



Sūrah al-An‘ām

A Brief Look at Chapter 2

On Sūrah al-Mā'idah ended Chapter 1 of the Qur'ān, as has been explained in the prelude to this exegesis. From Sūrah al-An‘ām begins Chapter 2, and consists of four *sūrahs*: al-An‘ām, al-A‘rāf, al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah. Of these, the first two are Makkan and the last two are Madīnan. In Sūrahs al-An‘ām and al-A‘rāf, the people of Makkah are addressed.

In Sūrah al-An‘ām, basic issues pertaining to monotheism, the hereafter and prophethood are discussed and the real religion of Abraham (sws) is explained. The bases of reasoning are the signs found in human nature and intellect and those found around them or on those universals which the Arabs accepted and which were true as well.

In Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the element of delivering warning is dominant. In it, the Quraysh are explained the consequences of a messenger's preaching among a people and what they will face if they persist in his denial, the laws and principles of God in this matter and historical evidence in this regard. They are warned that if they do not desist from their wrong attitude with their messenger, they should wait for the coming of an evil day for them.

In Sūrah al-Anfāl, the believers are told to do away with their weaknesses and remain united in obeying God and His messenger. They are also roused to war against the disbelievers of the Quraysh. It is openly proclaimed that they no longer have any right to be the custodians of the House of God; its real Abrahamic heirs are the believers. The latter are directed to not be over-awed by them as the time of their humiliation and punishment has arrived. If they do not desist from their ill-ways, they will be routed and there will be none who will give them refuge in this world or the next.

In Sūrah al-Tawbah, an open ultimatum is sounded to the Quraysh. They have only two options left: accept Islam or die. The believers are told to cut off all types of relations from them. Those who maintained secret ties with them because of kinship are severely reprimanded, and they too are given two clear options: to become true believers after cleansing themselves of all the filth of hypocrisy or face the fate destined for the enemies of God and His messenger.

In the light of this background, if readers deliberate on the contents of this group, it will become evident that all four of these *sūrahs* are arranged in a very meaningful



sequence. Sūrah al-An‘ām conclusively communicates the truth to the Quraysh. Sūrah al-A‘rāf sounds a warning to them. Sūrah al-Anfāl asks the believers to prepare for *jihād* and the divine decision is taken to depose the Quraysh from the custodianship of the House of God. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, an ultimatum is sounded to the Quraysh and the Hypocrites are given a final warning.

Group 1 of the Qur‘ān is directed to the People of the Book. If the Quraysh are addressed, it is only in a secondary way. On the other hand, Group 2 is basically addressed to the Quraysh and the People of the Book are only mentioned in a secondary way. There is also a basic difference in the nature of reasoning of both groups because of the addressees. In Group 2, arguments are mostly drawn from the signs found in human nature and intellect and in the world around human beings. However, in Group 1, the basis of argument are things which the People of the Book acknowledged. In Group 1, the People of the Book are deposed from religious leadership and their place has been given to the believers. In Group 2, the Quraysh are deposed from the custodianship of the House of God and this service is consigned to the believers.

This is a general description of the complete group. Now each of the *sūrahs* shall be taken up individually for the purpose of their explanation. With the help and blessings of God, we begin with Sūrah al-An‘ām.

Theme

As pointed out earlier, the Quraysh are addressed in this *sūrah*. They are invited to profess faith while arguments in favour of monotheism, the hereafter and prophethood of Muḥammad are furnished. They are simultaneously warned that if they do not accept faith they should be prepared to meet the fate destined for nations that deny their respective messengers. It may be noted that the people of Arabia were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and they claimed that they follow his religion. For this reason, those arguments are presented before them which Abraham (sws) had presented before his own people so that the Quraysh know what is the actual religion of Abraham (sws) and who are its real followers: the Prophet (sws) or the Quraysh.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-5): Some obvious arguments in favour of monotheism and the hereafter are pointed to. Wonder is expressed at the aversion of the Quraysh from these self-evident arguments. Denying the Qur‘ān is tantamount to denying the truth which will have its consequences. Whatever the Qur‘ān is informing them of is destined to happen.

Verses (6-7): Those who deny God’s Messengers were divinely punished. Early history of the Arabs is referred to.

Verses (8-11): The Prophet (sws) is assured that the greatest of miracles will not be



able to convince these rejecters. Even if the miracles they demand from him are shown to them, they will still not desist from denial. People similar to them also made fun of messengers that came before him. Ultimately, they were inflicted with the very punishment they had made fun of. The Prophet (sws) is asked to direct their attention to their history.

Verses (12-13): Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. He has made mercy mandatory upon Himself. Hence it is essential that He bring about a Day of Judgement.

Verses (14-18): Acquittal is declared from polytheism. Good and evil are in the hands of God. Everyone and everything is subservient to His power. He is all-wise and all-knowing.

Verses (19-24): The decisive evidence for monotheism and polytheism is from God and He bears witness in favour of the former. The Qur’ān too has been revealed with this evidence. True People of the Book are aware of it. Only the very unfortunate ones will remain deprived of professing faith in it. Adherents to polytheism are imputing falsehood to God. Such oppressors will not succeed. When on the Day of Judgement, they would be asked about the partners they associated with God, they will be taken aback and will have no answer.

Verses (25-32): Even if these people listen to the call of faith, it is not to understand and accept it; it is merely to counter it with foolish arguments. Instead of learning a lesson from the Qur’ān that narrates to them the anecdotes of those nations who earlier rejected the truth, they call it to be a tale of the ancients. Their eyes will only open when they will stand near Hell. At that time, they will express regret and sorrow on their wretchedness and will yearn to go back to the previous world so that they could accept faith. Today they think that the life of this world is all that there is. On the day they will be brought forth before their Lord, they will longingly express sorrow on their misfortune and on wasting their previous life.

Verses (33-39): The Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not be sad if these people are making fun of him for not fulfilling their demand to be shown a sign of punishment. They are not making fun of him; they are actually making fun of God. For this reason, he should leave their matter to God. Prophets before him also faced similar circumstances and they showed patience. After that, God’s help came. This is God’s established practice and it never changes. He should not worry in this regard. Only they will profess faith who have the ability to acknowledge the truth. Those whose hearts are dead will not accept faith even if they see the greatest of signs. God’s heavens and earth are replete with signs but what can they avail the blind.

Verses (40-50): These people demand a sign of punishment. The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them that if this punishment comes, how will they protect themselves? Previous nations are referred to. They too asked their respective messengers to show them signs. At this, God inflicted them with various calamities. However, instead of becoming attentive towards God, their hearts hardened even more. As a result, they



were uprooted by God. It is declared by the Prophet (sws) that he is not the owner of God's treasures nor does he claim to know the unseen world. He only follows what is revealed to him from God.

Verses (51-55): The Prophet (sws) is told that only those people will benefit from this Qur'ān who have fear of God and the hereafter. So he should warn them through it. As for those who demand miracles, he should ignore them. As for those who seek God's pleasure and want to listen to his message, he must not distance them from himself because these arrogant people are demanding this from him. If these people do not come to him because these poor people are in his presence, he should leave them alone. He is not responsible to make them accept faith. Their own affluence and the poverty of the poor has become a trial for them. The Prophet (sws) should nevertheless welcome these poor Muslims to his gatherings and give them glad tidings.

Verses (56-67): The Prophet (sws) is directed to proclaim his aversion to polytheism because it has no proof. He has clear evidence with him whereas these disbelievers deny it and demand a sign of punishment. The Prophet (sws) does not have the authority to show it; it is in God's authority. The life of every person is in God's hands. He can send His torment whenever He intends from where He desires. Every event has an appointed time. These disbelievers will soon know.

Verses (68-70): The Prophet (sws) is advised to not entangle himself in debate with these disbelievers when he sees that these disbelievers have been overcome with animosity. He should just ignore them as his task is to just to remind and advise them. When he sees that they do not want to listen to him, he should leave them to themselves. They will bear its consequences as he is not responsible to make them accept faith.

Verses (71-73): The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that once the truth has become evident and God's guidance has arrived, it is only their wretchedness that can still make them wander away. The Prophet (sws) and his companions will tread the same path as has been specified by God.

Verses (74-83): The argument in favour of monotheism communicated by Abraham (sws) to his nation is referred to.

Verses (84-90): Prophets and messengers prior to Abraham (sws) and those after him in his progeny are briefly alluded to. It is emphasized that the real guidance is the one these prophets have pointed to. The Prophet (sws) should strongly adhere to it. He should not care about the disbelievers of the Quraysh if they have decided to deny this guidance. God will bring forth others to support it.

Verses (91-92): An objection floated by the Jews in the ears of the Quraysh is cited and answered.

Verses (93-94): The claim of the foolish that they too can present the same discourse as the one presented by the Prophet (sws) from God is refuted. They say that divine revelation also descends to them.



Verses (95-99): Arguments of monotheism drawn from the world around human beings are presented.

Verses (100-105): Polytheism is refuted and the Quraysh are warned that once guidance has come to them, he who still chooses the path of error will himself be responsible for it.

Verses (106-108): The Prophet (sws) is directed to strongly adhere to divine revelation and ignore the Idolaters. The believers are told that without any justification they must not disgrace the idols and deities of the disbelievers so that in return, in frenzy, they say something about God.

Verses (109-111): The oath of the disbelievers is refuted that they will accept faith if at their demand they are shown a miracle. It is stated that if they are shown all kinds of miracles, even then those who have by that time have not accepted faith will never do so.

Verses (112-117): An established practice of God is referred to: when a messenger of God calls people to his message, the devils among the jinn and humankind are also given an opportunity to lure them to evil so that those who want to adopt the path of evil can do so. The Prophet (sws) is directed to tell those who are debating with him that how can he follow something else once the Book of God has come to him?

Verses (118-123): The believers are told that they must beware of those who want to lead them astray. They must not follow their religious innovations as per which they have regarded allowed edibles to be forbidden because of their polytheistic beliefs. They can freely consume things which were neither forbidden in the religion of Abraham (sws) nor has the Qur‘ān proscribed them. Now that the Almighty has brought them into light from darkness, the Prophet (sws) should disregard the religious innovations and frivolous arguments of those who are stumbling in the darkness of disbelief and polytheism.

Verses (124-127): Arrogant elements are refuted who say that they will not believe in the Qur‘ān unless they too receive divine revelation as received by the Prophet (sws). It is stated that not everyone is worthy of being given the high status of prophethood. Only God knows who is worthy of it. Those who arrogantly think that only they deserve success in this world and in the next will be punished for their arrogance. Acceptance of faith is dependent on God’s urge and grace and this urge is governed by a specific law.

Verses (128-135): In the hereafter, the deviant among jinns and humankind will acknowledge that they reached this fate because of their misdoings even after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them. The Quraysh are warned that they still have time to mend their ways otherwise the promised punishment is bound to visit them and none will be able to protect himself from it.

Verses (136-144): A certain practice of the Idolaters is refuted: they would forbid certain crops and animals to themselves and would sacrifice human beings to please their idols. They are told that these practices originate from baseless superstitions.



They have no basis in human nature and intellect as well as in the religion of Abraham (sws).

Verses (145-154): The things forbidden in the religion of Abraham (sws) and the religion of Moses (sws) are referred to. The notion of the idolaters is refuted that the path they are following is the one God has made them to follow and if God does not like this path why does He not make them tread the true path.

Verses (155-165): The conclusive communication of the truth done through the Qur’ān is stated. Even after this, if the disbelievers await a sign, then they should keep waiting. A prophet does not have the authority to show such a sign. It is proclaimed by the Prophet (sws) that he has been guided by God through Abraham’s religion and that he has started to follow it. Now anyone who desires should tread this straight path and anyone who wants can wander about. Everyone is responsible before God for his deeds.



سُورَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ

Section 1: Verses (1-11)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي
خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَنْتَرُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ ط يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَ
جَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا
جَاءَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّهِمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا
لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ مِّمَّا كَانُوا فِيهَا أَوَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَكُمْ آيَاتُنا أَنْتُمْ تَعْبُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٧﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قُرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالُوا الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْإِسْلَامَ هَذَا شَيْءٌ مُمَيَّنٌ
﴿٨﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَوْ
لَكُنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مَأْ يَلْهَبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَتَقَدَّرَ اسْتَهْزَاءُ بِرُسُلٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ
يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظَرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Gratitude is for God alone, Who made the heavens and the earth, created light and expansive darkness. Then it is strange that the disbelievers set up partners with their Lord! It is He Who has created you from clay, then decreed a term and the decreed term is only in His knowledge with Him. It is then strange that you engage in quibbling. And that very God is in the heavens and in the earth also. He has knowledge of what you conceal and what you reveal and also knows what you earn. And whatever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them, they ignore it. Thus, they have denied the evident truth when it has come to them. So, soon the news of what they have been making fun of will come to them. Have they not seen how many a nation we have destroyed before them whom We granted such authority in the land which We have not granted you and We sent down abundant rain on them and made canals flow below them. Then, because of their sins, We at last destroyed them and after them raised up other nations. (1-6)

And if We had revealed to you a Book that was written on paper and they were also



able to touch it with their own hands, even then these disbelievers would have still said: “This is but plain magic.” And they say: “Why does not an angel openly descend on him?” And if We had sent down an angel, the matter would have been decided. Then they would not have been given any respite. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. So, We would have inflicted them with the very ambiguity they are now in. And before you also messengers were made fun of; so the people among them who had made fun were surrounded by what they would make fun of. Say: Just roam about in the land and see the fate of those who disbelieved. (7-11)

Explanation

١ ۞ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ وَالنُّوْرَ ۚ ثُمَّ الَّذِیْنَ کَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّہِمۡ یَعْدِلُوْنَ ۚ

Research on the word اَلْحَمْدُ was presented in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah. It has been stated at a number of times in this sūrah that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth as well of darkness and light. The Qur’ān has here put forth an argument in favour of monotheism on the basis of this acknowledgement made by them. It is said that when they accept all this, when how strange it is that they set up partners with God. One aspect of expressing wonder at polytheism is that when everything has been created by God, from where has the possibility of polytheism arisen? Another aspect is that in the apparent conflict found in the opposing elements of nature, to fulfil a higher objective there exists tremendous harmony between them as well. This can be seen for example in the sky and the earth, light and darkness, cold and heat. Such is this harmony between these opposing elements that no sane person can think that they can have separate creators. In fact, every person of insight is compelled to accept that this Universe is working on the basis of a single aim and intent.

هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَکُمْ مِنْ طِیْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰۤی اَجَلًا ۖ وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی عِنْدَہٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَنْتَرُوْنَ ۚ ۞ وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَفِی الْاَرْضِ ۚ یَعْلَمُ سِرَّکُمْ وَیَعْلَمُ مَا تَکْسِبُوْنَ ۚ ۞

The fact that human beings are made from clay is alluded to at a number of occasions in the Qur’ān. For examples, in verse 7 of Sūrah al-Sajdah, it is said: وَبَدَا خَلَقَ

1. Gratitude is for God alone, Who made the heavens and the earth, created light and expansive darkness. Then it is strange that the disbelievers set up partners with their Lord!

2. It is He Who has created you from clay, then decreed a term and the decreed term is only in His knowledge with Him. It is then strange that you engage in quibbling. And that very God is in the heavens and in the earth also. He has knowledge of what you conceal and what you reveal and also knows what you earn.



الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ طِينٍ.³ The purpose is to allude to two realities. First, at the trivial substance of creation of human beings. Thus, they should not become arrogant. Second, at re-creation after death. In other words, when human beings have been created by God from clay and He was faced with no difficulty in creating them, why would it be difficult for Him to re-create them? In the verse under discussion, the purpose is to allude to the latter reality. In verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ra‘d, it is stated: وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا ءِإِنَّا نَخْلُقُ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ.⁴ In verse 104 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā’, the words are: وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُبْدِئُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ.⁵ Verse 27 of Sūrah al-Rūm says: نَعِيدُهُ وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ءِإِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ عَلَيْهِ.⁶

The word أَجَل means “period” and the term أَجَل مَسِي is used in the Qur’ān with reference to individuals and nations in different meanings. First, to the time of life which everyone gets from God. Second, to the Day of Judgement whose time of arrival has been prescribed by God. Third, to the time of existence of a nation after which it is wiped out. As an example of the first meaning, the verse under discussion and verse 60 ahead can be cited. As an example of the second meaning, the current verse can again be referred to. The word أَجَل is used twice. The first instance refers to the time of life of every individual, while the second instance (qualified by the word مَسِي (prescribed)) refers to the prescribed time after which human beings will be resurrected. As an example of the third meaning, verse 34 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf can be alluded to: وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ءِفَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.⁷ The time granted to a nation is not like the one granted to individuals. In the latter case, the rule is that whether a person as good or bad, his life will end when his time expires. On the other hand, the life of a nation is governed by moral laws: as long as a nation preserves its faith and character, God will allow it to exist until that time arrives which the Almighty has prescribed for the whole universe. The consequence of this period being governed by moral laws is also that it may be at the verge of destruction because of its misconduct and misdeeds but just before this decadence reaches the time when it must be destroyed, it repents and mends its affairs; then as a result it will be given more time. I will discuss this issue in more detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūh.

The word إِمْتَرَاء is from مَرَأ and means “to squeeze” and “to press.” The expression إِمْتَرَى الدِّبْن means “he squeezed out milk from the udders.” Here it refers to quibbling and polemical arguments given by a debater to create doubt in something which is

3. He began creating man with clay.

4. Now if you express wonder, then what is worthy of wonder is their statement: “When we become clay, will we be raised to life again?”

5. The way We began the first creation, in the same way, We shall do it again. This is a definite promise that We are responsible for. Indeed, We are certain to do it.

6. It is He who initiates creation, and it is He who will recreate and this is easier for Him.

7. And a time has been appointed for each nation. Then once their time ends, even for a moment they can neither be pushed back nor moved forward.



beyond doubt.

The verse means that it is God Who has created human beings from clay and this is such a reality which the Quraysh too do not deny. After that he prescribed a time of life for everyone. It is not that people become immortal. What is the doubt in God recreating them when He has created them from clay the first time?. He has fixed a time for this and only He has knowledge of this time. This is a certain reality in which there is no possibility of any debate or discussion. However, the Quraysh are adamant on their quibbling.

It is further implied that the heavens and the earth do not have separate gods. He is the master of both and each is under His command. In verse 84 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is stated: *وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ*⁸. The creation and sustained existence of the heavens and the earth bears witness that both are governed by the intent of the same God. Had this not been the case, both would have been destroyed as is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur‘ān (21:22). This verse actually refutes a certain opinion of the Idolaters. They did acknowledge that God has created both heavens and the earth; however, they contended that since the earth is a far flung area of His kingdom, He has consigned its governance to His workers. The verse asserts that both the heavens and the earth are under God’s direct control. Such is His knowledge that He knows the intentions, words and deeds of people. Thus He does not need any helper in His kingdom.

This topic of monotheism lays further emphasis on the topic of hereafter discussed earlier. It has been repeatedly explained in the Qur‘ān that it is essential to believe in the hereafter because without this belief, this world is rendered into a place of amusement. The same is the consequence that can be drawn if the baseless belief of intercession is accepted along with belief in the hereafter. This is because if the partners of God will be able to have all their worshippers – whatever deeds they committed – forgiven from God, as was claimed by the Idolaters, then the hereafter has no significance.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾⁹

The word “truth” here refers to the Qur‘ān. They were making fun of it because it was warning them of a punishment if they rejected the messenger.

8. And He alone is God in the heavens and He only is God on earth and only He is the real Wise and All-knowing One,

9. And whatever sign from the signs of their Lord comes to them, they ignore it. Thus, they have denied the evident truth when it has come to them. So, soon the news of what they have been making fun of will come to them.



أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّهِمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ تُنْكِنْ لَكُمْ وَآوَسْنَا السَّيِّئَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِذْرَارًا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا
الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

Historical evidence is cited here on the claim made earlier. No nation was spared from the punishment of denying a messenger and the Quraysh too must realize this. Here history has been referred to briefly. Details will be found in Sūrah al-A‘rāf the next *sūrah*, which forms its counterpart.

The word سَاء is also means “clouds” just as it means “sky.” The word مِذْرَارًا carries exaggeration and emphasis in it and signifies abundant rain and copious sustenance. It has been used thus in verse 52 of Sūrah Hūd and verse 11 of Sūrah Nūh.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قَرْنٍ عَاسٍ فَلَسَوْهُ بِآيِدِيهِمْ لَقَالُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْ لَا أَنْزَلْ
عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا
يَلْبَسُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Earlier in verse 4, the aversion of the Quraysh towards the Qur‘ān was mentioned. Here their objections and demands are responded to which they presented as an excuse to this aversion. The purpose is to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) that he should not think that they really have a legitimate excuse for their aversion so that if it is taken care of they would accept the Qur‘ān. The fact is that nothing will change. They will find new excuses because the reason of their not accepting it is that it is against their desires and not any lack of miracles shown to them.

The first verse is actually an answer to the demand of the People of the Book cited in their own words in verse 154 of Sūrah al-Nisā’. There the answer given was the one that was apt for the People of the Book.

The second verse mentions their second demand and its answer. This demand is also

10. Have they not seen how many a nation we have destroyed before them whom We granted such authority in the land which We have not granted you and We sent down abundant rain on them and made canals flow below them. Then, because of their sins, We at last destroyed them and after them raised up other nations..

11. And if We had revealed to you a Book that was written on paper and they were also able to touch it with their own hands, even then these disbelievers would have still said: “This is but plain magic.” And they say: “Why does not an angel openly descend on him?” And if We had sent down an angel, the matter would have been decided. Then they would not have been given any respite. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. And if We had made him an angel, even then We would have made him in the form of a human as well. So, We would have inflicted them with the very ambiguity they are now in.



cited at other instances in the Qur‘ān. The answer alludes to God’s established practice referred to in many verses that only that faith is acceptable which is professed through intellectually acknowledging corroborating signs found within and around human beings and in their nature and intellect without actually observing God.

The third verse answers a third demand. This too is cited at other instances. Thus, for example in verse 94 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl it is said: وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مُتَحَدِّثِينَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْبُرْجِ فَكُنَّا بِهَذَا صَحَافًا مَّوَدَّعِينَ ۚ إِنَّا جَاءَكُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُوا أَوْيَاظَكُمْ ۚ وَتَرْضَوْا مَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۚ

12 Similarly, verse 6 of Sūrah al-Taghābun, it is said: فَقَالُوا كَيْفَ يُهْدِيهِمْ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ۚ 13 The implication is that if the reason for not sending an angel is not because it was impossible for God but because human beings can only see angels when they are in the form of human beings. So if they had come in the form of a human being, they would have again raised the same question.

It is evident from the words “inflicted with the very ambiguity they are now in” that the doubt they raised for was not real. They were actually fabricating a doubt in order to create ambiguity for their simple-minded masses. The act of making it ambiguous is ascribed to the Almighty. This is in accordance with His established practice¹⁴ that He confounds people when they themselves wish to confound themselves.

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَىٰ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

The verb *حاق* means “to surround” and “to overspread.”

In verse 5, the Quraysh were threatened and told that they were making fun of an indisputable reality whose signs they will soon observe. Now in these verses the evidence and signs of this indisputable reality are referred to.

If they reflect on the history of their own land of Arabia, they will find many signs of the nations who were destroyed because of denying their respective messengers. Here this brief hint is only given, In the next *sūrah*, they are referred to in detail. It will become evident from them that the nations of ‘Ād, Thamūd, Madyan and Lot (sws) etc made fun of their own messengers and regarded the doom promised to them by these messengers to be a bluff. Ultimately, they were doomed and routed.

12. And when guidance came to them, the only thing that stopped these people from accepting faith was that they said: “Has God sent a human being as a messenger?”

13. So, they said to them: “Will mortals guide us?” Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them.

14. So, they said to them: “Will mortals guide us?” Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them.

15. And before you also messengers were made fun of; so the people among them who had made fun were surrounded by what they would make fun of. Say: Just roam about in the land and see the fate of those who disbelieved.



Section II: Verses (12-32)

In the forthcoming verses, arguments in favour of monotheism, hereafter and prophethood are presented in some new styles with some new aspects.

Text and Translation

قُلْ لِّمَنِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۖ قُلْ لِلّٰهِ ۚ كُتِبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ ۚ لِيَجْجَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ
 خَسِرُوْا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَا سَكَنَ فِى الْبَيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّيِّعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ اَعٰيذُ اللّٰهِ اَتَتَّخِذُ وِلِيًّا
 فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعَمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ۖ قُلْ اِنِّىْ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ اِنِّىْ
 اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّىْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ يُضْمَرْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْنٰهُ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْبَیْنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاِنْ يَسْتَسْكِنِ
 اللّٰهُ بِضَرْمٍ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاِنْ يَسْتَسْكِنِ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ
 الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ اٰى شَيْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۖ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۚ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاَوْحٰى اِلَىٰ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لِنُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ ۖ
 اَنْتُمْ كُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ الْيَهۡةَ اٰخَرٰى ۖ قُلْ لَا اَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اللّٰهُ وَاَحَدٌ ۚ وَاِنِّىْۤ اِبْرَءِىْ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِيْنَ
 اٰتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَاءَهُمْ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى
 اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيٰتِهِ ۖ اِنَّهٗ لَا يَفْقِدُ الظَّالِمُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَبِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا اٰتِيْنَ شُرَكَاءُكُمْ الَّذِيْنَ
 كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فَتَحْتُمُهُمْ اِلَّا اَنْ قَالُوْا وَاللّٰهِ رَبَّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَّبُوْا عَلَى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ
 عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَبِغِ الْيَمِيْنُ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِىْ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّرُوْا
 كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ۚ حَتّٰى اِذَا جَآءُوْكَ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اِنْ هٰذَا اِلَّا اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهٗ
 وَيَنْتَوْنَ عَنْهٗ ۚ وَاِنْ يُهْلِكُوْنَ اِلَّا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰى اِذْ وَقَفُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوْا يٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذَّبُ بِآيٰتِ
 رَبِّنَا وَنَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَا كَانُوْا يُخْفَوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَوْ رُدُّوْا لَعَادُوْا لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهٗ وَانَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَ
 قَالُوْا اِنْ هٰى اِلَّا حَيٰتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰى اِذْ وَقَفُوْا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ ۖ قَالَ اٰلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَ
 رَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُقُوْا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ ۚ حَتّٰى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوْا
 يٰحَسْرَتَنَا عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ يَحْبِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِمْ ۚ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا اِلَّا لَعِبٌ ۚ وَ



لَهُمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Ask them: To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God alone. He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. After gathering all of you, He shall definitely take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. Only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it. And whatever is stationed in the night or moves in the day is under His control alone. And He hears all and knows all. (12-13)

Say: Should I make anyone else but God my guardian Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? And He gives nourishment and is not nourished? Say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists. Say: If I disobey the directive of my Lord, I fear the torment of a horrific day. He who is spared that day from it is in fact the one God has shown mercy to, and this is clear success. (14-16)

And if God afflicts you with some sorrow, none except Him can take it away, and if He blesses you with some good fortune, then He has power over all things. And He is dominant on His servants in every respect and is Wise, All-Knowing. Ask: Who is the greatest witness? Say: God. He is a witness between you and me. And this Qur‘ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and those also whom it reaches. Do you bear witness to this that there are some other deities also besides God? Say: I do not bear witness to this. Say: He is but one God and I disown those you associate with Him. (17-19)

Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it the way they recognize their own sons. Those who have put themselves in loss, it is they who do not believe in it and who can be more unjust than the one who imputed a falsehood to God or denied His revelations? Indeed, such unjust can never succeed. Remember the day when We shall gather all of them. Then We shall ask these Idolaters: “Where are your associates who you thought were Our partners?” Then their deception will be exposed; but they will say: “By God, our Lord! We were never idolaters.” See how they have lied about themselves and all what they had been fabricating has vanished away. (20-24)

And there are those among them also who listen to you intently but We have cast veils over their hearts so that they may not understand what is said and have made their ears deaf so that they are not able to hear it. And if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them. So much so, when they will come to argue with you, these disbelievers will say: “These are only tales of the ancients.” And they also stop others from it and ignore it themselves as well, and in reality they ruin none but themselves, but are not aware of this. And if you could see the time when they would be made to stand beside Hell, then they will say: “Would that we are sent back so that we can testify and not deny the revelations of our Lord and become believers.” In fact, the reality which they had concealed in their hearts before has manifested itself to them. And if they are sent back, they will do the same which they had been



forbidden. They are absolute liars. (25-28)

They say: “There is no other life but this worldly life of ours and we shall not be raised to life after death.” And if you could see the time when they will be made to stand before their Lord! He will ask them: “Is this not a reality?” “Yes, by our Lord! It is a reality,” they will reply. He will say: “So, taste the punishment because of your disbelief!” They incurred loss who denied their meeting with God. Until when that hour suddenly arrives, they will say: “Pitiful is our negligence in this regard,” and they would be bearing their burden on their backs. Know well! Very evil is the burden they will be bearing. And the life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. The abode of the Hereafter, however, is better for those who are pious. Then do you not understand? (29-32)

Explanation

قُلْ لِّسَنُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ قُلْ لِلَّهِ كُتُبٌ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ ۖ لِيَجْزِيَكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ الَّذِينَ
خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَلَكُم مَّا سَكَنَ فِي الْإِيلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّيِّئُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٢٨﴾¹⁶

There are several instances in the Qur‘ān in which a question is posed to the addressees and then without waiting for their reply, it is answered. Deliberation shows that on such instances the addressees are no position to deny it. If any of their beliefs of deeds is against it, it is against what they themselves fully acknowledge. The haste in expressing the answer also shows that the truth must be told regardless of the stubbornness the addressees may show in response. Here it should be kept in mind that in spite of subscribing to idolatry, the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth, as has been explained elsewhere.

The words “He has made mercy mandatory on Himself” signify the level of perfection in God’s mercy and also that whatever this attribute requires shall certainly come into being. Nothing can stop it.

In *لِيَجْزِيَكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ*, the preposition *إِلَىٰ* evidences the existence of a word that means “driving someone.”

In other words, the advent of the Day of Judgement is a necessary consequence of God’s attribute of mercy. The absence of such a day would mean that the creator of this universe is neither Most Gracious nor Ever-Merciful. It would mean that, God forbid, to Him justice and injustice, virtue and vice, good and evil occupy equal status. The world is a place of entertainment and unrestrained actions that will never be checked. Since all this is obviously baseless and it is absolutely against the Gracious

¹⁶. Ask them: To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God alone. He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. After gathering all of you, He shall definitely take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. Only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it. And whatever is stationed in the night or moves in the day is under His control alone. And He hears all and knows all.



and Merciful God to do something without purpose, it is essential that He bring about a day in which His mercy fully manifests itself, the pious are unboundedly blessed by Him and the wicked meet their fate. It logically follows from this that the real purpose of the Day of Judgement is not to punish the wrongdoers; it is, in fact, to reward the righteous. Punishing the wrongdoers is in reality an essential consequence of rewarding the righteous. This aspect will be explained further under verse 53.

The sentence “only those who have inflicted themselves with loss do not believe in it” has been elucidated by verse 31 ahead.

According to linguistic principles, in *وَلَكُمْ مَاسَكَنٌ فِي النَّهَارِ وَاللَّيْلِ*, a contrasting word such as *ما* (that moves) to *سَكَنٌ* (that is stationed) is suppressed. It has been revealed in the translation. More examples of this common stylistic feature of the Qur‘ān are coming up.

These verses mean that if these people are conceitedly denying the hereafter and its reward and punishment because of their worldly successes and also making fun of the Prophet (sws), then he should ask them about the ownership of these heavens and the earth. The obvious answer of this is that they belong to God and these people too do not deny this. He should then tell them that God has made mercy mandatory on Himself. The essential consequence of this is that after creating them and providing them with all means of sustenance they not be left without any purpose. It is essential that He take them to the Day of Judgement regardless of their will. There is no doubt in the advent of this day. When it will come, people who show arrogance today and make fun of it are engrossed in worldly pleasures will utterly regret their attitude. They would express sorrow that they had forgotten the hereafter because of the transient pleasures of this life and now face eternal loss.

After that an example of God’s all embracing knowledge is cited that shows that the darkness of night and the radiance of the day are equal with regard to His knowledge of what happens in them. He will gather everyone from all places and just as He is all powerful, He is all knowledgeable too. Verses 59-62 ahead discuss this topic in detail.

قُلْ أَغْيَرَ اللَّهِ اتَّخَذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعَمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ^ط قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ
مِنَ الْبَاطِلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ مَنْ يُصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ^ط وَذَلِكَ
الْفَوْزُ الْبُيِّنُ ﴿٣٣﴾^{١٧}

These verses state the second essential consequence of the reality mentioned earlier:

¹⁷. Say: Should I make anyone else but God my guardian Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? And He gives nourishment and is not nourished? Say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists. Say: If I disobey the directive of my Lord, I fear the torment of a horrific day. He who is spared that day from it is in fact the one God has shown mercy to, and this is clear success.



when to God belongs everything and the heavens and the earth have been created by Him, it is not befitting for the Prophet (sws) to regard anyone else as his guardian and protector however much these people may not want to.

The sentence “and He gives nourishment and is not nourished” is a reference to God’s providence, and also encompasses a subtle sarcasm for the Idolaters. The implication is that only He is worthy of being regarded as the guardian and protector of people Who brings the heavens and the earth into existence from nothingness and with Whose grace everyone is being given sustenance. It is not their idolaters who can do all this. They themselves accept that they have not created anything. As for being deities, suffice it to say to expose them that when they present sweet edibles to them, they are happy at receiving them. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the edibles the Idolaters presented to their deities would be regarded by them as their favourite food which they would eat and whose aroma they would relish. On the contrary, whatever a person who only believes in God offers to God returns to His poor creatures and none of it, as specified by the Qur’ān, comes in the use of God.

Evident from the style in “say: I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam and you should never become among the polytheists” is that a prophet is the first person to comply with the guidance he gives others on God’s behalf. Further evident from it is that it does not make a difference to him whether people who he invited to accepted his invitation or not.

The sentence “you should never become among the polytheists” is not connected to “I have been commanded to be the first to profess Islam.” It is an independent statement that the Prophet (sws) must convey to them. Though these words are addressed to him, however, the rebuke in them is directed to the people whose attitude is under discussion.

The last verse subtly insinuates that those who regard worldly success to be the real thing and forget the real success of the hereafter will realize their wretchedness when that day comes.

وَإِنْ يَسْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بَصِئًا فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَإِنْ يَسْسَسْكَ بَخِيرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ
الْحَكِيمُ النَّبِيرُ ﴿١٩﴾¹⁸

Though the address of the first of the above verses is in the singular, it signifies a general situation and is actually a further explanation of what is said previously.

The word الْقَاهِرُ means “the supreme controller.” All the universe and all people are under His control and jurisdiction and he is not dependent on anyone to control them.

18. And if God afflicts you with some sorrow, none except Him can take it away, and if He blesses you with some good fortune, then He has power over all things. And He is dominant on His servants in every respect and is Wise, All-Knowing.



There is absolutely no chance that anyone can escape His grasp when He will seize them. In verse 61 ahead, this topic is further explained.

That God is wise and aware necessitates many things. For example, He brings about a Day of Judgement because without it, this world becomes a purposeless place. Secondly, there is no possibility of any intercession that may turn good into evil and vice versa because this is not only against His wisdom but also His knowledge.

قُلْ أَيْ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ وَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِأُنذِرْكُمْ بِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ بَدَعَ ۖ أَنِنُّكُمْ
لَنَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً أُخْرَىٰ ۖ قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بِرِجْزِ مِمَّا تَشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

Most exegetes regard the expression مَنْ بَدَعَ to be coordinated to the accusative pronoun in لَنُذَرِّكُمْ. Thus according to this construction, the translation would be: “and this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that through it I may warn you and those also to whom it reaches.” However, I think this expression is coordinated to the nominative pronoun in لَنُذَرِّكُمْ. Thus, the meaning would be: “and this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that through it I may warn you and those also whom it reaches also warn others.” This is a reminder of the responsibility mentioned in verse 123 of Sūrah al-Tawbah thus: ²⁰فَلْيَوَلِّ كَلَّافٍ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَ لِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ. ²¹فَلْيُبَيِّنِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبِ (let those present communicate this to those not present). The responsibility of this *ummah* stated in verse 143 of Sūrah al-Baqarah also corroborates this: (and similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you be witnesses [to the truth] before the people, and the *rasūl* be such a witness before you).

The meaning of the verse is the decisive evidence of whether God has a partner or not is that of God Himself. Only He can tell who He has included in His sovereignty and what is their nature. In other words, if He has done no such thing, on what authority can the Quraysh do so. It is then further said through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he regards God’s witness as final in this matter: He has revealed this Qur’ān to him for this very evidence that he warns them through it that God has no partners and they also to whom it reaches warn others that God has no peers. Now

19. Ask: Who is the greatest witness? Say: God. He is a witness between you and me. And this Qur’ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and those also whom it reaches. Do you bear witness to this that there are some other deities also besides God? Say: I do not bear witness to this. Say: He is but one God and I disown those you associate with Him.

20. But why did this not happen that a few from each of their groups could come forward to obtain sound understanding of religion and warned the people of their nation also when they returned to them so that they too could become careful?

21. See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 619, (no. 1652).



if even after this, they think that God has partners, then the Prophet (sws) is not prepared to bear this false witness. He has been directed to proclaim that God is one and only and that he has acquitted himself from those they associate with God.

الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابُ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ ۚ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْعِلُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾²²

The first part of verse 20 has been discussed in detail under verse 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It was explained there that the righteous among the People of the Book are referred to here. In the Qur’ān, the righteous among the People of the Book are generally mentioned in the active voice. The accusative pronoun in يَعْرِفُونَهُ (they recognize it) is the Qur’ān that has been mentioned in verse 19. Some people regard this pronoun to refer to the Prophet (sws). However, since this verse actually addresses him, an indirect pronoun is not appropriate for him. Nevertheless, as far as the purport of the verse is concerned, not much difference results. This is because the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws) mutually necessitate one another. Such is this mutual necessity that in verses 10-11 of Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, the two are mentioned as substitutes of one another.

The simile of “their sons” has also been explained earlier. Just as an estranged father waits for the promised meeting with his son – and from afar his arrival becomes known to him – in a similar way the righteous among the People of the Book were waiting for the Qur’ān and Muhammad (saws). Their emotions are depicted in verse 53 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah thus: وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ (and when they hear what is revealed to the Messenger, you see that their eyes overflow up with tears.)

In order to further reinforce the evidence borne by the Qur’ān, the verses under discussion state this not evidence is not unknown. It is well-known and is mentioned in the previous scriptures. Those who were given the Book before the Prophet (sws) and those of faith among them were ardently waiting for it. Only they will deprive themselves of believing in it who have put themselves in loss. When this is God’s evidence, then who can be more unjust than the one who imputes falsehood to God against this evidence.

Though this *sūrah* is a Makkan one, it belongs to that Makkan phase in which the People of the Book in Madīnah had been impacted by it. As a result, the miscreants among them were fuelling its adversity and the righteous among them were regarding

²². Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it the way they recognize their own sons. Those who have put themselves in loss, it is they who do not believe in it and who can be more unjust than the one who imputed a falsehood to God or denied His revelations? Indeed, such unjust can never succeed.



it to be an affirmation of the prophecies found in their scriptures. For this reason, this insinuation of the Qur‘ān is very meaningful. It encouraged in the pious and at the same time warned those who were deliberately posing as ignorant. More details of this topic will be found in verse 114 ahead.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَبِيْعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَشْرَكَ أَنَا إِنَّا شُرَكَاءُكُمُ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ فَتَسْتَثْمِهِمُ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَا
اللَّهُ رَبَّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَصَلَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾²³

The emphasis in the word جَبِيْعًا (all) in وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَبِيْعًا has embraced all the groups mentioned earlier whether they were the ones who ascribed partners to God or denied the Day of Judgement or rejected the revelations of God. Though all of these were Idolaters, it is evident from the Qur‘ān that each had different reasons to some extent for their rejection. For this reason, they are mentioned separately in the verses ahead and each of them has been warned in accordance with its wrongdoings.

If the meaning of the word فَتَسْتَثْمُهُمُ is taken to be in the same sense as the Qur‘ān calls wealth and children and the trivial pleasures of this life to be فَتَسْتَثْمُهُمُ, then it will be considered to be annexed to its maf‘ūl. The expression ثُمَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ فَتَسْتَثْمِهِمُ would mean that the trial of polytheism and false desires they are inflicted with now will become evident to them and they will see that the supports they were living on were mere deception. At that instant, they will have no option but to impute falsehood to their own selves the way they did to God.

On the other hand, if this word is taken to mean persecution, it will be annexed to its fā‘il. The expression ثُمَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ فَتَسْتَثْمُهُمُ would then mean that the way they are persecuting weak Muslims because they had denied polytheism will end and they themselves would be struck with those very calamities they had inflicted the Muslims with. As soon as they will be seized by God, they will lie acquit themselves of polytheism and lie. Whichever of these two interpretations is taken, in both cases the sarcasm would be steeped in the style of the verse and the exception would be regarded as severed. I am more inclined to the first of these interpretations and have translated the verse accordingly.

The imperative verb “see” is to portray the situation so that a future event comes to mind. These people will bear false witness against themselves. At the very beginning of the Day of Judgement, they will deny the polytheism for which they fought all their lives in the previous world. Also found in this the sarcasm is that in this world they bore false witness against God, as is mentioned in verse 19 and in the hereafter they

²³. Remember the day when We shall gather all of them. Then We shall ask these Idolaters: “Where are your associates who you thought were Our partners?” Then their deception will be exposed; but they will say: “By God, our Lord! We were never idolaters.” See how they have lied about themselves and all what they had been fabricating has vanished away.



will bear false witness against their own selves.

The exact meaning of the expression **مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ** would be that no benefit could their intercessors and associates give them in the hereafter. They were given this position of intercession by imputing falsehood to God.

This explanation of the components of the verse elucidates its meaning. No further details are needed. However, it is possible that one question may arise in the minds of people: it is evident from some instances in the Qur‘ān that on the Day of Judgement the Idolaters will confess to polytheism and even call their deities for help, while, on the other hand, in the verses under discussion they will deny it on oath. The answer to this question is that these two statements are given at two different occasions. At first they will call their deities and later when they will see that no headway is being made, they will deny that they even subscribed to polytheism.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَعِينُكَ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمُ أَكِنَّةً ۖ أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۖ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمَةً لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْعُونَ عَنْهُ ۖ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۖ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَعُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَيْتُنَا نَرُدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ بَلْ بَدَأَ الْهَمَّ مَا كَانُوا يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾²⁴

The word **أَكِنَّةً** is the plural of **كن** and **كان** and means “a cork” or “a cover.”

The word **وقرًا** means “burden.” Here it refers to hardness of ears. The cover and hardness mentioned here are obviously metaphorical that stops the ears to listen and understand. These faculties are the real essence of a human being. After being deprived of these faculties, a person becomes an animal; in fact, even worse. This situation arises because of a person’s own misdeeds and is governed by a principle: when a person does not use these faculties for the purpose they are given, he is deprived of them as a punishment. This is God’s established practice.

A verb that is appropriate in meaning **أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ** collocating with **أَذَانٍ** is suppressed.

24. And there are those among them also who listen to you intently but We have cast veils over their hearts so that they may not understand what is said and have made their ears deaf so that they are not able to hear it. And if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them. So much so, when they will come to argue with you, these disbelievers will say: “These are only tales of the ancients.” And they also stop others from it and ignore it themselves as well, and in reality they ruin none but themselves, but are not aware of this. And if you could see the time when they would be made to stand beside Hell, then they will say: “Would that we are sent back so that we can testify and not deny the revelations of our Lord and become believers.” In fact, the reality which they had concealed in their hearts before has manifested itself to them. And if they are sent back, they will do the same which they had been forbidden. They are absolute liars.



The translation points to it.

The words “and if they see signs of all kinds, even then they will not believe in them” are no exaggeration. The implication is that if they do not accept faith, it is not because any signs and miracles did not manifest themselves to them. After all, what is this whole universe, the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the seas, the mountains, the clouds, the wind, the night and day? Are they not signs and miracles? The whole universe is replete with such signs but what is the cure for people who do not have eyes that can really see? They are blind to all such signs and miracles. And if some other miracles are shown to them, they will make some excuse and remain obstinate in their ways. The remedy to this is they untie the covers on their eyes and intently listen to the Prophet’s message and the call of the Qur’ān. If they are not prepared to do this, what benefit can miracles give them?

The word *أساطير* is the plural of *أسطورة* and *أسطورة*. It means “an unfounded story.”

The reason that the Qur’ān has cited the history of some nations while presenting its message is that the Arabs draw a message from it. This history shows that the rise and fall of nations are not accidental events. They are governed by moral principles. When a nation becomes bereft of morals, it is destroyed by God’s law and some other nation replaces it which is better in conduct and character. This nation is now made to pass through the same test. The Almighty sees how it behaves after being given sovereignty. If it also deviates, it is destroyed too and replaced by another one. By regarding this principle of rise and fall of nations as a foundational one, the Qur’an has presented before the Arabs their own past history. In other words, the destruction of the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nations of Sabā’, Lot (sws) and the Pharaoh were not accidental events. They were governed by the divine principle of rise and fall of nations. When these nations were afflicted with moral and spiritual ailments, the Almighty sent spiritual healers to cure them. These prophets of God tried their best to heal them but these nations paid no heed to them. As a consequence, they were annihilated by God. By narrating this history, the Qur’ān has warned the Arabs that they too face a similar situation of life and death. A messenger of God has arrived among them. If they do not listen to him, they too will be annihilated the way their predecessors were. This warning of the Qur’ān struck a hefty blow on the arrogance of the Arabs. In the first place, they never liked being diagnosed as a morally sick nation that entailed punishment. In the second place, they never believed that the rise and fall of nations was governed by moral principles. They believed that nations live and die just as human beings or objects of nature like trees do. Just as living beings pass through the phases of infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age, nations too do so in a similar way. This has nothing to do with moral principles. At one instance, the Qur’ān (45:24) has cited their view: وَمَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا دَهْرٌ (only fortune kills us). Obviously if this was their view, it was but natural for them to show anger at the view expressed by the Qur’ān. In fact, their rage escalated when they observed that people were being



influenced by the Qur’ān. These people feared that if they did not listen to the Prophet (sws) and to the Qur’ān they will be punished. It was in this confused state they would say that this Qur’ān is a tale of the ancients which are being proclaimed by a madman. More details on this can be looked up under verse 24 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

In *فَقَالُوا يَكْفُورُونَ*, a word to the effect *نُصَدِّقُ* is suppressed in response to the desire found in *يَكْفُورُونَ*. The expression *وَلَا تُكْذِبُ* is actually connected to this suppression. That is why it occurs as a light indefinite tense (*muḍāri‘ khaṭīf*). In other words, a very obvious answer to the desire was *فَنُصَدِّقُ* (we attest) or a similar one. Hence it was suppressed and this suppression was indicated through the particle of co-ordination in *وَلَا تُكْذِبُ*. The eloquence in this expression is very telling: not only does longing exude from it, but their confession is also evident from it. In other words, today these people are showing arrogance and regarding the Qur’ān to be a tale of the ancients; however, on the day of judgement they will long to come back in this world to testify to the revelations of their Lord and not deny them.

After an explanation of the components of the verses, let us look at their meanings.

Earlier in verses 21-24, the fate of the leaders of polytheism was described. In the verses under discussion, the fate of the leaders who have denied the Qur’ān is referred to. It is said that though some miscreants listen to the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān he recites out to them, it is not to accept or understand them; the purpose is to find some point of debate and dispute so that they can indulge in baseless polemics with him. Because of their misdeeds, their hearts and ears have been sealed; so, now they cannot accept the truth. The Prophet (sws) should not think that if they are shown a miracle they will accept it and profess faith in the Qur’ān. The fact is that if they observe all kinds of miracles, even then they will engage in baseless argumentation. This is because as long as the real reason for them to reject the truth remains, they will never listen. They arrogantly regard the Qur’ān to be a tale of the ancients. However, the Prophet (sws) should rest assured that they will neither be able to harm God or him; they are leading only themselves to doom. However, since this doom is impending, they are not realizing it. They will gravely regret what they did when they will be made to stand at the edge of the pit of Hell and would wish to go back in the previous world and profess faith. The Qur’ān says that even this admission on their part is false. If they are made to return, they will do the same as they did before. This is because the reason for their denial is not that they are not aware of the truth. They knew that the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān and reward and punishment are undeniable truths. However, love of the world, arrogance and jealousy had made them blind. If they are now sent in the previous world, they will deny what they are committing here just as they denied when they were there; they will regard this observation to be a horrible dream.

وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ ۖ قَالَ أَيْسَ هَذَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ قَالُوا



بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِإِيقَاءِ اللَّهِ ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ السَّاعَةُ
 بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَحْسِرُ تَنَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا ۚ وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِمْ ۚ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ
 الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ ۖ وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

There is no literary or grammatical complexity in these verses.

After the fate of the rejecters of the Qur‘ān was stated earlier, these verses depict the fate of the rejecters of the hereafter.

Section II: Verses (33-50)

As can be observed, the previous section of verses ended on assurance to the Prophet (sws). This section dwells further on this topic of assurance. In fact, there occurs an emphatic enhancement in it. This enhancement is very affectionate for the Prophet (sws) and his companions; the rebuke and anger it encapsulates is entirely directed towards the stubborn rejecters. These rejecters persistently demanded a miracle from the Prophet (sws). They said that that after being shown it, they will accept the Qur‘ān presented by the Prophet (sws) as God’s Book. It was but natural that the Prophet (sws) and his companions be impacted by this demand. This was especially true for the Prophet (sws) because he was an embodiment of affection and love for his people. Under the influence of this demand, he would wish that a miracle be shown to them so that they may well accept faith. The Almighty has first of all assured him that this demand should not worry him. These people are not denying him; they are actually denying God’s revelations. So when God is observing and hearing everything and in spite of being able to is still not fulfilling their demand, why should he be worried. Prophets who came before him were similarly rejected; they bore this rejection with patience and hence he too should do the same. This is God’s established practice.

After that it is stated in a very severe tone that if God wanted to forcibly make people accept faith, this would have happened in the blink of an eye. However, He did

25. They say: “There is no other life but this worldly life of ours and we shall not be raised to life after death.” And if you could see the time when they will be made to stand before their Lord! He will ask them: “Is this not a reality?” “Yes, by our Lord! It is a reality,” they will reply. He will say: “So, taste the punishment because of your disbelief!” They incurred loss who denied their meeting with God. Until when that hour suddenly arrives, they will say: “Pitiful is our negligence in this regard,” and they would be bearing their burden on their backs. Know well! Very evil is the burden they will be bearing. And the life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. The abode of the Hereafter, however, is better for those who are pious. Then do you not understand?



not want this to happen. He wanted people to use their intellect and insight and accept faith on the basis of their own will and intention. So, if this is the case, then why should the Prophet (sws) be overwhelmed with their demand? God does not want this to happen. However, if the Prophet (sws) would like this to happen, he can bring a miracle from wherever he can from the heavens and the earth.

After that, it is stated what type of people will accept faith and what type will continue to ask for miracles. Next, the wisdom of not showing them a miracle is stated: their attention is directed to the numerous miracles that already exist in this universe and to the arguments and proofs which are found in the Book of God. It is said that people who have closed their eyes to these facts are deaf, dumb and blind. Nothing can open their eyes.

After that, it is said that if these people demand a sign of the punishment, then the Prophet (sws) should ask them that if it comes or if the Day of Judgement arrives whether they have any protection against it. At that time, they will only call out on God. Next, the history of the prophets and their nations is alluded to in this connection. These nations were shown similar signs but they did not benefit from them. The result was that they were destroyed. In a similar way, if the Quraysh are seized internally or externally, who except God can save them?

In the end, the responsibility of the prophets of delivering warning and glad tidings is referred to. This responsibility does not include showing miracles or signs of punishment. It is proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he is not the owner of God's treasures; he also has no knowledge of the unseen nor does he claim to be an angel. He only follows the revelations received by him from God. Everyone is free to accept or reject them. It is nevertheless an undeniable fact that those who can see and those who cannot will not be equal in the eyes of God.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَكَدُونَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ
رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأَوْدُوا حَتَّى أَتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِنْ نُبَى
الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سُلَامًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيهِمْ
بِآيَةٍ ۖ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَى فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ ۚ وَالْمَوْتَى
يَعْبَهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنْزِلَ آيَةً وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
هُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ مَا فَرَقْنَاهُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ
إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا صُمُّ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ ۚ مَنْ يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يُضِلَّهُ ۖ وَمَنْ يَشَاءِ يُجْعَلْهُ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ



مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ ارْءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ ؕ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ إِيَّاهُ تَدْعُونَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَمَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَمَّرُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقَطَّعَ دَابِرَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۗ وَالْحُجْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قُلْ ارْءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَ أَبْصَارَكُمْ وَ خَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ ۗ أَنْظَرُ كَيْفَ نَصَرَفَ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْذِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ ارْءَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۖ فَمَنْ أَمَنَّ وَ أَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَسْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ؕ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مَا يُؤْتَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۖ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

We have been aware that what they say grieves you. So, be patient. It is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God's revelations. And other messengers before you have also been rejected. So, they patiently bore their rejection and their harassment until Our help came to them. None can change the decrees of God, and the anecdotes of the prophets have already reached you. (33-34)

And if their aversion is hard for you to bear, find if you can a tunnel in the earth or a stairway in the sky by which you may bring them a sign. Had God willed, He could have gathered all of them on guidance. So, do not become of those who are overcome by emotions. Only those people shall accept who listen and understand. As for these dead, God will raise them; then they will be returned to Him. (35-36)

And they say: "Why was no sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Tell them: God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know, And all the beasts that roam on their legs on the earth and all the birds that soar on both their wings in the air are all communities like your own. And We have left no stone unturned in Our Book. Then all of them will be gathered before their Lord. And those who have denied Our revelations, these deaf and dumb are engulfed in darkness. God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases. (37-39)

Say: What if God's punishment visits you or the Hour of Doom arrives, will you call anyone except God if you are truthful in your claim? In fact, you call Him alone. Then, if He pleases, He relieves the affliction for which you called Him and you forget those you made partners of God. (40-41)

And before you also, We had sent forth Our messengers to many nations. Thus, We



afflicted them with physical and financial adversities so that they submit to God. Then why did they not submit to God when We seized them? In fact, their hearts hardened and Satan made this deed that they had been doing seem fair to them. So when they forgot that through which they had been reminded, We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them; they were left in utter amazement. Thus, those who were unjust were uprooted. And real gratitude is for God alone, the Lord of the Universe. (42-45)

Say: Speak, if God takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than God can restore them to you? See how We present Our revelations from various aspects; even then, they show aversion. Ask: If God’s punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced, who except the unjust would perish? And We send forth messengers only that they give glad tidings and deliver warnings. So, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve. And those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance. (46-49)

Say: I do not claim before you that I have God’s treasures or know what the unknown is nor do I claim to be an angel. I only follow that which is revealed to me. Say: Will the blind and those with sight become equal? Do you then not reflect? (50)

Explanation

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كَذَّبُوا وَآؤُذُوا حَتَّى أَتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِنْ نَبِيِّائِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾²⁶

The expression قَدْ نَعْلَمُ is actually نَعْلَمُ. When the word قَدْ is pre-posed to an indefinite verb in this manner, then according to linguistic principles an incomplete verb is suppressed before it. Its presence signifies that the actual purport is: “It has continued to remain in Our knowledge and still is.”

“What they say” refers to the things they say as alluded to in verse 8 and in verses 37 and 50 ahead (If he is God’s Messenger, then why does he not show a miracle? Why does not an angel come down to herald his veracity? Why does he not show a Book directly descending to him from the heavens? Why does he not own a treasure? Why does he not show a sample of the punishment he threatens people with).

The Prophet (sws) is actually assured that if in spite of knowing all this, God is not taking any notice, there is some wisdom concealed in it.

26. We have been aware that what they say grieves you. So, be patient. It is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God’s revelations. And other messengers before you have also been rejected. So, they patiently bore their rejection and their harassment until Our help came to them. None can change the decrees of God, and the anecdotes of the prophets have already reached you.



The sentence “it is not you that they reject; these wrongdoers are rejecting God’s revelations” signifies a lot of affection for the Prophet (sws). In other words, if it is actually God’s revelations that they are rejecting, why should the Prophet (sws) feel sad? Their real target is God and they will be taken to task by Him. At the same time, by using the word “unjust” for these rejecters it is shown that it is they who are suffering the loss. These unfortunate and wretched people are unjust to their own souls; neither are they harming him nor God.

In order to further reinforce the assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws), the words “and other messengers before you have also been rejected” point to God’s established practice regarding His messengers: in order to become entitled to God’s direct help, prophets and their followers have to pass through a long and enduring phase of trials. Without this God’s help does not come. During this phase, the people of the prophets continue to refute and reject them. They are inflicted with all sorts of tribulations and harassed in this phase. In this manner, whatever enmity the enemies harbour in their hearts fully manifests itself and whatever abilities prophets and their followers have are polished and become evident. It is at this time that the truth stands conclusively delivered by God to the rejecters of the truth, and a prophet and his followers become entitled to God’s help. This is an established practice of God and no one can change it. The accounts of all messengers of God bear testimony to this established practice.

وَأِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنْ اشْتَغَلْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْيَةُ ۖ وَوَشَّاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَجْعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْبَهِيلِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ ۖ وَالْمَوْثِقُ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

The answer to the condition found in the first verse is suppressed. This is a common linguistic style of Arabic. It has been unfolded in the translation.

It is known that the word **جهل** occurs as an opposite to both **علم** (ignorance) and **حلم** (forbearance). In fact, its dominant usage is in the latter sense. For this reason, it means “to be overwhelmed with emotions.” Because of their pure nature, messengers of God are never overwhelmed by base desires; however, they are overcome at times with noble desires to such an extent that they exceed limits. Though this in itself is a very commendable thing, since they are regarded as a standard and a benchmark, the Almighty does not let them cross the prescribed limits. This can be understood

27. And if their aversion is hard for you to bear, find if you can a tunnel in the earth or a stairway in the sky by which you may bring them a sign. Had God willed, He could have gathered all of them on guidance. So, do not become of those who are overcome by emotions. Only those people shall accept who listen and understand. As for these dead, God will raise them; then they will be returned to Him.



through an example. A messenger has a great desire for his nation to accept faith so that it remains secure from God’s punishment. These emotions bear witness to his affection and to the honour he has for the truth. However, these emotions too are only desirable to the extent they are in conformity with God’s established practice regarding professing faith. This practice has been referred to in verse 34 earlier. If it appears that a messenger may exceed these limits, the Almighty takes the initiative in stopping him.

The word *يَسْمَعُونَ* is used in its complete meaning ie, to listen and understand. Those who listen but do not understanding are ones who actually do not listen. The word “dead” refers to those who whose intellect and heart are dead. This is because real life is the life in which a person’s intellect and heart are alive.

There exists an apparent rebuke in these verses for the Prophet (sws). However, there is great affection concealed in it. If there is any harshness in it, it is directed to the wretched people whose evasion to faith had made the Prophet (sws) very anxious. He wanted that the miracle they were demanding be shown to them so that they were left with no excuse. So he is told that he can try as hard as he can to bring a miracle, the Almighty is not in favour of making people accept faith through miracles. He wants them to use their ears, eyes and intellect and reflect on the signs found with them and around them. He wants them to intently listen to what the Prophet (sws) is telling them and deliberate on it and accept faith out of their own free will and intention. It was very easy for God to force people to accept faith and this could have happened in the blink of an eye. However, He did not choose this. So the Prophet (sws) should not be so overwhelmed with emotions that he loses sight of God’s practice and mercy in this matter.

وَقَالُوا لَا نَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنْزِلَ آيَةً وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ ۚ مَنْ يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يُضِلَّهُ ۖ وَمَنْ يَشَاءِ يُجْعَلْهُ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

The “sign” here can refer to any of the signs the disbelievers demanded from the Prophet (sws). However, concomitant indications show that here those people are

28. And they say: “Why was no sign sent down to him from his Lord?” Tell them: God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know, And all the beasts that roam on their legs on the earth and all the birds that soar on both their wings in the air are all communities like your own. And We have left no stone unturned in Our Book. Then all of them will be gathered before their Lord. And those who have denied Our revelations, these deaf and dumb are engulfed in darkness. God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases.



being responded to who wanted to see a sign that would prove that if they deny the messenger they will be afflicted with punishment. Succeeding verses will themselves gradually unfold this indication. In this *sūrah* as well as at other instances this demand of the disbelievers with the respective messengers of their times is cited. They wanted to see a sample of the punishment they are being threatened with. This would decide the matter between them.

The answer cited in the words “God is capable of sending down a sign but most people do not know” seems vague apparently. However, concealed in it is great detail. One of the things evident from this demand is that the foolish and arrogant people were not aware of the consequences of such a sign’s manifestation. They regarded it to be a matter of mere amusement and jest. The fact is that if such a sign did manifest itself, it would break their backs. Secondly, these people were not aware of the wisdom and established practice which God had decreed for His messengers and their rejecters. It is not God’s way to immediately punish the rejecters of His messengers; on the contrary, He gives them respite until a certain time period so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them in every respect. It is after this conclusive communication that He seizes them, and when He seizes them, no one can rescue them from His grasp. Thirdly, they thought that the threat sounded by the Prophet (sws) was false or that God was helpless. The fact is that God gives respite to the rebellious and hence His planning is very-well founded. However much respite He may give, there is no possibility that anyone may escape His grasp. Fourthly, those wretched people were unaware of the mercy concealed in this respite, if they had cared to benefit from it. God takes the lead in showing mercy and not anger. He is very merciful to His people. He keeps the door of repentance and reformation open as long as His creatures do not close them due to their stubbornness and obduracy.

In the expression وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَبْتَغِي بِجَنَاحَيْهِ, a suppression of parallel phrases has occurred, the way it has in verse 134 of *Sūrah al-Nisā’*. Because of the presence of the expression فِي الْأَرْضِ (in the earth) in the first part of the sentence, there is a suppression of its parallel expression فِي السَّمَاءِ (in the sky) in the second part. Similarly, because of the presence of the expression يَبْتَغِي بِجَنَاحَيْهِ (fly on both their wings) in the second part of the sentence, a suppression of its parallel expression تَدْبُّ عَلَى رِجْلَيْهَا أَوْ أَزْجُلِهَا (roam on their legs) has occurred in the first part of the sentence.

The words إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ (are all communities like your own) are especially worthy of consideration. They are rather concise but encapsulate great details. The attention of those who were demanding signs is directed towards the signs around them. The implication is that if they are demanding signs, then the universe around them is replete with them. Every living being that walks on the earth and soars in the sky is a sign of God. If they reflect, they will see that just as in their individual and collective existence they find numerous signs of God’s providence, wisdom and power that bear witness to monotheism, reward and punishment and the veracity of the messenger, in



a similar way, various creatures that are found in this universe also have these signs. Just as human beings are a species, these creature too have different species. Just as the human beings have a nature and instinct these creatures too have them. Just as human beings have comprehension and emotions, they too are no different in this regard keeping in view their purpose of creation and requirement of their instincts. Just as the awareness about their own collectivity has impelled human beings to live in a political system, each species has an awareness of its collective existence that induces it to live as an organized unit and also preserve its unity and each member participate in the fulfilment of the purpose for which its species was created. In Sūrah al-Nahl, the Qur‘ān has mentioned the honey-bee as an example and referred to the signs of its creator’s providence, wisdom and power found in its communities. Today the veils lifted by science from the instinctive traits of the various genres of living beings are amazing. Each of these traits is enough to astound human beings. However, if from among very small and trivial creatures, the honey-bee and ants are deliberated upon, one can gauge remarkable features. One is really astonished at observing them. How splendid is their diligence in nourishing their young ones, vigilance in securing themselves from dangers, foresight in planning for future circumstances, intense sensitivity to collective responsibilities, superb division of labour, a strong system of hierarchy, expending of great effort in making available the needs of life, outstanding skill in making and protecting their food supplies and abodes, deep urge of quest and search, intelligence to realize their goal and the extent of sacrifice and selflessness.

Now the question is: has all this come into existence of its own accord and is continuing to exist on its own or is there a creator and planner behind it? If latter is the case, then has the creator become aloof after creating all this or is He directly governing and protecting this whole universe? Is all this the product of an unbridled fearsome force or the gracious doing of an all-powerful, wise, knowing and merciful being? Is this universe a battle-field of different mythological deities or the manifestation of the power, providence, mercy and wisdom of a single and peerless God? Does it seem to be a purposeless and meaningless place having no purpose or does it have a grand purpose that shall definitely manifest itself? Does its internal and external forms bear witness that human beings have being created in it to live merrily without being held accountable or do they bear witness that the powerful and wise God who has created it as a favour to them will one day they hold them accountable and deal with them accordingly?

If the nature of a human being has not been perverted and if his intellect has not been paralyzed, then he is forced to confess that the second option of each of the statements stated above is the right one. If it is the correct one and obviously it is the correct one, then the Qur‘ān is only inviting people to accept it. So, why is a miracle needed to accept what it says? Every particle of this universe bears evidence to it. Every living being that walks on the land and every bird that soars in the sky gives its



testimony in its favour. If a person has shut his eyes to the evidence found in his own being, he can at least open them to see the signs found outside him.

People mostly think that the word “book” in verse 38 refers to the register in which the accounts of people is maintained. Although this can be correct, but keeping in view the context, my mind is repeatedly inclined to infer that it means the Qur’ān. The implication is that just as this universe is replete with signs that bear evidence to the veracity of the Prophet’s message, in the same way God has not left any stone unturned in mentioning arguments in its favour in the Qur’ān. Every single claim is reinforced with irrefutable arguments. Moreover, this is done in so many different styles and ways that only those whose heart and intellect are dead cannot understand them.

The words “then all of them will be gathered before their Lord” sarcastically refer to the fact that as far as signs are concerned both the universe and the scripture are replete with them, but people who do not want to understand cannot be cured. They will now be gathered before their Lord. Only then will they open their eyes.

These blind, deaf and dumb people cannot be cured in this world.

The words “God leads astray whomsoever He pleases, and guides to the right path whomsoever He pleases” refers to God’s established practice about providing guidance. It is evident from the previous verses that God does not force His guidance into those who do not open their eyes and ears. Only they are guided who are willing to be guided and use the faculties God has blessed them with.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَتَتْكُمْ السَّاعَةُ اَعَيَّرَ اللّٰهُ تَدْعُوْنَ ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ بَلْ اِيَّاهُ تَدْعُوْنَ
فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾²⁹

The words اَرَءَيْتُمْ and اَرَءَيْتُمْ are synonymous in meaning. Thus in verse 45 اَرَءَيْتُمْ is used exactly similarly.

These verses answer their demand to show them a sign of punishment, and with respect to a specific aspect of human nature also form an irrefutable argument in favour of monotheism. Will they call upon someone other than God if they are actually sent such a sign? The fact is that they will never call their deities for help when it arrives and forget them. Only God can ward off the calamity if He wants.

As for the argument provided by these verses in favour of monotheism, the basic premise in this regard is that human nature bears witness to one God only. Other deities and gods that people set up have no proof in human nature. They are merely

29. Say: What if God’s punishment visits you or the Hour of Doom arrives, will you call anyone except God if you are truthful in your claim? In fact, you call Him alone. Then, if He pleases, He relieves the affliction for which you called Him and you forget those you made partners of God.



hypothetical. For this reason when a person is faced with a severe trial, he forgets these hypothetical deities and only pleads before God. More details on this argument can be looked up in my book “The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism.”

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَمَّرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَمَّرُوا وَلَكِنَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُم بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَقَطَّعَ دَابِرَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۗ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

The *تَضَمَّرَ* signifies bowing before God with all the humility, devotion and servitude. Here it refers to humility, devotion and servitude of the heart. Its opposite is *قَسَاوَتْ* which means signifies hard-heartedness, arrogance and lack of fear.

These verses state an established practice of God. Evident from it on the one hand is the ways He adopts to punish a nation towards whom He sends a messenger. What is evident from it on the other hand is that nations which demand a sign as a condition for accepting faith were never fortunate enough to accept faith and were ultimately routed by Him. These verses inform the Prophet (sws) that previous nations towards whom messengers were sent were put through various trials to instil the fear of God in them and to induce them to think that if they do not listen to their messenger they will be seized and destroyed by a decisive punishment. History however bears witness that they were not chastened by these divine warnings. Instead of their hearts being melted they became harder and their foul deeds were made to seem fair to them by Satan. Thus instead of desisting from them, they became even more persistent.

The expression “that through which they had been reminded” refers to the financial and corporeal trials God had inflicted them with to remind them that if they do not listen to what their messenger is telling them, then after these trials, a decisive punishment awaits them. However, instead of drawing a lesson from them, they ignored them by thinking that nations normally face such adversities. They reckoned that calamities such as famine, floods, storms and epidemics are faced by every nation. So, why then should it be supposed that they were the result of denying a human beings?

The words “We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them” state the next phase of the afore-mentioned established practice of God. At other instances, the

30. And before you also, We had sent forth Our messengers to many nations. Thus, We afflicted them with physical and financial adversities so that they submit to God. Then why did they not submit to God when We seized them? In fact, their hearts hardened and Satan made this deed that they had been doing seem fair to them. So when they forgot that through which they had been reminded, We opened the doors of everything to them until just as they were showing conceit on what they were given, We suddenly seized them; they were left in utter amazement. Thus, those who were unjust were uprooted. And real gratitude is for God alone, the Lord of the Universe.



Qur‘ān calls it *imhāl* or giving respite. The implication is that when those who have denied their messengers ignore such warnings from God, they are given more time by Him and the door to fulfil all their demands are opened. A time comes when they brag and boast about their successes. This is the time when their time actually expires. The Almighty then suddenly seizes them. They are then left helpless and astonished.

The word دابر means “root.”

The last verse means that before being uprooted, the gusts of trials that visit such transgressors only shake the branches of their trees of existence and that too temporarily. Their roots remain safe; however, when this time comes, God sends on them such a scourge that uproots them from the ground. The reason for this is that there is no benefit left for the world in the tree that has become poisonous and is also bearing poisonous fruit. This is because this world has been created by its merciful creator for a purpose and to manifest His mercy and justice in it. Being the Lord of the universe, how can He tolerate the existence of a tree in His orchard whose poisonous wind and leaves can destroy the whole orchard? Thus worthy of gratitude is the Lord Who roots out such a wretched nation.

The sequence and coherence of the verses has become evident in this explanation. However, historical evidence of God’s established practice referred to here is only briefly stated here without details. These details will be found in the next *sūrah*, which is a counterpart of the current one. It depicts the history of the past nations of Arabia that were destroyed through divine punishment. It becomes evident through it that these nations too demanded signs from their respective messengers. Thus in order to soften their hearts and direct their attention to Himself, the Almighty inflicted them with various physical and financial trials. Instead of drawing a lesson from them, they totally ignored them regarding them to be accidental happenings. As a consequence of this rebelliousness, they were given full respite by the Almighty. They reaped success after success because Satan inveigled them into thinking that they were treading the path of success. Ultimately when they were inebriated by their successes, divine punishment suddenly seized them and then they came to their senses.

The implication of all this is that the Prophet’s rejecters and those who demand a sign of the punishment from him face the same phase. If they do not learn a lesson from these circumstances, they will meet the same fate.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَكُمْ وَابْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ ۚ أَنْظَرُ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْذُقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

The verb صدف means “to ignore something” and “to withhold one’s self from something.”

31. Say: Speak, if God takes away your hearing and your sight and sets a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than God can restore them to you? See how We present Our revelations from various aspects; even then, they show aversion. Ask: If God’s punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced, who except the unjust would perish?



These verses answer their demand for punishment in a different way. Earlier it was said that if God sends them a calamity from the earth or from the heavens, none can stop Him. Now it is stated that if God inflicts them with some intellectual and internal punishment, none can save them. At the moment, their faculties of sight, hearing and understanding are functioning but they are not using them. However, if they are deprived of them by God, none except Him can restore them. /

The word **بَغْتَةً** means “suddenly” and “appearance of something out of the blue.”

The word **بَهْرَةً** means “openly” and “in the light of day.”

Here is needs to be kept in mind that the punishment referred to in “if God’s punishment visits you suddenly unannounced or announced” is the punishment which visits people who deny their respective messengers after the truth is conclusively conveyed to them. The established practice of God regarding this punishment is that those who reject a messenger are destroyed and the believers are saved from it. As for the trials and calamities mentioned earlier, they come to everyone regardless. However, the believers benefit from them and the disbelievers continue to persist on their mischief. In fact, as stated earlier, they become even more stubborn.

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۚ فَمَنْ آمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَلَسَّ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِقُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Now with reference to this demand of punishment, the real objective sending messenger is explained. The glad tidings stated in the verse are elucidated by the words “so, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve” and warnings stated in the verse are explained by the words “and those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance.” One thing that becomes evident from this is that God’s messengers are a manifestation of God’s mercy. Punishing others is not the objective of their position; it is the consequence of denying them. Second, the messengers should be asked what they come for ie. guidance about faith and righteous deeds and not to bring forth what they have been sent to save people from. Third, working miracles is neither of their traits nor an essential ingredient of their preaching. Such miracles manifest themselves only to conclusively communicate the truth, if God wants. Fourth, these verses comfort the messenger that he should focus all his attention to his real purpose: delivering of glad tidings and warnings; what is not related to his duties should be left to God by him; they should not worry him without any reason.

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنِّي أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۖ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي

32. And We send forth messengers only that they give glad tidings and deliver warnings. So, those who believed and reformed themselves shall have nothing to fear or grieve. And those who denied Our revelations shall be seized by Our punishment because of their defiance.



الْأَعْيُ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ³³

This verse makes a decisive declaration through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): if they want to debate with him, then it should be about what he is presenting and what he is inviting them to. Why do they dispute with him regarding things he never has laid claim to? If he does not have treasures, when did he say that he had? If he cannot tell them when the punishment or the Day of Judgement will arrive, when did he claim that he had this knowledge? Similarly, he never claimed to be an angel. He is only following the revelation sent down to him by the Almighty and inviting them to follow it.

At the end it is stated that if they are even slightly disposed to using their intellect, do they think that those who have eyes and those who are blind will be equal in the sight of God. In other words, can those who blindly follow their desires become equal to those who do not? Will the righteous and the wrongdoers have the same fate? If the answer to this question is in the negative and obviously it should be in the negative, then this revelation that he is presenting them is more evident than the midday sun. What is then their reason for asking for a sign of punishment? If at their demand he is not showing such a sign, would this revoke the law of reward and punishment he is narrating them in such explicit terms? Why do they not reflect on this?

Section III: Verses (51-55)

In these upcoming verses, the Prophet (sws) is told to leave to themselves those who were demanding signs and punishments. However, he should warn through this book those who fear God and the hereafter.

It is then stated that those who are actually worthy of his affection and attention are those inflicted with poverty among the Muslims and those who have come to him to understand religion. As for the arrogant and haughty who ask from him to show signs and miracles, he should totally ignore them and not show any slackness in his duty by paying more attention to them. Nor should he turn away the poor among the believers merely to please these arrogant elements. These people think that it would lower their status if they sit with these destitute in the gathering of the Prophet (sws) or listen to him. They want him to turn away the poor from his gathering if he wants them to come and listen to him because they are not their equals and sitting with them will make them inferior too. The Prophet (sws) should not the slightest encourage these arrogant elements. If because of their arrogance they have been deprived of faith, he is

³³. Say: I do not claim before you that I have God's treasures or know what the unknown is nor do I claim to be an angel. I only follow that which is revealed to me. Say: Will the blind and those with sight become equal? Do you then not reflect?



not to be blamed for this. The Almighty will not ask him about their attitude. Similarly, these people will not be held responsible on the Day of Judgement for the duties imposed on him so that on their demand he turns away the believers from him and in this way commit a great injustice.

It is then stated that the wealth, status and lineage of these arrogant people have become a barrier for them against accepting faith. They think that if all the successes of the world belong to them, then even if this new religion has some good in it, will God choose such people as its advocates who are poor and are not even able to have their daily meals and cover themselves with proper clothes? These wrongdoers do not know that God gives the treasures and pleasures of this world to both the worthy and the unworthy but He only gives the treasure of religion to those who are grateful to Him.

After that the poor and destitute among the believers are shown special affection and fondness in order to do away with any hurt that the comments of the arrogant may have caused them. For this purpose every word of the salutations and blessings they receive from God carries glad tidings of success in both worlds.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُخْشَوْا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۚ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ بَيَّنَّنَا الْكَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۚ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا إِبْهَالَةً ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَآمَدَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾



And through it warn those who fear to be gathered before their Lord such that they will have no guardian or intercessor so that they may become God-fearing. (51)

And do not drive away from your self those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour. You are in no way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you so that you become among the wrongdoers by driving these people away. And We have in this manner tested one through another so that they say: “Are these people the ones whom God has chosen to show favour among us?” Is God not fully aware of the grateful? And when those people who believe in Our revelations come to you, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord has made mercy mandatory upon Himself so that if anyone among you commits evil out of



foolishness, then after that repents and mends his ways, then God is Forgiving and Merciful. And in this manner, do We explain Our revelations so that the attitude of the righteous also becomes apparent and the path adopted by the wrongdoers becomes fully evident too. (52-55)

Explanation

وَأَنذَرِيهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُخْشَوْا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Earlier it had been declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that neither is he the owner of treasures nor does he have knowledge of the unseen world nor does he claim to be an angel. He only follows the revelation sent down to him. Now the Prophet (sws) is asked to leave to themselves those who were demanding a sign from him. However, he should warn through the Qur‘ān those who use their intellect and insight and who fear that they will be one day gathered before their Lord and that too in a manner that no intercessor or helper would be there to save them from God. Those who have this fear in them will benefit from this book and by coming God-conscious will mend their ways. As for those who have no fear of the hereafter or those who bank on their intercessors and deities to save them from God will never accept faith even if they see all kinds of signs.

Three things become evident from this verse.

Firstly, the most natural and logical means for warning is the Qur‘ān and not signs of punishment.

Secondly, this Qur‘ān will also benefit only those whose natural abilities are alive. It will not benefit those whose natural abilities have become dead.

Thirdly, the greatest impediment to piety and charity is the erroneous concept of intercession.

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۖ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

It is evident from the previous verse which people the Prophet (sws) must focus his attention on and which he must disregard. Now it is further being explained he should not waste any more time on the wretched among them who are inebriated by their status and have become arrogant because of their wealth. They do not give him any importance because he does not own treasures and disparage his companions because they are poor, weak and do not have any status in the society. The Prophet (sws) is

34. And through it warn those who fear to be gathered before their Lord such that they will have no guardian or intercessor so that they may become God-fearing.

35. And do not drive away from your self those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour. You are in no way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you so that you become among the wrongdoers by driving these people away.



told that in his worry for the faith of these arrogant elements, he should not show any slackness in fulfilling the rights of those who have professed faith in God’s revelation and are constantly worshipping and showing obedience to God.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that just as the leaders of the Quraysh would fashion excuses to oppose the call of the Prophet (sws), they would also argue that his companions were all poor who did menial jobs and how could God select such lowly sections of the society for His religion; and if these lowly people are regarded worthy of this religion then how can the decent and noble have any chance to enter into the folds of this religion and be humiliated thereby. It is because of this mentality that the Almighty has directed the Prophet (sws) to not make the mistake of losing his true companions in order win over these people. These stray sheep do not deserve the attention of a shepherd at the expense of those who rally around him. Now if these people persist in their error, he will not be held responsible for it. They will be held accountable. And if the Prophet (sws) now disregards his true companions these wayward elements will not be held responsible so that he ends up among the wrongdoers for their sake.

This directive was not given to the Prophet (sws) because there was any chance that he would disregard his true companions or distance them from himself. This is in fact a blow at the arrogance of the leaders of the Quraysh. However, instead of addressing them, the Prophet (sws) is addressed. This is to make evident to them that they are not even worthy of being addressed directly. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should let them utter whatever nonsense they are uttering. If this is an impediment to them in accepting faith, let them go to whichever place in Hell they want to; he is not responsible for them in any way. He cannot turn away those who have come to him to seek God. He must fulfil his responsibilities towards them. If he goes after these wretched elements, they will not be held responsible on his behalf while he ends up not fulfilling the rights of those who are in fact worthy of his attention and affection.

The word تَطْرُد used here is a very harsh word viz a viz its meaning; it means to disparagingly disregard someone. However, it has been used with reference to the mentality of the leaders of the Quraysh because it was their desire that the Prophet (sws) disparagingly drive away his companions who were poor and belonged to the common masses; if he does so, then they will listen to him.

Here one should also keep in mind the character of the prophets of God that they are very desirous of their nation to accept faith, as is alluded to in the Qur’ān. In this regard Jesus (sws) has stated a parable also: “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.” (Matthew, 18:12-13)

Just as this parable shows the great affection God has for people who turn to Him after being in error, it also shows the worry and concern of His prophets for the faith



and reformation of their nations. This attribute of the messengers is a reflection of God’s attribute. Hence it is a likable one. However, this attribute too has its bounds and limits. God does not want his prophet to go after those people who have gone astray at the expense of his real companions.

Ustādh Farāhī has written some very important points related to this topic in his exegesis of Sūrah ‘Abas. I will also express my opinion at an appropriate instance.

وَكَذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

In the word *لِّيَقُولُوا*, the particle *ل* is for ‘*āqibah*’ that expresses the consequence and it is not causative. This is a mention of the established practice of God: if some people are given wealth by Him in this world, it is not because they deserve it. Similarly, poverty too is not the result of this basis. Both affluence and poverty are a source of trial. If God makes some people wealthy, it is to check whether they show gratitude and humility at this favour or become arrogant and disparage the poor and regard these favours to be their monopoly. Similarly, if He makes some people poor, it is to test their patience on this adversity, contentment on meagre resources and satisfaction on God’s scheme. The other outcome could be that they become frustrated, perturbed and angry at God.

Instead of being a source of gratitude, the affluence of the Quraysh has become a trial for them. They think that they have a birthright towards all these favours and are the sole owners of all position of high status. The result of this wrong perception is that they think that if Islam was something superior, God would not have chosen these destitute and penniless as its worthy recipients. Why was not the rich nobility of the Quraysh and the chiefs of Tā’if be considered for it? The Qur’ān has referred to this arrogance of the Quraysh at other instances as well. For example in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, it is stated: ³⁷ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ. In verse 31 of Sūrah Hūd, the words are: ³⁸ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَن يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا.

These people regarded prophethood to be their monopoly, what to speak of faith and would openly say that if God was to make someone a prophet, He would have made some affluent person of Makkah or Tā’if; could He find only this person for this

36. And We have in this manner tested one through another so that they say: “Are these people the ones whom God has chosen to show favour among us?” Is God not fully aware of the grateful?

37. The disbelievers said about the believers: “Had there been any good in the Qur’ān, these people would not have professed faith in it before us.”

38. And I do not claim before you that I have the treasures of God. Nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen. I also do not claim to be an angel. And I cannot say about those whom your eyes see as inferior that God cannot even bless them with any good. God alone better knows whatever is in their hearts. If I do this, it is I who would be unjust.



responsibility?

In response to their haughtiness, the Qur‘ān says: “Is God not fully aware of the grateful?” The implication is that God’s religion is not gold, silver, silk or velvet whose saddles or pieces of cloth can be seen on donkeys, mules, horses and camels. It is a heavenly favour and divine mercy which is specific for only those who were grateful to God in all circumstances, gave due regard to His favours, fully used their abilities, kept their ears open, did not blindfold their eyes with the cloth of arrogance and did not let their hearts become dead. As for the wretched and ingrates who used all the inner and outer favours God blessed them with against God Himself, they will never have a share in this favour. Worldly pleasures are received by both the good and the wicked. However, the gift of religion is only given to those who are grateful to God.

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا إِبْهَاجَةً ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

Just as the expression *سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ* is spoken at the times of meeting and parting, it is also used at the times of welcoming someone. For example, it is stated in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Naḥl that angels while welcoming those who had remained steadfast on the belief of monotheism will say: *سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ خَلُّوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ*.⁴⁰

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) is directed to adopt an attitude opposite to what the chiefs of the Quraysh demanded with the poor among the believers. It has been pointed out earlier that these chiefs wanted that the Prophet (sws) distance himself from these believers.

Here the glad tidings given by the Almighty are of mercy and forgiveness and nothing related to worldly affluence and status. This sheds light on the inner selves of these poor believers who had no desires for these things. In spite of being deprived of worldly resources, they did not want them. The only desire they had was to please their creator and master. Earlier in verse 52, they are referred to by the words: “those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking to gain His favour.” It is keeping in consideration this most desired thing on their part that the Almighty has given glad tidings to them. It also becomes evident from this that there is no weight in the eyes of the believers of things which these slaves of the world vehemently desire – neither in this world nor in the next.

39. And when those people who believe in Our revelations come to you, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord has made mercy mandatory upon Himself so that if anyone among you commits evil out of foolishness, then after that repents and mends his ways, then God is Forgiving and Merciful.

40. “Peace be to you people. Go and dwell in Paradise as a reward for your deeds.”



41 **وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ** **وَلَقَدْ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ**

The clause to which **وَلَقَدْ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ** is coordinated is suppressed. If it is unfolded, the verse would read: **وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ** **وَلَقَدْ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ**.

Mentioned earlier are the attitudes of the believers and the disbelievers. Here at the ends this verse sums them up so that nothing needlessly worries the Prophet (sws).

Section IV: Verses (56-67)

In this section the same topic that is already under discussion is taken up in a new style with some new aspects.

It is declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that these people associate partners with God and fight with him in their favour; however, he himself has been stopped by the Almighty from worshipping them. Hence there is absolutely no possibility that he follow their religious innovations. This directive of God is based on a clear and irrefutable argument. In this regard, His Lord's testimony exists in the form of the revelations that he receives from Him. However, these people deny these revelations and are not willingly to accept unless God's punishment is shown to them. They should know that it is not in his jurisdiction to show them this punishment. It is in fact God's prerogative only. Had it been in his jurisdiction, the dispute would have long been settled. He can only inform them that only God will decide this dispute and only He knows its time and manner for such secrets of the universe are only known to Him.

After that it is stated that after they die, people will be raised to life one day and after that all will be gathered before the same God and held accountable. This is such a reality that its rehearsal can be witnessed in this world every day. But what is the cure of people who have shut their eyes?

After that attention is directed to a psychological ailment of human beings: when they are afflicted with a trial, they call upon God alone and forget everyone else. However, as soon as they are delivered by Him from this trial they immediately return to their previous foolish ways as if nothing had actually happened. They then think that they are beyond the grasp of God. The implication is that the Prophet's addresses who are demanding from him to show the punishment are also afflicted with the same ailment. The Prophet (sws) should tell them that every thing has a prescribed time. They will see it when its time comes.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

41. And in this manner, do We explain Our revelations so that the attitude of the righteous also becomes apparent and the path adopted by the wrongdoers becomes fully evident too.

**Text and Translation**

قُلْ إِنِّي نَهَيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَا آتِيكُمْ أَهْوَاءُكُمْ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾
 قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۖ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ يَقْضُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾
 قُلْ لَّوْ أَنَّ عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يُعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۖ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهُوَ الْغَايُ تُفَوِّقُ عِبَادَهُ وَيُزِيلُ عَنْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمْ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفِرُّونَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۖ أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۖ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحُسْبِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يُنْجِيكُمْ مِنَ ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْأَنْبَحِرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنْجِيكُم مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُذَيِّقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ ۖ أُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نَصَرِفُ أَلَا يَتْلَعُهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۖ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾ لَكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Say: I have been stopped from worshipping those whom you invoke besides God.
 Say: I cannot follow your desires. If I do this, I will deviate from the true path and not remain among those who are guided.
 Say: I am on a radiant argument from my Lord and you have denied it. I do not have what you are insisting to hasten. Its decision rests with God only. He alone shall explain the truth and He is the best of judges.
 Say: If with me was that which you are insisting to hasten, then this dispute between me and you would have been settled. And God is well aware of the unjust. And the keys to the Unseen lie with Him alone; none but He knows them. He is aware of all that is in the land and in the sea. Every leaf that falls from a tree is in His knowledge and every grain in the depth of the earth that falls and every dry or wet thing are recorded in an open book. (56-59)

And it is He Who makes you die at night and knows what you have done during the day. Then He raises you up in it so that the prescribed time span is completed. Ultimately to Him is your return. Then He will tell you what you have been doing. And He fully dominates His servants and deposes His guardians over you. Until when the time of death of anyone of you arrives, it is only Our angels who claim his soul and they are not negligent in this task. Then all of them will be returned to their true Lord only. Listen! All the authority to take a decision rests with Him, and most swift is He in taking account. (60-62)



Ask them: Who saves you from the extensive darkness of the land and sea when you are calling imploringly and in secret: “If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?” Say: It is God Who delivers you from this calamity and from all others, yet you again worship idols. Say: God has power to send some torment upon you from above you or punish you from beneath your feet or engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions and make one fully taste the power of the other. See how We mention Our revelations in various ways so that they may understand. (63-65)

And your people rejected it even though it is the very truth. Say: I have not been made a keeper over you. A time for everything has been prescribed and soon you will know. (66-67)

Explanation

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهَيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ أَعْبُدُوهُ كَمَا أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ إِذَا وَمَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُسْلِمُونَ 42

The word قُلْ (say) occurs in this verse and is also repeated in later ones. This evidences that what is stated is stated through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in response to the doubts, objections, questions and demands raised by the Quraysh in the heat of debate at that time. In order to fully understand them, it is essential to keep in view their background. This is because the Qur’ān does not always cite the question or demand of the disbelievers before responding to it.

Earlier in verse 14 it is said: “I have been directed to profess faith the foremost and not be among the polytheists.” After that, it was stated that the greatest testimony of God having a partner or not is that of God Himself. The testimony found in the revelation sent to the Prophet (sws) is that God is one. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) is not prepared to associate anyone with Him against this testimony.

Now in the verse under discussion, this declaration is repeated in the negative sense: the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from invoking those things these disbelievers invoke. Here “invoking” obviously means to invoke in the form of a supplication and acquire mercy. In this way, invoking anyone besides God is actually worshipping that entity and this is polytheism. The word “desires” refers to their religious innovations and by referring to them as أَهْوَاءَ, the Qur’ān has pointed to their baselessness: there is no evidence of their deities being partners of God neither in human intellect or nature nor in the Book of God; their fancies have concocted them and since their rather vague intercession has made them shirk all their responsibilities related to faith and deeds and the Hereafter, hence they like them a lot. They may like them but there is a great difference between reality and whims. It is not possible for the Prophet (sws) to disregard reality and follow their false desires, evil wishes and baseless innovations.

42. Say: I have been stopped from worshipping those whom you invoke besides God. Say: I cannot follow your desires. If I do this, I will deviate from the true path and not remain among those are guided.



The verse states that if he does this, he will be deviating from the path of salvation and then will never be guided. The implication is that in the first place such is the deviant nature of polytheism that a person strays from the straight path and gets entangled in crooked sideways to such an extent that it is not possible for him to come back to the real path. In the second place, if the Prophet (sws) makes this mistake after he was expressly stopped by God, then who will graciously guide him back to the right path?

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۖ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ يَقْضُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾
قُلْ لَّوْأَنَّ عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَكُفِّضِيَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ۖ⁴³

The word بَيِّنَةٍ (radiant argument) refers to the Qur’ān that was revealed by God as evidence that He has no associate. This testimony is mentioned earlier in verse 19 and in verse 157 ahead the same word is used for the Qur’ān: .

The antecedent of the pronoun in بِهِ وَكَذَّبْتُمْ is بَيِّنَةٍ translated above as “radiant argument.” A feminine pronoun should have been used here for it; however, the reason that the masculine pronoun is used instead is that it refers to the meaning and connotation of the word.⁴⁴ The benefit of this usage is that the nature of the Qur’ān as a conclusive proof becomes evident and that the word بَيِّنَةٍ refers to the Qur’ān also becomes evident.

The verse means that these people are wildly conjecturing and following their desires as they do not have any proof in favour of their hypothetical deities being associates of God. On the contrary, the Prophet (sws) has a clear proof from God that he is presenting before them. God Himself has revealed this “radiant argument” to him. It is so evident that it cannot be refuted yet they still refute it and instead of understanding it demand from the Prophet (sws) to show them God’s torment after which they will accept the veracity of this Book. But the torment they are demanding is not under the Prophet’s jurisdiction. He cannot therefore fulfil their demand to hasten it. Only God has the authority to send it. All that the Prophet (sws) can do is to explain to them that God will elucidate the truth and will resolve this dispute in the best possible way.

The sentence “and God is well aware of the unjust” has two aspects. Firstly, it threatens the disbelievers that since He is fully aware of such unjust people, He will deal with them in a manner they deserve. Secondly, it urges the believers to consign the matter of such people to God. Here injustice refers to injustice to one’s own soul. The implication is that God is granting them His mercy but they are demanding torment from Him. They are being given fodder but they are demanding what has no

43. Say: I am on a radiant argument from my Lord and you have denied it. I do not have what you are insisting to hasten. Its decision rests with God only. He alone shall explain the truth and He is the best of judges. Say: If with me was that which you are insisting to hasten, then this dispute between me and you would have been settled. And God is well aware of the unjust.

44. Allāmah Ibn Qayyim has discussed this style in detail in his books and at an appropriate instance, I will also discuss its eloquence.



nourishment for them.

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ
الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾⁴⁵

The word مَفَاتِحُ is the plural of مفتاح and means keys. This topic is also mentioned in verse 12 of Sūrah Shūrā thus: لَهُ مَقَائِدُ السُّبُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَنْسُطُ الرِّزْقُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ⁴⁶ Expressions like “land and sea” and “dry and wet” are meant to signify the all-embracing nature of God’s knowledge. “Depth of the earth” refers to its layers and sections.

This verse is actually an extension of what is said in the previous verse. When it was stated that the decision of the punishment rests with God alone, the occasion became apt to express the extent of His knowledge. It is belief in this vastness of God’s knowledge that engenders complete trust and satisfaction in a believer on His will. The slightest of misconceptions in this opens the door to polytheism. It is this belief which is the foundation of true and strong faith in the Hereafter, and it is through its true concept and reminder that the very humility is engendered in a person which induces him to adopt the right attitude in life. This statement of the Qur‘ān negates the view held by some people that God only has knowledge of the whole. It is evident that He also is aware of all components of the whole

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمْ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۖ أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۖ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحُسْبِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾⁴⁷

The extent of God’s knowledge has occasioned the mention of reminding people of the hereafter and the reward and punishment that will take place in it. Thus one inference ensues from another. It needs to be kept in mind that erroneous views about the hereafter have arisen because of not having the correct conception of God’s

45. And the keys to the Unseen lie with Him alone; none but He knows them. He is aware of all that is in the land and in the sea. Every leaf that falls from a tree is in His knowledge and every grain in the depth of the earth that falls and every dry or wet thing are recorded in an open book.

46. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases.

47. And it is He Who makes you die at night and knows what you have done during the day. Then He raises you up in it so that the prescribed time span is completed. Ultimately to Him is your return. Then He will tell you what you have been doing. And He fully dominates His servants and deposes His guardians over you. Until when the time of death of anyone of you arrives, it is only Our angels who claim his soul and they are not negligent in this task. Then all of them will be returned to their true Lord only. Listen! All the authority to take a decision rests with Him, and most swift is He in taking account.



knowledge. Human beings having limited intelligence think that who can have the complete knowledge of the life and death and every minute deed of so many creatures so that He can recreate them after death and hold them accountable for their deeds. The Qur‘ān has dispelled this erroneous notion here.

The Qur‘ān here by regarding sleeping during each night as death and waking up each morning as rising has directed our attention to the fact that life and death take place every day the way people sleep and wake up. The same goes for the death and resurrection of people. Just as God is not unaware of the deeds done in the day by a person who sleeps at night, similarly He will not forget the deeds of a person done during his life when he undertakes the sleep of death. Moreover, just as there is a dawn to every night’s sleep and people get up rubbing their eyes, in a similar way after the sleep of death they will wake up in the dawn of the Day of Judgement and they will think that whatever happened did not take more time than the span of a day and night.

The meaning of the words **قهر** and **تفريط** have been stated under verses 18 and 38 respectively. The word **حَفَظَ** is the plural of **حافظ** and means “guardians.” Here, the reference is to the guardians deputed on every soul by God.

The implied meaning is that no one should think that God is the slightest unaware of any of His creatures or any sheep of His herd. Everyone is under His control all the time. His angels continuously guard them and never for even a moment show any slackness in this duty.

After death, everyone will face God because He is their real guardian and protector. Deities and intercessors these people have fashioned will be of no use to them.

قُلْ مَنْ يُجِيبُكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمَاتِ اللَّيْلِ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً ۚ لَّيِّنْ أُنْجَسْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٢﴾
 قُلِ اللَّهُ يُجِيبُكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ
 مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ فِي بَعْضِكُمْ بَآسَ بَعْضٍ ۚ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَكَذَّبَ
 بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۚ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٥﴾ لِّكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ ۖ وَسَوْفَ يُعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾⁴⁸

The word “darkness” here signifies “calamities” and “adversities.” The darkness of the ocean is mentioned thus in verse 40 of Sūrah al-Nūr: **أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ**

48. Ask them: Who saves you from the extensive darkness of the land and sea when you are calling imploringly and in secret: “If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?” Say: It is God Who delivers you from this calamity and from all others, yet you again worship idols. Say: God has power to send some torment upon you from above you or punish you from beneath your feet or engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions and make one fully taste the power of the other. See how We mention Our revelations in various ways so that they may understand. And your people rejected it even though it is the very truth. Say: I have not been made a keeper over you. A time for everything has been prescribed and soon you will know.



49. ⁴⁹مِنْ فَوْقِهِ سَابُّ طُ ظَلُمْتُ بَعْضَهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ط إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرَهَا
People face the same storms and adversities on land as well.

The word *يُنَجِّيكُمْ* signifies state (*hāl*) from the accusative pronoun in *يُنَجِّيكُمْ*. The word *تَضَرَّعَ* is used in opposition to *حُفِّيَّةٌ*. For this reason, it means “to plead and cry.”

“If He delivered us from this calamity, we shall become grateful to Him?” are words which every person in such a situation utters.

The word *لبس* means “to mix and merge.” Here the expression in which it is used means “engage you in conflict after dividing you into various factions.”

The pronoun “it” in “and your people rejected it” can refer to the punishment mentioned in verse 58 and also the Qur’ān which is informing them of this punishment and which is alluded to in verse 57.

The word *نبأ* means the news of an important incident. Here it refers to the punishment the Qur’ān is informing people of.

The word *مُسْتَقَرٌّ* can refer both to the locus and time and can also be considered as a verbal noun. I have interpreted it in the meaning of time.

These verses unveil a spiritual ailment of human beings and at the same time also point to a psychological argument in favour of monotheism. The context is the same as before: refutation of the demand of punishment.

Here two things need to be kept in mind.

As for the first thing, it is an evident fact that whenever a person is in great difficulty, he invokes God alone and forgets all other supports. This is a proof of the fact that only one God exists in human nature. All the rest are baseless fabrications which are disregarded by a person’s imagination as soon as he faces some trial. I have explained this in detail in my book “The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism.”

As for the second, the verses place polytheism and gratitude as opposites to one another. It is evident from this that polytheism is not just worshipping idols, it is amounts to that arrogance overcome by which a person thinks that all the favours he has is because of his effort and planning. Such arrogance makes him reckless and heedless. This state is opposite to that of gratitude and a person who is overcome with this notion begins to regard himself to be equal to God. In Sūrah al-Kahf, the Qur’ān has depicted this mentality in the following words:

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا رِجًّا كَلِمَاتٍ
الْبَجَّتَيْنِ أَنْتَ أَكْلَاهَا وَلَمْ تَذُقْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا وَقَفَرْنَا خَلْلَهُمَا نَهْرًا وَكَانَ لَهُ شِجْرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ
مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً⁴

49. Or think as if there is expansive darkness in a deep sea with wave upon wave rising up; clouds overspread from the top. Layers of darkness, one on top of the other. If someone takes out his hand, he is not even able to see it. And he whom God does not give light, for him there is no light.



وَلَيْسَ رُدُّهُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَاجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ
مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا لِّكُنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا. (١٨ : ٣٢-٣٨)

And narrate to them the parable of the two individuals. For one of them, We made two orchards of grapes, surrounded them with rows of date-palms and also placed between them pieces of cultivatable land. Both orchards bore a lot of fruit; not the slightest reduction took place. And in their centre We made a stream to flow as well. And when its time to bear fruit arrived, he argued with his companion: “I have more wealth than you and am more powerful than you with regard to numbers too.” And he entered his orchard while he was being unjust to his soul. He said: “I do not think that this shall ever perish and I do not suppose that the Day of Judgement shall ever come. And even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall only find a better place to where I return.” His companion, while conversing with him, said: “Have you denied the Being Who created you from clay, then from a drop of fluid, then made you a complete human being? But my Lord is precisely that God and I do not associate any partners with my Lord. (18:32-36)

The verses under discussion go on to say that people should not think that if at that time people are living peacefully, God’s punishment will never seize them. As described in the verses, He can seize them any time in any manner.

The words “and your people rejected it even though it is the very truth” imply that the news of the punishment the Qur’ān is informing them of is certain and in spite of that his nation rejected it. The Prophet (sws) should now leave their matter to God and inform them that he has not been sent to them to force them to accept faith. His only responsibility is to warn and preach them, which he has done. If they are now insisting to hasten the punishment, they should know that every event has a prescribed time in God’s calendar. It will happen when its time arrives.

Section V: Verses (68-73)

In the coming verses, the address shifts to the Prophet (sws) and the believers. They are told that they should not go after the stubborn elements who do not even want to listen. When he sees that they are indulging in frivolous arguments and mockery, he should leave them. Only when should he converse with them if he sees that they are in the mood. His responsibility is just to preach and deliver the message. He is not responsible for their faith so that he should try to force them to accept it. He should also disregard their ever-new demands. He should merely warn and advise them through the Qur’ān in the best way. Those who want to mend their ways will do so and not be taken to task because of their deeds. No support, intercession or remuneration is of any avail before God.



After that, it has been declared through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that the believers are not willing to even enter the whirlpool of polytheism once God's guidance has come to them. They have been asked to consign themselves to the Lord of the worlds, to pray to Him and to fear Him only. Anyone who wishes can adopt this path and is also free to wander about. The implied meaning is that now there is no question of any debate in this matter in the wake of this declaration.

At the end, the purposeful nature of this universe is indicated. Evident from it is that the hereafter is bound to come. On that day, it is God alone Who will decide matters. He is wise and knowledgeable. On that day everyone will know the truth to be true and falsehood to be false. So, if these people do not listen, the Prophet (sws) should leave their matter to them.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۖ وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَكِنْ ذِكْرٌ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَذَرِ
الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَعَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَلَا شَفِيعٌ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلُّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذَ مِنْهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۖ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قُلْ أَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْنَا اللَّهُ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ
الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانٌ ۚ كَذَلِكَ أَصْحَابُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ اسْتَبْنَأْ ۖ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۚ وَأُمِرْنَا لِنُسَلِّمَ لِرَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَأَنْ أَقْبِلُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَالْقُوَّةَ ۚ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُخْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ وَيَوْمَ
يَقُولُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۚ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ ۚ عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

And when you see those people who criticize Our revelations, withdraw from them until they engage in some other conversation. And if Satan makes you forget this, do not sit with these unjust people after you realize it. Those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Only, reminding them so that they also have fear. Leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world, and keep reminding through this Qur'ān so that a person as punishment of his misdeeds is not consigned to destruction. He will not have any helper or intercessor before God, and even if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. It is these people who shall be consigned to destruction due to their misdeeds. Because of the disbelief they have been committing, they shall have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment. (68-70)

Say: Should we call on those besides God which can neither benefit nor harm us?



And we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us like him who is left perplexed in the desert by devils, even though his companions are calling him to the right path: “Come to us.” Say: God’s guidance is the real guidance and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds, and have been directed: Be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth. The day when He says: “Be,” so it shall be. His word is certain to materialize. The day when the trumpet is sounded, sovereignty shall only belong to Him. He has knowledge of all the unknown and the manifest. And He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. (71-73)

Text and Translation

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي الْإِيتِنَافِ اعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۖ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَكِنْ ذِكْرًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَ
ذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلُّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۖ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ ۖ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ بَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

The word خوض means “to enter into something.” The expression خاض الباء means “he entered into the water.” The idiom خوض في الحديث ensues from this meaning. It means to engage in frivolous talk, hair-splitting and baseless criticism. It is used in the Qur’ān at many instances and means to engage in silly conversation to dismiss something by scoffing at and making fun of it. For example in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Tawbah it is said: وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ كُنَّا إِتْمًا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ (And if you ask them, they will reply: we were engaging in light-hearted talk and making fun).

Here, in the verses under discussion too, this word has been explained by the words “leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement.” In other words after mentioning the word, its purpose has been elucidated. In verse 140 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ too, the Qur’ān has explained this word. Thus while referring to this

50. And when you see those people who criticize Our revelations, withdraw from them until they engage in some other conversation. And if Satan makes you forget this, do not sit with these unjust people after you realize it. Those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Only, reminding them so that they also have fear. Leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world, and keep reminding through this Qur’ān so that a person as punishment of his misdeeds is not consigned to destruction. He will not have any helper or intercessor before God, and even if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. It is these people who shall be consigned to destruction due to their misdeeds. Because of the disbelief they have been committing, they shall have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment.



very verse, it is stated: وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ أَلْفًا مِّنْهُ فَارْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ آلِهَتِكُمْ فَزِدُوا مَعَهُمْ كُفْرًا تَعْبَثُونَ (He has revealed in this very Book the instruction that wherever you hear that God’s revelations are being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit there with them until they get engaged in some other talk). Here the word *خوض* has been explained as rejecting God’s revelation and making fun of them).

Here though the address is in the singular which predominantly shows that it is directed to the Prophet (sws), but in reality it is directed to all the believers through him. Thus it was indicated in the very next verse that this address is a general one. The words are: “those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people. Moreover, in the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’ cited earlier, it has been explicitly shown that the address is general because in it people are taken to task for violating the directive mentioned here in Sūrah al-An‘ām.

This directive has two aspects and both are very important.

Firstly, this attitude is against the underlying wisdom of preaching that the Almighty has prescribed. When a person is overcome by frenzy in opposing something and making fun of it and rejecting it, and the intensity of this frenzy is actually making him hysterical, presenting that very thing before him in this condition will only enhance his frenzy and hysteria. If a doctor wants to only increase the ailment of a patient, obviously he can do whatever he wants to; however, a benevolent doctor who wants his patient to get well will never make this mistake. Keeping in view this principle, Muslims are directed here that if they see the opponents of Islam intent on making fun of the Qur’ān, have taken to scoffing at divine revelations and have made up their mind to fully oppose it, then they should look for an opportune time in which these people have come out of this frenzied state. Once they get back to normal, it is then that they should proceed to present and preach Islam to them.

Secondly, sitting with them in these circumstances is against the sense of honour a person has or should have. If a person or a group openly utters nonsense against God and His Messenger, then not only fighting with him is wrong for a preacher, but also remaining silent for him is inapt. This is because his sense of honour and support for the truth is sacrificed – something which is actually a sign of his faith. This weakness of faith can ultimately lead a person in a gradual way to hypocrisy. Once a person reaches this state, he begins to put up with hearing and listening to the humiliation of God, His Messenger, the Qur’ān and the *sharī‘ah*, and his sense of honour is lulled to such sleep that he finds no courage within him to utter a word in defence of his beliefs.

Here this directive takes into account both these aspects. The first is evident from the context and the second is evident from the afore-mentioned verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’ because it is referred to there and the hypocrites are reprimanded for participating in the gatherings of the rivals where God’s revelations were openly made fun of even though they had been stopped from it.

It follows from all this that sitting in gatherings in which God’s directives are mocked and made fun of is against one’s honour and if one indulges in it, it will be



hypocrisy and disbelief.

At times, it happens that while sitting in a gathering the conversation that ensues gradually leads to the stage that God’s revelations are made fun of. At that instance, a person feels that he should not sit at such a place. Similarly, if such a person was engaged in a polemical debate, he may think that if he now leaves that place his rivals will ridicule him. Both these situations can become a trial for people. If a person out of respect for the gathering does not leave it, it would mean that he has no honour left in him for his religion. In such a case, he should think whether he would even remain silent if his parents are abused in front of him whereas the obligation he owes to God and His directives is much greater than his obligation to his parents. Now in the second case, a person may choose to stick at that place to make evident the truth and falsify falsehood. However, he should know that when the minds of people are corrupted and conversing with them will only enhance their anger, then such an engagement merely becomes a question of one’s ego. It will not be helpful for the cause of truth at all and in fact it will be severely compromised. For this reason, a person should recognize that this is actually a ploy of Satan and immediately exit from such a place.

It needs to be kept in mind here that the true meaning of the expression “and if Satan makes you forget this” is that if Satan makes the believers face such a situation because of some trick, then they should leave the gathering as soon as they realize their folly. It is evident from this that in the first place a person should always remain vigilant from the deceptions of Satan, but if he somehow falls prey to him, then he should walk away from such gatherings as soon as he realizes that he was at the wrong place. This is because those who make fun of God’s revelations are the ones who are the most unjust to their souls and it is not known when God may get angry on these hypocrites for remaining in their company.

The words “those who fear God are in no way accountable for these people; only, reminding them so that they also have fear” sound an assurance to the believers and ask them to adopt a moderate and wise methodology of preaching referred to in the previous verse. In other words, the believers should keep in mind that the responsibility of the believers regarding the disbelievers is to merely communicate the religion of God to them. The purpose is that they too become fearful of God. The believers are not responsible for changing the faith of the disbelievers by force. If these disbelievers accept faith, they will be rewarded for it and if they remain adamant on their disbelief they themselves will be responsible for it before God on the Day of Judgement. The believers – when they truly remained fearful to God – will not be held responsible for the attitude of these rebellious people. It should remain clear that before God no soul will be responsible for another. The responsibility of those who fear God regarding others is to only to convey the truth to them and to remind them of it. For this, they must wait for opportune moments and must not go after others thinking that they are responsible to make them accept faith. Verse 105 of Sūrah al-



Mā'idah discusses this topic: **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ** (Believers! Concentrate on your own selves; if you are on the right path, then those who have strayed cannot harm you at all).

There are several points mentioned in the verses under discussion that merit attention.

Firstly, though in the previous verse the address was singular, but the discourse was directed at the believers. Thus this became evident with its gradual progression.

Secondly, they show the zeal and enthusiasm of the companions. It is clearly evident from these verses that they were so conscious of their responsibility of bearing witness to the truth that they thought that if people did not accept faith they would be held liable for it.

Thirdly, they show the importance of preaching. This is because it is very apparent from the verses that though the believers would not be responsible for others not accepting faith, they will certainly be held reliable if they did not preach and remind people.

The word “religion” in “leave aside those who treat their religion as a sport and an amusement and who have been led into deception by the life of this world” refers to the religion God revealed to them and which the prophet and his companions were presenting to them. The implied meaning is that what good can be expected from people who are so wretched as to make fun of something that was revealed for them? The Prophet (sws) should leave them alone and not go after them. He should know that there is no need to satisfy people who are non-serious and careless about life and are so indifferent as to make fun of religion.

Their real misconception is that since they are leading a successful life, then their attitude must be definitely correct. They give the life of this world the status of the life to come. This world is not governed by the principle of reward and punishment; on the contrary, it is governed by the principle of trial and test. Here the Almighty has given respite to evil as well together with the truth. To realize their desires, they have regarded evil as their religion and think that this life is all there is and that the attitude they have adopted is correct. They further think that the fate of which the Qur'ān has warned them is a far-fetched threat.

The antecedent of the pronoun **يَا** in **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ** is the Qur'ān that is mentioned earlier in verse 68.

The word **ابسله** means “he was consigned to death.”

Similarly, the expression **ابسل فلانا لعمله** means “he was consigned to his deeds.”

Before the particle **أَنْ**, a governing noun to the effect **مخافة** is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles.

The expression can be translated in two ways.

- i. remind through this Qur'ān lest a soul is consigned to death because of its deeds.
- ii. remind through this Qur'ān lest a soul is consigned to its deeds or is held in ransom because of its deeds.



There is not much difference in both these translations in essence.

The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) does not need to go after those who are making fun of their religion nor worry about their ever-new demands. He should only discharge his responsibility of reminding them through the Qur‘ān so that no soul faces punishment because of its misdeeds. His obligation is to warn people that in the hereafter everyone will face his deeds, which will either salvage them or destroy them. None will be there to help or support or intercessor. A person will also neither have any ransom to give nor will it be accepted. It is essential for the Prophet (sws) to inform people of this danger lest someone is punished in oblivion. If even after this warning someone still goes astray, he himself will be responsible for it. The Prophet (sws) will stand acquitted from his obligation. People who do not pay heed to this advice will be consigned to their deeds and because of their disbelief there will be boiling water and a painful torment for them.

“Boiling water” is mentioned as their first hospitality. In verses 92-93 of Sūrah al-Wāqī‘ah, the words are: ⁵¹وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ فَنُزِّلْ مِنْ حَبِيمٍ

In order to understand the true emphasis in “and even if he offers every ransom” it should be kept in mind that on the Day of Judgement, the wrongdoers will desire to be able to give their children, their wife, their brothers and their family in ransom in order to save themselves from torment but this desire would not be fulfilled.

قُلْ أَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانًا ۚ لَئِنْ أَصْحَبُ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ اسْتَعْنَا ۚ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۖ وَأُمِرْنَا لِنُسَلِّمَ لِلرَّبِّ الْعَلِيِّنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَأَنْ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۚ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ ۖ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ ۚ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٩٤﴾ ⁵²

The implied meaning of these verses is that if these people were in error earlier on, they had an excuse. But now that the Prophet’s guidance had come to them, what excuse will they have?

51. And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of boiling water.

52. Say: Should we call on those besides God which can neither benefit nor harm us? And we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us like him who is left perplexed in the desert by devils, even though his companions are calling him to the right path: “Come to us.” Say: God’s guidance is the real guidance and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds, and have been directed: Be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth. The day when He says: “Be,” so it shall be. His word is certain to materialize. The day when the trumpet is sounded, sovereignty shall only belong to Him. He has knowledge of all the unknown and the manifest. And He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.



The particle مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا signifies humiliation for their deities and the negation of benefit or harm relates to its essence. This is because if some benefit or harm reaches people through these deities, it is in fact because of God’s directive and not because of the deities themselves.

The words “even after God has guided us” also form a very effective advice for the addressees: those who stumble and make others stumble even after this clear guidance has come to them should reflect on their fate.

The word استهوا means “to make someone lose his senses and leave him bewildered.”

The word الأَرْض means “land.” However, in the presence of some indication, it can refer to a specific part of it. Here since the parable of wandering about is stated, it refers to a “desert” because it is here that there is danger for a person to go astray.

Ascription of the verb to the devils is on account of the meaning of the parable. This parable relates to loss of faith and morality. Devils among jinn and mankind are mostly responsible for it. For this reason, by attributing it to them the actual reality is indicated. The word سبيل also means “the straight path.”

The parable is of the earlier words “and we are thrown behind our own selves even after God has guided us.” The implied meaning is that if these people follow them after they had gained access to the path of guidance and once again get entangled in disbelief and polytheism from which God had delivered them, then their parable will be of the person who was made to go astray in a desert by the devils; that person is left wandering about while being confounded; he is then called by his companions to the straight path but he has been left bereft of his intellect and does not know where to go.

Though the words of this parable seem general, deliberation shows that it is the parable of opponents of Islam who are under discussion here. In it, they are told that they are like travellers who have lost their way in a desert. Devils and misled leaders have made their lives miserable. Some of their guided compatriots (reference is to the believers) are calling them to the true way but they are not listening to their calls.

One can see how beautifully the whole picture has been portrayed. The parable apparently relates to others; however, in reality, it relates to them.

The words “and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds” are said in response to the invitation to polytheism. In other words, these people are inviting the believers to worship those things which can neither harm nor benefit while they themselves have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds. The word “to Him” is meant for emphasizing God’s command and the expression “Lord of the worlds” is the reason for this emphasis. In other words if God is the Lord of the worlds, who else can be worthy of being submitted to?

The words “be diligent in the prayer, and fear Him because it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered” are governed by the submission just mentioned and are actually its practical portrayal yet the address has become direct instead of the earlier



indirect one. The purpose is to create emphasis in the discourse the way a direct address does. The prayer has been mentioned here as the foremost practical manifestation of the Islam mentioned earlier thus “and we have been directed to submit to the Lord of the worlds.” The word here refers to abiding by all those limits that God has commanded to abide by.

The expression “towards Him shall all of you be gathered” refers to both the hereafter and to the oneness of God and it is actually an argument in favour of the above directives. In other words, being diligent in the prayer and abiding by the bounds of God is essential because one day everyone has to appear before God alone. On that day, there will be no protector or guardian except Him.

In other words, the verse “and it is He alone Who has created the heavens and the earth in all truth” is a very comprehensive one that concisely states the argument in favour of every component of “and it is He before whom all of you shall be gathered.”

The signs and arguments present in the heavens and the earth regarding the Creator’s power, wisdom and providence bear witness to the fact that this world is not a place of amusement or sport of a merry-maker who has made it for his entertainment. It is, in fact, made by a being who is powerful, knowledgeable, wise, gracious and merciful. If it continues like this, the oppression in it is not redeemed through a day of justice, fairness is not rewarded, the evil-doers and the wretched are not punished, the pious, the truthful and the just are not rewarded, it will mean that this world is a meaningless and purposeless place. Moreover, this would mean that good and evil, justice and injustice, truth and falsehood are equal in His eyes. Human nature can in no way accept this. How can it be conceded that the Creator whose signs of wisdom, power, mercy and providence are found in everything that He has created does not care about good and evil, justice and injustice found in this world? If He does so – and definitely does so because in its absence this world is merely a place of amusement in fact gruesome entertainment – then, as a necessary consequence of this, there must come a day of justice in which the complete mercy and perfect wisdom of God manifest themselves and every virtue is rewarded and every vice is punished.

The words “His word is certain to materialize” mean that none should have any doubt that God will have any difficulty in bringing about the Day of Judgement. He will only have to utter just one word to make it happen. After all, when He had no difficulty in creating this world the first time, why will He face any difficulty the second time?

God is wise as well as knowledgeable. For this reason, the essential consequence of this is that all His verdicts be based on justice, wisdom and knowledge. There is no defect in His justice or wisdom so that He make some truth into a falsehood or vice versa. Similarly, there is no flaw in His knowledge so that because of a lack of it, He misconceives something or someone is able to mislead Him and interchange truth and falsehood.



Section VI: Verses (74-90)

The discussion that began from the beginning of the *sūrah* reached its pinnacle in the previous set of verses. Now in the verses coming up by referring to Abraham (sws) and to the prophets that came after him, it is asserted that all these prophets invited people to the same message as Muḥammad (sws) is inviting them to. After that he is addressed and told that he should nonetheless follow the guidance of this group of rightly guided prophets. If his nation does not listen to him, he should leave it to itself. His responsibility is to only preach and he is not liable to force people to accept guidance.

In this regard, the preaching of monotheism by Abraham (sws) to his father and his nation at the very start is mentioned with special significance. The reason of specially mentioning Abraham (sws) and his preaching, as was stated in the explanation of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, is that both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites regarded him as their patriarch and spiritual leader. They also claimed that they were following his very religion that they had inherited. For their idolatrous practices, they would present him as their guide. Since Muḥammad (sws) was also sent from among the progeny of Abraham (sws) for this reason it was essential that just as it was explained to the Israelites in *Sūrahs al-Baqarah* and *Āl-i ‘Imrān* that the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity they have fabricated has nothing to do with Abraham’s religion, it was also essential to make it evident to the Ishmaelites that the religion of polytheism they have adopted is their own fabrication; it is not the slightest connection with Abraham (sws).

Moreover, the lesson Muḥammad (sws) could have learnt from the preaching and every aspect of the life of Abraham (sws) could not have been made possible in any other way. The reason for this, as has been explained earlier, is that Muḥammad (sws) was sent to revive and complete the religion of Abraham (sws) to a people who ascribed itself to Abraham (sws).

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبْنَيْهِ أَرَزَأْتَنِي إِذَا سَأَلْتُكَ وَفَوَدَّكَ فِي صَلَاتٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْأُولِيِّينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَيْسَ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسُ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يُقَوْمُ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلدِّينِ فَطَرِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ ﴿٨٢﴾ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونَنِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا



تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَاءٍ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ ۚ وَمِن دُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْبُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَذَكَرْنَا يَا وَيْحِي وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِنْيَاسَ ۖ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَإِسْعَىٰ ۖ وَإِلْيَاسَ ۖ وَإِيْسَىٰ ۖ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا ۖ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمِن آبَائِهِمْ دُرِّيَّتُهُمْ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ ۖ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٩٣﴾ ذَٰلِكَ هَدَى اللَّهُ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ مِن عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ۚ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ۚ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

And recall when Abraham said to Āzar, his father: “Have you made idols as your deities? I am seeing you and your people in open error.” And, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction. (74-75)

Then it happened that when night came upon him, he saw a star. He said: “This is my Lord!” Then when the star faded, he said: “I do not befriend those who fade away.” Then when he saw the moon shining, he said: “This is my Lord.” But when it also faded, he said: “If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.” Then when he saw the sun shining, he said: “This is my Lord. It is the greatest.” But when it also faded, he said to his nation: “My people! I disown all those whom you regard as partners. I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists.” (76-79)

And his nation started to argue with him. He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? And I do not fear those who you regard as His partners unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things. Then will you not pay attention? And how can I fear what you ascribe as partners when you are not afraid of ascribing partners to Him for which He has not sent down any proof to you? So, Which of us two factions is more worthy of peace and comfort, if you know? Peace and comfort are for those who accepted faith and did not contaminate their faith with polytheism and only they are the guided ones.” (80-82)

This is Our conclusive reasoning which We provided Abraham against his people. We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire. In reality, Your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. And to him, We gave Isaac and Jacob. We guided each of them



and before this, also gave guidance to Noah and among his descendants to David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron also. And thus do we reward the righteous. And to Zacharias, John, Jesus and Elias too. All these were among the righteous. And to Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot as well. And each of them We had exalted above the people of the world. And We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them. And We guided them to the straight path. This is God's guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses. However, had they too been incriminated with polytheism, all their deeds would have become fruitless. It was these people on whom We bestowed the book, the power of decision-making and prophethood. So, if these people deny it, then there is nothing to worry about because We have consigned this favour to some others who will not deny it. It is these people who were the ones guided by God. So, you also follow their ways only. Declare: I do not want any recompense from you for this. It is a mere reminder for all the people of the world. (83-90)

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَأْتَنِي خِدَافًا مَّا إِلَهَآءُ ۖ إِنِّي أَزُكُّ وَتَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

Āzar is the name of Abraham's father. In the Arabic and English versions of the Torah and in the Talmud it has diverse pronunciations. The way the Qur'ān has specifically mentioned his name shows that it wants to resolve this difference of opinion in its pronunciation. Since the Qur'ān is a guardian over the previous scriptures and is directly based on God's revelation, it must be believed that its pronunciation is the correct one.

A study of religious literature of the Jews reveals that Āzar not only worshipped idols, he also manufactured and sold them. It may well be that he be the chief priest of his temple. In such circumstances, the birth of Abraham (sws) to him and Abraham's crusade against his beliefs and profession is a manifestation of God's power. Amongst the signs of the veracity of prophets of God is the sign that the truth they invite people to is foremost conveyed by them to those closest and dearest to them.

The message towards which Abraham (sws) invited his father is only briefly referred to here. At other instances, it is detailed out as well:

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَبْغِيكَ وَلَا يُنْفَعُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنْ إِلَهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ۚ كَيْنَ لَمْ تُنْتَهَ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَ

53. And recall when Abraham said to Āzar, his father: "Have you made idols as your deities? I am seeing you and your people in open error."



اَهْجَزَنِي مَلِيًّا (١٩: ٤٢-٤٦)

Recall, when he said to his father: “Father! Why do you worship those things that neither hear nor see and cannot be of any benefit to you? Dear Father! In truth, that knowledge has come to me which has not come to you. So, follow me, I shall show you the straight path. Father! Do not worship Satan. Surely, Satan is very defiant to God, the Most Gracious. Dear Father! I fear that some torment of the Most Gracious God may seize you and you end up becoming the companion of Satan.” He replied: “Are you giving up my deities? If you do not desist, I shall stone you to death. So, get away me forever.” (19:42-46)

The words “have you made idols as your deities?” of Abraham (sws) are meant to point at the blatantly evident deviance of his people. In verse 95 of Sūrah al-Şāffāt, the words are: ⁵⁴اَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْجِتُونَ.

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِىْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤَقِّنِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

The implied construction of *كَذَلِكَ نُرِىْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ* is actually *كُنَّا نُرِىْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ*. According to a common Arabic style, an incomplete verb is suppressed here.

Just as *رهبط* is formed from *رهبة*, *ملكوت* as is formed from *ملك*.

The word *ملكوت* literally means “respect, authority and kingdom.” However, in the Qur’ān it refers to God’s kingdom that stretches over the heavens and the earth, in fact, over everything. It has repeatedly invited people to reflect on this kingdom. Thus, for example, in verse 185 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the words used are: *اَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوْا فِيْ مَلَكُوْتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ* (have they not observed the system of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth). Similarly, in verse 83 of Sūrah Yāsīn, it is said: *فَسُبْحٰنَ الَّذِىْ يَبْدِىْهِ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ* (so glory be to Him Who has control of all things and to Him shall you all be returned.)

Here it needs to be kept in mind that Abraham (sws) would reflect on the system of the heavens and earth and as a result God graciously revealed to him the secrets of comprehending this system which he explained to his father and to his people. It may also be borne in mind that by reflecting on this system one is led to true concepts and deeds. One is able to get hold of the real issues of life and its purpose. Does this world have a creator or was it being self-created? If there is creator, is he single or has partners? Will it end some day or continue forever? If it has a creator, what are His attributes and characteristic and why has he created such a huge set-up? Is there any standard for truth and falsehood in this world? Are human beings answerable for their deeds or they can do whatever they like and not be questioned? Are the heavens and

54. “Would you worship that which you have carved with your own hands.”

55. And, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction.



the earth governed by a single powerful being's intent and wisdom or there are different beings vying for superiority? It is these questions and many others ones on the basis of which a person can have the right concepts and shape his deeds accordingly. For this reason, the Qur'ān has invited people to reflect on this system of heavens and the earth and has also guided them in reaching the right conclusions.

As far as deliberation on God's kingdom is concerned, a scientist also does so; however, he does this by making his own self or his limited environment as its focal point. He is only keen to see his immediate benefit. Hence he does not try to reach the facts that could divert his attention from the immediate benefit he seeks. He looks at the blossoming rose of an orchard to make sweet sugar or derive other benefits from it by making some other products. After this, he does not care to look beyond to observe the wisdom, mercy and providence of the creator in the beauty, majesty, splendour and fragrance of the flower. He is not able to become so overwhelmed at this observation so as to be overcome with the beauty and the majesty of the Creator who created the flower. The fact is that for a man of insight, it is this aspect of a flower which is more attractive. He ponders over the question that if the purpose of a flower was to produce nectar, what then was the need for providence to carve out such captivating patterns and designs on the petals of the flower? Surely, this was done so that every petal of a flower could become a means to comprehend the Almighty.

Newton observed an apple falling down from a tree. This directed his attention to the law of gravitation. Then from this law many other laws were discovered that proved very beneficial for scientific research but human insight could not go beyond a certain limit. All applications and inferences of this law were confined to this world only. Otherwise, a question also arises here: who is it that has bound every single object, big or small in this law of mutual attraction? Obviously, the only honest answer to this is that all this has been created by a dominant and powerful being who is wise and knowledgeable. However, since these questions and answers entail very heavy responsibilities on human beings, our scientists evade them.

The words “and, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth” refer to the vision and insight which, by God's grace, is specially bestowed to his prophets. Other individuals too gain its share in accordance with their ability. These individuals are ones who honestly reflect on this universe and instead of evading the consequences of this reflection, welcome them. Verse 191 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān point to these people: وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا (and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: “Lord! You have not created this without a purpose.”) The coordinated clause of وَيَكُونُونَ مِنَ الْمُتَذَكِّرِينَ (and become among those who have full conviction) is suppressed here in accordance with a common linguistic principle. This clause can be determined through concomitant indications. Here it is clarified later that God made Abraham observe His kingdom so that this observation could lead Abraham (sws) to the conclusive argument that there



is no other deity except God; he conveyed this argument to his nation, as specified by the verse. Thus in the presence of this concomitant indication, if the suppressed part is revealed, the whole sense would be: “and, in this way, We would make Abraham observe the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he may conclusively convey the truth to his people and become among those who have full conviction.”

The conviction mentioned here is one step higher than faith can be called true and full conviction. Belief is a general thing which can be acquired by an upright person even through his intuition. However, conviction is acquired by reflection and deliberation and by observing and having knowledge of God’s kingdom. There is no upper limit to this conviction. Thus further ahead [in verse 84] the words *نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَاءٍ* (We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire) point to its high status. When this conviction is added to belief, its benefits become transitive and, at times, makes mountains and deserts resound with its blessings. Since prophets of God are deputed for the guidance of people, they have this conviction and after that those who follow them with full devotion.

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى الْكَوْكَبَ ۖ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَيْسَ لَهُ يَهْدِيَنِي رَبِّي ۖ لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۖ هَذَا أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يُقَوْمُ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

There is no difficulty in the style and or words of these verses. With respect to coherence, they explain the brevity found in the previous verses. Previously, it was stated how Abraham (sws) exposed the hollow nature of the religion followed by his father and his nation and rebuked them for their open deviance. Then while referring to it, it was stated how the Almighty would reveal the facts and secrets of this kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he can conclusively convey the truth to his nation and so that he himself also becomes among those who have conviction.

After that, it is now being stated how Abraham (sws) explained to his people how the very objects they worship bear witness through their own existence that they are subservient to God’s authority and laws. They dare not the slightest deviate from these

56. Then it happened that when night came upon him, he saw a star. He said: “This is my Lord!” Then when the star faded, he said: “I do not befriend those who fade away.” Then when he saw the moon shining, he said: “This is my Lord.” But when it also faded, he said: “If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.” Then when he saw the sun shining, he said: “This is my Lord. It is the greatest.” But when it also faded, he said to his nation: “My people! I disown all those whom you regard as partners. I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists.”



laws. For this reason, the being who is actually worthy of worship is the one who has created everything and not these subservient and submissive objects.

I will now explain the argument presented by Abraham (sws). However, before this is done it is essential to understand certain aspects of his style of address and reasoning.

Prophets of God in general are very similar in their preaching and its purpose. However, owing to the peculiar temperament and nature of their addressees, every prophet has some distinctive features with regard to his style of preaching and methodology of reasoning. For example, John (sws) and Jesus (sws) would generally converse in parables. The preaching of some prophets was more akin to sermonizing and others was couched in legal diction. This difference, as pointed out, is because of the difference of addressees. However, this difference also owes itself to some extent to the difference in temperaments.

As is evident from the Qur‘ān, Abraham’s nation was very inclined to polemical debates and argumentation. In the first instance, his people would not be prepared to even listen, and if ever they would, very soon they turned away from it and engaged in polemical arguments. It is because of this aggressive nature that Abraham (sws) would mostly adopt the way of gradual and progressive reasoning with them. In this methodology, he would slowly lead them to an unimaginable situation in which they would have no answer to his arguments. One example of this is found in the incident mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā’. On one occasion, he shattered all the idols of the temple and just left the large one intact. When an investigation began into this incident and Abraham (sws) was questioned, he answered forthwith that this seems to be the handiwork of the large idol. He also gestured towards the shattered idols and asked them to inquire from these victims because if they speak, they will narrate what calamity befell them. This answer initially embarrassed them and put them to shame. They thought how foolish they were to worship idols who cannot even defend themselves; and if they cannot defend their own selves, how can they defend the worshippers. In this way, their belief was jolted. Then in frenzy of their tribal bias when they did try to answer Abraham (sws), they even confessed their own foolishness. They said that does not Abraham (sws) know that they cannot speak. This confession provided Abraham (sws) with a very opportune moment to direct their attention to their foolishness. He delivered a very moving sermon and expressed sorrow at their naivety for worshipping things that can neither harm nor benefit themselves or others.

In this methodology adopted by Abraham (sws), he would also use a literary device called *tūriyah*. As per this device, in order to carry out his plan, he would give a statement that would be true but could potentially mislead his addressees. The result was that in spite of being clever, they would not be able to understand it before it materialized. A very subtle example of this is found in Sūrah al-Şāffāt. I will, God willing, explain it there and also elucidate some words which our exegetes could not



understand and ended up interpreting them in a deplorable way. At times, this gradual reasoning methodology (*istidrāj*) and in this *tūriyah* is punctuated with polite humour – part of which is the natural component of these devices. This is because every task has a specific style. Another part of humour is also at times added to them since light and polite humour is also a trait of prophets of God. Readers will come across very pertinent examples of these in Sūrah al-Anbiyā’ and Sūrah al-Şāffāt.

After this introduction, let us now take a deeper look at the verses under discussion.

One day, Abraham (sws) saw a star shining. It is possible that this be Venus or could be some other. He said that this was his Lord. It is clear from concomitant indications that he uttered these words to himself in such away that others too could hear them. When the listeners heard these words from him, they would have been very satisfied to hear a person who was very averse to the religion of their forefathers but was still following it to some extent. Abraham (sws) went silent after saying these words. Later when the star faded away, in exactly the same manner as before, he spoke to himself again letting others hear it too and said that he does not befriend those who fade away. The satisfaction which people who were around him must have left them on hearing these words. However, they must have thought that if this young man was deviating from their idols, it was not because of some whim, fancy or indifference; he, on the contrary, has reached this conclusion on the basis of reasoning. Moreover, since Abraham (sws) did not utter these words by directly addressing them in the form of a challenge, they would not have become aggressive too. In fact, they would have thought that maybe their own belief had some weakness.

Causing ripples in such a stagnant pond reflects great success. In this manner, Abraham (sws) directed the attention of his addresses to not just look at the shining and rising of stars. He also induced them to think how they set and fade away. When they set after rising and go after coming and that too with such punctuality that there is not the slightest change in their direction, time and shape, then they by their very existence they show that they are being governed.

With this fact, another concept which Abraham (sws) injected in their minds was that a person’s relationship with his creator and master is that of love and not mere fear. This is because mere fear is not something which creates an obligation towards it and that too of worship. This concept was also new to the Idolaters because polytheism is entirely based on fear. Abraham (sws) asserted that he was not prepared to worship anyone merely because of fear; in fact, he worshipped God because of love and these objects that are themselves subservient are not worthy of love. Love is something which can only be reserved for the being to whom they submit.

Then at another instance when a night was lit with the full moon, he once again had the opportunity to instruct his people. He then said the same words in the same style and tone that he had said for the star. Then when the moon also faded away, he addressed himself and while directing his speech to those around him said: “if my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.” Deliberation shows



that Abraham (sws) took one step ahead in this instruction. Here it does not merely become evident that those that set or fade away are not worthy of being worshipped. What becomes evident is that to make deities out of objects that set or fade away is open error. What becomes further evident is that this error is not small. It is a matter of great sorrow and yearning. Moreover, it also becomes evident that the source of guidance is God alone. If He does not provide guidance, people can be misled by going after things on their face-value. Since all these statements were uttered by Abraham (sws) to himself, hence there is no reason for those who overheard them to get offended. In fact, those among them who had even a slight ability to deliberate must have reflected on the fact that on the one hand was this person anxious to receive guidance and on the other are they who were affixed to their place like a rock.

The words of Abraham (sws) “if my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray” express a fact. Guidance is only obtained from God. None can be guided if He does not guide. Some exegetes opine that this condition relates to the past; however, there is no need to over-stretch the mind to make this interpretation. Saying these words does not necessitate that Abraham (sws) was in error earlier or thought that he was in error. What has actually happened is that he has placed the mirror of his noble nature before others so that they can view their own faces. However, he has just placed the mirror before them without saying anything to them lest they may show aversion.

Similarly, one day he used sunrise and sunset a basis of his teaching. When the sun rose with all its splendour and it was midday, he said the same words about it as he had said earlier about the star and the moon. This time, however, he added the words “it is the greatest.” It is very evident that he said these words in a sarcastic way to mock at them. However, the listeners would have still been content to hear this from a rebellious person. They would have thought that if he does not accept the star and the moon, then at least he accepts the sun as a deity. However, this satisfaction did not stay with them for long. The sun had to set and it did. When this happened, Abraham (sws) openly declared his acquittal from these deities. Until then what he had uttered was more of his personal impression to his own self even though its purpose was to indirectly awaken the conscience of his people. However, he had not addressed them directly. It was at this third time that he did so and expressed his acquittal from their deities.

The words “I disown all those whom you regard as partners; I have turned my face dedicatedly to Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not among the polytheists” form this declaration of acquittal. The لَ of يَلِدُيَ in فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَجْهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ evidences the fact that the word وَجْهْتُ also encompasses the meaning of أَسْلَمْتُ in it. The implied meaning is that Abraham (sws) has devotedly submitted himself to the creator of the heavens and the earth. These words depict monotheism and submission in a grand way. Since in the prayer we acknowledge this reality, it begins with an utterance of these words.



وَحَاجَّةَ قَوْمِهِ^{٥٧} قَالَ اتَّحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ^{٥٨} وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا^{٥٩} أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ^{٦٠} وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ^{٦١} إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ^{٦٢} الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ^{٦٣}

The declaration of acquittal from Abraham (sws) elicited a very strong reaction from his people. Since polytheism is based on fear, they began to threaten and warn him. They told him that since he hates these deities and has turned against them, he will face their wrath and anger. They will cripple him and strike him with lightning and he will die in a very horrible way.

It should be kept in mind that his people never denied God; they only associated partners with him. And this is not something specific to his people. No nation of the world has ever denied God. Whichever of them has stumbled, has stumbled in the manner of monotheism. In his answer, Abraham (sws) stated that he does not the slightest fear these hypothetical deities for they do not have the power to harm them except if God wills. These words showed his tremendous trust in God. In verse 89 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, this topic is discussed through the tongue of Shu‘ayb (sws): قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْتَرِينَ^{٥٧} مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا^{٥٨} عَلَى اللَّهِ كَيْدًا وَإِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا^{٥٩} وَ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا^{٦٠} اللَّهُ تَوَكَّلْنَا^{٦١} It is evident from this that God’s grace is needed for the materialization of the noblest of intentions. For this reason, a person should not say that he will accomplish something on the basis of his own effort however much pure and sincere his intention may be. He should express his resolve by trusting God’s help because trials waylay every path and His help and grace are needed to sail through these trials.

Abraham (sws) went on to state that if anyone has to fear God, it is his people and not he himself. This is because it is they who have associated partners with him without any proof. As far as God is concerned, he himself believes in Him and so do his people because this is an indubitable reality. If his people associate partners with

57. And his nation started to argue with him. He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? And I do not fear those who you regard as His partners unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things. Then will you not pay attention? And how can I fear what you ascribe as partners when you are not afraid of ascribing partners to Him for which He has not sent down any proof to you? So, Which of us two factions is more worthy of peace and comfort, if you know? Peace and comfort are for those who accepted faith and did not contaminate their faith with polytheism and only they are the guided ones.”

58. We would be regarded as those who have imputed falsehood to God if we return to your ways after God has delivered us. This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends. And the fact is that the knowledge of our Lord embraces everything. We have trusted our Lord.”



God without any proof, then they are self-acknowledged criminals in the eyes of God. So, if he punishes them, they deserve it. Why should Abraham (sws) fear anyone when he has not done anything wrong?

The word **كُفْرًا** in the last verse refers to polytheism. It is used in this meaning at many instances in the Qur‘ān. This last verse expresses the true essence of monotheism. Only that belief in God is acceptable which is free from the slightest trace of polytheism. Faith which is contaminated with polytheism is not acceptable to God. His people think that peace is provided by their deities and are indifferent to God. The fact is that peace is reserved for those who trust God in all affairs and absolve themselves of polytheism. It is these people who are rightly guided and all others have deviated from the correct path.

59 **وَرَبُّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝٥٩**

This refers to the conclusive argument of monotheism which Abraham (sws) communicated to his people and whose details have just been mentioned.

It is clearly evident from these words that people who regard this anecdote of Abraham (sws) as a depiction of evolution in his thought and beliefs have formed an opinion that is against that of the Qur‘ān. What can be said is that it actually depicts an evolution in his preaching methodology. Had it been the former case, the words “against his people” should not have been present.

Here some more things need to be kept in mind.

Firstly, prophets of God are born with a very upright nature and they grow up with this nature. Before becoming prophets too they have no doubt between monotheism and polytheism. Monotheism is the pledge of human nature which the Almighty had taken from every soul before sending it into this world. It is evident from the Qur‘ān that every person will be held accountable before God on the basis of this pledge about monotheism whether the message of any prophet has reached him or not. Thus there is no possibility to even imagine about any prophet that before being summoned to this responsibility he was contaminated with any trace of polytheism. I will elaborate more on this under verse 172 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. I have also written a chapter called “The Real Reason of Polytheism” in my book *The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism*.

Before being appointed to this position, prophets of God are the best exemplars of humanity. In that phase of life, they do not seek God but seek the will and directives of God. This quest is a thirst found in their upright nature which intensifies as they advance in life and want it to be quenched. The rain of divine revelation then drenches them to quench this thirst. The status of divine revelation for prophets is not of light in

59. This is Our conclusive reasoning which We provided Abraham against his people. We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire. In reality, Your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.



darkness but of light upon light. More details on this can be seen in the explanation of verse 35 of Sūrah al-Nūr.

Secondly, the argumentation of Abraham (sws) drawn from God’s kingdom and mentioned earlier is when he began his preaching after he was made a prophet and not before. He first invited his father and this precisely has been the way of prophets of God: they invite the closest to them the foremost and then direct their attention of their nation and gradually declare the truth before them as detailed out earlier. The proof that this incident took place after Abraham (sws) was made a prophet is found in verses 79-80. The grand words uttered in these verses by him can only be said by a prophet of God.

Thirdly, if this incident depicts Abraham’s intellectual journey, then the sequence of events is totally illogical. Why did a small star attract his attention first? What happened to the sun that rises with such splendour and glory every morning? A more illogical narrative had to be fabricated to justify this illogical sequence of observation: it was posited that Abraham (sws) was born in a cave where he grew up; when he came out of it, it was night time and the first thing that he observed among the striking sights of this universe was the star Venus.

Fourthly, in this methodology of gradual reasoning, if the arguer accepts some premise of his rival, it is not to acknowledge its veracity but to trap him through a style of reasoning the rival is especially adept in. This practice of gradual reasoning which God has mentioned regarding his prophets in the Qur’ān also has this special trait that God seizes their rivals from where they think they are the strongest. If Abraham’s nation worshipped the sun, the moon and Venus, what proof they had of their divinity except that they rise and shine. Abraham (sws) based his reasoning on this very aspect. He asserted that if their shine is the proof of their divinity, then they should also witness their setting and fading away. A psychological point here should be kept in mind too: the most effective time to express the transient nature of an entity whose temporary splendour was affording them divinity when that entity is lying vanquished.

Fifthly, the various styles and forms of reasoning and methodology adopted by prophets of God are all very natural and based on human nature. These include gradual reasoning, humour, sarcasm, using words and sentences with double-meaning etc. Each of these styles has its own occasion and place. At times, a pause which apparently is a stoppage is instrumental in carrying us through a thousand mile journey, and affectionate sarcasm which is sarcasm on the face of it surpasses thousands of arguments. In the last chapter of the Qur’ān (Sūrah al-Mulk to Sūrah al-Nās), these styles are discussed in detail,

The word رَجُلَات is both a plural and is undefined too. This aspect has been kept in consideration in the translation viz. “ranks after ranks.” This aspect has been referred to under verse 75 “and become among those who have full conviction.” Precisely this is expressed here by saying that those people who observe the kingdom of God, their knowledge, comprehension, faith and ranks are enhanced by Him.



The attributes of God mentioned at the end are meant to refer to His established practice that He has prescribed for “His desire” in the words “We raise ranks after ranks of whomsoever We desire.” In other words, His desire is based on His knowledge and wisdom. He grants high status to those who deserve it and fulfil his rights and does not do so blindly. A very subtle reference is found in this that if a person does not use his intellect and innate abilities, he ends up prostrating before rocks he has carved out with his own hands and if he does so, then the sun and the moon, Venus and Mercury become trivial before him.

وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ ۚ وَأَيُّوبَ ۚ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِيلَاسَ ۖ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيُوسُفَ وَلُوطًا ۖ كُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَمِنَ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ ۖ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٦٨﴾ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبَطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَإِن يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِ ۚ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ۖ إِن هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

The earlier verses depict the spiritual and faith related ranks of Abraham (sws) besides his preaching. It is now stated that in this world also, God made his message succeed and eternally prosper. Among his progeny, many prophets and righteous people as well as reformers and revivalists were born. All of them preached the same religion of monotheism which he preached and which Noah before him preached. The implied meaning is that it is this religion which is common to all prophets and Abraham (sws) too is preaching it. If his nation does not want to accept it, he should leave it alone. God has raised others who will be its bearers. Disregarding their

60. And to him, We gave Isaac and Jacob. We guided each of them and before this, also gave guidance to Noah and among his descendants to David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron also. And thus do we reward the righteous. And to Zacharias, John, Jesus and Elias too. All these were among the righteous. And to Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot as well. And each of them We had exalted above the people of the world. And We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them. And We guided them to the straight path. This is God's guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses. However, had they too been incriminated with polytheism, all their deeds would have become fruitless. It was these people on whom We bestowed the book, the power of decision-making and prophethood. So, if these people deny it, then there is nothing to worry about because We have consigned this favour to some others who will not deny it. It is these people who were the ones guided by God. So, you also follow their ways only. Declare: I do not want any recompense from you for this. It is a mere reminder for all the people of the world.



opposition, Abraham (sws) must nevertheless follow the religion of those who were guided by God. He should clearly tell his rivals that he is not demanding any remuneration from them for accepting this message so that if they do not accept it, he will be financially finished. What he is presenting before them is a reminder. If they accept it, it will benefit them otherwise they will face its consequences.

Isaac (sws) is the son of Abraham (sws) and Jacob (sws) is the latter's grandson. The verses say that God blessed all the prophets with the religion of monotheism and with the straight path Abraham (sws) is calling his people to. First, Noah (sws) is referred to. It is known from the Talmud that Noah (sws) taught and instructed Abraham (sws). Viewed thus, the generations in between were adjacent. In the expression وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ, the antecedent of the pronoun is Abraham (sws).

Here it needs to be kept in mind that all these individuals are celebrated prophets of the Israelites. Also common to them is that all of them were either kings or held some or the other position of leadership. The words “and thus do we reward the righteous” refer to the fact that they received this guidance because they were righteous. They were ones who correctly used their God-given abilities and thus were rewarded by His favours. In other words, this reward was not given to them because of their lineage but because of their attributes and character.

Zacharias (sws), John (sws) and Jesus (sws) are well known prophets. Ilyas (sws) refers to Elijah of the Torah. About these prophets, it is also said that God blessed them with the guidance of the straight path as he did to Abraham (sws) and to other prophets. They also preached monotheism and Islam and not anything else. It is further stated that all of them were from among the righteous. One thing that is evident from this is the same that has been referred to before: whatever they acquired was because of piety and righteousness. The second thing that is evident is that these were pious and devout individuals and none of them possessed divinity, as the Christians believed regarding Jesus (sws). Just as in the previous set of prophets political authority and leadership is common, ascetism, and austerity is common to this set.

There are two prophets mentioned in the Bible whose names are similar to al-Yasa'a (sws). Of these, the pronunciation Elisha (sws) is closer to the Qur'ān. He prophesied around 832-892 BC. The other one is Isaiah (sws) whose period is 740 BC.

After mentioning Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot, it is stated: “and each of them We had exalted above the people of the world.” Exaltation here refers to the responsibility of preaching God's guidance.

The selection mentioned in “and We also guided from among their forefathers, their children, and their brethren and chose them” is to select them for guiding people and teaching them monotheism. The expression مِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ refers to the path of monotheism and is undefined to enhance its import.

Consider the words: “This is God's guidance. He bestows it on those of His servants whom He chooses.” The second sentence refers to God's established practice that He



guides those who desire to be guided. It is then stated that whoever have been chosen by God for a high status will lose this status if they get incriminated with polytheism. Their chosen status merely because they were the descendent of Noah (sws) or Abraham (sws) will not remain intact. This admonition was for the Arabs and for the Israelites as well: those who after deviating from monotheism were dreaming of being the chosen ones because they belonged to the progeny of Abraham were living in a fool's Paradise. Not to speak of the fact that, had they succumbed to polytheism, their deeds would not have borne any fruit before God.

Consider next the words: **أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبِيَّاتَ**. The Qur'ān has mentioned the word *ḥikmah* at many instances adjacent to *al-kitāb*. Here the word used is *al-ḥukm*. While discussing this word in his book *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has said that it means “true understanding and to decide affairs in the light of this true understanding.” When this trait develops into the form of a deeply rooted ability, it is called *ḥikmah*. Both *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* are essential consequences of being given the book of God. This is because the real purpose of God's books is to guide people in the affairs of life whether they relate to its individual or collective affairs and whether the situation at hand is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān or not. Obviously, in the latter case, an inference would have to be derived from it. Just God's book, *ḥukm* is His blessing and makes the book a practical manifestation of life. If the bearers of God's book are deprived of this, then the book severs its relation with the affairs of life and ends up being a mere historical document that can best be placed in a museum.

The meaning of the verse is that these people who are mentioned earlier are the ones whom God has blessed with His Book, His *ḥukm* and the gift of prophethood and they duly valued this gift. It is now through these gifts that the Almighty wants to bless the people of Makkah through prophet Muḥammad (sws). The correct attitude for them is that they duly value it but they did not. So the Prophet (sws) should ignore them. God has ordained such people to take up this responsibility who will fulfil it.

In the expression **وَجَعَلْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَٰءِيلَ سَمْعًا**, the particle **ب** in this is an indication that the word **وَجَعَلْنَا** (to make someone responsible for something) also encompasses the meaning “to make someone a guarantor.” The word **سَمْعًا** refers to the faction of the companions who had professed faith as well as those who were later destined to profess it and at the revelation of these verses had yet to accept it. These words predict the perseverance which will be shown by the companions and the abundance of the *ummah*, and viewed thus they form glad tidings for the Prophet (sws). They were given to him when he was passing through a storm of opposition. Evident from the words is the unassailable verdict of God that the preaching struggle of the Prophet (sws) will be successful. Also apparent from them is that people should not look at the small numbers in whom God has reposed this responsibility. They would be the advocates of the message, and those very drops would one day become an ocean.



In the words *أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ* (it is these people who were the ones guided by God; so, you also follow their ways only), the letter *ز* is for stoppage (*waqfah*). The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) should leave to themselves those who claim to be followers of Abraham (sws) but are actually following Satan and are not prepared to listen to the Prophet (sws). He should tell them that he is not demanding any remuneration for this responsibility so that they regard him a burden. He is distributing for free what he acquired free of charge. If they accept it, only they will benefit from it and if they reject it, it is they who will be among the deprived. He is preaching to them the religion of God and not doing trade or business with them so that if they do not buy what he is selling then he will be financially finished. It is God Who is going to reward him.

The antecedent of the pronoun “it” in “it is a mere reminder for all the people of the world” is the Qur’ān and the words actually further explain what has just been said. If the Prophet (sws) has delivered this reminder, then he has fulfilled his responsibility. If they accept it, they will see its consequence themselves. It is not his responsibility to make them forcibly accept it. The word *ذِكْرِي* is used for the Qur’ān and alludes to two facts. The first of these is that whatever the Qur’ān was presenting was not something unknown or unique: it was a reminder of the realities ingrained in human nature but people had buried them beneath their desires and religious innovations. The second of them is that the Qur’ān was reminding them of the very guidance which was brought forth by Noah (sws), Abraham (sws) and all prophets. However, those who claimed to associate themselves to these prophets had invented some wrong concepts in relation to some names and then regarded these wrong concepts as the religion of their forefathers. Through this reminder, the Qur’ān is not only making them remember some forgotten pages of history but also some forgotten lessons of human nature. Thus whoever wants can benefit from these.

Section VII: Verses (91-94)

It is stated earlier that the monotheism and Islam the Qur’ān is inviting people to is what all prophets preached; it is the misfortune of those who are denying it. Now, in these few succeeding verses, the attitude of the rejecters is commented and the statements they gave to justify it are shown to be foolish. Those who led this campaign of rejection were the leaders of the Quraysh but since the very beginning, the Jews had started to secretly support them because they regarded the popularity of the Prophet’s message to be the real threat to themselves. They reckoned that prophethood and messengerhood was a monopoly of their tribe and if a prophet was to come, then he will come to the Israelites and not outside of them. When they encountered the new Prophet from among the Ishmaelites, they wanted to stop this



danger. It was not possible for them to become unbiased but they were not very sure how to oppose him. If they asserted that prophethood and messengerhood was a monopoly of their tribe and in the presence of the Torah, no other divine book was needed, they feared that this would incite the honour of the Arabs and it may well be that in this frenzy they would prefer to support the Prophet (sws). Because of this fear, they did not express what they had in their hearts but in order to further inflame his opponents they asserted that the Prophet (sws) was falsely claiming that God has revealed a book to him. They would say this with their specific mental reservation but because of political reasons, as referred to earlier, would not say it as a principle. Here the Qur‘ān has exposed this prank here and also answered the arrogant Quraysh who because of being chiefs thought that anyone except them could also be worthy of status and honour.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ ۚ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَىٰ نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قُرْآنًا طَيْسَ تُبْدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَعَلَيْتُمْ مَالَهُم تَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَن حَوْلَهَا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَن أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ ۚ وَمَن قَالَ سَأُنزِلُ مِثْلَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُو أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرَجُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ أَتَيْتُمُ تُجْرُونَ ۚ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ ۖ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فَرَادَىٰ كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا نَرَىٰ مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَبْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ۚ لَقَدْ تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَصَلَ عَنْكُم مَّا كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

And they did not realize the value of God when they said: “God has not revealed anything to any mortal.” Ask them: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for human beings, which you would show to them page by page and would hide most of it, and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew? Say: God only did! Then leave them to amuse themselves with their quibbling. And this is a Book We have revealed, imbued with great blessings, confirming what came before it [so that you may give glad tidings] and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers. (91-92)

And who is more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, or



claims: “Divine revelation has been sent to me,” even though no divine revelation came to him and than the person who claims: “I shall reveal similar to what God has revealed?” And would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death and angels with outstretched hands would be demanding from them: “Hand over your souls; today, you will be meted out a humiliating punishment because you would fabricate falsehood about God and arrogantly evade His revelations.” And finally you have come to us alone as We created you the first time leaving behind all that We bestowed on you. And We also do not see with you your intercessors about whom you claimed they are Our partners in your affairs. All your ties have been broken, and whatever notions you had formed have turned out baseless. (93-94)

Explanation

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ ۚ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قُرْآنًا طَيْسَ تُبْدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾⁶¹

It has been indicated earlier that the statement: “God has not revealed anything to any mortal” is of the Jews. Though what they must have had in mind was that after the Book and the *sharī‘ah* revealed to Moses (sws), there was no further need of any Book or *sharī‘ah*. However, they feared that saying this in explicit words could have incited the national honour of the Arabs, as indicated before. For this reason, they gave this statement so that their purpose was met and no one should have any ill-will toward them.

While giving an answer to this statement here, both its outward and inward aspect has been kept in consideration.

First, the outward aspect that refers to the words used is responded to. If this statement had been given by the unlettered Arabs, they would have had an excuse because they were a people unaware of any divine Book. However, when this statement is given by people who were the inheritors of all prophets and all Books of God, then it proves that these people who claim to know God actually know Him very little. Otherwise, it is a matter of deliberation that the God Who has provided an answer to every need found in human beings, how can He not provide an answer to the greatest need found in them which is guidance. If He made human beings thirsty,

61. And they did not realize the value of God when they said: “God has not revealed anything to any mortal.” Ask them: Who revealed the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for human beings, which you would show to them page by page and would hide most of it, and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew? Say: God only did! Then leave them to amuse themselves with their quibbling.



He provided them with water from both the earth and the heavens. After this, giving the statement that He has not revealed guidance to any mortal can only be uttered by those who are neither aware of God’s attributes nor His blessings, which they have actually been enjoying since generations.

They are questioned that if what they say is really true, then who has revealed the Torah to Moses (sws). After that, by saying “which you would show to them page by page” their ungrateful attitude towards the Book of God is expressed. Secondly, as a result, this also became an answer of the inner aspect of their statement: if they had said it to imply that now after Moses (sws)’s Book, no other Book was needed then they do not even have the right to say that. This is because the value they had given to the Torah was that they had written it page by page and would hide most of these pages and reveal a few. In other words, if they dealt in this manner with something which had come to them as light and guidance, why would God have left His creatures wander in darkness and not revealed a fresh guidance that would take them out of this darkness and relieve them of error?

The word قُرَاطِيسَ is the plural of قُرْطَاس and means “a writing surface.” It may be kept in mind that the Jews never compiled the Torah the way Muslims have compiled it between two covers. They had, on the contrary, divided it into various parts and had written each part separately. In this manner, they could easily hide the teachings and prophecies which they found against their desires and interests. When a book is written in parts on separate sheets and it is also in the custody of a specific group, then the group can easily conceal any part of it that it wants from the eyes of people beyond a specific set of followers. This was a very grave form of the crime of concealment of God’s Book and the Qur’ān has accused the Jews of it. It is also evident from the words of the Qur’ān that a greater part of the Torah had been concealed from common people and a lesser one had been exposed to them. It is evident from the words تَبْدُوهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا that the part hidden was more. It is thus evident that the part exposed was less. God provides His guidance and light so that people adopt the right path and not that they conceal it. Jesus (sws) and some other prophets of the Israelites have rebuked the Israelites for their attitude of hiding parts of the Book of God. Thus, he is reported to have said: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew, 5:14-16)

The sentence “and you were given that knowledge which neither you nor your forefathers knew” is coordinated to the previous interrogative sentence. The implication is that even after knowing all these favours of God, they say that God has not revealed anything, then such audacity has no bounds.



وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّدِينِ الْيُسُفَىٰ وَيُنذِرُ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

This verse is an answer to the inward aspect of their statement that was hidden in their minds viz. why did God reveal a Book after the Torah and what gap did it fill? The attitude adopted by the bearers of the Torah with it has been secondarily pointed to in the previous verse. Now the absolute and independent status and need of the Qur‘ān is explained: it is not an un-introduced book; its glad tidings were given to Abraham (sws) and its arrival was predicted by both Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). It has come in accordance with the news already given about it. Here the words مبارك and مصدق are used for the Qur‘ān’s status found in the previous books. The former word refers to the glad tidings of universal blessings given to Abraham (sws) that they will manifest themselves in form of the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) from the progeny of Ishmael (sws). It is stated in the Torah:

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham (sws) from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” (Genesis, 22:15-18)

I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah the blessings mentioned in the above cited words for all the nations of the world materialized with the advent of Muḥammad (sws) and the revelation of the Qur‘ān.

The word مصدق means that the Qur‘ān has come in accordance with the prophecies mentioned about it in previous scriptures. These prophecies (eg. Dueteronomy, ch 18 and Gospel, ch 16) have been cited in Sūrah al-Baqarah’s exegesis. The characteristics of this book become evident from these prophecies and the need for which the arrival of this book was predicted beforehand also becomes known.

Besides the reason that the Qur‘ān was a universal blessing for all, the other reason is mentioned thus “and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it.” The Prophet (sws) should inform them that if they do not accept him as God’s messenger and the Qur‘ān as the Book of God, they will face a decisive

62. And this is a Book We have revealed, imbued with great blessings, confirming what came before it [so that you may give glad tidings] and so that you may warn the mother city and those who live around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers.



punishment from God.

This latter need of the Qur‘ān has been explained with reference to the Quraysh and the need was such that it had to be fulfilled. The Quraysh were the leaders of the Ishmaelites and they mainly lived in Makkah. The Ishmaelites were a people who were not aware of prophethood and divine scriptures. The Almighty had promised Abraham (sws) that he will send a prophet in the progeny of Ishmaelites who will prove a benefactor for all nations of the world. The Prophet’s arrival fulfilled this promise. It is an established practice of God that when He sends a messenger in a nation, if the messenger is accepted by it, then it is installed as the leader of the comity of nations. However, if the messenger is rejected by its nation, then the nation is destroyed because the truth has been conclusively conveyed to it. It was for this conclusive communication of the truth that the Almighty sent Muḥammad to the Ishmaelites as a messenger. About His messengers, God’s established practice is that they belong to the nobles of the people they are sent to and foremost address the leaders and chiefs of their nation. Thus Muḥammad (sws) was born in Makkah which occupied the status of the central city of Arabia and was also the place of residence of the Quraysh. For this reason, Makkah is called *umm al-qurā*.

The words “and those who believe in the Hereafter, it is they who shall believe in it and it is they who protect their prayers” refer to the righteous among the People of the Book. This topic is also discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah and in other verses of the Qur‘ān.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ قَالَ سَأُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرَجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فَرَادَى كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ وَمَا نَرَى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَاءُ لَقَدْ نَقَطَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

After the miscreants among the People of the Book, attention is now directed to the Idolaters of Makah. After briefly referring to the nonsensical remarks they gave about

63. And who is more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, or claims: “Divine revelation has been sent to me,” even though no divine revelation came to him and than the person who claims: “I shall reveal similar to what God has revealed?” And would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death and angels with outstretched hands would be demanding from them: “Hand over your souls; today, you will be meted out a humiliating punishment because you would fabricate falsehood about God and arrogantly evade His revelations.” And finally you have come to us alone as We created you the first time leaving behind all that We bestowed on you. And We also do not see with you your intercessors about whom you claimed they are Our partners in your affairs. All your ties have been broken, and whatever notions you had formed have turned out baseless.



the Qur’ān, they are informed of their fate. Since these statements were absolutely ridiculous and merely an expression of their arrogance, no response is given to them; instead, a fierce blow is dealt to their arrogance. The mention of these Idolaters begins with their greatest injustice: polytheism. By being incriminated with polytheism, a person usurps the greatest right of God and also commits the greatest disgraceful act against his own self. For this reason, it is called the greatest injustice. Moreover, it is a falsehood imputed to God because a person concocts it himself and then ascribes it to God even though he has no argument in its favour.

A further instance of imputation of falsehood is that some leaders of the Quraysh would say that the revelation that the Prophet (sws) claims to receive is also received by them and they too can present such a book if they want to. The purpose of this imputation was to do away with the impact the claim of the Prophet (sws) could have on the masses that he is guided by God through His angel. These fabricators would falsely maintain that they could present the words they receive through divine revelation but since they give it no importance, they make no claim. In verse 31 of Sūrah al-Anfāl, similar words from them are cited thus: *قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ إِنْ شَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَتَيْنَا قَالُوا* 64. It is a general principle that when a truth manifests itself, those whose arrogance is struck by it feel helpless against it. Then through such imposing statements they try to secure their position so that the common masses who have been deceived by them do not lose confidence in them and accept the truth. However, how and until when can such artificial show of courage and its proclamation evade reality? Finally, these boasters have to concede defeat.

On such instances as “and would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death” the answer to the condition found in these words is suppressed. This is because words fail to portray the horrific scene that is meant to be portrayed.

The words “you would fabricate falsehood about God” refer to their statement that they too received divine revelation from Him. In *وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ*, the preposition *عَنْ* evidences the fact that the word *تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ* encompasses the meaning of evasion. There can be many reasons for evading the Book of God. The most abominable of these evasions is the one done because of arrogance. Here precisely this is implied. It is a distinct legacy of Satan. It laid down very heavily on the leaders of the Quraysh that some honour or favour be bestowed to someone outside of them. For this reason, they would say that if God had really decided to make someone a messenger, He would have selected some chief of Makkah or Ṭā’if. The same arrogance exudes from their statements cited earlier.

The address from the words “and finally you have come to us alone as We created

64. And when Our revelations were read out to them, they would say: “We have heard. If we want, we can also present something similarly composed. These are but tales of the ancients.”



you the first time” has become direct so that the horrific nature of the fate referred to in “and would that you had seen when these unjust people would be in the unconsciousness of death” is portrayed before the eyes. It is as if the Day of Judgement has arrived and they are being addressed in these words. They will become before God without any wealth or supporters or intercessors which they thought would be there to help them. The previous words also show that when a human being comes into this world, he is practically a lump of fresh devoid of all abilities. After that, God nourishes and grooms his personality and blesses him with means and resources as well as wealth and assets that are ordained for him. The purpose is to see whether he becomes grateful to God or shows arrogance. Then comes a day when he returns to God empty handed. None of the things he possesses goes with him.

In the words تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ, the *fā‘il* in them has been suppressed. The actual construction is to the effect: تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ الْحَبْلُ. The reference is it to the intercessors who will not be there.

Section VIII: Verses (95-108)

The above section of verses concluded on the topic of monotheism. In this regard, more explanation is proffered regarding arguments in its favour in the succeeding verses. These arguments are drawn from the world around human beings and are stated in a way that they also substantiate prophethood and the hereafter. It is as if the whole topic of monotheism that is being discussed in this *sūrah* has been presented in a new style. Moreover, the right way – made evident by Abraham’s reasoning referred to earlier – on the basis of which this universe should be deliberated upon is also brought to the fore. Then in this connection, the Quraysh are addressed and warned regarding their circumstances. After that, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and assured. Then the believers are addressed and given directives that relate to the situation they were in. Reflection shows that the content of the *sūrah* progresses in this same way: central theme, monotheism, hereafter and prophethood are repeatedly discussed in different styles. Then with relation to objections raised by the addressees and the attitude they adopted, the discourse moves towards refutation or explanation or assurance of advice. However, the binding thread never digresses.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى ط يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ط ذَلِكَمُ اللَّهُ قَالِقُ تُوَفُّكَوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالِقُ
الْإِصْبَاحِ ؕ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ط ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ



لَيَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۚ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَرَاكِبًا ۖ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۚ انْظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكُمْ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةٌ ۚ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَارُ ۖ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَصَارَ ۖ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٠﴾ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُصَايِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَصْرَفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسَتْ نُبُيِّنُهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ اتَّبِعْ مَا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا ۖ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ۖ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلدِّينَارِ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ عَدُوًّا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ كَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Indeed, it is God who splits asunder the seed and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living. Such is God. Then where do you turn away? He alone brings forth the dawn and has made the night a thing of comfort and placed the sun and the moon with a measure. This is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God. And it is He Who has made the stars for you so that you may be guided by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained Our signs to those who want to know. And it is He Who has created you from a single being; then for each there is a resting-place, and a place of burial. We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand. And it is He who sent down water from the sky; then with it We brought forth the buds of everything; then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains. And palm-trees laden with clusters of dates and orchards of grapes, olives and pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different. Look at the fruit of each of these when it grows and behold its ripening when it ripens. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe. (95-99)

And they regard the jinn as God's equals, even though God Himself created them, and without any proof invented sons and daughters for Him. Glorious and exalted is He above what they say! He is the inventor of the heavens and the earth. How can He



have children when He does not have a wife? And He has created all things and is aware of all things. That very God is your Lord. There is no god but Him. He only is the Creator of all things. So, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things. Eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes. He is very Discerning and All-Knowing. (100-103)

Insightful revelations have now come to you from your Lord. So, he who now shows insight will benefit his own self and he who remains blind will alone bear its consequences and I am not your keeper. And in this way do We present Our revelations in various styles so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them and so that they speak out: “You have thoroughly read out to us,” and so that We can make it fully clear to all those who want to know. (104-105)

Follow then what is being revealed to you from your Lord. There is no deity but Him, and ignore the polytheists. And had God willed, they would never have indulged in polytheism. And We have not appointed you their keeper nor are you their guarantor. (106-107)

And do not abuse those they invoke besides God, lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance. In this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself. Then to their Lord will all of them return. So He will inform them of what they have been doing. (108)

Explanation

٦٥ إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى ط يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ط ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

The words *حب* and *نوى* mean “seed and fruit-stone.”

The mention of God’s signs begins with small things and then the larger ones are referred to. It is God’s power and might that is responsible to rent asunder seeds and fruit-stones and by making the extractions pass through various stages a plant is transformed into a tree. It is God’s power alone that bestows each seed and each fruit-stone with the abilities and potentials and then makes them grow and develop by ordering the earth, the heavens, the winds, the clouds and the seasons to play their roles and nurture them. In other words, every seed that grows from this earth, by its every existence, bears witness that it has come into existence by the scheming of the very being whose scheming has created the whole universe. If this universe was being governed by different gods and they would have been independent in their own spheres, not a single seed would have had the chance to develop, let alone the working of the whole universe.

65. Indeed, it is God who splits asunder the seed and the fruit-stone. He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living. Such is God. Then where do you turn away?



The words “He brings forth the living from the dead, and it is He Who brings forth the dead from the living” have been mentioned with slight variation in verse 37, where they have been explained. They actually signify an observation that can be made in every nook and corner of the universe. From the lifeless fruit-stones of mangoes and from the lifeless seeds of wheat, a luxuriant tree and a lush green plant sprouts, and then the luxuriant tree and the lush green plant become yellow and start to decay and finally wither away. The same observation can be made in human beings and animals. So much so, it is the same with nations and peoples: they follow a perpetual pattern of rise and fall. A nation suddenly emerges out of nothingness and dominates the whole world. A time comes when this very nation vanishes into nothingness. No one can escape this law of life and death, rise and fall. If someone besides God was also governing this universe, why can he not annul this law in even a part of the universe. If it is supposed that God does not even exist and this cosmos is a manifestation of matter or an unbridled power, then this manifestation should have continued and perpetuated. It should not have discontinued and no change in its direction should have occurred and it should not have changed.

Here a linguistic aspect needs attention. First it was said يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ; but in the second part the words are changed to مُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ. Thus it can be seen that in the first expression (bringing forth the living from the dead), a verb is used which portrays a situation. However, in the second expression (to bring forth the dead from the living), a *fā’il* is used which encapsulates the meaning of decision and intent. This difference of style in my understanding is that once life is acquired no living being is prepared to consign itself to death but such is the relentless law of nature that every living being must die. This is a very clear evidence of the fact that except for God, none has any authority in this universe. Had there been someone, why would he have not been able to defy dear death? In verses 86-87 of Sūrah al-Wāqī‘ah, it is similarly stated: ⁶⁶فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Generally people have confined these words to the age old question of what came first: the egg or the hen. However, it is evident from the aforementioned explanation that they signify laws of nature regarding life in non-living things and death in living things. Only God can implement them and none can flee from His grasp.

If the sentence “such is God; then where do you turn away?” is explained in the light of what is stated later in verse 102: “that God is your Lord”, then it is evident that in the first sentence the enunciative (*khobar*) is suppressed and if it is inferred that it is a complete sentence (without any such suppression), it would mean that all this is a benevolence of God; then where do you turn away.

It may be refreshed in our minds that the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of

66. So, why do not you restore this person’s life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful.



everything; however, at the same time, they associated partners with Him. For this reason, it is said that the right ideology is that when all this is God’s creation and control, then people should worship Him and show obedience to Him alone; however, their intellect has deserted them: if they take the first step in the right direction, the next diverges from the straight path and the truth that had been gained is forever lost.

This verse though occurs clearly in the context of monotheism, but it also subtly points to the hereafter. This is because when at every step life emerging from the death can be observed, then why should wonder be expressed at mankind’s recreation after death. If after decaying and decomposing, seeds and a fruit-stones can once again emerge from the earth, why can’t human beings after being buried in the earth once again rise from it?

فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ ۖ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٦٧﴾⁶⁷

The implied meaning of these verses is that besides observing the feats and glory of the Almighty in the earth that manifest in the seeds and fruit-stones buried in the earth, people should also observe His splendour in the sky above them. Just as He creates a tree by splitting a fruit-stone, He also brings forth the dawn after slicing through the veil of darkness. It is then stated that He has created the night to provide comfort and rest and alleviate people from tiredness of the day. They become fresh once again. This automatically shows that God sends the day after the night that people can start again with their chores and work for their livelihood. In verses 9-11 of Sūrah al-Nabā, it is similarly stated: ⁶⁸. *وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا*. The verses imply that if these people reflect on how the morning and the evening and the night and day appear in sequence, can they really believe that the one who brings the morning is different from him who brings the evening and the one who brings the night and different from him who brings the day? The fact is that all of them come and go at the behest of God. If the creators of the night and day were different, then how could such perfect harmony exist between them that the night would bring people the glad tidings of comfort, rest and deep sleep and the day would be a means of work and livelihood for them.

After the night and the day, the two great signs that appear in them are referred to: the sun and the moon. There is a law and calendar for each of them which they minutely obey and observe and not the slightest deviate from them. The count of days, months and years are measured by them and it is they which are responsible for producing various seasons. Moreover, in spite of being in the sky, they conscientiously and diligently, without even asking for any praise, serve the needs of

67. He alone brings forth the dawn and has made the night a thing of comfort and placed the sun and the moon with a measure. This is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God.

68. Have We not made your sleep a means of comfort? Not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood.



those who inhabit the earth.

The words “this is the planning of the Mighty, the All-Knowing God” depict the inference that can be drawn from the vigilance shown by the sun and the moon. The style of the statement is such as if it is the call of every heart that reflects on the system of this universe in the light of logic and reason. Many aspects are concealed in this small sentence.

Firstly, the sun and the moon do not have any say in the divinity of God. They are like parts of a machinery fitted in their place by the powerful and knowledgeable God. They carry out the responsibility and service consigned to them.

Secondly, this universe is not the battle-field of opposing forces and different deities. In fact, there exists amazing harmony between its opposite elements. This harmony testifies that the universe is governed by the intent of a single powerful and knowledgeable God and every thing that goes on in it is under His control.

Thirdly, this universe is not a place of amusement of some merry-maker. From its every nook and corner can be seen the testimony of its creator’s power, wisdom and knowledge. This further shows that the universe has been created with a purpose which is bound to materialize. Hence it is essential that a Day of Judgement come to portray His wisdom.

Fourthly, this universe is not a place where things are haphazardly dumped and scattered without any order. The fact is that it is the product of astonishing planning and everything in it has a set place. Every movement and rotation has a prescribed path. Every action that ensues does so under specific laws. Every freedom has restrictions and conditions that are known. It is quite evident from this arrangement that the Creator of human beings wants them too lead a life according to his directives so that their lives also become in harmony with the universe. This alone is the path to success. Under verse 5 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān, I will further explain this point. There the Qur’ān has also adduced prophethood from this testimony.

In this verse, the word تَقْدِير means “planning.” The attribute al-‘Azīz signifies His immense power and dominance and the attribute al-‘Alīm signifies His unfathomable knowledge that also encompasses His profound wisdom. This is because knowledge entails wisdom too. Also evident from this is that God is not part of this system of the universe. He is above and beyond everyone. His power, knowledge and wisdom embrace everything.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

After the sun and the moon, attention is directed to the stars: by serving the inhabitants of this world, they bear witness that the creator has deputed them to this

69. And it is He Who has made the stars for you so that you may be guided by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained Our signs to those who want to know.



task. When people journey by land and by sea, they guide their ships and caravans like lighthouses and turrets. How foolish it is to deify things which by their own existence show that they have been put into the service of human beings by their creator. Moreover, in spite of being in the heavens, they are serving the needs of those who live on the earth. People should think that if the creator of the heavens had been different from that of the earth, why would He have thought of this help. The fact is that this situation shows that the same God governs both the sky and the earth. It is He Who has put the stars in the service of human beings so that they are grateful to Him and worship Him alone.

It may be noted here that when Arab poets portray their travels by night, they mention the stars both with respect to the guidance they provide in these journeys and also by guiding them about various parts of time of night. In other words, they serve both as clocks and as travel guides. However, along with this, the Arabs also worshipped certain stars. Thus, Sirius (*shi‘rā*) has been referred to by the Qur‘ān. It would appear in the Spring season. Similarly, some stars were regarded as bringing good fortune and others as bad fortune.

The word *آيَاتٍ* in *قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ* has different meanings. Here it means “signs” and since every sign is a proof of the thing it is a sign of, it also means “proofs” and “arguments.” As monotheism is mentioned here and secondarily the hereafter and prophethood too are mentioned, it would here mean arguments and proofs about them. Because every sign of God encapsulates multiple aspects, it is stated in this verse that God has explained every sign. However, it is not stated what are the entities whose signs are being stated here. It has been left to the understanding of the addressee: those who have this curiosity will get the answer.

A subtle reference also exists in the word *آيَاتٍ*. It has been mentioned earlier about the rejecters among the Quraysh and this will be re-iterated at the end of this section that they would demand a sign to believe in the Qur‘ān. They would actually imply a palpable miracle by it. By keeping in consideration this mentality, it is said that if they want to see miracles, then God has stated signs that satisfy the intellect and the heart. However, they are beneficial to those only who have the thirst for knowledge in them. Those who are devoid of it will remain blind even if all types of miracles are shown to them.

At times a verb is used to connote its intention. For this reason, the words *لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ* would mean “for people who want to know.” This style exists in other languages too.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۖ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

After directing attention to the signs around themselves, the signs found within the creation of human beings and the means and resources given to them are mentioned

70. And it is He Who has created you from a single being; then for each there is a resting-place, and a place of burial. We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand.



The word **أَنْشَأَ** used here does not merely mean “to create,” it also means to make someone grow and develop. The “single being” refers to Adam (sws) who is regarded by all divine religions as the father of mankind. The Arabs too accepted this reality.

It is said that the mate of this being was created from its own species and then men and women were scattered in the earth. Though there is a variation in their faces, appearance, languages and dialects yet all of human beings have the same instinctive and natural needs. This is proof of the fact that all of them have the same creator. He has created all these leaves and off-shoots from the same tree. There is an apparent difference and disparity between a man and a woman. However, the inner and outer aspects of factors of harmony that exist between them testify from their very existence that the creator and sustainer of both is the same. He has created them for a common purpose. In other words, they are asked to reflect whether all this has been created by a single God and is the family of a single parent or is it the creation of different deities in the form of scattered species each having a different ancestor.

It is on this unity of ancestor and unity of creator that God has founded the human society and has regarded those who try to dismember this foundation as criminals of spreading anarchy in the land.

In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā’, I have discussed this issue in detail. Its very first verse presents this premise thus:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا. (١:٤)

O People! Have fear of your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from its species created its spouse and through these two scattered many men and women and fear the God whose name you invoke to seek help from one another, and respect blood ties. Indeed, God is watching over you. (4:1)

The word **مُسْتَقَرٌّ** means a resting place and **مُسْتَوْدَعٌ** refers to a place where something is safely lodged. Concomitant indications show that the former means the place where a person lives when he is born. Thus the words **وَمَتَّاعٌ إِلَىٰ الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ حِينٍ** (and for you is a place of living and benefiting from means until a specific time) are used in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The latter word means a person’s place of burial. When a person comes in this world, he has to encounter both these places. He lives the number of days ordained for him and benefits with specified means and resources. This life of a human being and using these resources shows that he is watched over by God and is in His knowledge. Once his life period ends in this world, he consigns his soul to the creator and wherever he is buried, it is in God’s earth that he is consigned to. At God’s behest, the



earth will return what is entrusted to it. Just as the living place of a person is in God’s knowledge, His place of burial too is in His knowledge. His knowledge embraces everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. At another instance, this aspect is mentioned in the Qur’ān with much more detail. Thus in verse 6 of Sūrah Hūd, it is said: وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ ⁷¹ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

In other words, if after birth human beings receive the means and resources of sustaining themselves from God, why should they regard someone else to be their guardian and protector? By using the word مُسْتَوْدَعٌ for the burial place, a subtle indication is made of raising them up after death: it is said that when people die, they are not obliterated; they are in fact entrusted to the earth from where they will be extracted and rewarded for their gratitude if they had acknowledged God’s favours. Others will be punished for their ingratitude if they did not duly value His favours. This mercy and providence of God is an essential consequence of His knowledge and wisdom.

The words “We have fully explained Our signs to those who understand” also occur earlier. This repetition shows that the addressees are very stubborn and do not want to understand and put forth the excuse that why is not a miracle being shown to them. The difference between “knowledge” and “understanding” is that the former relates to the intellect and the latter to the heart. Thus it is stated elsewhere in verse 179 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf: “they have hearts that do not understand.” This is a reference to the fact that God’s signs become apparent to a person when he uses his intellect and his heart. When he becomes a slave to the observable, he is exemplified by a donkey which only understands the use of force. Here this too needs to be kept in mind that the intellect and the heart reach God through observation of the universe when a person has the ability and courage to look beyond the observable. If he confines himself to what is palpable and observable and all his efforts revolve around these things that are only going to benefit him in this brief span life, at times he may see a mole but is unable to see the mountain behind it. This is the ailment in which a person becomes a slave to immediate gains. The consequence of this is that he sees everything but understands nothing.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَرَاكِبًا وَمِنْ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ⁷² انظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ ⁷² إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

71. And the sustenance of every single living being on earth is God’s responsibility. And He knows his place of dwelling and the place of his burial. Everything is written in an open Book.

72. And it is He who sent down water from the sky; then with it We brought forth the buds of everything; then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains. And palm-trees laden with clusters of dates and orchards of grapes, olives and



Attention is now directed to the signs and arguments that depict God’s mercy, providence, power, wisdom and His oneness as well as testify to the hereafter. They can be seen at every step provided a person wants to believe in them.

The word السَّمَاء means “sky” as well as “clouds.” It may be noted that the verse began with the speaker not being specified and then it was specified as God. This has an expression of affection, care and providence in it and also a reference to the fact that it is God Who rules everywhere in the heavens and the earth, the air and the clouds. If the heavens were ruled by one power and the earth by another, how could harmony have resulted such that the heavens would rain down water and the earth expel its treasures as a consequence? Also found in this is a subtle insinuation of the hereafter. At numerous instances in the Qur’ān, the revival of dead land as a result of rain is presented as evidence of the hereafter. If this is possible, why is being raised to life again not possible?

The words “then from it We raised lush green branches from which We create multi-layered grains” is mention of a specific form of providence after the general one. It relates to human beings. First grains are mentioned since they are commonly needed and can also be stored. People are invited to reflect that if they are able to benefit from these grains through such an arrangement, is some unbridled force doing all this or is it the product of a wise and powerful creator. Producing harmony and concord between so many diverse elements to ensure life can only be done by a noble creator.

In both parts of وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ مَنْ يُطْعِمُهُمْ وَذَاتِ النَّبَاتِ وَجَنَّتٍ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ verbs are suppressed. The first is a passive verb and the second, an active one. After grains, dates are mentioned which were the staple fruit of the Arabs. They are mentioned in a way that attention is focused on their trees, on buds being created in these trees and from these buds heavy hanging bunches coming into being so that man is able to behold the creativity of God found in their initial appearance until the time they ripen. Merely by reflecting on this creativity, a person can comprehend the Creator and has some idea of His power, wisdom, mercy and providence. The obvious reason of this is that people are able to have cognizance of God otherwise as far as the need of dates as a means of sustenance is concerned, it is not essential that a small fruit seed gradually become a large tree, then at one stage buds and then spikes come into being; after that fruitlings develop which gradually mature into fruits whose bunches because of their weight hang low and all this by its very existence invites people to deliberate on them. Our hearts bear witness that all this elaborate arrangement is for the reason that the secrets of God’s power, providence and wisdom are revealed to people. However, it is the blindness on the part of science that it can see wisdom but cannot see the wise being behind it;

pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different. Look at the fruit of each of these when it grows and behold its ripening when it ripens. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe.



similarly, it can spot providence but not its originator. More strange is the case of people who see that from the birth of a date tree to its development and ripening all elements of nature look after it but they still foolishly believe that this world is the battle-field of many deities and intents. Even more amazing is the case of the simpletons who see all these arrangements of nourishment and also benefit from them but think that all this is merely to feed them and comfort them. This question never arises in their mind whether all this imposes any responsibility on them from its provider and whether a day will come when they will be questioned about these favours. It is as if they enjoy privileges but have no obligation towards them.

After dates, more fruits are mentioned thus: “orchards of grapes, olives and pomegranates whose fruits are alike and also different.” The purpose of their mention is not just to point to a few specific fruits for they are only mentioned because they were very common in Arabia. The real purpose is to inform people that they were not just provided with food but with fruits too. It is then stated that these fruits reflect God’s providence, mercy, power, wisdom and generosity because each has different varieties which are similar to one another and others which are different from one another in appearance, size and taste. They should reflect that for their sustained existence, they did not need all these varieties for they could have lived with dry bread and water. Why then did the creator create for them all kinds of fruits in such abundance to people to savour their taste buds and provide fragrance to their sense of smell? The reason was that they see the reflection of the attributes of their creator in everything and then purify themselves and incite the sense of gratitude that is innately found in every human being and which is the foundation of religion.

In the expression *أَنْظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ* in accordance with linguistic principles, the word *إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ* have been suppressed after *يَنْعِهِ*. The antecedent of the pronoun in *إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ* is all things mentioned above. The pronoun occurs in the singular so that it points to each of these things separately and directs people to reflect on each of them.

The verse states that people should reflect on all the phases of each of these things that begin with their inception and end on their ripening. If they do so, they will witness so many signs of God’s power, wisdom, providence, creativity, micro-management, benevolence and beauty that they will not be able to count them. They ask for a single sign and a single miracle. If they have eyes, each branch, each flower and each fruit is no less than a miracle. Even the smallest of things has thousands of manifestations of God’s inimitable power writ large on it. It has been alluded to earlier that this world did not need all these marvels and majesties for its survival. It could have been created in a very simple and monotonous form and could have existed in this form; however, the creator of the heavens and the earth wanted that each and every petal and each and every flower reflect His great power and wisdom and His unfathomable mercy and providence so that man is able to comprehend Him. It is a great misfortune of man that, on the one hand, when he discovers a broken piece of



pottery from the archaeological remains of the Moenjo Daro and Harappa, from the crooked lines sketched on it, he fashions out a complete interpretation and history of the art, culture, civilization and religion and in short everything of that age; however, on the other hand, such is his thick-headedness and lack of taste that he is not able to comprehend the wisdom of the Almighty etched in abundance on every petal in this universe nor is he able to receive any guidance from them.

In the expression *أَنْظُرْ إِلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا أَتَىٰ بِنِعْمَةٍ*, the antecedent of the pronoun *إِلَى شَيْءٍ* is all things mentioned above. The pronoun occurs in the singular so that it points to each of these things separately and directs people to reflect on each of them. Here the Qur‘ān has not merely invited people to reflect but has also guided them to its methodology.

In accordance with linguistic principles, the word *إِذَا أَتَىٰ* have been suppressed after *يَنْعِمُ*. Since the words *إِذَا أَتَىٰ* were present after *إِلَى شَيْءٍ* there was need to state the words *يَنْعِمُ* after *إِذَا أَتَىٰ*. In this way, what was mentioned became a proof of what was suppressed.

The verse states that people should reflect on all the phases of each of these things that begin with their inception and end on their ripening. If they do so, they will witness so many signs of God’s power, wisdom, providence, creativity, micro-management, benevolence and beauty that they will not be able to count them. They ask for a single sign and a single miracle. If they have eyes, each branch, each flower and each fruit is no less than a miracle. Even the smallest of things has thousands of manifestations of God’s inimitable power writ large on it. It has been alluded to earlier that this world did not need all these marvels and majesties for its survival. It could have been created in a very simple and monotonous form and could have existed in this form; however, the creator of the heavens and the earth wanted that each and every petal and each and every flower reflect His great power and wisdom and His unfathomable mercy and providence so that man is able to comprehend Him. It is a great misfortune of man that, on the one hand, when he discovers a broken piece of pottery from the archaeological remains of the Moenjo Daro and Harappa, from the crooked lines sketched on it, he fashions out a complete interpretation and history of the art, culture, civilization and religion and in short everything of that age; however, on the other hand, such is his thick-headedness and lack of taste that he is not able to comprehend the wisdom of the Almighty etched in abundance on every petal in this universe nor is he able to receive any guidance from them.

Consider now the last part of the verse: “Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe.” It has been stated earlier that in order to acknowledge a fact, it is not merely sufficient that it is evident; the first thing required is that a person have the intent to accept it. People have generally not gone astray in this world because of a lack of knowledge but because of a lack of strong and sincere intent.

Let us now reflect on the signs that are indicated in this verse.

The first thing that becomes evident is that this world replete with so much wisdom has not come into existence out of its own accord nor has it been created by an



These verses start off by implying that every object of this universe is providing the testimonies about God and His attributes mentioned earlier, yet such is the foolishness of these people that they have ascribed the jinn to be God’s partners. It may be noted that the things which the people of Arabia associated with God included angels, jinn and the stars. Here, however, by mentioning the jinn the foremost, the Almighty has indicated the horrific nature of polytheism: what is the relation between the splendour and majesty of God mentioned earlier with this utter idiocy of equating Him with hand made idols of brass. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs would worship the jinn under the same ideology as held by some current nations that worship ghosts. They would assign a jinn or a ghost to various valleys, trees and hillocks and in order to remain secure from their anger would present offerings before them and worship them. Some jinn were regarded so dangerous that to remain secure from them, as will be indicated in verse 137 ahead, children were sacrificed. This heinous sin would probably be committed by those parents who superstitiously thought that if one of their children was not sacrificed to please the jinn, the rest too would be killed by him. This superstition has commonly existed among savage nations of the world.

In the expression **وَحَلَقَهُمْ** the **و** signifies state and it is in reality a parenthetical expression. Such was the horrific nature of what was stated that it had to be refuted forthwith: these people regard the jinn to be God’s peers whereas God has created them. How can God’s creation be equated with Him? It may be kept in mind that the Arabs regarded God to be the creator of the whole universe. In this respect, their polytheism was not just contradictory, they were blatantly contradictory: how can God leave the world He has brought into existence at the mercy of the jinn He has created Himself?

Consider the sentence: **وَحَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ**. The expression **الْكذب** means “to fabricate a lie.” The people of Arabia regarded the angels to be daughters of God. They would make their likenesses regarding them to be their deities and would worship them. Though primarily the superstitions of the Idolaters of Arabia are mentioned here, yet the Qur’ān by mentioning sons besides daughters has extended the scope of the discussion. In this way, the beliefs of those nations too have been refuted who regarded God to have sons. An example is the Christians. The words **بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ** mean that all this was done without any logical or scriptural argument. In verse 56 of Sūrah al-Mu’min, the words similarly used are **بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ** (without any proof that came to them).

As far as God is concerned, He is a self-evident reality of human nature and intellect. Without believing in God, neither is the enigma of this world solved nor do

does not have a wife? And He has created all things and is aware of all things. That very God is your Lord. There is no god but Him. He only is the Creator of all things. So, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things. Eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes. He is very Discerning and All-Knowing.



human nature and intellect receive satisfaction. This premise is acknowledged by both monotheists and polytheists. However, whether God has partners or not needs proof and the onus of this proof lies on the one who makes this claim. This proof could have been of two types. It could either have been from God Himself that He has chosen certain beings to have a share in His divinity and regards them to be His children, or some argument was found in their favour in human nature and intellect. In the absence of both, on what grounds can this ascription be made and people become servants of many gods? God is not a matter of amusement. He is believed in because there is no other option. Moreover, what exactly is the compulsion in accepting others with Him? Without proof, a person does not even accept anyone to have a share in his property. Why then does he accept a share for some entities in the divinity of God?

The word *سُبْحَنَهُ* is meant to express a lack of negative attributes. However, a very clear argument of monotheism is also present in it. It is an obvious requirement of human nature and intellect that no attribute should be ascribed to anyone which contradicts or negates any attribute which is established, universal and self-evident. If this is done, then its necessary consequence is that a fact which a person accepts is negated by another hypothesis he accepts. If someone is a king, then the attributes of a slave cannot be ascribed to him. Similarly, the attributes of an angel cannot be ascribed to Satan. Likewise, how can someone who is the creator, the master, is powerful and all-knowing and also noble and merciful be regarded to have attributes which creatures have. If someone does this, then he negates all the attributes acknowledging which is essential as per sense and reason and as a result of whose negation man is again engulfed in the darkness from which the light of God's attributes had led him out. If after accepting God as God, the jinn and the angels are regarded to be His associates, then how can He still be God? Then His peers and equals also exist and both His partners and rivals come into being.

Consider now the expression: *بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ*. The word *بَدِيعُ* means “to bring something into existence out of nothingness.” The expression means that God has created the heavens and the earth from nothingness. In other words, when there was nothing, God still existed and this is a universally acknowledged reality. It means that every object of this universe is a creation of God. When this is so, how can it be equated in status to Him? How can they have a share in His divinity?

The verse “How can He have children when He does not have a wife?” implies that ascribing children to God opens the way to an even greater foolish concept. It may be noted that in spite of their nonsensical notions of polytheism, the Idolaters of Arabia never regarded God to have a wife. That is precisely what the Qur’ān has raised this question. If this cannot be denied, then all that exists is His creation and this ascription is rendered totally baseless.

The sentence “and He has created all things and is aware of all things” is the proof for complete negation of associate of God and of polytheism. In other words, when



God has created everything and His all knowledge is all-embracing, then what is the need for Him to seek help from partners? There is no possibility to accept that fact that God has created everything but He is not aware of what He has created. The creator necessarily knows everything. Thus in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Mulk, it is stated: *أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ* (would He not know Who has created?) Here it may be kept in mind that if the Arabs worshipped the angels by regarding them to be the daughters of God, it was not because they regarded them to be creators; they only regarded them to be favoured ones of God who inform Him of the desires and needs of those who worshipped them and secure these things from Him.

The words “He only is the Creator of all things; so, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things” that He watches over everything and thus all hopes and fears should be pinned on Him.

The words “eyes cannot see Him though He is able to see the eyes” are meant to sound an assurance. A ḥadīth depicts this very meaning thus:⁷⁴ *تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ* (worship God as if you see Him; if you do not see Him, He nevertheless sees you). It may be kept in mind that one of the reasons for polytheism since the very start is that the naïve wanted to see God in some palpable form. It is this notion that has produced mediators between God and human beings. When they could not see God with their eyes, the foolish fashioned idols of these entities and began worshipping them by regarding these idols to be a manifestation of God’s being, attributes or His avatar. Thus modern Hindu philosophers today present this new argument in favour of idol worship. I am also struck with wonder to observe that the Sufis of Indo-Pak who have clung to the religious innovation of having a shaykh (guru), also present this same argument in favour of their innovation. They say that since human beings are desirous of a palpable entity, having a shaykh is a means to have a palpable presence of God. The Qur’ān has dispelled this misconception here that God is not someone who can be observed or touched. One is near or distant from Him through one’s heart. If a person keeps God in remembrance, he becomes closer to Him and vice versa. If a person’s eyes are not able to see Him, it does not matter; the eyes of God see him at all times wherever he is and this is sufficient for a person’s trust in Him.

The sentence “He is very Discerning and All-Knowing” corroborates what is just said. Nothing whatsoever is hidden from Him. In other words, He does not need any means and mediators. If people seek Him, they will be sought by Him. Their eyes might not be able to see Him but they are seen by His eyes everywhere.

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ

74. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 27, (no. 50).



الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

The word بصيرة is used in the Qur‘ān to imply insight and also arguments that produce insight. Here it is used in this second meaning and refers to the verses of the Qur‘ān that can potentially lift the veil from the eyes provided people are prepared to open them.

It is evident from the words “and I am not your keeper” are directly from the tongue of the Prophet (sws). It has not been said: “Tell these people” What needed to be said was stated by the Prophet (sws) himself. This style of revelation shows proximity of the soul of a prophet to the divine. It is as if God is speaking from his tongue.

The expression “and in this way” in “and in this way do We present Our revelations” refers to the earlier arguments presented in favour of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter.

Consider the expression: وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ. The word درس means to erase and rub away. درس would mean that “he erased the sign.” When a person repeatedly reads a book particularly while placing a finger on the text, as is the convention in reading religious texts, the lines get dimmed. For this reason, this word came to connote reading something very thoroughly and memorizing it.

Reading a book can be for one’s self and also for reading it out to others. Thus the words قراءة and تلاوة are used in both these meanings by the Qur‘ān.

In accordance with linguistic principles of Arabic, the copulative clause of وَلِيَقُولُوا is suppressed. The overall meaning of the verse would be: “We present our revelations in different styles and aspects so that if they want, they may understand them and if they persist in their attitude, then at least they do acknowledge that the Prophet (sws) has thoroughly read out to them.” Moreover, the Almighty is explaining everything so that those who are desirous of knowledge can acquire knowledge from them.

It should be kept in mind that when the Almighty sends a messenger to a nation that messenger conclusively conveys the truth to it. So much so, their hearts speak out that the messenger has done what best could have been done to convey the truth whether they acknowledge this from their tongue or not. Here “so that they speak out” actually refers to what they say on their hearts.

A nation which, in spite of acknowledging a truth in its heart, adamantly persists in denying the messenger through its words and deeds is destroyed in accordance with God’s established practice.

75. Insightful revelations have now come to you from your Lord. So, he who now shows insight will benefit his own self and he who remains blind will alone bear its consequences and I am not your keeper. And in this way do We present Our revelations in various styles so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them and so that they speak out: “You have thoroughly read out to us,” and so that We can make it fully clear to all those who want to know.



اَتَّبِعْ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْشُرَٰكِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا ۚ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيفًا ۚ وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٧٧﴾

These verses are directed to the Prophet (sws). Besides following what is stated, he should remember that had God’s wisdom entailed he would have given people the choice to accept whatever religion they wanted to. So, the Prophet (sws) should not be worry in this matter. His sole responsibility is to communicate the truth and this is precisely what he is doing. He is not responsible or accountable before God for their faith. He should leave them to do what they want to. If they do not fulfil their responsibility, they will bear its consequences.

The word وکیل here means “guarantor.” In other words, when God has neither made the Prophet (sws) their keeper nor is he their guarantor, why should he worry about them?

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

This is a very apt on the spot directive to the believers. It is similar to the one mentioned in verses 86 and 148 of Sūrah al-Nisā’. The context of both these verses is that the attitude of the hypocrites was severely criticized. After that, the believers were told that in spite of this criticism, they must not break communication with them or stop greeting them in the ceremonial; similarly, they must not also say harsh words to specific individuals lest the matter becomes personal. In the verse under discussion too, a similar pattern has been adopted. After severely criticizing polytheism and polytheists, it was deemed appropriate that the believers be told that their refutation of polytheism should not become so vehement that the zealous among them start to abuse their deities. This directive was essential also because the phase the believers were passing through was one of intense debate, as will become evident from subsequent verses. It was quite possible that in the heat of discussion, believers cross the limits even though it is imperative for the believers to not transgress bounds even while dealing with their enemy, as is referred to in verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah.

The second important aspect of this directive is that what is more blessed and

76. Follow then what is being revealed to you from your Lord. There is no deity but Him, and ignore the polytheists. And had God willed, they would never have indulged in polytheism. And We have not appointed you their keeper nor are you their guarantor.

77. And do not abuse those they invoke besides God, lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance. In this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself. Then to their Lord will all of them return. So He will inform them of what they have been doing.



consequential in the case of preaching is that discussion must be confined to foundational beliefs are discussed so that the addressees are not given a chance to express their violent bias. It can be proven that monotheism is the call of human nature and polytheism is baseless, the divinity of these alleged deities will automatically be dashed to ground. There is no need at all to abuse them. However, if in the heat of argument people start to abuse their deities which the polytheists vehemently submitted to for generations, they could be psychologically cornered to say bad words about God in their frenzy and after that would never have been prepared to listen to any further preaching. The words “lest crossing the limits they start abusing God in their ignorance” indicate that even though the idolaters believe in God but when in their frenzy, how could they have abided by bounds of decency especially when they are not aware of God’s attributes and rights?

Viewed thus, it is evident that abusing the deities of the idolaters is pointless. If they are conjectural, what is the use of fighting with a shadow? And if they belong to the category of angels, prophets and saints, then there is no question of abusing them. In short, this attitude is against the spirit of preaching and also violates the norms of intellect and justice. And what is most important is that abusing false gods of the idolaters opens the way to abusing the one true God.

It may be noted that instances in the Qur’ān where the helplessness and baselessness of the idols is portrayed is a different matter. In the first place, what believers have been stopped from here is abusing their deities and not criticizing them. Secondly, the verse here refers to hypothetical or real beings which the idolaters would worship and call upon, as is evident by the words “those they invoke besides God.”

The words “in this way, We have made the actions of each community seem pleasing to itself” allude to the fact that every nation holds its traditions and beliefs dear. Hence if these are openly humiliated, people become violent. In such a case, every critic must keep in mind that only those aspects should be discussed that are appropriate and that too in a polite way. The style should not hurt them.

Here the Almighty has ascribed the word “pleasing” (*tazyīn*) to His own self. This is a reference to the fact that it is quite natural for a nation to have a bias and attachment for its cherished things and cultural and collective traditions. If this does not exist, then national unity cannot come into being. It is what binds families, nations and countries together. In its absence, people become leaves scattered about by the wind. Hence, it has a certain place in human life which is a requirement of nature and as such should be kept in consideration. It should be checked only when it starts to deviate from the truth and should be checked in a manner that the necessary obligation owed to it is not compromised.

It may be kept in mind that the Qur’ān has also accepted the importance of the way of the forefathers. It has only demanded that only those things among it should be followed which are not against the teachings of human nature and God’s guidance.



Similarly, the believers are informed here that it is important to cleanse the beliefs and deeds of people but this task must be done with great care and wisdom. Every nation is deeply attached to its traditions and this is among the consequences of the nature God has ordained in human beings. For this reason, it is essential that things that have infiltrated into human nature and are against it should be cleansed from it. However, no one should indulge in any aggression against human nature itself because it will prove counter productive.

If one reflects on the words “then to their Lord will all of them return; so He will inform them of what they have been doing” in the light of the whole verse, the implied meaning would be: the believers should not cross limits in their zeal of preaching; if in spite of being aware of the truth people adhere to their mistakes, they will be regarded as criminals; on the Day of Judgement, they will be answerable to God and the believers will not be responsible for them in any way; if this is the case, then why should the believers cross limits in their responsibilities? In other words, this is an assurance sounded to the believers much like the assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) in the previous verse.

Section IX: Verses (109-117)

In the previous section of verses, logical and natural arguments in favour of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are mentioned in detail. In the succeeding verses it is being stated that even after all these arguments, these people are still demanding a miracle. The Prophet (sws) asked to inform them that this is not under his jurisdiction. Only God has this authority. He can show all sorts of miracles. However, these people will not accept faith even if they see every type of miracle. This is because the real reason for not professing faith is not the absence of signs and miracles; their hearts and their eyes have gone wayward. Just as they remained blind even after seeing numerous signs found in this universe, they will still remain blind if several miracles are shown to them.

After that, assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) by referring to an established practice of God that is found in this world and which is faced by every prophet and every preacher of the truth: devils among human beings and the jinn necessarily embark upon opposing their preaching. This situation on the one hand distinguishes good people from the bad ones and on the other gives more time to the evil elements to do what most they can to oppose the truth.

Next, it is proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that there is no option for him but to follow the directive of God in the ensuing dispute. God has given His verdict between vice and virtue by revealing a Book. The People of the Book know that this Book is from God. Those who are opposing it are following Satan and in their



matter the words of God will come true: in response to Satan, God had said that He will fill Hell with all those who follow him.

In the end, the Prophet (sws) is told to strongly adhere to his stance and consign the matter to God.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ آيَاتِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَنُفِّلْنَا عَنْهُمْ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرْنَاهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَاهُ إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْنُفُوسَ وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَا كَانُوا إِلَّا أَعْيُنًا مُنْمَوِّاتٍ إِلَّا نَبَأَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَاطِئِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلْنَاهُ فَنَذَرْنَاهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلِتَصْغَى إِلَيْهِ أَفْئِدَةُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَلِيَرُضُوا عَنْهُمْ مَقَتَرْفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ ابْتِغَى حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَتَبَتُّ لَكُمُ الرِّبَا صِدْقًا وَعَدًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا أَكْثَرَهُمْ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

And while swearing emphatic oaths by God, they say that if a sign comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Signs are with God alone. And what do you know that even if they come, they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness. And if We had sent down angels to them, and the dead had also spoken to them, and all things would have been collected before them in groups, even then they would not have believed, except if God wills. But most of them are afflicted with ignorance. (109-111)

And We have similarly made the mischievous among humans and the jinn to be the enemy of every prophet. In order to deceive one another, they keep inspiring falsehoods to one another. And had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this. So, leave them engaged in their fabrications and this is because the hearts of those who deny the Hereafter are inclined towards it and so that they like it and so that they earn whatever they can. (112-113)

Should I find a judge other than God even though it is He Who has revealed this detailed Book to you and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been



revealed with the truth from your Lord. Thus, you must never become among those who doubt. And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all. And most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God. They only follow conjecture and merely speculate. Indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided. (114-117)

Explanation

وَأَنفُسُ بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ آيَاتِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَاهُ إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْنُفُوسَ وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَا كَانُوا إِلَّا يَوْمِنُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يُجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾⁷⁸

The word جهد means “to try as best as possible.” The expression بذل جهده means “he tried his best.”

The disbelievers contended that if they were shown a miracle, they would believe that it is from God and the one who has showed it is His messenger and the Book he has presented is from God. It is obvious that their purpose in swearing these emphatic oaths was not what they outwardly claimed. It was part of propaganda against the Prophet (sws). By this, on the one hand, they wanted to mislead the masses who were being impacted by his veracity; they surmised that if this simple demand from them was met, they would believe in him. On the other hand, they wanted to influence the upright believers that if he was a true messenger of God, what is hindering him in fulfilling this demand for if he does it, they will accept faith.

The answer given at this precarious juncture is true to the core and disregards the fact that these believers may make fun of it: only God has the authority to show miracles and not the Prophet (sws). His responsibility is it to only deliver warnings and glad tidings.

The addressed pronoun in وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ is in the plural and the address is directed at the common Muslims. When matters reached this peak in the heat of discussion, it was but natural for them to think that a miracle would now be shown. They were told that this will not be so; whatever miracle is shown, the disbelievers will still be adamant on their denial. This is because the real reason of their denial will still stand even if

78. And while swearing emphatic oaths by God, they say that if a sign comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Signs are with God alone. And what do you know that even if they come, they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness. And if We had sent down angels to them, and the dead had also spoken to them, and all things would have been collected before them in groups, even then they would not have believed, except if God wills. But most of them are afflicted with ignorance.



they are shown a miracle.

The words “and We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not believe the first time” point to God’s established practice regarding blessing someone with the urge to accept faith: those who reflect on the innumerable signs found within and around themselves and whole-heartedly accept the conclusions which this reflection entails are blessed with the urge to accept faith. On the other hand, the eyes and hearts of those who persist in their blindness even after observing all these signs are made to turn away from the truth. After that, the greatest of miracles does not impact them. It is the law of God that those that look in crooked directions instead of looking straight and tread the wrong path instead of the right one are made to end up with crooked hearts and ideologies. Then like squint-eyed people they are only able to see everything from their own angle. This established practice of God is mentioned in the Qur’ān in the words: (۵:۶۱) فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (so, when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray 61:5)). Here, in the verse under discussion, this very established practice of God is referred to and Muslims are questioned as to how they think that if these people are shown a miracle on their demand, they will accept faith; after all, all these signs are found around people and within them – which the Qur’ān has emphatically pinpointed and explained their arguments and insinuations. When none of these was able to set right the approach of their hearts and eyes, how can a new sign change them? How can the veil which stretches across them today be removed tomorrow and where will the blindness that obstructs them to see today go away when a sign manifests itself? They are bound to deny this sign the way they have been denying other signs. On that day too their hearts and eyes will deny the truth the way they are doing today. This situation transpires as a result of God’s established practice. For this reason, just as at some instances, the verb “leading astray” is ascribed to God, the act of turning away eyes and hearts is also ascribed to Him. The antecedent of the pronoun in لَمَّا يُؤْمِنُوا is the Qur’ān.

It is evident from the words “and leave them to wander in their rebelliousness” that their real reason of not accepting faith is their rebelliousness. They regarded God’s favours to be a result of their own efforts and the preaching of God’s messenger was striking a blow at their arrogance of being leaders. The punishment for this arrogance was that their eyes and hearts were turned away from the truth and they were left by God to wander in their rebelliousness.

The word قبل can be a verbal noun which means “to see someone come from in front” and it can also be the plural of قبيل which means “a group” or “a party.” Examples of both these meanings exist. For the first, verse 55 of Sūrah al-Kahf can be seen: ⁷⁹وَمَا مَنَعَهُ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةٌ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا

79. And after guidance has come to people, the only thing stopping them from accepting faith and seeking forgiveness from their Lord is that the fate met by the previous ones also



the second, verse 93 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl can be cited: ⁸⁰ أَوْ تَأْتِي بَالَهُ الْغَيِّبَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ يَشْكُرُونَ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَاطِئِينَ الْإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۚ وَكُوشًا رَّبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ ۖ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلِتَضَعِ الْأَيْدِي الْيَدِ الْأَيْدِ الْيَدِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَلَيَرِضُنَّ عَنْهَا وَلِيُفْتَرُوا مَا هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ ⁸¹

It is evident from the words “except if God will; but most of them are afflicted with ignorance” that the only way these people will accept faith is that God gives them the urge to do so and this does not happen without His wisdom coming into play. He does not force people to accept faith. He gives this gift of faith to those who value it and for this use those faculties and potentials that are innately found in them. When they use them, they are further blessed with the urge to accept faith. As for those who want to profess faith, they are becoming blind because of being overwhelmed with their desires. How can they accept faith?

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَاطِئِينَ الْإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۚ وَكُوشًا رَّبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ ۖ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلِتَضَعِ الْأَيْدِي الْيَدِ الْأَيْدِ الْيَدِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَلَيَرِضُنَّ عَنْهَا وَلِيُفْتَرُوا مَا هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ ⁸¹

The word “similarly” points to the hostile attitude adopted by the Quraysh and their allies in those times against the Prophet (sws). This verse assures him that he is not the only prophet to face such a situation. All prophets before him faced it. It becomes a means of trial for the upright and their potentials blossom and gives evil elements the chance to work their mischief so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth.

This topic is discussed in verse 122 ahead in these words: أَوْ مِنْ كَانَ مِثْلًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا

⁸² يَنْشِئُ بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ Since this test of the righteous and the respite given to the wicked takes place as a result of God’s grand scheme of trial, and is actually a necessary consequence of the freedom of choice given to human beings, it has been ascribed to God.

The word زُخْرُف means “something deceptive” or “something which is false but an attempt is made to coat it with the truth.” In the expression زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ, the adjective is

manifests for them or the torment appears from in front them.

80. Or unless you bring God and His angels to stand before us.

81. And We have similarly made the mischievous among humans and the jinn to be the enemy of every prophet. In order to deceive one another, they keep inspiring falsehoods to one another. And had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this. So, leave them engaged in their fabrications and this is because the hearts of those who deny the Hereafter are inclined towards it and so that they like it and so that they earn whatever they can.

82. Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them.



annexed to the noun it qualifies. It refers to those polytheistic innovations which have been invented in every era by the collusion of devils among men and jinn; they would then label these as the *sharī‘ah* and give them currency in the society. When the prophets of God and the righteous called upon them to correct them, they began to dispute and debate with them. Thus, at this instance too, nothing different happened. When the Prophet (sws) called them to monotheism and pointed out the baselessness of the things they had prohibited on the basis of their idols and idolatrous beliefs, these leaders of polytheism rose up against him in antagonism. They tried to lead astray all those who they could inveigle and tried to convince the masses that Muhammad (sws) was trying to lead them away from the religion of their forefathers and from the ways of Abraham (sws).

It does not need any explanation to understand that the system of evil and polytheistic beliefs exists in this world because of connivance between the devils found among the jinn and human beings. The greatest malice which Satan has is for monotheism. For this reason, he continues to strike it from angles through ever-new ploys. Those among human beings who are misled by him are afflicted with wrong beliefs and they become his instruments to mislead others, as stated in verse 122 ahead. Verse 128 further explains this collusion.

The words “and had your Lord intended, they would not be able to do this” refers to the fact that whatever is happening is happening because of God’s will and his law of trial. He has given both the jinn and human beings the choice to accept good or evil. He could have made every tread the path of virtue but His wisdom entailed that there should not be any compulsion in this matter and people be given the choice to accept good or evil. Under this law, the evil find respite of a few days to tread on the path they want to. The Prophet (sws) is told that he should tread his path and invite people towards it. He should leave to themselves those who do not want to hear him and want to remain in their self-created innovations. They will see their fate themselves. In the Qur’ān, the word *افتراء* is used for polytheism and religious innovations.

The co-ordinated clause of *وَلْيَضْحَكُوا إِلَيْهِ* is suppressed and the attribute of Satan’s followers is described by the words: *الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ*. It is evident from this that the appeal of the miscreants mentioned here is effective for only those who do not believe that they will be raised to life again. They are ones who only desire the luxury of this life. The word *اقتراف* means “to earn.” In the Qur’ān, it is used in both positive and negative meanings. Here it is used in the latter sense, ie. “to earn evil.”

The implied meaning of the last verse is that the respite given to devils among the jinn and human beings to oppose the prophets and the righteous and to try to lure them to religious innovations is to test the upright. On the other hand, the miscreants are lured away from the right path and they become happy and do whatever deeds they want to. This respite is the essential consequence of the freedom of choice given to human beings and thus comes under the established practice of God.



أَفَعَيِّرَ اللَّهُ أَتَّبِعِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا ۖ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابُ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنْذَرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ
بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُبْتَدِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَتَبَّتْ كِبَيْتُ رَبِّكَ صَدَقًا وَعَدْلًا ۖ لَا مَبْدَلَ لِّكِبَيْتِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّيِّمُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَ
إِنْ تَطِعْ أَكْثَرُ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ
مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾⁸³

This is the Prophet’s response to the debate started by the Idolaters. They were disputing with him regarding monotheism and polytheism and what is allowable and not. They are told that who else but God Himself has the right be regarded as the best judge in this debate. If surely it is His right, then how can the Prophet (sws) regard someone else to have this status when God has also revealed a book to them in which He has resolved all disputes in detail. On the one hand is this detailed divine scripture and on the other are their baseless traditions. What is more worthy of being decisive in this regard?

As has been explained under verse 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 20 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, the People of the Book mentioned here in “and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been revealed with the truth from your Lord” are the righteous among them who had testified to the veracity of the Book. If the ignorant among them are not accepting its status, the Prophet (sws) should ignore them; people of true knowledge know that it has been revealed from God to settle the dispute between truth and falsehood. In verses 52-53 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, this evidence borne by the righteous among the People of the Book is cited thus: ⁸⁴الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ

Though the words “thus, you must never become among those who doubt” are apparently addressed to the Prophet (sws), they are actually directed at the wrongdoers.

It may be kept in mind that when some truth is presented before people who have gone astray, it is not immediately welcomed. On the contrary, the majority opposes it.

83. Should I find a judge other than God even though it is He Who has revealed this detailed Book to you and those to whom We have given the Book know that it has been revealed with the truth from your Lord. Thus, you must never become among those who doubt. And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all. And most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God. They only follow conjecture and merely speculate. Indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided.

84. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: “We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival.”



The leaders and the miscreants of the nation oppose it because it is against their vested interests. As for the masses, since they are followers of their ancestral traditions, everything that is against these traditions is disliked by them even though it might be a great reality supported by convincing arguments. The behaviour of the majority at times inflicts hesitancy and doubts regarding this reality in the minds of those who though have pious intentions but are not fully mature in their thought process. It is to teach such people that this verse hints at and the next provides specific guidance. They are told that the veracity of something is judged on its own standards and if any external evidence is required then the evidence of serious, knowledgeable and morally upright people in its favour is sufficient however small in number they may be. It is famously known about Socrates that when some of his well-wishers cautioned him that all people of Athens are angry at his views, his nonchalant reply was that he just cared about one single person who was wise. More details are coming up on this debate about minority and majority.

Consider next the words: “And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice. And no one can change His words. And He hears and knows all.” The Prophet (sws) is being told that if today he finds all the devils among human beings and the jinn united against his message, it should be no matter of amazement. This is precisely the same situation as had been referred to in the incident of Satan and Adam (sws). At that time, he had been given the respite he had asked for to lead astray mankind. He had threatened that he would lead astray the majority to polytheism and idolworship. In response God had said that He will consign him and his followers to Hell. In verse 168 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, this aspect has been explained. Here it has been referred to show that by being lured away by Satan, they have made God’s prediction come true about them. This verdict of God conforms to the standards of both truth and justice. In other words, what God has said is not only true, it is also just. This is because God has conclusively communicated the truth to them. If, in spite of this, they insist on following the suggestions of Satan instead of following the guidance of God, they deserve the fate God has informed them of. The verdicts of God are subservient to the established practice set by Him. No one can change it. God hears and knows all. Neither are any of His actions based on a lack of knowledge nor is there any chance of a mistake or injustice in them. It may be kept in mind that these words were meant to warn the Idolaters and assure the Prophet (sws). Readers may look up verse 34 of this *sūrah* to understand further the words “and no one can change His words.”

What is stated earlier in verse 115 is now explained by the words: “and most people of this world are those that if you obey them they are bound to lead you away from the path of God.” Though the address is singular but its sense is plural. The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest care about the opposition to monotheism and support to idolatrous innovations he is facing. It is not based on any proof or reasoning. It is entirely based on conjecture and speculation. The claim made



by these people that they are following the way of God and what they had inherited from Abraham (sws) is false. It has no relation with both. None should be misled that the majority is with this erroneous view. If people start to follow this majority which is devoid of knowledge, they will necessarily be led astray. The clamour of the majority is no proof of its veracity.

The address in the words “indeed, your Lord well knows him who has strayed from His path and well knows the rightly guided” is general. None should be misguided by the majority. People should adopt the path of those whom God is regarding as guided and abstain from the ones he is regarding as misguided. These words not only form glad tidings for the guided, they are also a warning for those who are errant. This is because when God is fully aware of both groups, He will deal with them accordingly. The claims of those will be no use to them who have gone astray but pose as the guided.

Section X: Verses (118-140)

In the succeeding verses, the religious innovations of Idolaters are refuted. They claimed that these innovations were inherited by them from Abraham (sws) whereas actually they were Satan’s inspirations. The Qur’ān has regarded them as baseless and regarded as allowed the things that were deemed prohibited under these innovations. At this, they raised the propaganda that Muḥammad (sws) had allowed things their ancestors had forbidden ever since the times of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). This campaign naturally impacted those with weak temperaments. I have explained in detail under verses 168-172 that human dispositions are very sensitive in the matters of eating and drinking, and if these matters relate to idolatrous innovations, their impact is very swift. For this reason, the Qur’ān has refuted them in detail and explained the real way of Abraham (sws). This subject will now continue until the end of the *sūrah*. In between, certain things are also discussed as on the spot of comments or refutation of doubts. However, all these directly and indirectly relate to this subject. Their occasion and context will become evident when they are mentioned.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرُّتُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لِّيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَاءِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِشْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِشْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يَذْكُرِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفَاسِقٌ ۖ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَيُؤْخَذُ إِلَىٰ أُولِيئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوهُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مِيتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَ



forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion. And indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations. Your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits. And leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin. Indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning. And do not eat from those animals which have been slaughtered without pronouncing God’s name. Indeed, this is defiance. And the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you, and if you obey them, then you too will end up as polytheists. (118-121)

Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them. And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this. And when a sign came before them, they would say: “We shall never believe in it until we are given what God’s messengers have been given.” God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood. Those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues. Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe. And straight is the path of your Lord. We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed. For them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds. (122-127)

And bear in mind the day when He will gather all these. He will say: “O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind.” And their companions from mankind will say: “Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us.” God will say: “Now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever except what God wills. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.” And We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds. O Groups of Jinn and Humans! Did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours? They will say: “We bear witness against our own selves.” And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers. This is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware. And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing. And your Lord is self-sufficient and an embodiment of mercy. If He wants, He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations. What you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp. Say: O People of my Nation! You tread on your way; I am treading on mine. So, soon you will know for whom is the good



fate of the next abode. Undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed. (128-135)

And they have set aside for God a share from the very cultivated land and animals created by Him. Thus, they say: “This share is for God” – they claim – “And this share is for our associates of God.” Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge! And in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them. And had God willed, they would not have done so. So, leave them to these falsehoods of theirs. And they say: “Such and such animals and such and such crops are prohibited. Only they may eat it whom we allow according to our view.” And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God. God will soon punish them for these falsehoods they have been guilty of. And they say: “Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it.” God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God. They have gone astray and could not remain among the guided. (136-140)

Explanation

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرُّتُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِنْ كَثِيرًا لَيُفْضِلُوهُنَّ بِأَهْوَاءِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَذُرُوا طَائِفَهُمُ الْإِنَّمِ ۖ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِنَّمِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾⁸⁵

It has been pointed out earlier that when the Qur’ān regarded those animals as lawful for eating which the idolaters had prohibited because of their polytheistic superstitions a great propaganda was created by them. They contended that the Prophet (sws) was regarding as lawful what had been regarded as unlawful ever since the time of their ancestors Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). In such matters, as alluded to before, the general mind is prone to weak faith and is also very sensitive.

85. So if you believe in His revelations, then eat the animals that have been slaughtered by pronouncing the name of God, and why should you not eat from things on which God’s name has been pronounced, when He has detailed out what He has regarded as forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion. And indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations. Your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits. And leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin. Indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning.



For this reason, it readily accepts such foul campaigns. In order to dispel this impact, the Qur‘ān has stated here that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest care about what these idolaters regard as lawful or unlawful once God has specified in His Book what exactly is unlawful to consume. The only restriction on what is lawful is that the name of God should be pronounced when such animals are slaughtered.

The words “so if you believe in His revelations” are for emphasis and, in fact, signify warning. In other words, it is the essential requirement of faith in God’s revelations that the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest pay heed to this baseless propaganda. Only God has the right to regard things as lawful or unlawful. If this right is granted to someone else as well, then this will mean that he is being given a share in the rights of God, and this precisely is polytheism. The implication is that the issue does not relate to merely eating one thing or abstaining from it. The issue is that once things which are regarded as unlawful on the basis of polytheistic superstitions are declared lawful by God, [they must be benefited from]. If they are still abstained from, then this will imply indirectly acceding to polytheism. Hence this becomes a matter of belief and disbelief. The requirement of monotheism, as is subsequently stated, is that a person stays away from both the apparent and hidden forms of polytheism.

The words “and why should you not eat from things on which God’s name has been pronounced, when He has detailed out what He has regarded as forbidden to you with the exception when you under compulsion” imply that when what is unlawful has been explained from God, there is no option left for those who have faith in God to still remain hesitant. The expression “detailed out” refers to the detail that has been mentioned in this *sūrah* as well as later ones (for example, in verses 114-119. What is said here in this *sūrah* relates to regarding edibles unlawful under polytheistic superstitions and not to regard something unlawful merely because of one’s view. However, the stress on eating what is lawful is because the matter of monotheism and polytheism is very important in religion and the *sharī‘ah* does not want even the slightest doubt to arise in such matters. If even a slight concession is given in this regard, it can nurture hypocrisy in people. In other words, this emphasis was to set up a distinction between a sincere believer and a hypocrite. Those who still abstain from consuming things that have been regarded as lawful show that the germs of polytheism and *jāhiliyyah* are still found in them. In the methodology of prophets of God and the righteous, this distinction has a very basic importance and this is also a requisite of human nature and intellect.

The words “with the exception when you under compulsion” state that in such a situation even what is unlawful becomes lawful for a person. The bounds and limits of this compulsion are stated at other instances. It needs to be kept in mind that the idolaters would readily eat what was prohibited by God even when they were not under any compulsion. However, they would never go near those things that they had forbidden on the basis of their polytheistic superstitions – even if their life was at stake.

The word أَهْوَاءَ means “desires.” However, it is evident from the context here that it



refers to polytheistic innovations which are regarded as religion merely because of desires. The words *بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ* (without knowledge) refer to this very aspect. In other words, the idolaters do not have any sanction for these from God. The aspect that the Qur‘ān wants to allude by the word “most” in “and indeed most people without any knowledge are leading [people] astray through their innovations” has been referred to earlier in verse 116. The expression “without knowledge” is also meant to dispel the misconception of the simple-minded who would magnanimously accept all the views of their elders and superiors thinking that they must have some strong evidence and they [the simple-minded] are not aware of it.

The words “your Lord knows full well these who exceed limits” occur in contrast to what is stated thus in verse 117 “and He well knows the rightly guided.”

The words “and leave aside both the outer and inner aspect of sin” emphasize in a very subtle way what is said earlier.

Every vice has two aspects. One is its inner aspect and the other its outer one. In other words, one is its essence that is found in a person’s heart and his soul, while the other is its manifestations which become evident in a person’s life. One aspect of polytheism is to regard someone to be God’s associate in His being, attributes and rights. A second one is its manifestation and forms like idols, divining arrows, *baḥīrah*, *sā‘ibah*, *waṣīlah*, *ḥām* and other similar things. They are the practical forms of polytheistic belief. Obviously, both have a deep relationship with one another. They grow and develop through mutual support. For this reason, if a sin is to be totally rooted out both its essence and its manifestation need to be rooted out. Without adopting this strategy, this is not possible. If the forms and manifestations of a sin are ignored by thinking that since its essence has been refuted, then such a sin will continue to grow and develop through its forms and manifestations and gradually takes firm roots in the society.

Here, in the verse under discussion, attention is drawn to the fact that just as it is essential to forsake polytheism, animals that are regarded as prohibited by rendering them sacred under polytheistic beliefs must also be considered having no sanctity and thus lawful to consume. They must be slaughtered in a way that God’s name is pronounced at the time of slaughter. If they still feel hesitant in this regard, it means polytheism still has some roots in their hearts. And if these roots are not there, then from where are the branches getting their nourishment? In

verse 145 of this very *sūrah*, it is thus said: *قُلْ لَا آجِدُ فِي مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خَنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ بِهِ*

*فَبَيْنَ أَصْطَرٍّ غَيْرَ بَاطِلٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ*⁸⁶

86. Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else’s name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.



It was on this very principle that the Prophet (sws) obliterated all the manifestations and signs of polytheism right after the conquest of Makkah. Though the word used in the verse under discussion is **أَشْمَ**, concomitant indications show that it means polytheism.

It may also be kept in mind that the case of virtues (like vices) is no different. Each has an essence as well as a form. Just as it is essential for the elimination of vice that both essence and form be eradicated, for virtues too it is essential that if they have to be nourished then its form too must be nourished together with its essence. If the form is not nourished, it will become depleted and its growth will be stunted. More discussion on this aspect will be found under verse 33 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the next *sūrah*.

The words “indeed, those who commit sin shall soon be punished for this earning” warn those who were arguing and debating with the Prophet (sws) and the believers in support of their baseless innovations.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يَذْكُرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۖ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادُواكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

In the previous verse, it was stated that animals that were prohibited on the basis of polytheistic beliefs should be consumed by slaughtering them while pronouncing God’s name. In this verse, animals on which the name of God is not pronounced are regarded as prohibited. The Idolaters raised a furore on this issue as well just as they did on things that were regarded as lawful earlier. The reason for this was that they did not believe that God’s name must necessarily be taken on an animal to render it lawful. When the believers would regard those animals as lawful which they and their forefathers regarded as unlawful, it must have struck a blow to their arrogance that arose from their religious concepts. They must have tried to incite their masses against the believers in a very malicious way. It is this furore which is being pointed to by the words “and the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you.” However, the Qur’ān did not pay heed to their uproar just as it did not in the case of previous one. It openly stated if the name of God is not pronounced at the time of slaughter, it is pure defiance on their part. It also sounded this warning to the believers that if they are influenced by this uproar and obey them, then they too will end up as polytheists.

Here it needs to be reflected as to why taking God’s name at the time of an animal’s slaughter has been regarded as essential so that in its absence it becomes unlawful to consume. Some of its reasons are very apparent. I will try to allude to them.

87. And do not eat from those animals which have been slaughtered without pronouncing God’s name. Indeed, this is defiance. And the devils are suggesting their agents to fight with you, and if you obey them, then you too will end up as polytheists.



Firstly, every act that is begun without taking God’s name and *tabbīr* is devoid of His blessings. It is essential to pronounce His name while benefitting from any of His favours whether big or small so that people are able to acknowledge this graciousness of God. Without this confession and acknowledgement, whatever use a person gains from a thing is extortion and extortion is nothing but stubbornness and obduracy which makes a person worthy of punishment before God.

Secondly, it is a requirement for the sanctity of life that the name of God be pronounced at the time of slaughter. Life is sacred, whoever it may belong to. Had God not given us the permission, it would not have been allowed for us to take the life of even an animal. It is only at God’s behest that we have this right. For this reason, it is essential that we pronounce His name whenever we take the life of an animal. If His name is not pronounced or if it is pronounced together with someone else’s name or merely someone else’s name is pronounced, then this will violate the sanctity of that animal’s life as well as that of the Creator of life.

Thirdly, this shuts the door to the wide path of polytheism. Those who have studied history of religions know that the sacrifice of animals, their vows and offerings have always had a significant role in worship rituals. As a result of this significance, they received great impetus in polytheistic religions. Nations who became religiously enamoured with a deity tried to win its pleasure through animal offerings and sacrifice. The challenge of Satan mentioned in the Qur’ān in which he threatened to lead mankind astray also specially alludes to this way of misguiding them. In order to close all these doors that lead to polytheism, Islam has forbidden animals unless the name of God is pronounced on them at the time of their slaughter. If this is not done, then not only is it a wrong act in itself the animal also is forbidden for eating.

It is evident from this that in Islam this only is not forbidden that an animal be slaughtered such that the name of someone other than God is pronounced, this too is forbidden that an animal be slaughtered by not taking any name at all. Only forgetfulness in doing so can be an exception, and this forgetfulness stands forgiven only for believers because the name of God is already found in their hearts and intent. Only temporary negligence makes them forget expressing it.

أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَشِيءُ بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكْبَرًا مُجْرِمِينَ لِيُعَذِّبُوا فِيهَا وَمَا يُكْفِّرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ
مَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

88. Can the person who was dead, then We raised him to life, and gave him a light with which he is walking among people be similar to a person who is in layers of darkness from which he can never emerge? In this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them. And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement



The word “death” refers to the life spent in disbelief and “life” refers to life spent in belief. The word “light” refers to the Book mentioned in verses 114-119 that was revealed to distinguish right from wrong and to explain the lawful and the unlawful. “Layers of Darkness” refer to the speculations, superstitions, whims and innovations referred to in verses 116 and 119.

The first verse presents a parable of belief and disbelief: God blessed the believers with the life of faith after the death of disbelief and also bestowed on them a radiant light in the form of His book. It is stated that will these people be the same as the ones whose parable is that they are wandering in the darkness of their superstitions and innovations and are not ready to emerge from it. The purpose of mentioning this parable is to encourage the believers that they no longer should they pay heed to this clamour of these devils from among human and jinnkind. God has blessed them with life and they should move on with this message of life. It is not befitting for them now to listen to the nonsense of these people who are wandering in darkness.

The words “with which he is walking among people” refer to the fact that when someone is blessed with light from God, his obligation towards it is to obtain guidance from it and also present it before other people so that those among them who have the potential can benefit from it. Light is not a thing to be hidden. It is to be placed at a high place on a path frequented by people. Thus, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” (Matthew, 5:15)

The words “in this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them” are meant to assure the Prophet (sws). He should not despair at people who insist to remain in darkness and show aversion to the guidance he has brought to them; the law of God is that what people like surrounds them. This aspect is discussed further in verse 125 thus: **فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَلْبًا يَصْعَدُ فِي السَّاءِ**

كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ⁸⁹ We have also discussed this law at the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Consider the sentence **وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكْبَرًا مُجْرِمِينَهَا**. The word **جَعَلْنَا** here means **امهنا** (to give respite).

The words “is a similar way” in “and We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it” refer to the situation mentioned earlier in verse 121. These words actually mention God’s

so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this.

89. Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe.



established practice in a different way which has been stated earlier in verse 112. What is implied is that if these deviants among human and jinns are trying their best to oppose the mission of the Prophet (sws), then this is not something new. People whose interest is tied with evil have always tried to plot schemes to oppose the preaching of prophets and in accordance with God’s established practice they are given a certain respite so that whatever wrongdoings they are able to do, they have the opportunity.

In the verse *وَمَا يَنْصَرِفُونَ إِلَّا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ*, an incomplete verb is suppressed before *يَنْصَرِفُونَ*. The verse implies that the schemes they plotted went against them. Those who oppose the truth do not harm the truth; they in fact fatally harm themselves. However, since they cannot see their fate, they are not cognizant of it. Similar is the case with the wrongdoers of the Quraysh. They too are following their footsteps and will ultimately reach the same fate though they are not aware of this.

وَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا تُومِنُ حَتَّى نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ ۚ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَنْصَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾⁹⁰

This is an example of the scheme mentioned earlier. The leaders of the Quraysh would precisely plot this scheme, as has been detailed in the Qur’ān. They too were afflicted with the same conceit as that of the rejecters of messengers and the haughty people of the past and asked that if God wanted to grant the position of messengerhood to someone, why could He only single out Muḥammad (sws) for this position? Why did He not choose from among the leaders of Makkah and Ṭā’if? Obviously, they gave this statement only as a machination and an evil scheme. The purpose was to provide a cover to them for their egotism and self-deception and to fool the general masses. The simpletons among them highly regarded worldly means and resources. If they saw someone prominent and resourceful in this world, they thought that he must be great in the sight of God as well. They would be very easily lured in this trap. For this reason, the Qur’ān has called it a plot – a political gimmick.

The words “God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood” imply that the position of messengerhood is not something which every Tom, Dick and Harry is entitled to. God knows full well who to choose for this. It is not a velvet or silky cloth that at times is even put on donkeys. It is in fact a divine appointment which is received only by those who are selected by God for it.

90. And We have given respite in a similar way to the ringleaders of every settlement so that they may plot their schemes in it. And they only plotted these schemes against themselves but were not aware of this. And when a sign came before them, they would say: “We shall never believe in it until we are given what God’s messengers have been given.” God alone knows better whom to entrust with His position of messengerhood. Those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues.



Just as it is evident from these words that prophethood and messengerhood are blessings of God given only to those chosen by Him, it is also evident from it that only those people are chosen for these positions are the best human beings standing at the miracle of lofty morals.

In the verse “those who are working mischief will face a humiliating and a severe torment with God for their intrigues” while the words “working mischief” refers to all their wrongdoings, a special reference here is to their arrogance as per which they demanded that they too be chosen as prophets and messengers. It is because of this arrogance that they will be humiliated and punished by God.

فَنَزَّلَهُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَانْتَبَإٍ يَصْعَدُ فِي السَّيِّءِ كَذَلِكَ
يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَهَذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ
السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾⁹¹

The word حَرَج means “a narrow place replete with bushes.” Here it occurs after ضَيِّق to emphasize it.

The word تَصْعَد means “to climb an incline with difficulty.”

Just as the word سَبَاء means “clouds” it also means “atmosphere.” Thus for example in verse 24 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm it is said: أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ حَرَّبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّيِّءِ⁹²

These verses depict the real reason for not professing faith: they have been deprived by God’s graciousness to accept faith. In other words, their schemes and plots are only a deception. The real thing that stops them from professing faith is the filth of disbelief and polytheism whose thick rust has settled on their hearts. For this reason, the way of Islam seems to them to be a steep incline; when they imagine surmounting it, they feel tightness in their chests and become breathless. God makes people whose hearts have the filth of polytheism inconducive to Islam, as is said in verse 122 thus: “in this way, the deeds of the disbelievers have been made to seem fair to them.” Only those people’s hearts are inclined to Islam which are without such filth. Because this is also in accordance with God’s established practice, it is ascribed to Him.

Consider the sentence: هَذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا. Since a demonstrative pronoun has the

91. Whomsoever God wants to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. And whomsoever He wants to misguide, He tightens his heart as if he is climbing the sky. In such a way, God afflicts with impurity those who do not believe. And straight is the path of your Lord. We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed. For them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds.

92. Have you not reflected how God has mentioned the parable of the noble word? It is like a noble tree whose root is deep in the ground and whose branches are spread out in the air. It continues to bear its fruit with the directive of its Lord in every season.



meaning of a verb in it, the word مُسْتَقِيمًا is in the accusative of state from صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ. What is implied is that Islam is the straight path adjudicated from God; it is the straight path endorsed by human nature that has neither any zigzags in it nor any ups and downs. However, those who have burdened themselves with heaps of unnatural filth find it difficult to tread.

The next sentence “We have explained Our revelations in detail for those who want to pay heed” implies that God has furnished all arguments that show that Islam is the religion of human nature as well as the way of Abraham (sws). However, only those people will find these arguments convincing who have the intention to be reminded and the ability to reflect.

The sentence “for them is a house of peace with their Lord and He is their Guardian because of their deeds” states the reward of those whose hearts are made conducive to Islam by God. On the other hand, for the adversaries of Islam, there will be the abode of humiliation and their companions will be those from among the jinn and human kind whose fiendish suggestions were readily accepted by them and they went astray. This sentence is in parallel to what is said above thus: “soon these wrongdoers will face ...”

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَبِيْعًا يَعْشَمُ الْجِنُّ قَدِ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ أَوْلِيُوهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَبَلَّغْنَا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَلْتَ لَنَا ۖ قَالَ النَّارُ مُثْوَلَةٌ خُلْدِيْنَ فِيْهَا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللّٰهُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُؤْتِي بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾ يَعْشَمُ الْجِنُّ وَالْإِنْسُ اَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقْضُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَلْبَتَىٰ وَيُنْذِرُوْكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا ۖ قَالُوْا شَهِدْنَا عَلَىٰ اَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلَىٰ اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكِ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَّاَهْلُهَا غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣١﴾ وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَةٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣٢﴾⁹³

The pronoun “these” in “and bear in mind the day when He will gather all these”

93. And bear in mind the day when He will gather all these. He will say: “O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind.” And their companions from mankind will say: “Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us.” God will say: “Now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever except what God wills. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.” And We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds. O Groups of Jinn and Humans! Did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours? They will say: “We bear witness against our own selves.” And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers. This is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware. And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing.



refers to the diehard wrongdoers mentioned in earlier in verses 123 and 124. The word “all” is emphasizing that besides the devils among human beings, the ones among the jinn too will be gathered there. They were the ones who led astray these diehard wrongdoers.

Also the expression “O Group of Jinn” does not refer to their entire community. Only those who followed Iblīs, their supreme leader, are the ones implied. He himself, as is known from the Qur‘ān, belonged to the jinn. It was he who had deceived Adam (sws) and while defying the command of prostration had arrogantly said: *قَالَ ارْجِعْكَ هَذَا* ⁹⁴ *الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَكِنِ أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا*. At another instance, his words are: *لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ثُمَّ لَا يَنصُرُهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ*. ⁹⁵

In the verses under discussion, people who have a flair for language know that the words “you have led to yourself many from mankind” have a very subtle insinuation to the words of the two afore-cited verses: “I shall consume all his progeny except a few” and “and You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You.” In other words, God will address these figurative descendents of Iblīs and say that they have successfully accomplished the mission of their leader: they have led them away and how docile were these descendents that were lured away by them in such a naïve way.

In the verse “and their companions from mankind will say: ‘Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and have reached the time you had prescribed for us’” the words “thoroughly benefitted from one another” imply that these companions from mankind worshipped these deities, made offerings and vows to them, regarded at their behest what was lawful to be unlawful and vice versa, were misused by their soothsayers, magicians and mediums for their evil motives until this day arrived and they never got the chance to reflect on what they were doing.

It may be kept in mind that in the social and religious lives of the Arabs in the *jāhiliyyah* period, the jinn played a very significant role. It was because of the jinn that soothsaying and magic flourished. They even thought that poetry was a product of inspiration received from the jinn and that every great poet had companion jinn. It is for this reason that they said that the Prophet (sws) too was accompanied by jinn. Similarly, every valley was regarded to have jinn that would control it and the jinn had a significant role in matters of their travels, stays, wars, peace and conquests.

Here an aspect of eloquence of the discourse needs to be kept in mind: This statement of the devils among mankind will be a confession and an expression of shame and through this prelude they will seek God’s forgiveness. However, it is clearly evident from the style of the discourse that God will interject even before their statement is complete, and without giving them a chance to apologize, will declare His

94. He said: “Just see! Is this the one who you honoured above me? If you give me respite until the Day of Judgement, I shall consume all his progeny except a few.” (17:62)

95. I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them. Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left. And You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You. (7:16-17)



verdict that Hell is now their abode in which they will abide forever (النَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّكُمْ خَالِدِينَ) (فِيهَا); so they must not try to present excuses; the doors to apology, excuse and forgiveness now stand closed.

Here the words “except what God wills” after “now, Hell is your abode; you shall abide in it forever” are worthy of attention. A similar style can be seen in verse 107 of Sūrah Hūd: خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمُوتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ.⁹⁶

This exception has caused some confusion in the minds of exegetes. This is because it shows that apparently “eternal stay” in Hell does not after all seem “eternal.” They think that the word “eternal” here signifies a long period of time. In order to avoid this interpretation, some have regarded مَا to mean مَنْ. These interpretations are against Arabic language. The exception of eternal Hell is from those who deserve eternal Hell. This would mean that essentially there will still be some who deserve eternal Hell.

In my view, the exception is not meant to express the fact that the time of stay in Hell will end one day. It means that once these people are afflicted with punishment, no hope will be left for them; no intercession, influence or pleading will have any impact; the limits of intention and freedom of will die away; no time will be left for repentance or reformation. The only thing that will remain is God’s intention and will and the secrets of His intention and will are known to Him only. He is able to accomplish, come what may, whatever He intends (فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ) and is All-Wise and All-Knowing. This is what most can be understood from the words of the Qur’ān. Those who have gone beyond these limits to infer something should be judged for their inference on its own merit. It is not right to regard it to be the purport of the Qur’ān. It may also be kept in mind that the concept of “eternity” is not something that can be fully grasped by the human mind. If people try to go after its implication, they may enter the domain known only to God (*mutashābihāt*). The Qur’ān has stopped its followers from doing so. For this reason, it is better to accept whatever God has disclosed and consign the knowledge of the next steps to Him.

Verse 129: وَكَذَلِكَ نُوَلِّي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (and We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds) refers to what is said earlier in verse 128: يَبْعَثُ الْجِنَّ قَدِ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ (O Group of Jinn! You have led to yourself many from mankind). The words وَلَّى تولية فلانا الامر and وَلَّى means to make someone in charge and in control of someone. What is implied is that if these devils have been able to control so many human beings, it is not because these devils have any authority over human beings; the misdeeds of these human beings are the reason for it. They left God’s guidance to follow their desires and religious innovations. The result was that they became followers of Satan, and it is the law of God that those who become the

96. They shall remain there as long as the heavens and the earth are intact except what your Lord wills.



followers of Satan are consigned to his progeny.

The word “wrongdoers” in “and We let the wrongdoers get hold of each other in this way because of their misdeeds” refers to polytheists and disbelievers. This topic was discussed earlier in detail and will also come up ahead too in various forms.

The question “O Groups of Jinn and Humans, did there not come to you messengers from among you who would recite My revelations to you and would warn you of this Day of Meeting of yours?” is meant to leave them with no excuse. The implication is that in the absence of messengers, they could have had an excuse but not after they have come to them. They closed their eyes and ears after listening to and understanding everything.

This verse also shows that just as the Almighty sent human beings as messengers among human beings, He also sent jinn as messengers among the jinn. The necessary consequence of God’s established practice regarding messengers also entails that the messengers belong to the same species as their addressees. This is obviously because they speak the same language and are able to convey the truth conclusively to them according to their circumstances. This conclusive communication is the real obligation of prophets and messengers and this is not possible if they are not of the same species as their addressees. Both the jinn and human beings are different species. Most of their issues are different from one another. If there is anything common, it can be regarding some principles related to beliefs and morality. Issues related to the *sharī‘ah*, law and social spheres are bound to be different. Furthermore messengers are exemplars for their own kind; so, how can they become examples for others? If for human beings, no messenger from among the jinn can become an example, how can a messenger belonging to human beings become an example for the jinn? The reason that God sends messengers to their own kind obviously is that because he is their own brother who speaks their own language and represents their collective conscience and is an exceptional human being himself as well. This makes conclusive communication of the truth possible. If this pattern was not adopted, the jinn could have presented this excuse on the Day of Judgment that how could the words and deeds of someone not belonging to their species become a conclusive argument for them. However, this much is true that just as the miscreants and devils among jinn and human beings collude and collaborate against the truth, as is stated in the previous verse, there are examples in which the righteous among the jinn support the truth which manifests itself through righteous individuals and prophets among human beings. This is because the truth in principle is a common treasure for both these species. In fact, it is common for everyone in this universe. This issue will be discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Jinn. Here, this brief note should suffice.

In my opinion, the word يَقْضُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ is used in يَقْضُونَ because the word revelations here refers to the revelations that pertain to warning. A better part of them consists of the fate of the disbelievers and their anecdotes. Here too this is precisely the occasion. The implication of the question God will pose to them is: Did not My messengers

warn you of the fate of the disbelievers and of the advent of that day so that you have now consigned yourself to eternal doom?

Consider next the words: “They will say: ‘We bear witness against our own selves.’ And the life of this world deceived them and they will testify against themselves that they indeed remained disbelievers.” Precisely the same has been stated thus in verses 9-11 of Sūrah al-Mulk: قَالُوا اِذَا قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا قَالُوْا اِذَا قَدْ جَاءَكُم مَّوْعِدٌ مُّزْمَرٌ ۚ فَاَعْتِرِفُوْا بِذُنُوبِكُمْ ۖ فَسُخِّقَالَا صَحْبِ السَّعِيْرِ فِي صَلَاتِ كَبِيْرٍ وَّقَالُوْا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ اَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِيْٓ اَصْحَابِ السَّعِيْرِ (Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: “Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?” They will say: “A warner did come but we rejected him and said: ‘God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.’” And they will say: “If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell.” And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell.)

The words “and the life of this world deceived them” in the part of the verses under discussion is a parenthetical sentence. It implies that what they are audaciously rejecting today will be helplessly acknowledged by them on the final day and they will bear witness to it against their own selves. This is because the only reason they are denying this today is that the deceptive charms of this world have led them astray because this world is not based on the principle of reward and punishment. It is based on the principle of trial and thus evil too is given respite in it. This apparent situation has led them to believe that there is no reward and punishment and those who claim it are saying something that has no sound basis.

The words “this is because your Lord is not One Who destroys the cities due to their injustice when their inhabitants are unaware” state the reason why it is specially arranged that every species whether jinn or mankind have messengers of their own kind. The Almighty does not punish anyone without informing him of the consequences so that they are given a chance to repent and reform or get ready to bear its consequences.

Consider next, the last verse: “And the ranks of all are according to their deeds, and your Lord is not unaware of what they have been doing.” The word “all” when used in such a context refers to, it refers to those entities that are mentioned previously. Here it refers to the groups of jinn and human beings mentioned earlier. The implied meaning is that whatever they did was done after the truth was conclusively communicated to them by the Almighty. Thus they duly deserve punishment for this attitude and be placed in various sections of Hell according to the extent of their crimes. God will have no botheration to categorize them according to their misdeeds because He is fully aware of them. He will deal with every individual the way he deserves.

وَرَبُّكَ الْعَنِّي ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يَذِيبُكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ كَمَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِنَّ



مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَا يَفْذَحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قُلْ يَقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ ۖ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْذَحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

What was said earlier was evidently directed at the Quraysh. However, they were principle statements. The latter are now clearly and directly addressed and warned that God has made arrangements for the conclusive communication of the truth to them. They are now passing through a final trial. If they do not get hold of themselves, they will be seized by God and when this happens they will not be able to escape.

When attributes of God are mentioned adjacent to one another without any particle of coordination as is the case in رَبُّكَ الْعَزِيزُ ذُو الرُّحْمَةِ, it means that they exist in Him at the same time. Because of the fact that God is self-sufficient, He does not care for anyone if they deny Him and He also stands to gain nothing if people praise Him. If He sends messengers, reveals Books and invites people to faith, it is not because without their faith He will not be able to accomplish certain tasks. He does all this because besides being self-sufficient, He is also an embodiment of mercy. It is the requisite of His mercy that He does not punish people before conclusively conveying the truth to them. On the contrary, He makes all sorts of arrangements for this communication and gives respite to people until they work as much mischief as they can. This actually is a prelude to what is coming ahead.

The words “He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations” mean that it is not that God cannot seize them for their rebelliousness or if He destroys them, His world will become desolate; in fact, the sole reason is His mercy. Otherwise, He can destroy them at will and replace them with others. Moreover, this fact is something that they can easily understand by analogy. They too had replaced some previous nations whose history has been narrated to them and whose remnants can be seen in their land. These nations were guilty of rebelliousness and were destroyed as a result and replaced. So if he replaced them and made the Quraysh/Ishmaelites their heirs, why can’t He replace them too? Who can stop Him? Their own history bears witness against them.

A linguistic aspect of the verse is also worthy of attention.

The words are: وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ. Apparently the last part should have been: مَنْ يَشَاءُ. This is because the particle مَا is mostly used for non-living things. In my opinion, the Almighty has used مَنْ instead of مَا to express His profound power and to shatter the pride of the Quraysh. The implication is that these people have become

97. And your Lord is self-sufficient and an embodiment of mercy. If He wants, He can destroy you and after you, bring forth in your place whomsoever He wills just as He raised you from the offspring of other nations. What you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp. Say: O People of my Nation! You tread on your way; I am treading on mine. So, soon you will know for whom is the good fate of the next abode. Undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed.



arrogant because of their power and glory while such is the power of God that He can replace them with whichever thing of the desert He wants to. At one instance, Jesus (sws), while addressing the Israelites, is also reported to have said: “And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham,” (Matthew, 3:9). The style of this verse intends to convey precisely this. In fact, the style of the Qur’ān is much more forceful because of its general nature.

The words “you are being promised” in “what you are being promised with is bound to come and you are not beyond Our grasp” refer to both promises: worldly punishment in this world for denying God’s messenger and the punishment of the Day of Judgement. The expression اعجزه الشيء means “something escaped his grasp; he could not control it.” Concealed in this warning is that they should not show haste in demanding the punishment; if they do not change their ways, they will be seized by it.

A parallel phrase has been suppressed in اِنِّي يَقُومُ اَعْلُوًا عَلَى مَكَانِكُمْ اِنِّي عَامِلٌ to the effect: اِنِّي عَامِلٌ عَلَى مَكَانَتِي. The word مَكَانَةٌ means “place”; “status”; “position.” In the Qur’ān, it has been used to imply “place.” Thus in verse 67 of Sūrah Yāsīn, the words are: وَتَوَلَّوْا نِسَاءَكُمْ لَسَخُنَهُمْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِهِمْ.⁹⁸ The meaning “way” is its consequential meaning. Thus, if it is said: “continue what you are doing at your place, and I will continue what I am at my place” the meaning “way” is automatically incorporated in it. The implication is that if they are not ready to change their place of disbelief and their stance of opposing the truth, then they should do what they want to. The Prophet (sws) is not going to deviate the slightest from his stance. Those who have a flair for Arabic know that there is more stress in اِنِّي عَامِلٌ as compared to اَعْلُوًا. This is because adjectives and attributes as opposed to verbs encapsulate the meaning of stability and permanence. These words in fact sound a clear acquittal and severe warning from the Prophet (sws).

The words “so, soon you will know for whom is the good fate of the next abode” sound the real warning. The conventional meaning of the Arabic word عَاقِبَةٌ is “fate” whether good or bad. However, at times, it means “good fate.” This actually refers to its real meaning because a fate worthy of mention is the one that is good because this is the real purpose of creation of this universe and not the fate of failure which is against this purpose. Thus it is used in the meaning of “good fate” at many instances in the Qur’ān. In verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd, it is said: فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ.⁹⁹ In verse 123 of Sūrah Tāhā, the words are: وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى.¹⁰⁰

The word الدَّار refers to the Hereafter. This is because it is the place where results will manifest themselves. Believers make efforts in this world keeping it in view. The

98. And had it been Our will, We could have defaced them where they stood so that they could neither go forward nor retrace their steps.

99. So, remain steadfast. The ultimate triumph is for those who fear God.

100. And success in the end is for piety.



success they achieve in this world is not decisive. This is because the actual goal is not this world; it is the hereafter. Unless that goal is achieved, actual success and actual failure cannot be gauged. Also concealed in this is that if in this world those who oppose the truth are giving the opportunity to make hay, then this is not something to be proud of. This is just a temporary respite. Real success will be decided on that day.

What had remained ambiguous in the earlier section is clarified by the last words “undoubtedly, the unjust shall never succeed.” Earlier it was said that people will see who achieves final success. Now it is said that disbelievers and polytheists, usurpers and ingrates will have no share in success. This is actually based on the premise that this universe from its very existence shows that it has not been created for amusement by its maker. It is the creation of someone who is wise, knowledgeable, just and merciful. How then is it possible that He make those people succeed who are guilty of injustice and polytheism?

Here what must specially be noted is that what is stated here is stated as a principle and not in a specific way. In other words, it is not stated that the final success will be of the righteous or they will succeed in the hereafter; it is only said that the wrongdoers will have no share of success in the hereafter. This style is very effective with regard to the wisdom found in it and also with regard to its message. It also bears witness to the fear and trust found in the prophets and the righteous. Only this much can be said of something which is still hidden from the eyes, on which a decision is still awaited and for the materialization of which many a peak needs to be surmounted and many a dangerous territory traversed. Making any claim beyond this is against the requisites of serving God and fearing Him.

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِرِغْمِهِمْ وَهَذَا لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَى شُرَكَائِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ لِيُرْذَوْهُمْ وَيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَقَالُوا هَذِهِ أَنْعَامٌ وَحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖ لَا يَطْعَمُهَا إِلَّا مَنْ نَشَاءُ بِرِغْمِهِمْ وَأَنْعَامٌ حَرَّمَتْ طُهُورُهَا وَأَنْعَامٌ لَا يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَاءً عَلَيْهِ ۖ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَذِهِ الْأَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَحْرَمٌ عَلَى الْأَوَّامِنَ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مَيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ ۖ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹. And they have set aside for God a share from the very cultivated land and animals created by Him. Thus, they say: “This share is for God” – they claim – “And this share is for our associates of God.” Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of



This particular discussion, as is evident from verses 118-121, began with a refutation of the innovations of the Idolaters of Makkah which they had invented because of their polytheistic superstitions. In response to this refutation, appropriate directives were given to the believers to counter the furore of argumentation they had raised and at the same time some warnings were also meted out to the Idolaters. Now verses detail out these religious innovations of the Idolaters so that the believers can protect themselves from this filth.

The important word to note in the distribution of shares mentioned is “they claim.” In other words, the distribution is based on conjecture but they claim that it is from the *sharī‘ah* of Abraham (sws). It may be kept in mind that the Idolaters believed in God and regarded Him to be the creator of everything and, as His share, would give in charity a portion of their produce and livestock. This practice was in vogue among them ever since the times of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). About the latter, it is stated in verse 55 of Sūrah Maryam: *وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ*.¹⁰² Later when polytheistic innovations spread among them, then just as in the rights of God their alleged deities were given a share by them, in a similar way, the *zakāh* given in His name was also distributed to these deities.

Consider next, the words: “Then the share of their associates cannot reach God, but the share of God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge!” This shows that their deities held superiority to God. At another instance in the Qur’ān, it is stated that the Idolaters loved their deities more than God. This is not something specific to the Idolaters of Makkah; it is the trait of all polytheistic nations; in fact, it is the inherent nature of polytheism. When some entities are made partners of God by polytheists, it is obviously because these people think that they provide them with their immediate needs, and if there are some needs that God has to provide, then He too will do it through these associates. So much so, if the Almighty does not want to

God can reach their associates. How ill is what they judge! And in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them. And had God willed, they would not have done so. So, leave them to these falsehoods of theirs. And they say: “Such and such animals and such and such crops are prohibited. Only they may eat it whom we allow according to our view.” And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God. God will soon punish them for these falsehoods they have been guilty of. And they say: “Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it.” God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing. Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God. They have gone astray and could not remain among the guided.

102. He would command his people to the prayer and the *zakāh*.



provide them, these associates will do so. After this, God has no importance left in their lives. Thus to them God was no more than a useless elder of a family. So, they dealt with Him too in this capacity. They did give in His name something as per the tradition, but if some goat dedicated to an idol died or was stolen or if mice ate away the grain dedicated to it, it was necessarily compensated through God’s share. On the contrary, if the share that was to be given in God’s name was afflicted by some calamity, they did not dare compensate it through the share of their deities. That is why it is stated that how evil is the judgement they make. The fact is that all that they receive is from God; but they distribute the share given in His name in whatever way they like. They favour their hypothetical deities and disregard the real Deity.

The words “and in this way for many idolaters, their associates with God have made the killing of their children seem fair to them” imply that their associates do not just have a share in wealth, but also in the lives created by God. It has been stated under verse 100 that this heinous crime of filicide was perpetrated by them to earn the pleasure of some alleged rebellious jinn. They thought that if they did not make this sacrifice of one child, all their children or all their family would be killed by him. Such superstitions have persisted in all polytheistic nations of the past and even today are found in the lower sections of some nations in spite of the developments of the modern age. A major role in bolstering these superstitions is played by the agents of the devils who become their disciples. In the times of *jāhiliyyah*, the priests and pundits of the temples dedicated to the jinn would deceive the simpletons who would turn to them by saying that such and such jinn is very angry with them; if they did not earn his pleasure, he would destroy all his family. These naïve elements would be inveigled by them in this manner to perpetrate this outrageous crime and in this way ended up ruining their world and the hereafter.

The word “religion” in “so as to ruin them and to make their religion dubious to them” refers the religion these people inherited from Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). In other words, the devils from among the jinn and humankind deceived the foolish and ruined them spiritually and materially. On the one hand, they deprived them of their children and, on the other, the simple religion taught to them by Abraham (sws) ended up becoming an amalgam of falsities.

The words “and had God willed, they would not have done so” are meant to assure the Prophet (sws): if these people continue to fight and argue with him in support of their foolish notions and callous practices and are not prepared to listen to him, he should let them remain in their self-created mischief; he is not required to force people to accept something; God has given evil the chance to thrive in this world too; those who want to adhere to evil can do so; He does not like people to forcibly accept His guidance; had He wanted people to be guided, all of them would have been on the straight path and none would have gone astray. In other words, when this is an established practice of God, the Prophet (sws) should not be worried on their stubbornness.



The word حَرَّمَ in حَرَّمَ حَرَّمَ means “prohibited.” However, it is also a religious term of Arab *jāhiliyyah* and refers to things that have been prohibited because of some religious custom. These words actually state the self-made edicts of the priests and keepers of their temples. There were many dietary restrictions among them regarding what was dedicated by them from their produce and livestock. For example, certain things could only be eaten (or the converse) by men or by women or by widows but could not be touched by married women or by spinsters. Such foolish practices still exist in current times among families prone to religious innovations. Since all these self-styled edicts were issued by these priests and they alone were its scholars none other could give his own opinion in their matter or even slightly deviate from them. Their authoritativeness is signified by the word “according to our view.”

Consider next, the words “And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God.” They regarded some animals prohibited for riding. Some examples of this can be seen under verse 104 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Similarly, they did not pronounce the name of God while slaughtering certain animals dedicated to their deities. It should be kept in mind that the people of Arabia knew the correct way of slaughter through the traditions of the Abrahamic religion and would also pronounce God's name. However, the dominance of polytheistic traditions and beliefs had made them deviate from this way. It seems that pronouncing the name of God on certain animals was regarded by them to be against their polytheistic *sharī'ah*. All these baseless beliefs were founded on their polytheistic superstitions but they would ascribe them to God. For this reason, the Qur'ān says that this is falsehood that they impute to God and has threatened them that they will soon be punished by them.

Consider next the words “And they say: “Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it.” This too forms their self-issued edicts. The response to this is stated right after in the words “God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.” In other words, it is against His knowledge and wisdom that He not punish those who create a *sharī'ah* of their own but attribute it to God. A subtle reference in this is that if there is some delay in punishing them, it is based on His knowledge and wisdom.

Consider next the words “Inflicted with loss are those who killed their children merely out of foolishness without having any knowledge. And whatever sustenance God had granted them, they have regarded it as unlawful by fabricating a lie on God.” This is an expression of sorrow on their evil fate and on all these foolish practices which do not have any divine sanction. There is no doubt in their wretchedness. They deviated from the right path and when God guided them to it through His prophet, they did not accept it because of their wretchedness as depicted by the words “they have gone astray and could not remain among the guided.”



Section XI: Verses (141-165)

In this section, the afore-mentioned religious innovations are refuted. This refutation is from many aspects.

Firstly, land-produce, cattle and live-stock are all created by God and it is because of His graciousness that the Quraysh are their beneficiaries. They should avail them, express gratitude to Him and fulfil their duty towards these favours. They should not regard things as lawful or unlawful under their polytheistic superstitions. Satan is their inveterate foe.

Secondly, they are asked about the prohibition of every pair of male and female from all species of four-legged animals whether its male is prohibited or female. They are also asked to prove if any of these animals was prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws). A rejoinder is then sounded to them that when they cannot prove any of them to be prohibited, how can from among their offspring some be regarded as lawful and others unlawful? How can some fruits of the same tree be allowed and others disallowed? What can this mean?

Thirdly, in the divine revelation received by the Prophet (sws) regarding the lawfulness and unlawfulness of certain animals in the religion of Abraham (sws), he finds only certain specific ones as prohibited. What was prohibited to the Jews was the same as prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws) except the ones that were prohibited to them because of their rebelliousness.

After that, reference is given to the basic teachings of the religion of Abraham (sws) and stated that the Quraysh too are invited to this straight path. They must not deviate from them and wander in misguidance. At the same time, the *sharī‘ah* given to Moses (sws) is alluded to because it too guides those who adopted it to precisely this path.

After that the great favour done by God to the Arabs by revealing the Qur‘ān to them is mentioned. They are warned that by revealing this Book the truth stands conclusively conveyed to them. They are now left with no excuse. If they await punishment to believe in these things, they should know that belief expressed on such instances will be of no avail.

At the end, a proclamation is made from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he has been blessed with the guidance of Abraham’s religion. His prayer, his sacrifice, his life and death are all for God. Whomsoever among his addressees would like to adopt this path should do it or else be prepared to be questioned by Him. None shall be questioned on behalf of another. At the same time, the Quraysh are warned that they are not the first nation to have appeared on the stage of the world. Nations before them were destroyed because of their rebelliousness. If, as their successors, they too adopt their ways there is no reason why they would not suffer the same fate. God’s law is the same for all.



ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَتَابَعًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ عَلَى طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَلَاءُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيَّاهُهَا تَكُنْ أَمِنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا قُلِ انْظُرُوا إِلَانَا مُنْتَضِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شَيْعًا لَسْتُ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتُ رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ قُلْ إِنْ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٥٤﴾

And it is God Who has created orchards; some are creepers and others not. And He created date-palms and crops of different sorts. And olives and pomegranates, alike and different to one another as well. Benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest. And do not commit excess. God does not like those who commit excess. And He has animals of tall stature and of short one too. So benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is your inveterate foe. (141-142)

Take eight kinds of four-legged animals: two from the species of the sheep and two from the species of the goat. Then ask them: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Answer me with some proof if you are truthful. Similarly, take two from the camel both male and female and two from the cow both male and female. Then ask: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Were you present at the time when God directed you about this? Then who can be more unjust than the person who fabricated a lie on God so that he can lead people astray without any knowledge? Indeed, God shall not guide the unjust. (143-144)



Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else's name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (145)

And for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a bone. This is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness and We are absolutely truthful. Thus if they deny you even after this, then say: Very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers. (146-147)

The polytheists will now say: "Had God willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have declared anything as unlawful." In a similar way, those before them also denied until they tasted Our punishment. Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations. Tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you. Say: Bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited. Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord. (148-150)

Say: Come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you: do not associate anything with Him, treat your parents with kindness and kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide you also and provide them too. And do not even go near vulgarities whether they are open or hidden. And do not kill without justification any soul forbidden by God. These are the things God directs you to so that you understand. And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him until he reaches maturity. And weigh with honesty and full measure. We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear. And when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives. And fulfil God's promise. These are the things He has directed you to so that you receive a reminder and that: "Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord." These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain secure from His punishment. (151-153)

Then We then gave Moses the Book to complete My favour on him who was thorough, as an explanation of everything, and as guidance and mercy so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord. (154)

And this blessed Book that We have revealed, follow it and fear [God] so that you are shown mercy. Lest you say: "The Book was revealed to only the two earlier communities and we had no knowledge of its reading and teaching." Or say: "Had the



Book been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than them.” Thus a conclusive argument and a guidance and mercy have come to you from your Lord. So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion. They are only waiting for the angels or your Lord to come to them or a special sign from among the signs of your Lord appear to them. The day such a sign of your Lord manifests itself, the faith of a person will not be of any benefit to him who did not accept it earlier or did not earn pious deeds from his faith. Say: Wait; we too are waiting. (155-158)

You have no link with those who created divisions in their religion and split themselves into sects. Their matter rests with God alone. So, He alone will gather them; then tell them what they had been doing. He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them. (159-160)

Say: My Lord has guided me to a straight path – the upright faith which is the path of Abraham’s religion, who was fully devoted and was not among the idolaters. Say: My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the Universe. He has no associate and thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit. Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything? And each soul gets what it earns and no soul shall bear another’s burden. Then to your Lord shall you return. Thus, He will tell you in what you have been differing. And it is He who has made you successors of one another in the earth and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you. Indeed, very swift is your Lord in retribution also and is also Forgiving and Merciful. (161-165)

Explanation

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكْلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةٌ وَفَرَسَاتٌ كُلُّوا مِنْ مَبَارَزِكُمْ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٣٢﴾¹⁰³

The question implied is regarding the basis they have associated partners with God

103. And it is God Who has created orchards; some are creepers and others not. And He created date-palms and crops of different sorts. And olives and pomegranates, alike and different to one another as well. Benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest. And do not commit excess. God does not like those who commit excess. And He has animals of tall stature and of short one too. So benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is your inveterate foe.



when crops and orchards have been made by Him.

غَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ refers to grapes etc whose creepers are made to climb fences and مَعْرُوشَاتٍ refers to those things that are not dependent on fences. With reference to the creepers of grapes, I am inclined to think that غَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ refers to creepers which grow and develop horizontally along the surface of the earth like melons, water-melons and cucumbers.

In verse 28 of Sūrah ‘Abas both قَضَب and عنب are mentioned together. The former refers to grapes and the latter to vegetables that are eaten while being fresh.

It should be kept in mind that the variation in orchards and crops and in their types and numbers are specifically referred to here for some particular objectives.

Firstly, He Who has created all this is very generous and magnanimous, affectionate and caring. If He placed the need for food in people, He did not produce food merely to fill their bellies; on the contrary, He created a wide variety of foods. If He brought forth orchards, then they had a very large assortment. The dates and grains produced by Him were of so many types. Fruits including olives and pomegranates were produced in different kinds. It needs to be appreciated that such diversity, colour, kind and variation was not needed to keep people alive. However, the Creator of this world embellished it with such an innumerable range of products for us even though He Himself did not need us in any way. For those who think and reflect, the question arises: Why? The answer to this is that people come to know that their Lord is very magnanimous and merciful Who blessed them with these favours even though they are not entitled to them. The objective is that they realize from the bottom of their hearts to be grateful to God and also the obligations they owe to Him. This gratitude and sensitivity to acknowledge the truth is the basis of religion.

Secondly, all these blessings and favours of God in nourishing and nurturing us impose a very heavy responsibility on us: we must keep in mind that He Who has created all this for us will necessarily bring about a day in which He will question us if we have fulfilled the requisites of loyalty to Him and then reward or punish us accordingly. This questioning is on the basis of the principle that every privilege imposes responsibility. That both necessitate one another is an obvious fact of human nature. Every sensitive person acknowledges this. Only the mean and the wretched benefit from God’s favours but do not feel responsible to be answerable for them.

Thirdly, evident in every part of this universe is unity in multiplicity, harmony in diversity, accord in discord. The same mud, air and water yield different types of produce in different colours, tastes, odours and heights. Moreover, all these are favours that satisfy man’s taste buds and provide him with sustenance. It is clearly evident that the Creator Who has created in us the need for glucose and iron has filled pomegranates and grapes with juice which provides us with these needs. He Who has created taste buds in us has provided us with edibles to satisfy them. He Who has blessed our eyes to appreciate beauty and splendour has made everything around us an embodiment of beauty, splendour and majesty to everything. It is to this unity in the



apparent disunity and diversity between various things that the Qur‘ān has directed our attention. This aspect points to the Creator of this universe and to the oneness of its governor. I have referred to this earlier under verses 99-101. People who would like more details should read my treatise “Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism” in which these issues are discussed comprehensively.

The very existence of these favours invite people to what is said thus: “benefit from these fruits when they ripen and give away what is due of it upon the day of its harvest.” Prophets of God also have invited them to this and human nature too bears witness to it if it has not been distorted.

In the expression *وَأْتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ*, the antecedent of the pronoun in *حَقَّهُ* can be God and it can also be the fruit. However, in both cases, there will not be much difference in meaning. Every favour of God necessarily entails that he who receives it must also share it with others who are without it. This is a requisite of the gratitude he owes to it. It is this right which is called God’s right. Its awareness is found inside human nature. Ever since the inception of mankind, this awareness has existed in it. The offering of his livestock to the Almighty made by Adam’s son Abel was for this very purpose. It is to fulfil this right that in the *sharī‘ah* of the Israelites and later the Ishmaelites a formal system of *zakāh* was instituted.

It is evident from the phrase *يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ* that this right should be discharged at the time of the harvest from the produce. The reason is that this right in fact is an expression of gratitude of God’s favour received by a farmer. For this reason, Islam has imposed the right of *zakāh* on produce and this precisely is in accordance with human nature and intellect. In current times, while mimicking other nations, Muslims too have adopted an un-Islamic financial system. For this reason, an Islamic government collect taxes instead of *zakāh*. Taxation is against the justice and the blessing found in the system of *zakāh*.

Though the pronoun in the expression *مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ* is singular, yet it refers to all the things enumerated. In Arabic, when a pronoun or a verb occurs in the singular, then the purpose is to refer to each and every entity individually. It is evident from this that in Islam God has a right in every produce whatever the thing; only a certain amount is exempt. The *sharī‘ah* has given exemption in a certain quantity of produce with regard to the needs of the producer. Details of this can be found in books of *fiqh*.¹⁰⁴

The expression *إِذَا أَثْمَرَ* does not merely relate to *مُؤَلَّدًا*; it also relates to *أَتَمًّا حَقَّهُ*. In other words, just as benefit can only be obtained from produce if it is actually produced, *zakāh* will only be imposed on it if it is produced and collected for consumption. This

104. Jurists do not regard certain entities to zakatable, which is beyond my comprehension. If something is produced in a very limited amount merely for household consumption, this exemption is understandable. However, if any of these entities is cultivated in a large amount or if the thing produced is done at the national level, why should it be exempted from *zakāh*?



further strengthens the inference that *zakāh* is to be imposed on production and not on the land which is a means of production. Thus the Islamic system of *zakāh* is based on this very principle.

The words “and do not commit excess; God does not like those who commit excess” depict the same directive after people are told to pay what is due from the produce as can be seen on verses 26-27 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl: *وَإِذَا الْقَرْيُ حَقُّهُ وَالْيَسْكِينِ وَالْبَيْنِ: ١٠٥. النَّبَذَرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرُوا نَبْذِيرًا إِنَّ*.¹⁰⁵ This directive was essential because the fulfilment of rights is based on a person being moderate and frugal in his needs and desires. A person who is extravagant and a spendthrift will not be able to fulfil the expenses of his own interests; so how will he fulfil the rights of others. Satan lures wealthy people foremost in this manner. He entices them into various desires and wishes and these people become such slaves to their desires and luxurious ways that these things become even more than necessities for them. How can such people think that the wealth which is scarcely enough to fulfil their extravagance also has a share for other people of God. As a result dogs, falcons and hawks of such people live in luxury while their neighbours sleep in hunger.

The tall and short statured animals referred by the verses are the ones which are appropriate as means transport and as a beasts of burden like camels, horses and mules etc.

The word *الفرش* refers to the land which has abundant vegetation and also to cultivated land that has not yet fully sprouted. With respect to beasts, it refers to those short statured animals which are not appropriate as a means of transport or as beasts of burden; they are only appropriate for slaughtering and other needs likes goats and rams. Concomitant indications show that also included in this are short statured camels and buffaloes. However, here this verse is used in contrast to *حَبُونَةً*. Hence it necessarily refers to short-statured beasts.

It may be noted that while mentioning orchards and cultivated lands, the words used are: *مَعْرُوشَتٍ وَعَبْدٍ مَعْرُوشَتٍ*. In contrast, the words used for animals are *حَبُونَةً* and *فَرَشَ*. This is a very elegant comparison. In other words, just as in the orchards there are creepers that grow on vertical supports as well as those which spread along the ground, in a similar way, among animals there are those that are of tall stature like camels, horses and mules etc and those which pick their fodder from the ground like sheep, cattle and other animals of short stature and they give benefit to human beings through their wool, hides, milk and meat etc.

Just as there is this correspondence in the choice of words, readers may also note correspondence in meaning: it has been referred to earlier that one aspect of God’s

105. And give to the near of kin his due, and also to the destitute and the traveller. And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are brothers of devils; and the Devil is extremely ungrateful to his Lord.



favours is their variety and assortment, which bears evidence to His providence, mercy and blessing; moreover, this evidence, as alluded to earlier, is a very significant evidence drawn from within the being of a person and the world around him in favour of monotheism and the hereafter. The same evidence is pointed out here through the variety found in quadruped animals. This is actually meant to stimulate human thought if only people reflect.

Consider now the words “so benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you and do not walk in the footsteps of Satan; indeed, he is your inveterate foe.” Just as in the earlier verse, after mentioning favours, it was stated: “benefit from these fruits when they ripen” in a similar way the obligation owed to favour bestowed in the form of quadruped animals is “so benefit from whatever God has bestowed upon you.” Since all this is evident from the context and moreover they were also mentioned earlier, there was no need to repeat it here. However, people were warned of the trials of Satan and warned not to follow him because he has already openly given an ultimatum to human beings that he will lead people astray and people will as a result regard things lawful and unlawful of their own selves and offer and sacrifice quadruped animals blessed to them before idols. Thus in verse s 118-119 of Sūrah al-Nisā’, it is stated: *وَقَالَ لَا تَخْذَلْ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ۚ وَلَا ضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ لَأْمٌ يَنْتَهُم ۚ وَلَا مَرْتَةٌ لَهُمْ فَلَْيَبْتَكَرْ إِذَا نَ الْاَنْعَامِ* (He said: “I shall grab a certain number of your people come what may. I shall definitely lead them astray, implicate them in desires, teach them so that they will slit the ears of cattle). The tactics of Satan to grab the favours mentioned earlier are stated with regard to excessive and to needless spending. Here his polytheistic whispering are mentioned and both these types of onslaughts of Satan have proven to be very effective.

The word *رَزَقَ* and *أَكَلَ* are mentioned in this verse is their wider connotations. The former implies what is benefited and used and the latter to God’s sustenance.

ثَبْنِيَّةَ اَرْوَاحٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ وَمِنَ الْبَعْرِ اِثْنَيْنِ ۚ قُلْ اَلَّذَكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اَسْتَبَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَمِنَ الْاِبِلِ اِثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اِثْنَيْنِ ۚ قُلْ اَلَّذَكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اَسْتَبَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ اِذْ وَصَّيْتُمُ اللّٰهَ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا يَفْضِلُ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

106

106. Take eight kinds of four-legged animals: two from the species of the sheep and two from the species of the goat. Then ask them: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Answer me with some proof if you are truthful. Similarly, take two from the camel both male and female and two from the cow both male and female. Then ask: Has God forbidden their males or females or the offspring that is in the wombs of their females? Were you present at the time when God directed you about this? Then



The word **شَيْئَةٍ** is in the accusative because of a suppressed verb. People have generally regarded a verb of the past tense to be suppressed here. However, in my opinion, the occasion demands the suppression of an imperative verb.

Just as the word **زوج** is used for a pair, it is also used to denote one member of a pair. Examples of this usage are found both in the Qur‘ān and in classical Arabic literature.

Amongst the domesticated animals in Arabia, there were four whose milk and meat were consumed. Among the smaller ones were the goat and the ram and among the larger ones were the cow¹⁰⁷ and the camel. The Qur‘ān used the word **أَنْعَام** for these quadruped animals. When this word is annexed to the noun **بَهِيمَةٍ**, it includes wild animals which though are not domesticated, but are still subsumed under the category of **أَنْعَام**. They include the deer, wild goats, antelopes and zebras etc.

Since the lawfulness and unlawfulness of domesticated quadruped animals is under discussion here, the Arabs regarded some among them to be lawful and others unlawful under the influence of their polytheistic superstitions. For this reason, the Almighty has asked the Prophet (sws) to take one member of each of them and inquire from the Quraysh about their lawfulness. The Prophet (sws) is also directed to ask them to reply to him on the basis of some logical or scriptural proof.

These well-known quadruped animals as has been indicated earlier were camels, cows, goats and rams. If their males and females are accounted for, they come out to be eight. The question posed in the verse is meant to jolt these people that if all these animals are lawful, how can they claim some of their components to be unlawful. As a result of this verdict, they declare some to be unlawful for consumption and some prohibited for transport; some lawful only for men and some only for women and some for both. Human nature and intellect entail that if a tree is lawful, then its fruit should also be lawful.

The proof referred to in “answer me with some proof if you are truthful” can be of two types: one of them could be proof from Abraham’s religion and the other some natural or logical one. If none of these exist, then what does it mean to regard certain animals to be prohibited. It may be kept in mind that the only argument the Arabs presented in favour of their idolatrous superstitions and traditions is cited in verse 148 ahead: “had God wanted, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have regarded anything as unlawful.” Obviously, this is neither logical evidence nor scriptural one. If it at all it is some evidence, then every foolish person can present it to validate his foolishness. Forefathers adopting something is no proof of its veracity or its ascription to Abraham (sws). How can it be believed as true that whatever their forefathers adopted was on the basis of some solid

who can be more unjust than the person who fabricated a lie on God so that he can lead people astray without any knowledge? Indeed, God shall not guide the unjust.

107. Buffaloes were not found in Arabia because they generally live in warm and humid weather.



proof, especially when Arab traditions themselves show that just as Paul had distorted the religion of Jesus (sws), polytheism was inducted among Arabs by a person called ‘Amr ibn Lūhī. The Qur’ān has presented both logical and scriptural arguments to refute these superstitions of the Arabs. On the one hand, it has presented the complete written evidence from Abraham’s life found in the Torah every word of which bears witness that he did not have any link with polytheism and polytheistic traditions and had wiped out the minutest germs of polytheism by his words and deeds. On the other hand, it has purely logical and natural arguments in favour of monotheism which are both irrefutable and which, as is evident from the previous sections of this *sūrah*, have been presented by Abraham (sws). How huge is this difference between these supremely convincing arguments presented by the Qur’an and this statement of the Arabs that they found their forefathers adhering to polytheism and hence this precisely is the God’s religion and Abraham’s way.

The question: “were you present at the time when God directed you about this?” is the final nail in the coffin. The implied meaning is that they do not have any logical or scriptural arguments; so on what grounds do they impute this falsehood to God that He has forbidden such and such things. Were they present when God forbade them? Hence who can be more wretched and unjust than those who without any such arguments use false accusations to lead people astray?

The “unjust” in “indeed, God shall not guide the unjust” refer to these very people. They are one who are so unjust as to not only make a self-fabricated falsity a means of going astray but also leading others astray. The people who are implied to here are the religious leaders of the Quraysh. The campaign they were maliciously running to lead people astray was based on falsehood and hence would miserably fail. This in other words also forms glad tidings of success of the Islamic mission.

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ ۖ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالنَّعَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوِ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۚ ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَصَدِيقُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْجَافِينَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

108. Tell them: I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because these are indeed unclean or, in disobedience to God, animals slaughtered in someone else’s name. Yet, even after this, whoever is driven by necessity, neither intending to be desirous nor exceeding the limits, then your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a



This is a proclamation from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) about animals that were prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws). It is evident from the earlier sections that the ongoing discussion with the polytheists of Arabia is regarding Abraham’s religion and this discussion too specially relates to quadruped animals because the Arabs under their polytheistic superstitions had regarded some to be unlawful. This context and occasion entail that the proclamation be understood in this background. People have severed these verses from this context and presented it as a principle proclamation of what is lawful and unlawful in Islam. Because of this misconception they have ended up in confusion themselves and confused others too. This is because not just the things mentioned in this verse are forbidden in Islam but others too like carnivorous beasts and birds used for hunting. However, here since the context relates to quadruped animals only, it has been clarified that what the Idolaters have regarded to be unlawful are their own self-created fabrications because the revelation received by the Prophet (sws) in this regard does not contain these prohibitions.

The encompassing style: “to a person who eats things which are edible” refute the superstitions of the Idolaters about certain animals and sacrifices: they contended that only some could touch them and others could not. Moreover, as indicated in verses 138 and 139 earlier, the flesh of certain animals could only be consumed by men; women were forbidden to do so. The Qur’ān has specified here that just as their polytheistic sacrifices are baseless, this discrimination in their consumption too is fictitious and has no link with Abraham’s religion.

This verse mentions the prohibition of four things: carrion, blood poured forth, flesh of the swine and animals slaughtered in the name of someone other than God. The prohibition of the first three of these is because of their apparent filth. After that, it is stated “because these are indeed unclean.” This is because when a singular pronoun is used the way it is here (قَالَ رَجُلٌ), it refers individually to each of these three is referred to, as has already been pointed out under verse 141. The last mentioned prohibition relates to inward filth. Slaughtering an animal in someone’s name other than God is polytheism which in beliefs is no less than a filth. For this, he who is afflicted by polytheism also becomes filthy. This filth in beliefs is signified by the word “disobedience” (فسق). It is evident from this that the lawfulness and unlawfulness of things in Abraham’s religion are not just on the basis of a divine directive, they are also based on human nature and intellect. These prohibitions as well as the exception mentioned in this verse regarding their consumption when a person is driven to necessity have been discussed by me at many other instances. Hence there is no need

bone. This is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness and We are absolutely truthful. Thus if they deny you even after this, then say: Very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers.



left to go into their details here.

Here this basic principle of what is lawful and unlawful should remain our minds that in the religion of Abraham (sws) all pure and wholesome things were lawful and all impure ones were unlawful ones regardless of the fact whether the impurity was internal or external. Islam also subscribes to this basic principle because, contrary to Judaism and Christianity, it is based on Abraham’s religion. I will explain the Islamic principle of what is lawful and what is not ahead.

After the religion of Abraham (sws), Judaism is mentioned by the words “and for those who adopted Judaism, We forbade all animals with nails and the fat of the goat and the cattle as well, except what adheres to their backs or intestines or that which is left adhering to a bone.” It is evident from this list that some pure and wholesome things too were forbidden to them. However, this was solely as a punishment of their rebelliousness. The implied meaning is that now in Islam, these prohibitions no longer remain; all pure and wholesome things stand allowed. It may also be kept in mind that the Jews were promised that all these restrictions will be lifted from them by the last messenger of God.

Here are some excerpts from the Torah that describe the afore-mentioned prohibitions to the Jews.

The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats.’²⁴ The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which a food offering may be presented to the LORD must be cut off from their people. (Leviticus, 7: 22-25)

From what you offer you are to present this food offering to the LORD: the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys. The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD’s. (Leviticus 3:15-16)

It is evident from the words of the Qur’ān that except for the fat that was a component of the meat and was part of the back, intestines and bones in a way that it could not be easily separated, all other fat of an animals’ body was prohibited. This seems quite logical. However, it is evident from the afore-mentioned excerpts of the Torah that the fat was prohibited in its absolute sense. In my opinion, this harsh and strict view is actually of the rabbis and scholars of the Jews which is an addition to the already harsh and strict structure of their *sharī‘ah*. Even some blood sticks with the meat, let alone fate. For this reason, the expression “blood poured forth” is used so that the restriction remains within natural limits.

The قُفْرُ word means “nails.” Some people are of the opinion that the nails of animals



that do not hunt are called ظُفُر and the nails of those that do are called مَخْلَب.

It is evident from the details of what is lawful and unlawful found in the Torah that among the Jews, only those quadruped animals were lawful which had split hooves and which chewed the cud. Animals in which any of these two conditions did not exist were regarded as unlawful. Thus camels, rabbits and badgers and all other animals which do not have a split hoof were considered unlawful by the Jews. In the light of this, it can be said that the word ذِي ظُفُر refers to animals whose hooves are not split and are intact but have some nails in front. All such animals were unlawful to the Jews in the absolute sense, as is evident from the word كُل (all). For this reason, some animals like the rabbit and the camel were also rendered unlawful to them even though they were lawful in Abraham’s religion.

The words “this is the punishment We had given them for their rebelliousness” imply that animals with nails and the fat were not unlawful to the Jews because they had some intrinsic reason for prohibition. Their prohibition related to the rebellious nature of the Jews. Just as in some cases, a doctor stops a patient from consuming what is perfectly lawful and allowed since it may potentially harm him, for the same reason, the Almighty punished the Jews because of their moral misconduct by prohibiting many things to them which were otherwise lawful. The Qur’ānic word used for this moral misconduct is بَغْي (rebelliousness). This rebelliousness of the Israelites has been mentioned at so many instances in the Torah and in the scriptures of the prophets that a person literally feels bored to read them at length. There is not a single directive of religion which they whole-heartedly accepted. In the first place, they would make each directive more burdensome to follow because of repeated questions. An example of this has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah regarding the cow. Even after consenting to follow the directive, they tried to evade it in so many ways that it practically was rendered ineffective. This escapist mentality and rebellious attitude also impacted their *sharī‘ah*. Just as the master of an unruly animal ties it in strong fetters to control it or the ruler of rebellious subjects is compelled to impose strong restrictions on them, in the same way, God imposed very stern laws on them termed as “burdens and shackles” by the Qur’ān (7:157). If one reads the directives of *sharī‘ah* of the Israelites in the Torah, one feels nausea. Notwithstanding others, if only the chapters on cleanliness are read and seen what toil and labour they had to go through during the menstrual and puerperal cycles, ceremonial impurity or ailments like leprosy and spermatorrhea, every hair of a person becomes grateful to the Lord Who through His last messenger gave mankind the guidance that was free from unnatural restrictions. The Israelites did not forbid themselves just what has been just stated; these only related to quadruped animals. They had much severer restrictions regarding sea animals. It is evident from the eleventh chapter of Leviticus that sea animals having fins and scales were lawful and all the rest were forbidden. Similarly, it was not just the hunting birds that were forbidden; ducks, herons and



linsangs were also forbidden.

The reason for prohibition of these animals, as has been referred to earlier, is the rebelliousness of the Jews. In Sūrah Mā'idah, while giving them these directives, God had said to the Jews that if they profess faith in the last messenger, these burdens would be lifted from them. This is because he will preach the religion of Abraham (sws) which is in harmony with human nature and has no unnatural restrictions.

The purpose in God emphasizing that He is truthful is not merely an expression of this reality; it also indicates that His adversaries are liars. The implication is that God is truthful in whatever He has stated about the nation of Abraham and the *sharī'ah* of the Israelites, and Jews and Christians who are indulging in this frivolous talk are absolute liars.

Consider next the part: "thus if they deny you even after this, then say: very vast is the mercy of your Lord and it would not be possible to ward off His punishment from the wrongdoers." This is a warning sounded to both the Quraysh and the Israelites. The Almighty is vast in mercy and hence gives the rebellious and the stubborn a lot of a respite so that they are not left with any excuse. Thus they should not become arrogant because of this respite. It does delay God's punishment but does not ward off His established practice regarding wrongdoers.

It has become fully evident from the details of what is unlawful in the *sharī'ah* of Abraham and the Israelites mentioned earlier that the Idolaters had regarded many things to be forbidden without any proof. This prohibition had no link with Abraham's religion. In a similar way, the Jews regarded many things to be forbidden which were not prohibited because of any intrinsic reason; it was only because of their rebelliousness that they were forbidden to them, and as per the promise of God these restrictions would be lifted from them through the last messenger. Thus, as has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'idah, they were actually lifted. Now in this last religion only those things are prohibited which should be prohibited as per the norms of human nature and intellect. This religion is devoid of the innovations of the Idolaters and the extremities of the Jews.

Presented briefly below are the Islamic principles of what is lawful and what is not, as mentioned in the Qur'ān.

The foundational principle in this regard is that all pure and wholesome things are lawful and vice versa. Thus Muḥammad (sws) is introduced in the Qur'ān in the following words:

يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْبَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْفُكْرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ (١٥٧: ٧)

He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. (7:157)



The word طَيِّبٌ (pure) refers to things which because of their nature and effect on human beings are beneficial, moderate and wholesome. By the same token خَبِيثٌ (impure) are things which because of their nature and impact on human beings are harmful and injurious. The degree of purity and impurity in each thing could be different. As a result of this variation, the degree of a directive may change regarding two things: one would be prohibited and the other undesirable.

Similarly, at times, something may not be impure intrinsically; however, something extrinsic to it makes it impure. For example, an animal sacrificed in the name of some deity, meat obtained from gambling or a prey hunted in the state of *ihrām*.

It is not correct to believe that things are pure and impure merely on relative grounds and there is no natural, logical or moral basis for this. To regard something to be prohibited for one nation and allowed for the other is mere scepticism. This is tantamount to saying that justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, right and wrong are relative and they have no logical or natural basis.

It is on this principle that Islam has regarded all those quadruped animals as *أنعام*. When this word is annexed to the noun *بهيمة*, it includes wild animals which though are not domesticated, but are still subsumed under the category of *أنعام*. They include the deer, wild goats, deer, antelopes and zebras etc. However, predators will not be included in them like the lion, the dog, the bear, the wolf etc. Thus the Prophet (sws) regarded predators to be prohibited. Similar is the case of carrion, swine, blood poured forth and animals slaughtered in the name of other deities. This is because they carry filth and impurity – some in the apparent sense and some in the logical sense,

The same principle will be applied on the birds. Those which are of the category of predators like eagles, falcons and hawks or if they have a certain type of impurity mentioned above will be regarded as prohibited.

Similar will be the principle for sea animals and insects.

The case of vegetables or things that are made from them will be no different. For example, alcohol prepared from everything will be prohibited because it has logical and moral impurity.

Stated above is the actual principle of what is lawful and what is not. In the light of this, it is not difficult to say that both are evident. However, since there are unlimited types of quadruped animals, birds, and sea-animals in this world, there can be a difference of opinion in many of these. Thus such difference of opinion does exist among our jurists and can be seen in books of jurisprudence. Some regard certain animals to be predators and others do not. Similarly, some jurists regard some things to be impure and some do not. In my opinion, the views of the Hanifite jurists hold the greatest harmony with the Qur'ānic principles of what is lawful. However, the right way in such issues in which it is possible to differ is that a person should stay away from grey areas if he thinks that they are dubious but should not regard others to be committing something wrong if they hold a different opinion. In this regard, the



attitude of the Prophet (sws) regarding not eating of the lizard mentioned in narratives gives us the best guidance.

However, one thing must be kept in mind here: it is stated about some companions in certain books that they regarded only four things that are mentioned earlier to be prohibited. This view does not correct in any sense and it has been wrongly ascribed to them by some narrators. This is beyond logic. What some of them may have actually said would be that in the religion of Abraham (sws) only four things among quadruped animals are forbidden. This view obviously is true in a certain background, as has been explained earlier. It seems that this was precisely what they said by them and it somehow got distorted.

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَيْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ هَلَمْ شَهِدْكُمْ أَنْ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هَذَا فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَلَا تَشْهَدُ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعِدُلُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾¹⁰⁹

These verses cite the final argument raised by the Idolaters and then respond to it. Obviously, the argument is absolutely foolish. If people have the freedom to express certain views and do certain deeds, this does not mean that these views and deeds are correct. If this is an argument, then every foolish individual can cite it in his support. No different is the case of any oppressor or a rogue. Such people can always argue that what they did or are doing is at God's behest. They are told that this argument is just a prank and an excuse to adhere to their stubbornness. Prior to them, their predecessors also adopted this attitude and were ultimately punished for this by God and their own fate will be no different. So the Prophet (sws) should leave them to themselves.

Consider next, the words “Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations.” The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that the means of knowing God's like and dislike are not their deeds so that whatever they do they will be rewarded by Him. For

109. The polytheists will now say: “Had God willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have indulged in polytheism nor would we have declared anything as unlawful.” In a similar way, those before them also denied until they tasted Our punishment. Ask them: Do you have any knowledge which you can present before us? You are merely following conjecture and only make speculations. Tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you. Say: Bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited. Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord.



this, some proof is needed: either it should be based on a verifiable directive of God or any evidence from human nature or intellect should exist to support it. They do not have either of these proofs and are merely conjecturing, and conjecture and never replace knowledge.

The words “tell them: God only has a conclusive argument and had He willed, He would have guided all of you” depict God’s established practice about providing guidance: He does not force guidance upon people; had He wanted this, none could have stopped Him. He provides guidance through arguments and reasoning and has given people the freedom to choose or reject it. Thus He has delivered to them His conclusive argument through His messenger. They have mere conjecture and speculation with them but God has strong and convincing arguments if they open their ears and minds to listen and understand them. Reasoning alone is the path to guidance; not any use of force.

The words: “say: bring forth those witnesses of yours who can bear testimony that God has regarded this thing to be prohibited” ask them what to do instead of speculating. It may be kept in mind that logical evidence can only be presented on two bases: personal observation or knowledge and some natural or intellectual ground whose example can be seen in verses 26-28 of Sūrah Yūsuf. Here the Qur’ān has demanded both these types of evidence. If they cannot provide this, they should accept the conclusive argument the Qur’ān is presenting before them.

Consider next the words: “Then if they bear witness, do not bear this witness with them and do not follow the desires of those who have denied Our revelations, who do not believe in the Hereafter and associate partners with their Lord.” Their innovations are signified by the word “desires.” This is because something that does not have any logical or scriptural justification can only be based on whims and desires and the fate of such people who are guided by their desires is known. Here, three of their characteristics are referred to. First, they deny God’s revelations. Second, they do not believe in the hereafter. Third, they are guilty of polytheism. The purpose is to show that people who are so rebellious that neither God or His verses nor the hereafter have any value before them, who can imagine where these desires of such people will lead them to.

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا تَشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِمَّنْ أَمْلَاقٍ ۚ نَحْنُ
نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۖ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ ذِكْرُكُمْ وَصَّكُمْ
بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْيَتِيمَ بِالْقِسْطِ
لَا كَيْفٍ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۖ وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ ۖ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ۚ ذِكْرُكُمْ وَصَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَ



أَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

These verses state the real religion of Abraham (sws) in detail. It is declared through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that these people should not think that by regarding certain lawful things of Abraham’s religion to be unlawful because of their polytheistic superstitions nothing else is the part of this religion and that they have fulfilled their obligation towards it. The fact is that many other directives of this religion related to the rights God and His creatures that are unlawful have been adopted by them. So, they should now hear out the Prophet (sws) what he has to say in this regard. The first of these unlawful things is polytheism. Yet they have adopted it as their religion.

After God, parents have the greatest right. Their right is mentioned under the right of God but in a positive way, ie. “treat your parents with kindness.” The novelty of style in the verses under discussion may be kept in mind in that some directives are stated in a positive way and some in a negative one. For example, polytheism, murder of children, lewd acts, killing, consuming the wealth of children are mentioned in a negative way. On the other hand, kindness to parents, measuring and weighing honestly, justice in words and deeds and keeping promises are stated in a positive way. Exactly the same style has been adopted in these directives in verses 22-38 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl. The reason for this is that the deduction of the positive from the negative and vice versa is an obvious phenomenon. When a thing is mentioned in a positive way by urging people to adopt it, then it necessarily means that what is opposite to it is prohibited. Similarly, if a thing is prohibited, then it automatically means that its opposite should be adopted. In other words, if polytheism is prohibited, then monotheism should be adopted. Likewise, if it is said that the rights of the parents should be fulfilled, it means that their unkind treatment is forbidden. In the light of this style, all directives which are stated in a positive way but are under حَرَام as far as the construction of the discourse is concerned, their opposites should also be kept in mind. Thus the whole sentence would be to the effect: “neither show

110. Say: Come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you: do not associate anything with Him, treat your parents with kindness and kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide you also and provide them too. And do not even go near vulgarities whether they are open or hidden. And do not kill without justification any soul forbidden by God. These are the things God directs you to so that you understand. And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him until he reaches maturity. And weigh with honesty and full measure. We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear. And when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives. And fulfil God’s promise. These are the things He has directed you to so that you receive a reminder and that: “Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord.” These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain secure from His punishment.



disrespect to the parents nor scold them; in fact, be kind to them.” The advantage of this style is that what is needed to be stated with stress is cited in words and its opposite is deemed to be understood from the style of the discourse as its natural consequence. At some instances, the Qur‘ān has revealed the tacit implications of this style as well. For example, what is stated here is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl thus:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آيِبٌ
وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا. ۚ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا.

(١٧: ٢٣ – ٢٤)

And your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to treat well your parents. If either or both of them attain old age in your life before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them while answering; but speak to them with good etiquette and treat them with humility and tenderness and say: “Lord, be merciful to them the way they nursed me in childhood.” (17:23-24)

Consider next: لَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ. The word إِمْلَاق means “poverty.” In verse 31 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl, the expression used is: خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ. In other words, it is said that the fear of providing food for children and grooming them should not lead to killing them. It may be kept in mind that one form of killing children in Arabia was related to polytheistic superstitions, as referred to earlier. A second form found in some tribes was that they would bury alive their infant girls because of an overblown spirit of honour. The third related to killing them for fear of poverty, as mentioned here. Even today, we hear of such heinous and brutal killings in some countries that are extremely poor or inflicted with some calamity. The reason for this ghastly act is that a human being thinks that he is the actual provider of himself and those linked with him. The fact is that every person is created and sustained by God alone. Human beings just become a means of this sustenance. Children are primarily entrusted by God in the custodianship of their parents. It is their obligation to fulfil the responsibilities imposed on them regarding their children as far as they can on the basis of sense and reason as well as religion. Never should the parents think that they are the actual sustainers of their children. On the contrary, it is God Who not only provides the children but also the parents. The milk with which a mother feeds her child is not actually provided by her; it is God Who is its source. When this is so, what right have the parents to perpetrate this inhuman crime?

Like individuals, sometimes governments too cross their limits and bounds and enter the sacred domain of God. The result of this transgression is that instead of being beneficial to their citizens, they end up fighting against nature and their creator. For a conscientious government, it is very much befitting that in order to improve the



means of livelihood for its citizens, it rummages through every nook and corner of its territory both land and sea to provide them with resources and livelihood. This too is its natural, in fact, religious responsibility to instruct and educate the masses in every sphere of life, whether public or private, individual or collective to be cautious, moderate, pro-hygiene and hard-working. However, it would be exceeding limits if a government starts ordering them to produce a certain amount of children in line with the resources it can generate for them. It thinks that any number beyond the prescribed amount would be unwelcome and in fact would not be allowed to come into being by using birth control techniques.

It can thus be seen that the grave misconception with which the cruel Arab tribes of *jāhiliyyah* were inflicted is no different from the one today's civilized governments are guilty of. They too were angry with God that when He is not providing them enough why is He increasing their population with such speed? They would vent this anger by killing their children. The modern man too furiously contemplates that when he has not been able to attain a certain standard of living, why should he bear the responsibilities of others? In this consternation, modern governments have hatched the scheme of family-planning. The form has only changed. The Arabs were uncivilized and unkempt, and the method they adopted was in line with their unruliness. Today, people are refined and cultured and hence they have adopted a sophisticated way to deal with the same problem. The philosophy of both is the same: both regard themselves to be the providers of sustenance. It is God, in fact, who sustains everyone. The Qur'ān corrected the mistake of the Arabs and they understood it too. However, who can convince the cultured minds of today?

The word **وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ** in **الْفَوَاحِشَ** means “open lewdness.” The primary form of it is adultery or fornication. Thus in verse 32 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, the words used are: **وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا** (and do not even go near adultery; it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path). The words **لَا تَقْرُبُوا** are used by the Qur'ān for those wrongdoings of which even a shadow is destructive for a person, which are not only dangerous themselves but the motives of which are also equally dangerous, which shower their filth on him from a very long distance and then engulf a person in such a manner that it becomes impossible for him to disengage himself from them. A person can only succeed to protect himself from such wrongdoings when he fully protects his eyes, tongue and heart and is able to clog every hole from which it can creep up to him and stays short of every place that can cause him to stumble.

It is in order to fulfil the requisites of this **لَا تَقْرُبُوا** (do not even go near) that the Qur'ān has imposed many restrictions on men and women, the details of which are mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb and Sūrah al-Nūr. In their explanation, I will mention all the details *inshaAllāh*.

It should be kept in mind about virtue and vice that their real source is the heart. For this reason, no virtue develops unless it is deeply rooted in the heart. Similarly, a vice



cannot be gotten rid of unless it is uprooted from the heart. If some vice is found in the heart it will continue to be nurtured through the eye, the ear, the tongue and thoughts until it becomes a spiritual cancer. Even if it may never materialize practically, it grips the mind and heart of a person in such a way that the strongest effort of self-cleansing ends up in vain. This results in the moral and spiritual death of a person. For this reason, the Qur‘ān has asked the believers to stay away from both inner and outer forms of lewdness.

Every soul is sacred. Hence, the words used are *حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ* (what God has regarded as sacred) in the sentence *وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ*. The only exception to this is that the life of a soul can be taken in accordance with the *shari‘ah* because of an offence it commits. For example, if someone has murdered someone or if someone is guilty of rebelling against God and His messenger or if someone has committed adultery (whose punishment is death by stoning). Without such offences, killing someone is not justified.

The words *ذُرِّكُمْ وَصَلُّوا بِهِمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ* imply that these are the things they were directed to adopt as part of Abraham’s religion. However, the Quraysh have abandoned them and by regarding some lawful animals to be unlawful, they claim to be followers of this religion. The Prophet (sws) is narrating to them these directives of Abraham’s religion to make them think how far they have deviated from it, in spite of claiming to be its adherents. In order to appreciate the real stress in *لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ* (so that you understand), readers may keep in mind the opening verse: “say: come, I shall tell you what your Lord has forbidden to you.” The implied meaning is that the Prophet (sws) has related these details so that the Quraysh revisit their attitude and try to understand the reality.

Consider next the words: “And that do not go near the wealth of an orphan except in the way that is better for him.” The rights of the orphans have been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā’. The wealth of the orphans is like fire of Hell and for this reason none should even go near it with any evil intention. The only proper way to go near their wealth is to manage it and further enhance it. When they reach maturity, their wealth should be returned to them in the presence of witnesses.

Consider next the words: “And weigh with honesty and full measure.” This directive too is stated in a positive way. Thus it too must be subsumed under what is stated earlier when the rights of the parents were explained. In verses 1-3 of Sūrah al-Mutaffifin, it is said: *الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ وَيَلْبِطُوا قُلُوبَهُمْ فِي الْبُطْقِ فَيَكْفُرُونَ* (Woe be to those who weigh and measure less! Who exact full measure when they take from others, and when they measure or weigh for others give less than what is due).

It may be kept in mind that the system of this universe is based on justice and fairness, as pointed out in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. Moreover, every object bears witness that its creator adheres to justice. For this reason, for the well being of this universe, it is essential that human beings in their spheres too stick to justice. Any deviation from it will lead them away from their centre of gravitation and will create



tremendous disorder in the whole system. In verse 35 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl, it is stated: **وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كُلْتُمْ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا**.¹¹¹ The last words of this verse relate to the consequences and blessings of both of this world and the next. These blessings are self-evident regarding the next world. In this world, these blessings manifest themselves in the form of a just economic system in which trade and business ventures are established on right footings. Nations which are dishonest in their dealings have never developed in this world nor is their any chance for them to do so. This vice is not just one vice; it is the source of many other vices. A nation fraught with this evil is devoid of the concept of justice and fairness. For this reason, it is not only devoid of the ability to create a healthy society, it also sows seeds of disorder in God’s earth. Thus in accordance with God’s established practice, such a nation is destroyed. More details on this are found in the next *sūrah* when the nation of Shū‘ayb (sws) is discussed.

Consider next the words “We do not burden a soul with more than it can bear.” Evident from this is that all directives which God has given to human beings are in accordance with their capacities. Nothing among them are beyond their capacity and capability. Secondly, everyone must follow these directives with full honesty and veracity both in letter and in spirit. Any inadvertent mistake in following them will be overlooked by God. By delineating this required standard, the purpose is also to circumvent any extremism in exercising caution. No one should set goals that are beyond those set by God. However, these words should not cause any misconception in people that they themselves can ascertain the extent of their strength and capacity and then select to what extent they can follow God’s directives. God has not given anyone this discretion.

The words “and when you speak, speak the truth, even if the matter is about your relatives” state a general principle.¹¹² However, occasion and context shows that here they imply that no evidence borne and no decision given by people should be against the truth even if the matter relates to their relatives.

At the end, a comprehensive directive is given: “And fulfil God’s promise.” This includes promises which God has taken from people as well as those which they make with one another for any noble cause. A person will be held answerable to God for every promise he makes. So every promise, if it is within the limits stipulated by God, is a promise made with Him. Thus the words used in verse 34 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl are: **وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا**.¹¹³

The words **وَصَلُّوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَتَذَكَّرُوا** should be understood in the light of what is

111. And when you measure give full measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned.

112. Thus in verse 36 of Sūrah Banī Isrā‘īl, the words are: “and do not go after what you know not because ears, eyes and heart – each of them shall be questioned.”

113. And keep your promises because you shall be held accountable for promises.



explained earlier under **ذِكْرُكُمْ وَصَلَكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ**. However, what needs deliberation is that earlier the word used was **تَعْقِلُونَ**. Here it is **تَذَكَّرُونَ** and in the next one, in the same context, it is said: **لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ**. There is a very deep meaningful relationship between **تَعْقِلُ**, **تَذَكَّرُ** and **تَتَّقَى**. When a person frees himself from blind following and resolves to seriously reflect on something, then this is **تَعْقِلُ**. Through this **تَعْقِلُ** facts found in human nature are revealed to him but are veiled because of a person's indifference. Revealing of these facts is **تَذَكَّرُ**. This **تَذَكَّرُ** guides a person to the destination of **تَتَّقَى** which epitomizes education and self-purification as well as religion and *sharī'ah*. At some appropriate instance ahead, I will explain that the *sharī'ah* is based on human nature. For this reason, as far as the basics and fundamentals of religion are concerned, they do not come from an external source; they are divulged from human nature on the condition that a person after being reminded by God does **تَذَكَّرُ**. The *sharī'ah* is a treasury that has been extracted from our nature and has been consigned to us, on the condition that we give due regard to it.

The last verse read: **وَإِنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ**. The word **مُسْتَقِيمًا** is an accusative of state. The verb found in the demonstrative noun is acting on it. The verse implies that the straight path which the Prophet (sws) is presenting before them should be followed by them; it is instructed by God and taught by Abraham (sws) to his progeny. They should retract from all other paths because they will lead them astray from this path and from Abraham's religion. It was through Abraham (sws) that they had been directed to follow this path and now it is through Muḥammad (sws) that they are once again being reminded of it so that they can avoid destruction and divine punishment.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that just as the natural criterion between what is lawful and unlawful in edibles is what is pure and wholesome and what is not, in a similar way, the basic principle in rights and obligations and character and conduct is that all things that are enjoined stem from justice, goodness and good conventions and all things that are forbidden stem from rebelliousness, lewdness and vice. The foundations of what is forbidden and what is not in the religion of Abraham (sws) and in the religion of Islam are based on this principle. More details on this are found under verse 90 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

114. **ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تِبَابًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّعَلَّهُمْ يُلْقَا رَبَّهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ** (38)

The word **ثُمَّ** signifies sequence. Earlier the religion of Abraham (sws) was under discussion. After this, it was Moses (sws) who was given a book and a *sharī'ah*. It may be kept in mind here that the basic contents of this book and Abraham's religion are the

114. Then We then gave Moses the Book to complete My favour on him who was thorough, as an explanation of everything, and as guidance and mercy so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord.



same. The first directives given to Moses (sws) written on tablets are famously known as the “Ten Commandments.” They may be couched in different words but the essence is the same as what was directed to Abraham (sws). Even the number of commandments is common. If there is any addition in the Mosaic *sharī‘ah*, it is only of the nature of additional details, as indicated by the Qur’ān. Moreover, precisely the same directives were given to this *ummah*, as shall become evident from the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nahl and Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl. In other words, actual religion is one. Difference lies only in details and completion. In this final *sharī‘ah*, by reverting religion to its real foundation, it has been perfected and relieved of all the restrictions which had been imposed on the Jews because of their rebelliousness, as has been explained earlier.

Some people are of the view that the words تَبَارَكًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ refer to a group. However, in my opinion, they refer to Moses (sws). The demonstrative pronoun الَّذِي is conventionally used for proper nouns and when it occurs in the singular, it can only allude to a person. In Qur’ānic parables, it does refer at times to a group but this is only the case in certain contexts and backgrounds. This attribute for Moses (sws) is used here exactly as it is used in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Najm for Abraham as الَّذِي وَفَّى (who was loyal). The purpose of referring to Moses (sws) with this attribute is to show why he was rewarded with this favour. He was thorough in his deeds. He understood his obligation to the favours God bestowed on him intrinsically and extrinsically and befittingly discharged it. It is such people who become worthy of God’s favours and are selected by Him for such a position as messengerhood. God perfects His favour on them. This attribute is also very subtly reminding the Jews to reflect on the person from whom they acquired religion. He was blessed with this favour because he recognized his duty to this favour and efficiently carried it out. On the other hand, the Jews disregarded every favour with contempt and evaded every directive and even distorted it; yet they claim that all the success of this world and the next belong to them.

The words “as an explanation of everything” refer to all things of religion. The foundational principles of religion are the same as the ones explained under Abraham’s religion earlier. However, each of them has sub-components and corollaries. In the book given to Moses (sws), God mentioned all these details and constituents. In this way, this book became a source of guidance and mercy.

The words “guidance” and “mercy” in a very apt sequence express the purpose for which God reveals His scriptures. They are revealed so that they guide people to the way according to which they should lead their lives in this world which will then earn them His mercy in the next world. In this way, God’s Book is guidance with regard to its objective and mercy with regard to its consequences. Moreover, the real purpose of this life is success in afterlife. The life of this world is temporary and transient. For this reason, the purpose of divine books is to induce people to profess faith in meeting God and lead a life while keeping this mission in mind. Thus the words: “so that they believe in the meeting with their Lord.”



وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ عَلَى طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا^{١١٥}
وَأِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَفِيلِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنا عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابَ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ
رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ
الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

After the Torah, now the revelation of the Qur‘ān is mentioned. It is a means of blessings for all people in general and for the Arabs in particular. After stating this, the Arabs are warned that the truth has been conclusively conveyed to them through this book and now they have no excuse left before God. So if they must persist in this denial, they must contemplate its consequences.

The word مُبَارَكٌ has been used in the Qur‘ān at many places for rain which becomes a source of irrigation to bring forth greenery and vegetation. It is this rain which energizes the treasure of seeds sown in it so that they can become lush green plants and it gives it lush foliage after they have become dry and desolate. In this word is also concealed the metaphorical meaning that this Qur‘ān too has been revealed to bestow mankind with new life after its spiritual death and revive religious guidance after it has been adulterated with alien concepts.

Consider next the verse: أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ عَلَى طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا^{١١٥} وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَفِيلِينَ. Before them a governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed as per linguistic principles. The actual construction is to the effect: كَرَاهَةً أَنْ تَقُولُوا. An example of this style can be seen in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Mā‘idah.

The words هُدًى and رَحْمَةٌ used in verse 157 for the Qur‘ān. The first of these means “a convincing and conclusive argument.” This word is used in the Qur‘ān with regard to two aspects. First, it ended all the excuses referred to earlier which the Arabs had. Second, the Qur‘ān in itself is a conclusive proof and argument. It does not need any external evidence to certify its divine origins. It is a challenge for which the Arabs had no answer, as has been referred to at many instances within it. Moreover, like the Torah, it is not merely a collection of directives; it has been revealed with all the reasoning needed to verify its claims. So strong, logical and natural is this reasoning

115. And this blessed Book that We have revealed, follow it and fear [God] so that you are shown mercy. Lest you say: “The Book was revealed to only the two earlier communities and we had no knowledge of its reading and teaching.” Or say: “Had the Book been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than them.” Thus a conclusive argument and a guidance and mercy have come to you from your Lord. So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion.



that people can stubbornly react to it but they cannot deny it.

Consider next the words: فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ. The verb صدف is both transitive and intransitive and means “to evade something” and also “to make someone evade something.” Those who think that it is used transitively here seem correct. Before it, it has been stated “the ones who reject the revelations of God.” This already carries the meaning of “evasion.” After that, it is only appropriate that the verb be used transitively. Thus the overall meaning would be: those who denied God’s revelations and stopped others from them.

The words imply that who can be more wretched and deprived than those to whom a book comes and does away with all their excuses, is a conclusive and convincing proof as well a lighthouse of guidance and can secure God’s mercy for them in the hereafter but they deny it and stop others as well from accepting it.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ نَفْسًا إِيسَاءُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا قُلِ انْتِظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ¹¹⁶

The verse implies that all their excuses were done away with and the truth was conveyed to them from every angle but they are not ones who can be convinced through reasoning and proofs and only await the appearance of angels or God before them, and if this is not possible then some sign of punishment be shown to them. In verses 210 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and 111 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, these demands have been alluded to and are mentioned as well in some *sūrahs* coming up. For example, in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Nahl, it is said: هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ¹¹⁷. Similarly, in verse 21 of Sūrah al-Furqān, the words used are: وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَدِينَةُ أَوْ تُرَىٰ رَبَّنَا¹¹⁸.¹¹⁶ لَقَدْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْهُمُ أَكْبَرًا

The verse under discussion goes on to say that expressing faith after observing the promised doom will be of no avail to them, what to speak of the appearance of angels. Only that faith is acceptable which is professed through the faculties of sight, hearing, heart, mind and intellect. If these people await a sign of their doom, they should

116. So who can be more unjust than the ones who reject the revelations of God and turn others away from them? Those who are evading Our revelations, We shall soon sternly punish them for this evasion. They are only waiting for the angels or your Lord to come to them or a special sign from among the signs of your Lord appear to them. The day such a sign of your Lord manifests itself, the faith of a person will not be of any benefit to him who did not accept it earlier or did not earn pious deeds from his faith. Say: Wait; we too are waiting.

117. They only await that angels come to them or the directive of your Lord arrives.

118. And those who do not fear coming before Us, say: “Why were angels not sent down to us, or We could have directly observed God?” They regarded themselves to be very superior in their hearts and showed great arrogance. The day they will see the angels, there shall be no good news for these wrongdoers and they will cry out: “Refuge! Refuge!”



continue to wait and so will God because all those signs which make a nation of worthy of punishment have manifested themselves in them. According to God's established practice what only remains is that He decide their fate by destroying falsehood and be making the truth dominant. Here it should be kept in mind that when a messenger and his companions have done what is required of them and the stubborn and rebellious still do not pay heed, then they too have to wait for God's verdict because the supremacy of the truth is related to the manifestation of this verdict. The desire of destruction for opponents is not the real purpose of this waiting; it is the sentiment of the supremacy of the truth that is the real objective of this wait. The mission of the prophets of God is to spiritually purify and rectify the lives of people. They expend all their energy in this mission. Those who have the slightest element of good in them accept this reformation from them. Those who become blind and deaf to these calls are actually dead. If their corpses remain on the land, they will stagnate and spread disorder. Hence in their destruction lies the well-being of people. This issue will *inshaAllāh* be taken up in greater detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūh.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَسْتُ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ ۖ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هَدَيْتُ رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۚ دِينًا قَبِيلاً إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ إِنْ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ ١١٩

Earlier in verse 153, it was said: “And that: ‘Only this is My straight path; so, follow it and do not tread on other paths lest they lead you away from the path of your Lord.’ These are the things to which He has directed you so that you may remain

119. You have no link with those who created divisions in their religion and split themselves into sects. Their matter rests with God alone. So, He alone will gather them; then tell them what they had been doing. He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them. Say: My Lord has guided me to a straight path – the upright faith which is the path of Abraham's religion, who was fully devoted and was not among the idolaters. Say: My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the Universe. He has no associate and thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit. Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything? And each soul gets what it earns and no soul shall bear another's burden. Then to your Lord shall you return. Thus, He will tell you in what you have been differing.



secure from His punishment.” While explaining it, I had written that this is a mention of the real religion of Abraham (sws) that was given to both branches of his progeny: the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. However, both branches created religious innovations and side-tracks in it: the latter adopted polytheism and the former named themselves as followers of Judaism and Christianity. The real path was lost. So, the Almighty once again had it recovered through the last Prophet – Muḥammad (sws). Arguments in favour of this were presented in detail, as is evident from previous discussions. However, all these afore-mentioned groups opposed this manifest reality and became adamant on their own deviant paths.

In the verses under discussion, the last prophet is directed to have no link with people who have created divisions in the religion given by God; he has already discharged his obligation and should now leave them alone; their matter rests with God and it is now He who will inform them of their misdeeds. This also indicates that the time for the Prophet’s (sws) declaration of acquittal was drawing very near.

Consider next, the words: “He who brings forth a good deed will be rewarded tenfold and he who brings an evil deed will be punished in proportion to it and no injustice will be meted out to them.” They actually explain what is said right before them: “then tell them what they had been doing.” Here informing them of their deeds obviously entails its consequence: reward and punishment. It is thus said that neither anything will fall short for those who did good deeds nor any excess will be committed by those who did evil. Here it may be kept in mind that the words “in proportion to it” refer to their proportion and extent before God and not to what human beings regard in this world. Moreover, the reward of virtue that has been stated here is the minimum. It does not negate the blessings in excess to it mentioned at other instances.

In قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتُ رَبِّيَ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۚ وَبَيْنَا قَيْمًا مِّثْلَهُ ۚ إِنزِيلُهُمْ حَنِيفًا, the words دِينًا قَيْمًا form a permutative (*badal*) from صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ as per it is occasion and context. The words قَيْمٌ and قِيمٌ are synonymous ie. the straight and natural religion that has no deviation. In the Qur’ān, this word has been used for the religion of Abraham (sws) and the religion of Islam and the purpose is to show that its nature is purged from the deviances that the Idolaters, the Jews and the Christians had created in their religion.

This in fact is that same statement that was uttered earlier from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in positive words. It implies that he has no link with the innovations created by the Jews and the Christians and that he should clearly declare before them that he has been blessed with the guidance of the straight path which is the religion of Abraham (sws) who was devoted to his Lord and was not among the Idolaters. It is as if the discussion that began from the beginning of the *sūrah* has reached its culmination. At the end, it is declared through the tongue of Muḥammad (sws) that the real religion of Abraham (sws) is the one he is following; he who wants to follow it should do so; all other paths are deviations and he has not link with them and he disowns them.

Consider next the words: قُلْ إِن صَلَاحِي وَتُسْكِ وَمَخْيَايَ وَمَبَاقِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. Here the word نُسْكُ



means “animal sacrifice” and this meaning is signified by its placement adjacent to the prayer. In verse 2 of Sūrah al-Kawthar, it is said: ¹²⁰فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكِ وَانْحَرِ.

In the part under discussion, the real spirit and essence of the religion of Abraham (sws) has been explained through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). Deliberation shows that there is a very profound comparison between the prayer and animal sacrifice and between life and death. The prayer is compared with life and animal sacrifice is compared with death. This is an indication that those who follow this religion live for God and die for Him as well. There are no divisions in their lives. From the beginning to the end, they are in harmony. There is no associate of God: لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ. For this reason, there is no associate of God in a person’s life as well. It is meant entirely and totally for God without any division, reservation or exception for the one and only God. It is then stated: “Thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit.” This means that this submission is human nature and the Prophet (sws) has been commanded by God to obey it. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) is treading this path and all those who have the strength should follow him; he will not postpone this journey while waiting for others.

Consider next, the question: “Ask: Should I make someone Lord other than God when He alone is the Lord of everything?” This is actually the reasoning why the Prophet (sws) is submitting to God: when God is the Lord of everything, how can he associate partners with Him.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَكَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ¹²¹

This is the final warning sounded to the Quraysh. They are not the first nation to appear on the stage of this world. Many nations appeared before them and then finally they were given this opportunity by God. This bestowal of authority itself shows that God will assess them on the basis of the same criterion He assessed the nations before them. If they do not qualify, He will discard them the way He discarded others. Here this is stated in a concise way. Its full details are coming up in the next *sūrah*: al-A‘rāf.

The words “and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you” are meant to dispel a misconception foolish people are often afflicted with. When they think that they are successful in this world and have more worldly wealth and resources than those who are warning them of the Hereafter, they surmise that these people are silly for had they been wrong, why would they have

120. So pray only for your Almighty.

121. And it is He who has made you successors of one another in the earth and exalted one of you in status above the other so that He may test you in what He has given you. Indeed, very swift is your Lord in retribution also and is also Forgiving and Merciful.



succeeded in life? In this way they become even more audacious on their rebelliousness. These people are told not to ruin themselves through this misconceived notion. Whatever they have is not because of their abilities; it is a test from God to see whether they express gratitude or not. The day of reward and punishment for virtues and vices is about to come and they should not think that it is far off. Rather it is very near. On that day, everyone will see the consequences of his good and bad deeds. Those who would have shown ingratitude to God will suffer and those who fulfilled their obligation towards His favours will be forgiven by God and show mercy.

The exegesis of this *sūrah* ends here. **وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ** (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
11 Šafr, 1388 AH
10 May, 1968 AD
