



Sūrah al-A‘rāf

Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In Sūrah al-An‘ām, as is evident from its commentary, the Quraysh were invited to Islam. The basis of this call was that it is Islam which is the religion of Abraham (sws). He had directed his progeny to follow it. The current innovations and superstitions that the Quraysh adhere to has nothing to do with it. God has done a great favour to them by sending a messenger from among themselves. He has conclusively delivered His religion to them. If even after this they persist in their denial, they should remember that He destroys those deny His messengers. This is a known fact of history to find which they do not have to go anywhere. The history of the land which they reign today in has enough lessons to learn from. They are not the first inhabitants of this land. Several nations have ruled here before them. In fact, some of them were far mightier than them in their power and majesty. They are their heirs. So, there is no reason why they should be treated differently. They are guilty of the same -crimes because of which the Almighty had destroyed the previous nations and given the Quraysh the political authority. So why would God let them make hey? His law is the same for every one.

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-An‘ām, the previous *sūrah*. The element of warning pervades it as opposed to element of preaching in the previous *sūrah*. The Quraysh are clearly warned in it that if they do not mend their ways, they will be seized by God’s torment. A charge sheet against them is first briefly presented. After that a detailed history of all the previous nations is narrated who reigned in this land and reached their fate one after the other. They were guilty of the same crimes as the Quraysh. These details are actually the detailed explanation of the last verse of Sūrah al-An‘ām. With the Quraysh, the Jews are also sounded a final admonition. At the end, a warning is given with reference to the covenant based on human nature that was taken from every human soul before its birth. This takes the *sūrah* to its culmination. After this, the phases of migration and declaration of war or visitation of divine punishment ensue.

We now present an analysis of the meanings of the *sūrah* so that the whole of it can be viewed at a glance.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-9): The Prophet (sws) is assured about his responsibility regarding this Book



of God: he should warn people through it so that the truth is conveyed in its ultimate form. He is not responsible to make the accept faith. Only the believers will benefit from this Book. The Quraysh are warned to profess faith in this Book, otherwise they should remember that many nations before them were destroyed for the crime of denying God’s messengers. When God’s torment visited them, they could do nothing to stop it. In fact, they themselves confessed their crime and were wiped off the face of the earth. They should be aware that a day will necessarily come when they will be held accountable for their responsibilities and the messenger for his. On that day, God will expose all their deeds before them. The scale of justice that will be set up on that day will weigh every deed and decide how much truth or falsehood it carries. On that day, only they will succeed whose scales are heavy. All the rest will be doomed.

Verses (10-25): The Quraysh are warned that the political authority they enjoy in this land was blessed to them by God. He opened the way to sustenance and livelihood for them. However, Satan prevailed over them and made them ungrateful. The incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is then narrated. It becomes evident from it that Satan had threatened Adam’s progeny that he would lead them astray and their majority will turn out to be disobedient and ungrateful to God. In the case of the Quraysh, he has succeeded in his mission. Just as he had led astray Adam (sws) and Eve and had had them expelled from Paradise, he is trying to lead them astray too. They should not let him succeed in his aim.

Verses (26-30): The Quraysh are reminded that in spite of being the progeny of Adam (sws), they did not remember the enmity of Satan with their progenitors. He had led them astray, deprived them of the attire of Paradise and had had them expelled from it. He has played the same trick with the Quraysh. By obeying Satan, they have disrobed themselves of both the inner and outer attire with which God had embellished them. The attire of piety which is the embellishment of one’s inner self was taken off by them and so was the outer attire. Thus they were lured by Satan right in the House of God to encircle it while being naked. They regard this indecency not only to be a heritage of their forefathers but also a directive of God. Can the Almighty direct people to such an act of indecency? He only commands His creatures to adhere to truth and justice, to worship Him alone and not associate partners with Him. While obeying Satan, the Quraysh have violated all these directives and still claim that this alone is the path of truth. Very few people could secure themselves from Satan’s luring.

Verses (31-34): The Quraysh are warned that there is no basis of what they regard to be lawful and unlawful out of their own whims. God has neither prohibited adornments nor edibles. These things are permissible in this world for the believers and in the Hereafter they will be their sole recipients. What he has prohibited is vulgarity, whether open or hidden, usurping rights and rebelliousness – none of these have any justification. Similarly, he has forbidden polytheism for it has no grounds and imputing falsehood to Him. However, the Quraysh are guilty of doing all these forbidden practices. If, in spite of this, they are being respited, it is because a time has



been prescribed by God for every destruction.

Verses (35-43): It is reminded that since the very beginning the progeny of Adam (sws) was directed to obey God’s Messengers that would be sent to inform them of His commands. Those who will follow them will go to Paradise and those who will deny them will go to Hell. All the inhabitants of Hell will curse one another and none will be able to come out from it. The fire of Hell will be something they will continue to burn in. However, the believers will enter Paradise. They will be happy to meet one another and will be grateful to God’s favours. They will confess that whatever they have been blessed with is because they had followed the messengers. Whatever the messengers had told them came true word for word.

Verses (44-53): The inhabitants of Paradise will inform the inhabitants of Hell that the promises God made with them were fulfilled. They will ask them if they too have seen what they were promised. A declaration of curse will be delivered to the companions of Hell from God. It is then mentioned that people stationed in certain turrets will be made to view both Paradise and Hell. The purpose would be to make them see that the promises made by God through His messengers were all fulfilled. The people standing in these turrets will congratulate the inhabitants of Paradise and rebuke the inhabitants of Hell. The latter will plead to the former to show some mercy to them. They will receive the reply that the favours of Paradise are forbidden to the disbelievers. A declaration from God is then stated that people who ignored His directives in the previous world will now be ignored by Him. The disbelievers will express yearning at their misfortune and deprivations.

Verses (54-58): The disbelievers of the Quraysh are warned that it is solely God Who creates and runs this universe. In both hope and despair, they must plead before Him. They must not spread disorder in it after it has been reformed. The Day of Judgement is certain to come. They are continuously witnessing the emergence of life after death in this universe. God has explained His signs in every way.

Verses (59-93): The anecdotes of the nations of Noah (sws), Hūd (sws), Šālīh (sws), Lot (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws) are narrated. They show that God wipes out those nations from the face of the earth who spread disorder in it and deny the call of their messengers.

Verses (94-102): A brief comment is made on the afore-mentioned anecdotes. Some basic principles and lessons that must be learnt from how God deals with various nations are referred to. Its underlying wisdom is also alluded to. The Quraysh are warned that they are the successors of these nations and if they had used their insight to study the fates of these nations, they would have learnt many lessons. However, just as God had put a seal on the hearts of these nations, their hearts too have been sealed.

Verses (103-136): The anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is mentioned. It becomes evident from it that the Pharaoh employed all possible tricks and ploys against Moses (sws) but God did not let him succeed. The wrongdoers were destroyed and the oppressed faction was given political authority in the land because of its



perseverance.

Verses (137-171): A comprehensive comment is made on all the phases of the history of the Israelites. It is evident from this that the Almighty was always kind to them but they showed ingratitude to His favours right from the beginning to that time. They did not benefit from any reminder or warning and this attitude is still continuing. Thus they are opposing the very truth whose protection they were made responsible of. The fact is that this is the last chance for them. If they do not avail it, they will suffer eternal humiliation.

Verses (172-206): In this concluding section, the Quraysh are reminded of the covenant drawn from human nature and are asked to learn a lesson from the fate of the Israelites. After that they are threatened with God's punishment and warned that when they would be seized by God, these idols that they have carved out will not be any benefit to them. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is directed to show patience and ignore his adversaries. He is asked to keep God in remembrance all the time.

Section I: Verses (1-9)

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ ۝ كَتَبْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَزَنٌ مِّنْهُ يَشْنُدْ بِهِ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْيَاءَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۝ وَكَمْ مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَجَاءَهَا بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا أَوْ هُمْ قَائِلُونَ ۝ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ۝ فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝ فَلَنَقْضِيَنَّهُمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا غَائِبِينَ ۝ وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۝ وَمَن خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلِمُونَ ۝

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

This is Alif Lām Mīm Ṣu‘ād. It is this Book which has been revealed to you. So let not there be any worry in your heart because of it. It has been revealed so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers. People! Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other patrons leaving aside your Lord. Very seldom do you receive a reminder. And how many cities have We destroyed; so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon. Then when Our scourge visited them, they could only say: “Indeed, it was we who were unjust.” So, bear in mind that We shall



ask those to whom messengers were sent and ask from the messengers themselves as well. Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them. The truth only shall hold weight on that day. Then those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who are the ones who put themselves in loss because they would deny Our revelations and would be unjust to their souls. (1-9)

Explanation

الْبَصِّ ۖ كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَازِئٌ مِّنْهُ لِيَتَذَكَّرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ¹

Detailed discussion on the abbreviated letters can be seen at the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the letters **اَلَمْ** were discussed. Here **ص** is added to them. It has been mentioned earlier that *sūrahs* that have similar names have similar topics. Thus deliberation shows that there are many aspects in which this *sūrah* is similar to Sūrah al-Baqarah even though this is a Makkan and the latter a Madīnan *sūrah* and the addressees of both are different from one another too.

Here the verses can be parsed in two possible ways: Firstly, **الْبَصِّ** can be regarded as an independent sentence whose inchoative (*mubtadā'*) has been suppressed. The second option is to regard **الْبَصِّ** as the inchoative that is connected to **كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ** in the next verse that forms the enunciative (*khabar*). I have preferred the first option and regard **كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ** to also have a suppressed inchoative as well. Nevertheless, there is not much difference in the meaning in both options.

The word **حَازِئٌ** means “worry” and anxiety.” This verse was revealed to assure the Prophet (sws) in a phase in which the enmity of the Quraysh was at its peak, as is evident from the analysis of meanings done earlier. They were using all kinds of wicked tricks to persecute the believers. In order to harass the Prophet (sws), they would make new demands from him everyday. On the one hand was this intensity of opposition and on the other hand such was his conscientious nature that in spite of doing all what he could to invite the Quraysh to Islam, he would be extremely worried that perhaps he was falling short in some way in his preaching endeavours because of which they were not being convinced of such an evident truth. Both these things were weighing down heavily on the heart of the Prophet (sws). The Qur’ān has reduced both these burdens. It has urged the Prophet (sws) to disregard the opposition of the Quraysh because this Book was not authored by him nor did he every ask God to reveal it to him. In fact, it has been revealed to him by God without his demand or desire. So why should he be worried by the opposition of its adversaries. The God Who has revealed it will provide help and support in this matter. He is not weak or

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm Ṣu‘ād. It is this Book which has been revealed to you. So let not there be any worry in your heart because of it. It has been revealed so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers.



powerless nor is He unaware or unconcerned of the prevailing circumstances. He fully knows the responsibility He has imposed on in the Prophet (sws), the needs of the provisions of this responsibility and how much strength is needed by the Prophet (sws) to remove the hurdles of this path. God will provide all these things to him. Hence, he should not worry and rest assured.

The words “so that you can warn people through it and it is a reminder for the believers” depict the extent of responsibility of the Prophet (sws). Whether the Quraysh accept it or not is not the worry of the Prophet (sws). His responsibility is to only warn them and deliver the message to them.

Consider the clause: **وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِمَا هُمْ مُنْذَرُونَ**. Here the expression **وَذَكِّرْهُمْ** is co-ordinated in meaning to **يُنْذِرْهُمْ** but it is in the form of a noun instead of a verb. The purpose of expressing it in the form of a noun is to refer to a fact: as far as warning is concerned, the Prophet (sws) should discharge this responsibility towards the disbelievers; however, only the believers will benefit from this reminder. This topic has been mentioned at a number of instances in the Qur’ān. For example, in Sūrah Tāhā, it is said: **طه مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى إِلَّا تَذَكُّرٌ لِّمَنْ يَخْشَى تَنْزِيلًا مِّنْ خَلْقِ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ الْعُلَى** (This is Sūrah Tāhā. We have not revealed this Qur’ān to you to put you through difficulty. It is only a reminder for those who fear God. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. (20:1-4))

اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْيَاءَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ²

Interpreters have generally regarded the believers to be the addressees of this verse. However, both its context and words evidence that the disbelievers of the Quraysh are its addressees. After assuring the Prophet (sws) in the previous verse, the Quraysh are warned here. The last part of the verse “very seldom do you receive a reminder” is an expression of sorrow on such people.

وَكَمْ مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَجَاءَهَا بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا أَوْ هُمْ قَائِلُونَ³ **فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ**

The word **قَرْيَةٍ** occurs both for a city as well as for its inhabitants. For this reason, while using pronouns and verbs for it, sometimes the word is referred to and sometimes its meaning. This style is common in every language.

The word **قَائِلُونَ** is from **قِيلَ** and refers to celebrating the afternoon; sleeping is not its essential component. Since Arabia was a hot-weather country, people were

2. People! Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other patrons leaving aside your Lord. Very seldom do you receive a reminder.

3. And how many cities have We destroyed; so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon. Then when Our scourge visited them, they could only say: “Indeed, it was we who were unjust.”



compelled to rest in the afternoon in their houses, tents, orchards and other abodes.

Some commentators while considering the words “so, Our scourge descended on them suddenly at night or right in the day when they were resting in the afternoon” opine that God’s punishment comes in the afternoon or night when people are sleeping. However, this view is not only against history but also the Qur’ān too. Thus, for example, it is stated in verse 47 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ جُحُوشًا هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (Ask: Have you ever thought that if God’s punishment visits you unannounced or announced, would any perish but the unjust ?) Similarly, in verses 97-98 of the current sūrah, it is stated:

أَفَأَمِنْ أَهْلُ الْقُرَى أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ. أَوْ آمِنْ أَهْلُ الْقُرَى أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ.

So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing?

In my opinion, the words under discussion do not imply that God’s punishment comes at a time when people are sleeping. On the contrary, it means that this punishment can come silently in the dark of night and also as a clamour right in broad sunshine. Whenever its time comes, none is able to stop it nor save people from its impact. Only they remain secure whom the Almighty keeps secure.

This is the warning to which the words “so that you can warn people through it” of verse 2 point to. The Quraysh are threatened that the Almighty destroyed many nations through His scourge whenever He wanted. None could survive. In fact, every nation consigned itself to God’s punishment while confessing its crime. The implication is that if the Quraysh do not follow what is revealed to them, they too will meet the same fate as that of the previous nations. Today they show conceit, but at that time they will be left with no power or strength and will confess their crime from their tongues. However, this confession will be of no use then.

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۖ فَلَنَقْصُصَ عَلَيْهِمْ عِلْمَهُمْ ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا غَائِبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ ۖ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلُمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

4. So, bear in mind that We shall ask those to whom messengers were sent and ask from the messengers themselves as well. Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them. The truth only shall hold weight on that day. Then



God’s Messengers warn people of two things: firstly, the punishment that necessarily visits a nation that denies its messenger; secondly, to the reward and punishment that everyone will necessarily face in the hereafter. In the previous verse, the Quraysh have been warned of the first of these and in the verses under discussion, they are warned of the second of these things.

The accountability of nations has been mentioned in the Qur’ān thus:

كَلَّمَآ أَنتَنِي فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهُآ أَنَّمَا يَأْتِيَكُم مِّنْ ذِيَرَةٍ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنَّا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَحَقَا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ. (٦٧: ٨-١١)

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. (67:8-11)

The accountability of the messengers is mentioned thus in the Qur’ān:

يَوْمَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمْ (١٠٩: ٥)

The Day when God will gather all the messengers; then will ask them: “What response was given to you?” (5:109)

The words “Then with full knowledge, We shall narrate everything before them and We were never away from them” imply that everything will be thoroughly brought to light: how these messengers delivered the truth with full earnestness and how their addressees deliberately denied them. It may be noted that this narration would be meant to leave them with no excuse. No possibility will be left for anyone to open their mouths.

The scale of the Almighty on the Day of Judgement will only be tilted by the truth. Evil will have no weight in it. Those whose scales will tilt will succeed and others will be doomed. Regarding the weight of deeds, the Qur’ān has also mentioned another principle:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who are the ones who put themselves in loss because they would deny Our revelations and would be unjust to their souls.



أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزْنًا ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ هُمُ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا الْآيَتِىَ وَرُسُلِى هُزُوًا (١٨: ١٠٥-١٠٣)

Say: Should We inform you who the greatest losers are with regard to their deeds? Those people all of whose efforts were wasted while going after the life of the world while they thought that they were doing very noble deeds. It is these people who denied their Lord's revelations as well as meeting Him. Thus their deeds went waste and on the Day of Judgment, We shall not give them any weight. (18:103-105)

It is evident from these verses that only those deeds will have weight on the Day of Judgement which are done to earn God's pleasure and reward in the hereafter. Deeds which are devoid of these two features will be regarded as evil and carry no weight.

Consider the words are: بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ. There exists a *taḍmīn* (suppression of meaning) because the verb and the preposition do not collocate. If this is revealed, the verse should be to the effect: بِمَا كَانُوا يُكْفَرُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَيَتَذَكَّرُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ (because they continued to deny Our revelations and were unjust to their souls). The advantage of this *taḍmīn* is that a comprehensive meaning can be espoused in a few words.

Section II: Verses (10-25)

First, the Almighty addresses the Quraysh and by reminding them of His favour rebukes them: it was He Who blessed them with majesty and splendour in the land, made them secure from fear and provided means and resources for their livelihood. However, instead of being grateful and obedient to Him, they became ingrates and disobedient.

After that, the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan that was narrated to the Jews in Sūrah al-Baqarah is recounted with some additions before the Quraysh: Satan had sworn to remain an eternal enemy of Adam (sws) and his progeny. He fulfilled this oath by having Adam (sws) and Eve expelled from Paradise. Now he has fulfilled this oath on the Quraysh and they are fully caught in the web of deception weaved by him. The consequences of this are quite evident.

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

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ ۖ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ ثُمَّ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ



أَمَرْتُكَ ۖ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ ۖ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ تَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُنَهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا مَدْحُورًا ۚ لَبِئْسَ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمَلَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْعَلِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَيَا أَدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَوَسَّسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَائِينَ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَبِئْسَ النَّصِيحِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا بِعُرْوَةٍ ۖ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ ذَرْقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْتُ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا ۖ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And We granted you authority in this land and opened up for you sources of livelihood, yet seldom are you grateful. (10)

And We designed you. Then gave you form. We then said to the angels: “Prostrate before Adam.” Except Satan all prostrated. He was not among those who prostrated. God said: “What stopped you from prostrating when I had ordered you?” He replied: “I am better than him. You have created me from fire and created him from clay.” He said: “Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful.” He replied: “Give me respite until the Day people are raised up.” God said: “You have this respite.” He replied: “Since you have led me astray, 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.” God said: “Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.” (11-18)

And O Adam! Dwell with your wife in the garden and eat in it from wherever you want. But both of you do not go near this tree otherwise you both will become unjust to your own selves. Thus Satan whispered to them to open to them what had been hidden to them from their private parts. He said to them: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” And he swore to them repeatedly and said: “I am from among your well-wishers.” By deceiving them in this way, he enticed both of them. Thus when they tasted the fruit



of the tree, their private parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden. And their Lord called them: “Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?” Both cried out: “Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers.” He said: “Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there.” He said: “You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it.” (19-25)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

The expression *تسكين في الارض* means “to grant political authority in the land.” Thus for example, it is used in this sense in verse 21 of Sūrah Yūsuf: *وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا يُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ*.⁶

The word “land” is mentioned in the general sense but since the addressees here are the Quraysh, it refers to the area of Hāram in which they held political sway.

The expression “sources of livelihood” refer to the means of sustenance and blessings available to the Arabs in general and the Quraysh in particular. These blessings are mentioned in the Qur’ān at a number of instances. I have referred to them in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In verse 57 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is stated: *أَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا مِمَّا امْنَأَيْجَبِي إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ زُقَامًا لَدُنَّا*.⁷

The words “yet seldom are you grateful” depict what actually was meant to be stated after the things mentioned prior to them.

In other words, it was because of the invocations of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and the House of God that the Quraysh were blessed with political authority and generous provisions of livelihood and sustenance. However, they ended up very ungrateful. Instead of God, they followed Satan, as will be shown ahead. He was successful in whatever trials he wanted to inflict them with.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ثُمَّ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُنَهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَ

5. And We granted you authority in this land and opened up for you sources of livelihood, yet seldom are you grateful.

6. And in this way We granted authority to Joseph in the land.

7. Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to from Us?



لَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْذُومًا مَّدْحُورًا لَنْ تَبْعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْبَعِينَ ﴿١٥﴾⁸

The incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is narrated here. It shows the history of the enmity between Adam and his progeny with Satan and his accomplices. The real reason for this enmity also becomes evident from it. It also shows that Satan will be kept alive until the Day of Judgement. It also depicts the promise he has made to take revenge from the progeny of Adam (sws). The purpose of narrating this incident should not elude the readers while they read it.

The reason of Satan's enmity with Adam (sws) and his progeny is because of his jealousy with them which arose when he was asked to honour them. He had rejected this directive with utter arrogance. As a result, he was humiliatingly expelled from Paradise. Ultimately, overcome with anger as a result of this expulsion, he requested God to be given respite until the Day of Judgement. The verses describe how he planned to waylay mankind and lead them away from the path of monotheism.

There are some points in between the lines that are evident from these verses:

Firstly, the real animosity which Satan has with mankind is because of the latter being given preference over him. He asked for respite to prove wrong this preference. Now, it is a matter of great misfortune that human beings start to support him in this conflict created by him against them. This would mean that through their own deeds they bear witness that God had wrongly preferred them over Satan.

Secondly, this world is a place of conflict between Adam's progeny and Satan. At every step, this clash is taking place. Satan has been granted opportunity by God to use all his lures and deceptions against them. This opportunity of whispering evil suggestions to them is with him until the Day of Judgement. After that, it will be decided who won and who lost.

Thirdly, the real target of Satan in his onslaught is to make human beings deviate from the path of monotheism. He will lie in ambush for this purpose and has challenged to lead their majority away from it. They will end up ungrateful to God. Earlier by the words "yet seldom are you grateful," the Quraysh were informed that because of their own failings, they have proven correct Satan's opinion about

8. And We designed you. Then gave you form. We then said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam." Except Satan all prostrated. He was not among those who prostrated. God said: "What stopped you from prostrating when I had ordered you?" He replied: "I am better than him. You have created me from fire and created him from clay." He said: "Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful." He replied: "Give me respite until the Day people are raised up." God said: "You have this respite." He replied: "Since you have led me astray, 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." God said: "Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all."



mankind. Hence they have become worthy of the evil fate God had referred to while replying to the ultimatum of Satan: “I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.”

Once the coherence and sequence of the discourse has become evident, there is absolutely no need to explain the words and components of the verses. Most of these things have already been discussed in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Repeating them here would add to the bulk of the discussion. However, things that were not discussed there, are explained below.

Consider the words: **وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ**. The word **خلق** means “to design” something. This word has been used in the Qur’ān alone as well as with its other consequences and linkages. **برء ، تسوية ، تركيب ، ترتيب**. Where it is used alone, it refers to all its consequences and linkages. However, when some other linkages are mentioned with it – for example, here **صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ** is mentioned – it is used in its literal meaning. Here the two words **خلق** and **تصوير** refer to the initial and final phases of creation. The initial phase of every creation is its design and its final phase is the form and perfection given to it.

Here the addressees, as indicated earlier, are the Quraysh. They are being informed of the about the phases of creation of human beings and of the trials ordained for them. Adam (sws) is the father of all humankind. Hence his anecdote is not solely his; it is that of the whole humankind.

The meaning of prostrating before Adam (sws), its underlying wisdom, the reason that jinnkind is included in it and other important related issues have been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah’s *tafsīr*. There it was made evident that Iblīs is the title of the jinn who had deceived Adam (sws). He was from among the jinn and had become rebellious by disobeying God. Those who become his followers among humankind and jinnkind effectively become his progeny. It for such humans and jinn that the Qur’ān uses the word “Satan.” It is not an independent creation, as has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

What is stated here by the words **قَالَ مَا مَنَّكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ** is stated in verse 75 of Sūrah Ṣu‘ād thus: **قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَّكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإِيدِي**.⁹ It is evident that in the first verse there is a **لَا** after **مَا مَنَّكَ**, which is not found in the second. The reason for this is that since the meaning of negation is already found in the expression **مَا مَنَّكَ**, there is no need to bring the particle of negation **لَا** after it. However, if it is used, it emphasizes the rebuke. Thus the gravity of Satan not prostrating is very evident in the verse under discussion. This style is also found in other languages.

It is evident from the words “when I had ordered you” that Adam (sws) was not worthy of being prostrated before in the absolute sense. It was God Who made him so. Moreover, prostration before him was actually prostration before God because it was done at His behest.

Apparent from the words “I am better than him; You have created me from fire and

9. “Satan!” said He, “What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands?”



created him from clay” is that in the eyes of Satan the basis of arrogance was that honour and respect was based on lineage and in this respect he was superior to Adam (sws). The Qur’ān has stated here that the philosophy of regarding one’s lineage to be a basis of superiority is an invention of Satan, and wherever it is present, it is his from his heritage. The basis of respect and superiority in the sight of God is obedience to Him and nothing else.

Consider the words: “He said: “Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful.” They show that deliberate rebellion from God’s directive is arrogance. A person who is inflicted with this arrogance regards himself to be superior to God or equal to Him. Such elevation and exaltedness only behoves God. Those who claim to have a share in it are humiliated by God. An arrogant person has no place in God’s Paradise. Paradise is only a place for those who humble themselves before God and worship Him. For precisely this reason, Iblīs was asked to go away from there and because of his arrogance he was given the punishment of eternal humiliation. In verse 40 ahead, it is about such arrogant people that it is said that just as a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle, they cannot enter God’s Paradise: *إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ* *أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِغَ الْبَعْلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ* ¹⁰ *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ* Exactly the same words are spoken by Jesus: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,” (Luke 18:25). The only difference between the two statements is that the Qur’ān has referred to the actual sin: arrogance and Jesus (sws) has referred to wealth which generally becomes the source of arrogance. It is evident from these details that the real crime of Satan was arrogance. It was because of this that he was expelled from Paradise. For this reason, those who will become his compatriots in this crime will have no place in Paradise.

Since Iblīs was humiliatingly expelled from Paradise, he thought that he will have no opportunity for doing any deed. However, on his request he was granted the opportunity. It was at this juncture that the lives of human beings enter the battle field of trials and tests. Satan spends all his efforts in planning to prove human beings to be unworthy and failed creatures. On the other hand, the success and triumph of human beings hinges on the fact that they prove that they are in fact worthy individuals.

Since this opportunity to do deeds is available to human beings until their death, for this reason Satan too has the chance to lead them astray until their death. Just as after death, the register of deeds of human beings closes, Satan too is left with no chance to lead them astray after that. However, the decision about who won or lost will also be declared on the Day of Judgement. It is for this reason that Satan asked for respite until that Day. Since his request was granted, it means that he was able to delay the

10. Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers.



decision of the matter of human dignity until that time. It is that time when it will be decided whether human beings are worthy of that sparkling crown or not. If he is worthy of it, he will gain eternal pleasures of Paradise. If this is not so, then with Satan they will dwell in Hell.

After his request was granted, Satan challenged God in the following words: “Since you have led me astray, I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them.” He regarded God be his actual enemy and that is why he challenged him. In other words, as per Satan’s view, the real conflict is not between him and human beings; it is between him and God. The words “since you have led me astray” show that he regarded himself to be on the right path when he refused to prostrate before Adam (sws). He thought that he had gone astray not on his own but because God had led him astray. In other words, God put him through a test in which he could have never succeeded. For this reason, he contended that if had gone astray it was God Who compelled him.

There is a direct connection between God and the nature on which human beings are created. If human nature is not afflicted with unnatural distortions, a person cannot adopt any path but the path of monotheism. For this reason, the Qur’ān and other divine scriptures called monotheism to be *مراط مستقيم* (the straight path). As long as a person keeps treading this path, he walks towards his destination seven if he walks slowly and tiredly. It may take him long but he will still reach his destination. On the contrary, if a person turns to a crossing that leads to polytheism, he will deviate from his destination and the further he goes the more he goes astray. It is due to this secret that Satan is not able to lead a person astray totally unless he is able to divert him from the wide path of monotheism to the narrow path of polytheism. Thus in his challenge to God, he openly stated that he will sit on the path of monotheism in ambush for mankind and will try to make it lose its way.

Consider the words: “Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left.” They are an expression of the power, extent and comprehensive nature of Satan’s onslaught from his own tongue. He will attack mankind from every direction, every aspect and every place. He will try to get the better of their observations, emotions, feelings, desires and all other ways that he can access them. He will try to poison their thought, ideology and knowledge and everything that he can get hold of. He will try to inject his venom into their research, critiques, writings, literature and art and will try to create disorder in their culture, civilization, society, economic undertakings, fashion, politics and religion.

This very challenge of Satan is cited in verses 62-65 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl thus: قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ أُخِّرْتُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْغَيْبَةِ لَأُحْتَبِكَ دَرْيَتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا قَالَ أَذْهَبَ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا وَاسْتَفْتَى مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلَبَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَبِيلِكَ وَرَجَلِكَ وَشَارَهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدَهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَكُنْ يَسْتَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظٌ وَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ بِهِمْ عِلْمٌ إِلَّا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ (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.” God said: “Very Well! Those among them who follow you, then Hell is the full recompense for all of you. And whoever among them you can overpower, scare them with your commotion; bring upon them your riders and pedestrians, become a partner in their wealth and children and make promises with them. And the promises Satan makes with them are nothing but deception. Indeed, you will not have any power over My own servants and as a guardian, sufficient is your Lord.”)

From these verses, the extent and intensity of Satan’s propaganda can be gauged. Also evident from it is that he will use political gimmicks too in order to realize his mission. However, there is one element of assurance in it: God has not given Satan the authority to prevail over the will of human beings. The latter will have the freedom of will to choose their way. Hence, those servants of God Who will resolve to tread the path of monotheism will adhere to it in spite of all the machinations of Satan, even if they have to put their life in danger.

The true meaning of the words “and You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You” is: “and You will find most of them not to be monotheists.” This is because the essence of monotheism is that a person regards all his favours to be a blessing of God and remains thankful to Him. If he attributed these favours to anyone other than God, then this would be tantamount to polytheism. This issue has been discussed earlier and further ahead in the *sūrah* also some very important aspects will be referred to. Readers may take a look at verse 10.

Consider the words: “God said: “Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.” The answer to the arrogant challenge thrown by Satan earlier is replied with majesty and authority by God. It is evident from these words that this decision of God is absolute. There is no possibility of any concession in it.

وَيَا أَدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَوَسَّسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَقَاَسَهُمَا أَنْ يَكُنَا لِنِ الْصَّاحِبِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا بِعُرْوَةٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ ذَرْقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْتُ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُفَّاءٌ وَعَدُوكُمَا مُبِينٌ ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾ قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

11. And O Adam! Dwell with your wife in the garden and eat in it from wherever you want. But both of you do not go near this tree otherwise you both will become unjust to your own selves. Thus Satan whispered to them to open to them what had been hidden to them from their



These verses narrate the next part of the anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan. The purpose of narrating it has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. However, things that were not discussed there will be explained here.

The connotation of the word “tree” is discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

It is evident from “and eat in it from wherever you want” that both Adam (sws) and Eve could benefit from anything in Paradise they wanted to. They were just stopped from going near one tree and it was this tree that became a trial for them. Satan delivered such a stirring speech on the benefits of this forbidden tree that Adam (sws) could not abide by his promise with God. Satan uses the same technique with Adam’s progeny in this world. Everything of this world is permissible for them except a few things. It is these few things that Satan and his accomplices use to lure them. He tries to convince them that the secret of their success actually hinges on these prohibited things.

Even though after being regarded as accursed Satan had been expelled from Paradise, he had gained the opportunity to lead astray Adam (sws) and his progeny, as is mentioned earlier. It is evident from this respite that there was no hindrance for Satan to reach Adam (sws) and Eve. Thus he took advantage of this respite and whispered his luring suggestion to him.

In the clause *لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا دُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا* the *ل* is for consequence. Satan wanted to entice Adam (sws) to show disobedience and ingratitude to God. However, since this manifested in Adam (sws) and Eve being divested of the robes of Paradise, it is stated here that Satan had actually striven for this. It is evident from being divested of these robes that now Adam (sws) will have to provide for his needs through his efforts. Until then, everything had been arranged by God. This ended after his disobedience.

Consider the words: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” It is evident from this that in spite of having the honour of being prostrated by the angels, Adam (sws) regarded angels to be higher in status to him. Moreover, he knew that the life that had been given was not eternal. Were this not the case, Satan would never have used both these premises to entice him.

private parts. He said to them: “Your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality.” And he swore to them repeatedly and said: “I am from among your well-wishers.” By deceiving them in this way, he enticed both of them. Thus when they tasted the fruit of the tree, their private parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden. And their Lord called them: “Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?” Both cried out: “Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers.” He said: “Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there.” He said: “You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it.”



Consider the words: **وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَبِئَ السَّاجِدِينَ**. The verb **قَاسَمَ** is from the *mufā‘alah* form. This form generally signifies sharing. However, sometimes it is only used to signify multiplicity and exaggeration. Thus it is evident from this verb that Satan had to make a great effort to create his credibility. He had to repeatedly swear to convince Adam (sws) and Eve that whatever he was telling them was based on his sincerity and there was nothing malafide in it.

Consider next, the idiom **فَدَلَّيْنَاهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ**. The expression **دل فلان بغرور** would mean **اوقعه فيها** (he deceived him in whatever way he wanted).

Consider next, the sentence: **فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ ذَرْقِ الْجَنَّةِ**. Tasting the tree means to taste the fruit of the tree. It is common to suppress the governing noun (*muḍāf*) in Arabic. The verb **خَصَفَ** means “to join and to fasten.” This tree was forbidden to Adam (sws) and Eve, as is referred to earlier. So when they violated this directive, they were deprived of their attire of Paradise. The basic purpose of clothes is to hide body parts and hence a sudden deprivation from them creates the feeling of shame in a person. Thus the whole situation is depicted by the words “their private parts became evident to them.” After them, the words “and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden” depict the timidity and bewilderment with which both were overcome with at this sudden incident. As soon as they realized their nakedness, they started to cover themselves with whatever they could lay their hands on. When they could find nothing else, they used leaves to do so. It is evident from this that the feeling of hiding one’s private parts is a natural instinct. Those who say that it is an acquired habit are not correct in their view. Just as monotheism is a natural instinct and polytheism is an artificially acquired dogma, in a similar way, feeling shame is natural and shamelessness is what something a person adopts artificially.

The words “and their Lord called them: ‘Did I not stop you from this tree and not told you that Satan is your open enemy?’” refer to the warnings mentioned in verses 17 to 19. The nature of enmity of Satan with Adam (sws) had also been explained as well as the fate of those who would follow him and his followers. At the same time, the tree which could pose danger to them was also pin-pointed.

The words: “Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and not have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers” signify the repentance of Adam (sws) and Eve once they had been rebuked by God for breaking their promise. This repentance has been referred to in Sūrah al-Baqarah. It has been discussed there in detail. Through this repentance Adam (sws) won a round that he had lost. It has already been mentioned about Iblīs that in spite of the rebuke, he became arrogant but Adam (sws) and Eve expressed their regret on their blemish and sought God’s forgiveness. It has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah that their repentance was accepted and God showed mercy to them. In this way, Adam (sws) set an example for his progeny that if a person stumbles at the luring of Satan, then the way out is



repentance.

Detailed discussion on “Get down as enemies of one another and you will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there” can be seen in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah (30-39). Though God accepted the prayer for repentance of Adam (sws) and Eve, God’s wisdom entailed that they go out of Paradise and they and their progeny compete against Satan and his progeny; then those among them who defeat the latter be worthy of Paradise. In other words, the contest was the same which Iblīs had challenged them for; however, its locus was shifted from Paradise to earth and Paradise was regarded as the reward for those who would succeed in this contest. The words “as enemies of one another” show that Adam (sws) and Iblīs were sent in this world as two disputing parties. The latter was given the opportunity to lead as many as he could from the progeny of Adam (sws). On the other hand, Adam’s progeny was given the opportunity to regain their lost heritage of Paradise by defeating the designs of Iblīs.

Here one misunderstanding that the Christians were inflicted with must be dispelled: they think that human beings like Satan were also sent in this world as accursed beings. In order to get rid of this stigma, they invented the baseless belief of atonement. The Qur’ān, both here and in Sūrah al-Baqarah, has clearly stated that Adam (sws) came in this world after being forgiven. Also, the purpose of sending him and his progeny in this world was that they through resolve and determination prove themselves worthy of the honour God blessed them with and which became the reason for Satan’s jealousy.

Consider the part: “You will have to stay in the earth until an appointed time and live there.” He said: ‘You will live and die in it and also be raised up from it.’” It depicts the phases through which Adam and his progeny will pass in this world. In other words, after they return, they would be informed by God what they gained and lost and if they won or lost.

Section III: Verses (26-43)

In these verses, things which Adam’s progeny had been informed of with regard to Satan’s enmity at the very beginning are reminded of. It was essential that these things be adhered to if people wanted to succeed in the imminent test and remain secure from the trial faced by their progenitor Adam (sws) at the hands of his foremost enemy: Satan.

After that, it is said that the Quraysh – who are the real addressees of this *sūrah* – had ignored these directives. The consequence was that Satan successfully led them astray and disrobed them in the very way he did their progenitors: Adam (sws) and Eve. However, because of their foolishness, they think that they have indulged in this vulgarity not by following Satan but by following God. The only proof they have of



this is that it was this way which they had inherited from their forefathers.

After that, the essence and cardinal principle is alluded to which is always kept in consideration about all divine directives and which is the benchmark that distinguishes them from Satanic innovations. Thereafter, by applying this standard to Satanic innovations which the Quraysh were regarding as God’s religion, it is asserted that none of these things has even the remotest of relationship with God. They have invented all these innovations under the guidance of Satan and have falsely ascribed them to God. At the same time, they are warned that if they do not mend their ways, they will meet the same fate as that of nations similar to them.

After that God has referred to His covenant that was made at the time when Adam (sws) was sent in this battlefield: He would send a series of messengers to guide mankind and those who follow them would remain secure from the trials of Satan and those who deny them would be consigned to Hell.

Next, a very effective picture of what will happen to the rejecters and followers of God’s messengers is portrayed. About the first group, it is stated that when they will be united in Hell, they will curse one another. Those who today follow their leaders with great pride will abuse them at that time. They would say that had these leaders not led them astray, they would have been guided. In response, the leaders will abuse the followers that they themselves are to be blamed: if they did not adopt the path of guidance, it was not their fault. The second group is depicted as happily sitting facing one another. There will not be the slightest trace of any hate or rebuke. They would be merrily greeting and congratulating one another. Every nook and corner would be resounding with the Almighty’s gratitude and with the acknowledgment of the favours of His messengers.

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

Text and Translation

يَبْنِيْ اَدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِيْ سَوَاتِيْكُمْ وَرِيْشًا ط وَبِاسِ التَّقْوٰى ط ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ ط ذَلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ يَبْنِيْ اَدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَا اَخْرَجَ اٰبَاؤَكُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ يُتْرَعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسُهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا
سَوَاتِيْهُمَا ط اِنَّهٗ يَرِيْكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ط اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيْطٰنَ اَوْلِيَاً لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَاِذَا
فَعَلُوْا فَاحْشَةً قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا اٰبَاءَنَا وَاللّٰهُ اَمَرْنَا بِهَا ط قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ ط اتَّقُوْا عَلٰى اللّٰهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلْ اَمَرَ رَبِّيْ بِالْقِسْطِ ط وَاقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ ط وَاذْكُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ط كَمَا
بَدَاكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَرِيقًا هٰدٰى وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلٰلَةُ ط اِنَّهُمْ اتَّخَذُوْا الشَّيْطٰنَ اَوْلِيَاً مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَ
يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ يَبْنِيْ اَدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ط اِنَّهٗ لَا
يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِيْنَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ اَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهٖ وَاطَيَّبَتْ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ط قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي



and think that they are rightly guided. Children of Adam ! Wear your clothes at the time of your presence in every mosque. And eat and drink but do not cross the limits. God does not like those who cross limits. Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles? Say: They are for the believers also even in this world and on the Day of Judgement, they shall be theirs alone. Thus do We explain Our revelations for those who want to know. Say: My Lord has only forbidden lewd acts, whether open or hidden and usurping rights and wrongful oppression and that you associate with God that for which He did not send down any sanction and that you fabricate something about God that you know not. 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. (28-34)

Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved. And those who deny Our revelations and arrogantly turn away from them are the ones who are the dwellers of Hell. They shall abide therein forever. So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief. It will be ordered: “Go, enter Hell with all those groups of men and jinn who lived before you.” Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its fellow group. Until when all are gathered there, their later ones will say about the earlier ones: “Our Lord! It is these people who led us astray; so inflict a two-fold punishment on them.” He will say: “For each of you is a two-fold punishment but you know not.” And their earlier ones will say to the later ones: “You too could not acquire any superiority on us; so, taste the flavour of punishment in retribution of what you did.” (35-39)

Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers. For them shall be the bedding of Hell and also their very covering from above. And this is how We punish the unjust. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity – it is they who are the companions of Paradise. They shall abide in it forever. We shall banish every grievance of their hearts. Rivers will be flowing beneath them and they will say: “Gratitude be to God who guided us to this. Had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided.” The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth. And they will be given the message: “This is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds.” (40-43)

**Explanation**

يَبْنِيْ اَدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤْوِيْ سَوَاتِرَكُمْ وَرِيشًا ۚ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ۚ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ يٰبَنِيْ اَدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَا اَخْرَجَ اٰبَوَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوَاتِرَهُمَا ۚ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۚ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَاَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾¹²

The word ريش is used for the wings of birds and it also refers to decorated clothes. The foremost purpose of clothes is to cover the body. However, embellishment is also included in its purposes. God has given various facets to whatever He has created, and all these facets are in accordance with the requirements of human nature. A loin cloth was also enough to cover the body but in order to perfect His favours, God arranged for clothes for us. It would not only cover our bodies and protect them, but would also enhance our personalities and our splendour and dignity. None of these objectives in itself is wrong. However, just as going to both extremes creates disorder in everything, in clothes too this disorder results. By including embellishment in the objective of clothes, the Qur’ān has negated the ascetic style of life, which regards clothes to be a stigma and nudity or semi-nudity to be religiously sacred.

Besides an outward attire, human beings are also blessed with an inner one and that is the attire of piety. It is far superior to the inner one. This is because it is this attire of piety that delineates the real benefit of the outward attire. In fact, a person wears this outer attire because of a drive from the inward attire. If this does not exist, then a person is naked in spite of wearing clothes, and instead of his clothes increasing his dignity, they either increase his arrogance or his ugliness. This attire of piety emanates from modesty, fear of God and a sense of servitude to Him. A person who is blessed with this attire from God is worth observing with regard to his grace and splendour. In the attires worn by human beings, it is like an angel and whoever sees it, impulsively calls out the words spoken by the women of Egypt for Joseph (sws): “this is not a human being; he is a noble angel.”

Consider the words “it is a sign from among the signs of God so that they may be reminder.” What is reminded from among what is said above is from among those things to which the progeny of Adam (sws) were directed when he was sent in this world. The purpose is warn the Quraysh that they have been inflicted with the same trial with which Satan had inflicted Adam (sws). It may be kept in consideration that

12. Children of Adam ! We have sent down attire for you which embellishes you. Moreover, it is the attire of piety which is even better than this. It is a sign from among the signs of God so that they may be reminded. Children of Adam ! Let Satan never lure you the way he ousted your father and mother from the garden by exposing their private parts to them by making them take off their attire. He and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them. We have made the devils the companions of those who are bereft of faith.



some of the directives which were given to Adam (sws) and his progeny at the time he was made to inhabit the earth are referred to in the Qur’ān. Thus for example in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is stated: قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۚ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ تَّبِعَ ۖ هَدَىٰ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْنِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, their reward is Paradise. So, there they shall neither have any fear, nor shall they grieve.”) Precisely the same guidance is mentioned in verse 35 of the sūrah under explanation: يٰٓبَنِي ٓاٰدَمَ اِمَّا يٰٓتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِي ۖ فَمَنْ اَتٰنِىْ وَاصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ¹³ In my opinion, here too the same guidance is being referred which was given to the progeny of Adam (sws). The purpose was that they could secure themselves from the trials similar to the ones with which Adam (sws) and Eve were afflicted. The Quraysh are now being reminded of the same guidance to warn them that they too have been lured by Satan with the same spell he had weaved over Adam (sws).

The words of address “Children of Adam ” should be kept in mind. The incidents and events that occur in the life of a father are the strongest means of learning a lesson for the children. This story is the story of the whole family. In the form of an indelible tradition, sincere children preserve the practice of friendship with the friends of the father and enmity with his foes. They preserve this etched in their minds and transmit it to later generations and in fact urge them to carry on with this process. So dearly held is this tradition amongst the Arabs that they do not even distinguish the good and evil in it. The enemy of the forefathers will be considered an enemy if this enmity had some convincing basis. So it is a matter of great sorrow if human beings forget the enmity of Satan and his progeny with their progenitor – an enmity which was entirely based on malice and jealousy, which was not concealed but was fully exposed and which was not specifically meant for Adam (sws) and Eve but for all their progeny until the Day of Judgement. Moreover, the matter does not end on forgetting this fact; such is the extent of the insolence, defiance and wretchedness of the children that many among them have actually befriended this enemy and his associates. They regard them to be their confidants and well-wishers. At the bidding of Satan, they are leading themselves to ruin in precisely the same way as he had intended for Adam (sws). And Adam (sws) would have fallen into the pit of this ruin had not God’s mercy saved him. Such is the unmatched eloquence of the Qur’ān that just two words يٰٓبَنِي ٓاٰدَمَ have concealed all these implications in them. When every honourable and sincere son of Adam (sws) reads these words of address and the reminders they sound, his blood boils against Satan. It is only the dishonourable and the insolent who do not budge even after this address.

13. Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved.



As indicated earlier, the words “Children of Adam ! Let Satan never lure you the way he ousted your father and mother from the garden by exposing their private parts to them by making them take off their attire” are from those things which the children of Adam (sws) were reminded of in the very beginning. Evident from the style of these words is the scheme which Satan adopts to destroy the culture and society and to ultimately deprive it of God’s favours: he first strips people off the attire of piety which the Almighty has revealed as an internal honour for them together with the exterior attire. This has been referred to earlier. When this internal attire is taken off, modesty and bashfulness – which are the actual prompters of the external attire – are sacrificed. At that instance, this external attire becomes a burden. Vulgarly impels a person to expose his or her private parts – hiding which is actually part of human nature. After that fashion comes to their rescue and human beings wear such clothes that even after wearing them, they appear naked. Clothes are not merely worn to cover the body but to indecently expose it as much as possible. Then gradually people become bereft of intellect to such an extent that nudity becomes the name of culture and clothes become a symbol of obsolete traditions. Then literate devils rise and in the light of history say that nudity is real human nature; clothes have been adopted by them as restrictions imposed by their traditions. It is at this instant that the whole society is impregnated with the poison of lust and lewdness. Then such a shameless society becomes worthy of being exterminated from the face of the earth and be replaced by others to check their deeds.

The words “he and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them” refer to the cunning, wily and conniving nature of Satan and his accomplices: such is the multiplicity and variety of their garbs and the places of their onslaughts that people can neither recognize them in all these apparels nor can remain on guard regarding all these attacks. The army of Satan boasts both of jinn and mankind. They will sit in ambush at places where people will not be able to spot them. They will regard them to be friends, well-wishers, teachers, leaders and the like, while they are after severing the roots of their faith. People will think that they are paving the way for development and advancement whereas they will be after mercilessly decimating them. They will know all the inner weaknesses of human beings and will try to inveigle them through evil suggestions. They will also try to spin a web of charm around them to make them get caught in it. In short, mankind should not take Satan’s enmity lightly and always remain on guard.

The words “We have made the devils the companions of those who are bereft of faith” guide human beings how they can secure themselves from the onslaughts of Satan and his accomplices: they must strongly adhere to faith. It refers to faith in God and in the guidance revealed by Him. This is a reference to what has been stated in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any



guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, for them there shall neither be any fear nor shall they grieve). The words under discussion refer to the fact that only people who deprive themselves of faith become a target of Satan. Their hearts are like empty houses and hence devils populate them. On the other hand, people whose hearts are replete with faith in God and in His guidance remain secure from Satan and his accomplices. This is stated in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf as well in the following words: وَمَنْ يُعْشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نَقِيضٌ لَهُ شَيْطَانٌ فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ (and he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion).

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا قُلْ إِنْ أَلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾
 قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾¹⁴

After the Quraysh were sounded with the reminders mentioned earlier, these verses depict how Satan had led them astray and how they ended up befriending him. The fact is that he deceived them just as he had deceived their parents – Adam and Eve. He was instrumental in making them take off their clothes in Paradise and now he has succeeded in making the Quraysh take off their clothes in the House of God. The irony is that they think that this is a tradition of their forefathers and a directive of God. The fact is that this is not His directive at all; it is a trial from Satan. Through it, he wanted to expel them from the House of God just as he was able to expel Adam and Eve from Paradise.¹⁵

The word فاحشة refers to blatant lewdness and even the blind and foolish regard it to be so. Our exegetes think that it refers to the tradition of circumambulating the House of God while being naked. This tradition was found in Arab *jāhiliyyah*. This opinion seems to be correct since it is this very shameless act which they regarded to be a directive of God, as this verse says. Though the Quraysh themselves considered themselves to be above this directive, they regarded it to be applicable to others. Their edict was that Arabs who did not belong to the Quraysh tribe must not wear their own

14. And when these people do something vulgar, they say: “We found our forefathers on this way and to this God has directed us.” Say: God never directs to vulgarity. Do you accuse God of which you know nothing? Say: God has commanded fairness in every matter, and to face Him near every mosque and to call Him by showing obedience to Him only. And the way He initiated you, you will return. He guided one faction and another was led astray. Instead of God, they made devils their companions and think that they are rightly guided.

15. Here it should be kept in mind that the House of God is a surrogate of the fountain of Kawthar in Paradise, as he been substantiated by Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Kawthar.



clothes. Either they should borrow it from the Quraysh or circumambulate the House of God while being naked. It was as if such clothes as worn by the outsiders were a sign of worldly adornment and would violate the sanctity of worship. This was a very despicable form of an ascetic practice the likes of which can be found in the history of temples and churches. All of them were fabricated by the diabolic intentions of their priests and worshippers but were conferred with the sanctity of religion. The keepers of the shrines too promoted these fiendish practices. The result of this religious innovation was that even a ritual as sacred as circumambulation was contaminated with vice. This became so deeply rooted in their culture that such vices became part of their vulgar poetry. If a person reads it, he becomes amazed how Satan infiltrated in the House of God in the garb of sanctity and how successfully he transformed the greatest worship ritual for God into his own worship. Yet none bothered at what happened. This is what it meant by the words “he and his accomplices see you from where you cannot see them” of verse 27.

The words “say: God never directs to vulgarity; do you accuse God of which you know nothing?” show that all directives of God are in accordance with the dictates of His attributes and of human nature; He never directs people to shamelessness. When none of His attributes tolerates vulgarity, how can he ask people to put up a display of vulgarity? When such is the human nature created by Him that no human being – from birth to death – likes to be naked before others, how can God order him to be naked and that too in the vicinity of His own House? How can the Quraysh associate such an act of indecency with God and His noble attributes and with upright human nature? This is a baseless allegation.

The word *qist* (قسط) has been fully discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. Since God is *qā’im bi al-qist* (adherent to fairness), all His directives are also based on fairness. *Qist* is an all-embracing reality which is also the essence of the *sharī‘ah*. In other words, everything should be based on balance and equity. It does not relate to just one aspect of life. It is inclusive of beliefs, deeds, morality, worship as well as directives related to economics, politics and society. Thus, for example, here it said: *وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ*. This means that when God is the master, then it is against fairness to worship someone other than Him. On this very value are the words *كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ* based. They mean that it is the requisite of fairness that when God has created human beings, provided them with the means of their sustenance and growth and given them the awareness of good and evil, then He should hold them accountable and reward or punish them. If He does not do this, it would be injustice and not fairness. Readers may see that further ahead in the next verse, again on fairness the words *حُذُّوا* *كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا* and *زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ* are based. In other words, it is against fairness that clothes be forsaken for God’s worship or eating and drinking be abandoned. *Qist* means that a person eats and drinks but does not go to extremes. This is against fairness. In short, fairness is a barometer through which a person who is aware of the



wisdom of religion will come to know what is from God and what is not.

Consider the words “face Him near every mosque and to call Him by showing obedience to Him only.” *Qisṭ* is a comprehensive concept, as alluded to earlier. Its foremost requisite is that none should be included in the rights of God. Worship is only His right. None else is worthy of it. For this reason, neither can a mosque be built for someone other than God nor can anyone intend to face anyone else during worship. Prostration is due before God only and hence a mosque by its very nature is specific for God. Thus in verse 18 of Sūrah al-Jinn the words are: *وَأَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ* *اللَّهُ أَحَدًا*.¹⁶ After *وَأَقِيمُوا وَجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ*, words to the effect: *إلى الله وحده* are suppressed. This is because in the next sentence, the words *مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ* occur in parallel to them and indicate this suppression. They show that it is not just God’s worship that entails sincerity, His obedience also entails sincerity; none else can be included in it.

The words “and the way He initiated you, you will return” reinforce the concept of monotheism. In other words, people must worship and show obedience to God alone because He has created them and towards Him they all will return; just as they came into this world alone, they will go back to Him alone; none of their alleged deities and intercessors will be with them. Such is the magnificent eloquence of the Qur’ān that in this brief sentence not only the relationship between the hereafter and monotheism is explained, but a very evident proof of the hereafter is also pointed to.

Consider the words “He guided one faction and another was led astray; instead of God, they made devils their companions and think that they are rightly guided.” They mean that the real thing has been alluded to above and God has also given a faction the urge to profess faith in it; however, one faction was led astray; it has befriended the devils and these devils have entangled them in the same way Iblīs had threatened to entangle them. In other words, if these people do not abstain from this ignorant attitude, they will definitely meet the fate destined for such wretched people.

يَبْنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

16. And that mosques are only for the worship of God so invoke not any one with God.

17. Children of Adam ! Wear your clothes at the time of your presence in every mosque. And eat and drink but do not cross the limits. God does not like those who cross limits. Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles? Say: They are for the believers also even in this world and on the Day of Judgement, they shall be theirs alone. Thus do We explain Our revelations for



The address: “O Children of Adam” is directed to the Quraysh and the Arabs. The eloquence of using the word “Adam” is the same that was pointed to before: it reminds us of the anecdote of Adam and Eve which is a common anecdote for all mankind. It gives this message to every human being that Satan is their eternal enemy. Befriending and following him means befriending the enemy of their father.

The word زِينَت (zīnah) does not mean adorned clothes. It refers to mere clothes. Clothes are called adornment because the philosophy of circumambulating the House of God in the nude was fashioned out by believing that clothes were an adornment and adornment is not befitting for worship. Ascetic tendencies in the ritual of *hajj* and in wearing the *iḥrām* already existed since the time of Abraham (sws) and are a characteristic of the *hajj*; however, just as the Arabs had invented many religious innovations in the age of *jāhiliyyah*, they also fashioned out the innovation of stripping men and women off *iḥrām*. In these verses, the Qur’an has tried to reform this innovation. It says that nudity is a matter of indecency; people must wear clothes whenever they go to a mosque. Just as a mosque cannot be for someone other than God, the condition that a person enter it naked cannot be imposed. By using the expression “every mosque” the directive was generalized and was not made specific to the House of God. This is a total refutation of the monastic philosophy that regards nudity to be a means of nearness to God.

The words “and eat and drink but do not cross the limits; God does not like those who cross limits” imply that just as clothes are not against piety and religiosity, eating and drinking and benefiting from God’s favours are also not against religiosity. What is against it is going to an extreme in these matters. This is because this attitude is against *qist*, which is the essence of all directives of religion. God adheres to fairness and hence He likes those who adhere to it. He does not like those who cross the limits of justice and fairness. This imbalance refers to both extremes: doing something very little or crossing the limits in doing it. God dislikes both. Neither does He like that a person make eating, drinking and clothing a purpose of his life and spend all his time in these; nor does He want a person to forsake them like ascetics. He wants moderation in every sphere of life.

The question as to what is moderation and what is extreme in these matters has been left to human nature and intellect and nothing is prescribed in this matter in the legal sense. It can vary with respect to circumstances and from person to person. A rich person and a person in want are not required to follow the same standard in this regard. However, Islam’s demand from every rich person is that others have a right in

those who want to know. Say: My Lord has only forbidden lewd acts, whether open or hidden and usurping rights and wrongful oppression and that you associate with God that for which He did not send down any sanction and that you fabricate something about God that you know not. 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.



his wealth. Thus he can benefit from it but not overspend or spend on wrong things because God does not befriend such people. This actually means that He is very angry with them.

The question “Ask: Who has forbidden you the adornment of the Almighty which He had created for His servants, and the wholesome among the edibles?” is meant for negation. In other words, the implication is that none except God has the authority to do so. If it is God Who gives these things, only He has the right to proscribe them. The words “that God has created for His servants” are cited as an argument. The implication is that these things by their very existence bear witness that they have been made by God for people; so how can someone impose unfounded restrictions on them? Only their giver can impose any restrictions and for this it is essential that people have a proof from Him.

There are some linguistic suppressions in قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. Here parallel words to لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا and خَالِصَةً are suppressed. If this is taken into account, the meaning of the verse will be: “In this world also, all favours of God are primarily the right of the believers but God has given a share in them to the disbelievers; as far as the next world is concerned, these favours will be entirely for the believers and the disbelievers will have no share in them. However, they will be answerable for them regarding the benefit they obtained from them in this world. In other words, benefitting from them in this world is not against religiosity. Those who regard the pleasures and favours of this world to be allurements and think that God’s nearness can only be procured if they are forsaken, are mistaken. The correct attitude in this regard is to benefit from them but not over indulge in them. One should be moderate in this regard and continue to discharge the rights of God and of his fellow human beings.

The words “thus do We explain Our revelations ” are meant to assure the believers and the verb “explain” signifies intention.

Next what God has regarded as prohibited are pointed out the style adopted is that the Quraysh have regarded as lawful and in fact part of religion and the things regarded lawful by Him are considered unlawful by them in their garb of religiosity.

Among these prohibited things are فواحش (lewd acts), whether they are apparent or hidden. Both these types have been explained in verse 151 of Sūrah al-An‘ām.

The word بَغْيٌ (translated as oppression) means rebelliousness. It means to rebel against the directives of God. It is qualified by the adjective “wrongful.” This does not mean that some forms of rebelliousness are not wrongful. The adjective actually serves to signify the heinous nature of rebelliousness. This is because every form of rebelliousness in itself is wrongful. It is not permissible for anyone to show arrogance before God and cross the bounds prescribed by Him. Just as this adjective has been used with the killing of prophets, it is used here.

As far as believing in God is concerned, it is a logical requisite of human intellect



and nature. An idolater also believes in God. As for ascribing partners to God is concerned, it needs proof and that too of a conclusive nature. This is because such a belief decimates the whole system of human intellect and nature as well as of justice and fairness. Such a belief can only be accepted if it has some logical, natural or religious basis.

The words “fabricate something about God that you know not” means to regard something as lawful or unlawful or to invent religious innovations while following one’s whims, author the dictates of religion and ascribe all these things to God. These words also express the need for prophets and messengers: when it is not permissible to ascribe something to God without proof, then it is essential that messengers be sent by Him and be followed.

It has been explained in the introductory part of the *sūrah* that it primarily warns the Quraysh. What is stated above is merely a charge sheet meant to leave them with no excuse. For this reason, the discourse turns to its primary topic repeatedly.

Consider the part: “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.” Just as in verse 29 earlier, the words “and the way He initiated you, you will return” remind the Quraysh of the hereafter, the part under discussion reminds them of an established practice of God: if in spite of all the mischief they are spreading, they are not being seized, they should not think that they would never be called to account. If this established practice of God was fulfilled for all rebellious nations, as mentioned in verse 4-9, it will necessarily be fulfilled for them as well. The respite they have been given is because a time of destruction for every nation has been fixed. When that time arrives, it will not be pushed back or moved forward.

Here the word *ajl* is used for the time fixed. It should be kept in mind that his prescribed time is different for individuals and nations. For the former, it is determined in years, months, days, hours and minutes. Once this time expires, an individual dies. The matter of nations is different. Their time is determined on the basis of decadence of their faith and morals. There is a certain limit to this. Once a nation reaches that, it is destroyed. Just as the time of death of individuals is known to God only, the time of death of nations too is in His knowledge only. Only He knows when a nation has reached the limit after which its existence in this world is against divine wisdom. Here readers may keep in mind God’s established practice referred to in this exegesis a number of times: when a messenger is sent to a nation, it signifies conclusive communication of the truth to it. Thus, when a nation denies its respective messenger, it is destroyed forthwith by the Almighty. More details on this issue are found in the exegesis of Sūrah Yūnus.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اٰدَمُ اِمَّا يٰتِيْنٰكَمۡ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقْضُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰتِيَّۙۤا۟ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰۤىۤٓ وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاٰتِيْنٰكَمۡ



الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَبِمَا أَظْلَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ ۖ قَالُوا آيِنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

These verses are a reminder of the promise made by God with Adam (sws) and his progeny when he was being expelled from Paradise. In verse 38 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, this is referred to as: *قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۚ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ تَّبِعَ هَٰذَا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ* (We said: “Get down from here all of you; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, follow it because those who follow this guidance of Mine, their reward is Paradise. So, there they shall neither have any fear, nor shall they grieve.”) This promise of sending His messengers was made by the Almighty with Adam (sws) and his progeny was to save them from the mischief of Satan. Deliberation on the anecdote of Adam (sws) and Satan mentioned in this *sūrah* shows that human intellect and nature vouch for the need of this divine guidance. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have explained that the Almighty negated the notion of the angels about the progeny of Adam (sws) through pious individuals born to it. This promise was actually fulfilled by Him by sending a series of prophets from his progeny. Here the Quraysh are reminded of this. The implication is that Satan is in total control of them. The only way to secure themselves from him is to follow God’s messengers. In their case, a messenger has come to them who recites God’s revelations to them. If they want to be protected from the onslaughts of Satan, they must follow these revelations.

In verse 36, the preposition used with *اسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا* is *عن* which encompasses the meaning of evasion. The implication is that people who deny and arrogantly turn away from God’s revelations recited by His messengers will end up in Hell.

It has been stated that previous verses serve as a reminder for the Quraysh. Now from verse 37, the Quraysh are directly addressed: So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against

18. Children of Adam ! if messengers come to you from among your own selves reciting to you My revelations, then he who feared God and reformed himself shall then have nothing to dread nor shall he be grieved. And those who deny Our revelations and arrogantly turn away from them are the ones who are the dwellers of Hell. They shall abide therein forever. So who can be more unjust than those who impute falsehood to God or deny His revelations. The share of the record of these people will reach them. Until when Our angels come to them to claim their souls, they will ask: “Where are those whom you worshipped besides God?” They will reply: “All of them have been lost upon us,” and they will bear witness against themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief.



themselves that undoubtedly they remained in disbelief.

Polytheism is called افتراء على الله (imputing falsehood to God).

The word رسل is used for angels in the Qur’ān at more than one instance. It may be kept in mind that words رسول and ملك have the same literal meaning. Here the purpose of using the plural رسل is to encompass angel of death and his squad. The words “all of them have been lost upon us” signify the confession of the Quraysh which they will utter from their tongues.

قَالَ ادْخُلُوا فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا حَتَّى إِذَا ادَّارَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لِأُولِهِمْ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ أَضَلُّونَا فَآتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِنَ النَّارِ قَالَ يَلِكُ ضِعْفٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَقَالَتْ أُولَهُمْ لِأُخْرَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ نَكُمُ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فذُقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَبَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾¹⁹

The words قَالَ ادْخُلُوا فِي أُمَمٍ express the fate that people will meet. The *fā’il* of the verb قَالَ is generally suppressed on such occasions to signify indifference on the part of the speaker.

In the first verse, two loci are mentioned: فِي النَّارِ and فِي أُمَمٍ. The first expresses who their companions will be. They will be those before them from among the jinn and men who had followed Satan. The second expresses the place they will land in: Hell fire. In other words, they will have the worst of companions and the worst of abodes.

Consider the words: كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا حَتَّى إِذَا ادَّارَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا.

The word ادَّارَكُوا is actually تَدَارَكُوا. In the Arabic language, words undergo such changes. The expression تَدَارَكُوا الْقَوْمَ means the preceding ones caught up with the later ones. In قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لِأُولِهِمْ the ل connotes فِي implying that the later ones will say about the previous ones.

The word ضِعْفٌ means “twice” and in the presence of concomitant indications can refer to more.

The verses depict a picture of the conversation that will take place when all of them

19. It will be ordered: “Go, enter Hell with all those groups of men and jinn who lived before you.” Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its fellow group. Until when all are gathered there, their later ones will say about the earlier ones: “Our Lord! It is these people who led us astray; so inflict a two-fold punishment on them.” He will say: “For each of you is a two-fold punishment but you know not.” And their earlier ones will say to the later ones: “You too could not acquire any superiority on us; so, taste the flavour of punishment in retribution of what you did.” Indeed those who denied Our revelations and arrogantly turned away from them, for them the doors of the heavens shall not be opened and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye of a needle. And this is how We punish wrongdoers. For them shall be the bedding of Hell and also their very covering from above.



would be gathered in the den of Hell. In the previous world, they were leaders and followers, companions and helpers, advocates and torch-bearers of one another. They would praise and congratulate one another. However, they will curse one another as soon as they will face each other. The followers will curse their leaders and the latter will call throw back the blame. They will call their followers as wretched and absolve themselves of leading them astray.

It should be kept in mind that both vice and virtue are contagious by their very nature. They not only influence their perpetrators but also others. So much so, after passing from generation to generation, a small speck of virtue can become a mountain and seed of vice sown can produce an expansive desert. It is this principle which is stated in a particular narrative of the Prophet (sws). In this narrative, he has stated the extent of the consequences of people who set up good or bad examples. He is reported to have said that whenever a killing takes place in this world, the first killer of humankind, Cain, gets some share from this vice and its sin accrues in his account. This is because he laid the foundations of this heinous crime by unjustifiably killing Abel. In the verse under discussion, this very aspect is referred to. Besides their own sins, both the earlier and later generations will get another share of sins. They implore that the previous generations set an evil example for them and hence should be given a two-fold punishment. True, they will get a two-fold punishment; however, how can they not be punished for the evil example they have further set for the later generations. The yardstick is the same for everyone. If they had realized the extent of influence of their own vices, they would have accepted that they were equal in their sin to the previous generations. However, they are showing indifference to this. But soon its evil consequences will come before them.

In verse 40, the preposition used with اسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْ is عَنْ. The implication of this usage has already been delineated above.

The words لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ can have two meanings. Firstly, the gates of heaven will not be opened for them. Secondly, they will not be welcomed in the heavens the way believers would be; in fact, they would be humiliatingly dragged like criminals and ruffians to witness their fate. The tradition is that gates are very honorably opened for those who are meant to be given respect and people stand on both sides to welcome them. On other hand, those who are meant to be disgraced, they are shoved like prisoners into a jail. In other words, this is not a negation of the verb but that of the consequence of the verb. This means that they will not be welcomed in the heavens by their gates being opened for them to greet and congratulate them. On the contrary, they will be humiliatingly pushed into the gates of Hell.

In other words, the negation found in this sentence is not meant to negate the verb per se but the consequence of the verb. There are several examples of this usage in classical Arabic.

The words “and they shall not enter Paradise unless a camel passes through the eye



of a needle” are steeped in a special hyperbolic style. It means that it is impossible for such people to enter Paradise in the same way as it is impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The previous scriptures also employ this style. Thus, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matthew, 19:23-24)

The only difference in the style of the Qur’ān and the Bible is that Jesus (sws) has referred to the reason of arrogance which is wealth and the Qur’ān has referred to the real sin: arrogance. Earlier, in the episode of Adam (sws) and Satan, the essence of arrogance has been explained. It was shown there that the real reason because of which Satan was expelled from Paradise was arrogance. Hence, those who even have a semblance of arrogance in them will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise. Jesus (sws) is also reported to have said: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew, 5:3).

Consider now the words: لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ. The word مِهَادٌ means “a spreading” and غَوَاشٍ is the plural of غَاشِيَة. It means “a covering.” Here it means “to cover.” The implication is that Hell will be their covering from above and below.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غَلٍّ تَجَرَّيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنَّ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلٌ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَتُودُّونَ أَنْ تَلَٰكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ أَوْ رِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Now these verses depict in parallel the fate of the believers. The words “and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity” form a parenthetical sentence and are meant for assurance. None should think that God imposes a responsibility on a person which is beyond his capacity.

The style implied in “We shall banish every grievance of their hearts” needs to be appreciated. Here the consequence of what is stated is meant. In other words, the people of Paradise will meet each other with great relish and love and welcome one another; they will sit facing one another and exchange words of affection; there will be no malice or grievance between them. In verse 47 of Sūrah al-Hijr, precisely this

20. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity – it is they who are the companions of Paradise. They shall abide in it forever. We shall banish every grievance of their hearts. Rivers will be flowing beneath them and they will say: “Gratitude be to God who guided us to this. Had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided.” The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth. And they will be given the message: “This is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds.”



meaning is conveyed by the words: عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ (on thrones facing one another). Sitting while facing away from each other signifies grievance and sitting while staring one another signifies love and affection. The Qur’ān has referred to this latter state of the people of Paradise by adopting the style just explained. This state of theirs will be in exact parallel to the people of Hell who will curse one another.

The style adopted here can also be seen in verse 51 of this very *sūrah* فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسِيهِمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ (thus today We will forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting). Obviously, here the consequence of forgetting is implied: they will be ignored by the Almighty; otherwise what is the meaning of God forgetting someone? He does not forget anything. Similarly, in verse 152 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is said فَأَذْكُرُوا لِي آيَاتِي (if you remember Me, I will remember you). In other words, He will look upon them with favour and help them at every instance; fulfil every promise made with them and furthermore bless them eternally.

The words “gratitude be to God who guided us to this” depict the words of thanksgiving expressed by a traveller after a long journey. The word “this” in this sentence refers not only to the urge seekers of the truth are blessed with but also to the guidance provided by God through His messengers and prophets. The words “had God not given us this guidance, we would not be among the guided” refer to the perilous nature of the journey and also to the fact that the success achieved by the dwellers of Paradise would be so beyond their expectations and hopes that they will regard it to be purely a blessing of God; they will think not even think that it was their effort which earned them this success.

“The messengers of our Lord brought the absolute truth” is the proclamation made by the dwellers of Paradise after seeing every news given to them by messengers materialize. Encapsulated in this is also a warning for those whose denial and arrogance is mentioned above.

The words “this is the very Paradise that you have been made heirs of because of your deeds” refer to God’s declaration for the dwellers of Paradise

Earlier the statement of the dwellers of Paradise is cited in which they regard Paradise to be God’s blessing on them and not the reward for their efforts. This verse says that God regards Paradise to be the reward of their efforts. In reality, this is a completion of favour. This verse elevates the status of the deeds of people to such an extent that a higher status cannot be imagined. Whatever we receive in this world is because of God’s grace, and in the Hereafter too it will be His grace that will bestow us with blessings, yet God regards it to be our right and the consequence of our hard work. Who can imagine the extent of the eternal kingdom about which each person thinks that he has earned it and that it is ever-abiding. A person does not merely want that he be given favours, he also wants to possess them personally. Without this feeling, he cannot truly take pleasure. God will fulfil this requisite of a person’s nature in Paradise.



The word “heir” used in this verse carries a very subtle insinuation to the episode of Adam (sws) and Satan. There it was indicated that only those people from the progeny of Adam (sws) will become an heir to the Paradise of their forefather who adhere to the straight path of faith and righteousness in spite of the lures of Satan. By using the word “heir” in this verse, they are congratulated that they have won the battle and now they are worthy heirs of Paradise.

Section IV: Verses (44-53)

In the succeeding verses, a conversation between the dwellers of Paradise and Hell is narrated. The dwellers of Paradise will inform the dwellers of Hell that all the promised God had made them have been fulfilled and will ask them if the promises He made with them were fulfilled or not. They will reply in the affirmative. After that, a person will proclaim God’s curse on them.

Next, it is stated that from the top of turrets a group of illustrious individuals will be made to observe what would ensue in Heaven and Hell so that they can see how God’s promises were fulfilled regarding the fate of people. These individuals will recognize the dwellers of Heaven and Hell through their distinctive signs. They will congratulate the companions of Heaven on their success and curse those of Hell. They will ask what benefit was their faction to them on which they do arrogantly relied. It was these people who repeatedly swore oaths to contend that the righteous could never be worthy of Heaven. They will be asked about where these people they made fun of have landed and where they themselves have landed.

After that, it is stated that the dwellers of Hell will beg for water and implore the dwellers of Paradise to show favour to them. They will reply that these things are forbidden by God to the dwellers of Paradise.

At the end, a warning is sounded that the account of Heaven and Hell narrated is a certain fact. It is not a hoax. It is God’s great favour that He has revealed a Book to them in order to guide them. What it convey is certain knowledge so that those who want to profess faith accept this guidance and become worthy of this mercy. The unfortunate part, however, is that these people because of their arrogance await that all these things told to them first materialize and then they will profess faith. However, that would be too late and they would end cursing themselves.

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

Text and Translation

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنِ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا ۖ قَالُوا نَعَمْ ۚ



فَإِذْ مَوْذَنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۖ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۖ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيئِهِمْ ۖ وَنَادُوا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيئِهِمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تُسْتَكَرِبُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ أَهْلَ الْأَعْلَافِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ ۖ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَهَا عَلَى الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۖ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنسُوهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَٰذَا ۖ وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ ۖ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ نَسُوهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شُفْعَاءَ فَيُشْفَعُوا لَنَا أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۖ قَدْ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And the dwellers of Paradise will call out and ask the dwellers of Hell: “We found the promise God made with us to be absolutely true; did you also find the promise your Lord made with you to be true?” They will reply: “Yes.” Then a caller will call out between them: “The curse of God be on unjust people.” – on those who stop [people] from the way of God, want to create divergence in it and disbelieve in the Hereafter. (44-45)

And there will be a curtain-wall between them and on the turrets of the wall there will be some people who will recognize each person through his sign. And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: “God’s peace and mercy be upon you,” – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders. And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: “Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.” And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: “What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you would show. Are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” “Enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve.” (46-49)

And the dwellers of Hell will call out to the companions of Paradise: “Give us water or grant us some of what God has blessed you with.” They will reply: “God has forbidden both these things to the disbelievers.” – For those who made their religion an entertainment and amusement and who were deceived by the life of the world. Thus, today We shall forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting and the



way they used to deny Our revelations – And We have delivered to them a Book which We have explained on the basis of certain knowledge, as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe. These people only wait to see its reality? The day its reality comes forth, people who had ignored it earlier will say: “Indeed, the messengers of our Lord had brought the absolute truth. Then are there any intercessors who may intercede in our favour or is there a possibility that we may be returned so that we do different to what we have been doing?” They inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished. (50-53)

Explanation

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنِ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ²¹

This verse gives a brief description of the change of state a person’s abilities and potentials will undergo after he reaches Paradise. In this world, a person’s faculties of sight, hearing, communication and understanding are limited. The most trivial of things become a hindrance in their capacity. However, in the hereafter, these obstructions would be done away with. Whenever the dwellers of Paradise desire they would be able to converse with the dwellers of Hell.

In today’s era of scientific advancement, this depiction should not be the slightest amazing for human beings. By discovering very few law of nature, they have been able to make telescopes that can view the sun millions of miles away. They have invented the telephone in which two far off people can converse with one another. Television has made it possible for an orator thousands of miles apart to deliver a speech to his audience and hear them applaud him. They have invented instruments which can transmit the sound of the heart and the beat of a pulse to distant lands. In the presence of all these marvels, there is no reason to wonder how they will achieve such powers in the next world especially when the laws that confine them in this world will no longer be there when this earth and these heavens will be transformed into a new earth and heavens.

This question posed by the Paradise dwellers obviously cannot be understood as a reminder because its time would have passed. Its purpose would be to humiliate the dwellers of Hell. The latter’s confession would be the final nail in the coffin after which there will be no obstruction between them and their punishment. Thus the proclamation mentioned would signal its beginning.

21. And the dwellers of Paradise will call out and ask the dwellers of Hell: “We found the promise God made with us to be absolutely true; did you also find the promise your Lord made with you to be true?” They will reply: “Yes.” Then a caller will call out between them: “The curse of God be on unjust people.”



الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۖ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

People have generally understood these words to be a part of the proclamation mentioned in the previous verse. However, in my opinion, they are an insertion from God. They are meant as an explanation so that this verse does merely become a narration of a future event. It has made it evident who disbelievers are and how the Quraysh are among them.

Such insertions are common in the Qur’ān. Several examples have been indicated in earlier *sūrahs* and many more will be found later. One example can be seen in verse 51 coming up. It is through these insertions that principles or anecdotes of the past and future are depicted as if they are happening in the present. For this reason, they must be specially paid attention to otherwise the sequence of the discourse might elude us and we may end up with a loaded interpretation. It would not only be against literary flair but also against linguistic principles. Thus those who have not regarded this verse to be an insertion, they had to go to great lengths to adjust the meaning of the last part: who disbelieve in the Hereafter. They have interpreted it in the sense: *وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَافِرُونَ* (and they disbelieved in the hereafter) which is a form of an addition in the Qur’ān.

The *يَصُدُّونَ* is used both transitively and intransitively. If there is no reason for preference, the transitive meaning should be adopted since it encompasses the latter meaning also.

The word *عِوَجًا* can refer to all sorts of divergences which people adopt after they depart from God’s way; however, if parallels from the Qur’ān are kept in consideration, this word alludes to creating deviations of polytheism from the straight path of monotheism.

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۖ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَاهُمْ ۖ وَنَادُوا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْبَعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَهَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ ۖ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

22. On those who stop [people] from the way of God, want to create divergence in it and disbelieve in the Hereafter.

23. And there will be a curtain-wall between them and on the turrets of the wall there will be some people who will recognize each person through his sign. And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: “God’s peace and mercy be upon you,” – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders. And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: “Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.” And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: “What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you



The Qur’ān itself has made it clear in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd that the حِجَابٌ (curtain-wall) here refers to the wall between Paradise and Hell. Who can imagine the length of a wall that will be erected between the whole world of Paradise and the whole world of Hell when the Qur’ān has compared the extent of the world of Paradise with vastness of the heavens and the earth.

The word أَعْرَافٌ is the plural of عُرْفٌ. The latter word is used for the topmost part of a horse’s forehead and to the comb of a rooster. From here, this word began to be used for a turret or an observation post that is built on a high wall or mountain from where all sides are visible. It is evident from the style of the Qur’ān that these turrets and observation posts will be found on the wall erected between Paradise and Hell. From these places, both these worlds would be visible.

The word رِجَالٌ not only occurs in its common meaning (people), but those who are aware of the finer aspects of Arabic also know that the way it occurs here, it refers to prominent and distinguished personalities. For example in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Nūr, the words are: رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.²⁴ Similarly, in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, it is stated: مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ.²⁵ In verse 48, this very word is used for the leaders of disbelievers.

When the word كُلٌّ (all) occurs after a mention of people or groups the way it occurs here, it becomes a defined noun with regard to its meaning. In other words, it will refer only to those people or groups who have been mentioned earlier. Here the dwellers of Paradise and Hell are referred to and hence the word refers to them.

The word سِيَاهٌ means “sign”. Thus for example, in verse 29 of Sūrah al-Fath, the words are: سَيِّئَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَكْثَرِ السُّجُودِ.²⁶ It is mentioned both in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth that on the Day of Judgement believers and disbelievers will be distinct from one another through the signs and effects of their deeds. Thus it is reported in a narrative that people asked the Prophet (sws) how he would recognize believers who would come after him. His reply was that if a person has horses in his herd whose head and feet have white hair, will he not recognize them. People replied in the affirmative. The Prophet (sws) then said that the people of his *ummah* will be recognized on the Day of Judgement by the signs of *wuḍū* – with which their foreheads, hand and feet will glisten.²⁷

About the wife of Abū Lahab, the Qur’ān itself mentions that on the Day of

would show. Are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” “Enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve.”

24. In it, those people glorify Him morning and evening whom neither trade nor sale purchase divert from God’s remembrance.

25. Among the believers are people who have fulfilled their promise with God.

26. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces.

27. See: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 218, (no. 240).



Judgement, there will be a rope around her neck similar to the one used by slave-women to gather firewood. One can find similar indications in Ḥadīth narratives related to the ascension of the Prophet (sws). In short, it is evident that both believers and disbelievers will be distinct from their respective signs. It is because of these signs that the people standing on the turrets will recognize the righteous among the believers and miscreants among the disbelievers.

After this discussion, the important question that remains is about the identity of these people stationed in the turrets. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has cited four opinions in this regard.²⁸

1. People who will have equal number of good and bad deeds. For this reason, the decision about their fate would have been deferred.

2. Religious scholars.

3. Those who participated in *jihād* without the permission of their parents.

4. Angels.

The last two of these have no basis. Not the slightest indication of these connotations exists in the Qur’ān.

The first of these though is the most famous, yet it is also very unlikely to be the correct connotation because of many reasons.

Firstly, the word رَجَالٌ is used for them. As indicated earlier, when used thus it refers to distinguished personalities. The question is that how can people whose good deeds could not even outnumber the bad ones be regarded so.

Secondly, it is not necessary that people whose good and bad deeds are equal be all men. They can also be women. Then why is a word (رَجَالٌ) that specifies men be used? Gender neutral words like *ṭā’ifah* and *ummah* could also have been used.

Thirdly, not a single word in the verse indicates that people whose decision has been deferred are referred nor is the purpose of making them view these sights evident even though occasion demands it.

Fourthly, the way in which these people standing in the turrets will speak to the people of Paradise and Hell must be taken into consideration. The content and style of their speech as well as the regard they are given shows that they cannot be those whose own salvation has been deferred and are such that their good and bad deeds are equal. It is evident from the Qur’ān that they will congratulate the People of Paradise and rebuke and scold those of Hell. How can people whose own fate is hanging in the balance say such words? Psychologically too it is not possible that such words come out from the mouths of those whose fate is uncertain and ethically too such words do not befit those whose own record of deeds is not very envious.

For these reasons, in spite of its wide acceptability, this opinion has no significance. The second of these interpretations is the one that is correct in my opinion. Al-Ṭabarī has ascribed it to Mujāhid (d. 105 AH) whose status as commentator is well known.

28. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, vol. 8, 190-194.



By referring to religious scholars, he obviously meant those were the proponents of the truth in the conflict between good and evil and those who enjoined the virtue and forbade vice. They would have been the ones who in their support of the truth bore hardships at the hands of the miscreants and defended the innocent. Such people undoubtedly would deserve the distinction that God make them observe Paradise and Hell from tall turrets so that they can witness the final fate of the believers and disbelievers from their very eyes and from their very tongues congratulate the former and rebuke the latter.

The words “And they will cry out to the dwellers of Paradise: “God’s peace and mercy be upon you” – they will not yet have entered it but would be contenders, show that they will made to see these sights before they go to Paradise so that they witness the veracity of God’s promise from their eyes and then enter it. The words “but would be contenders” express their humility. In spite of being bestowed all these favours, they would humble consider themselves to be hopeful of God’s mercy and not certain of it. It should be kept in mind that those who know the attributes and practices of God do not place themselves beyond the status of being candidates of God’s mercy. Only ingrates and the mean accord themselves such a position even if they have small number of pious deeds to boast about. In verse 82 of Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’, Abraham (sws) says: *وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ*.²⁹ At one instance, Muḥammad (sws) is reported to have said none will enter Paradise because of his own deeds. When people asked about his own self, he replied that he too will not be able to do so except if God’s mercy envelops him.³⁰

Consider the part “And when they will be directed towards the dwellers of Hell, they will cry put: ‘Lord! Do not make us the companions of these unjust people.’” Its style signifies respect and honour for the people of the turrets. They will utter these words while being engrossed with the successes of the People of Paradise and dreading the fate of the dwellers of Hell. Just as the earlier words “they will be its candidates” portray their humility, the words of prayer also show their dread and as well as the horrific nature of Hell.

Consider next the words: “And the people on the turrets will call some people who they would recognize through their signs. They will say to them: ‘What benefit did you gain from your group and from the arrogance that you would show?’” It is evident that this address would be directed at the leaders of the dwellers of Hell because it was they who would boast about their large number and affluence in the previous world. In Hell, they will be distinct because of their signs and thus people like Abū Jahal and

29. “All these are my enemies except for God, Lord of the worlds, Who has created me; then it is He Who guides me. And Who makes me eat and drink and when I get sick, cures me, and He who shall give me death; then bring me back to life and from whom I have hope that on the Day of Judgement He shall forgive my sins.”

30. See: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 2169, (no. 2816).



Abū Lahab would be recognizable to the people on the turrets. The question posed by the people on the turrets obviously would not be to elicit any answer but to humiliate the dwellers of Paradise. The particle مَا here in مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَنَّاتُكُمْ my opinion is not for negation but for interrogation. This creates great emphasis and parallels from the Qur’ān reinforce this interpretation. Moreover, the next verse which is related to this is clearly interrogative in nature. If some other interpretation is adopted the discourse will lose its harmony.

The question in “are these not the people about whom you would repeatedly swear that they cannot be worthy of any mercy from God?” will be posed by the people on the turrets to the dwellers of Hell while referring to the dwellers of Paradise. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān that one of the arguments which the leaders of the Quraysh would bring against Islam was the poverty-stricken nature of its followers. They contended that how could God choose such people for this purpose. On the other hand, they themselves were blessed with affluence and thus were more eligible. It is in the background of this arrogance that the people on the turrets will pose this question to the dwellers of Hell. On the other hand, the words “enter Paradise; now there is neither any fear for you nor will you ever grieve” will be addressed by them to the dwellers of Paradise. They would be meant to congratulate them. This will simultaneously also be a source of humiliation for the people of Hell.

Here, it is a possible that a question arise in the minds of some people that the dwellers of Paradise will already be in Paradise. So what is the meaning of saying ““enter Paradise” to them? It is perhaps to avoid this question that interpreters of the Qur’ān went to unrealistic lengths to ascertain its addresser and addressee. In my opinion, this happened because they did not keep in mind a particular style of Arabic. At times, a verb also connotes firm placement and location. Thus the verb “enter” is used in this very meaning in verse 99 of Sūrah Yūsuf:

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ آوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ (٩٩:١٢)

Then when they came over to Joseph, he gave his parents a place especially near him and said: “Enter in Egypt, if God wills, with peace.” (12:99)

The above cited verses refer to the time when at the behest of Joseph (sws), his brothers had come over to his court with their parents and were treated honourably. Obviously, they had already entered Egypt and were in his presence. Here the words “enter Egypt” thus mean “stay and take residence in Egypt.” It is precisely in this meaning that the word “enter” has been used in the verse under discussion too. The people on the turrets would ask the dwellers of Paradise to comfortably stay in Paradise. Such will be the honour of those who were regarded as poor and poverty-stricken in the previous world. They will have nothing to fear or grieve.



وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ مَعَهَا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ

The forbiddance mentioned in *حَرَّمَ مَعَهَا* does not relate to any *sharī‘ah*-related prohibition. It relates to general forbiddance, as in verse 26 of Sūrah al-Mā‘idah (thus this land was prohibited to them for forty years). In other words, God deprived them of entering that land at any cost for forty years. It is obvious that when God deprives someone of something in such an emphatic way, how can he be ever its recipient? It is evident from the answer of the dwellers of Paradise that they have no problem in fulfilling the demand of the dwellers of Paradise but it is God Who has decided to deprive them of its fulfilment and hence now they too cannot be of any help.

الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسُوهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَٰذَا وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا

يَجْحَدُونَ ۚ

This verse is a *taḍmīn* (insertion) from God. He has explained the answer of the dwellers of Paradise as to why the dwellers of Hell will be deprived of the fulfilment of their demand. Through this insertion the discourse relates to the situation of those times. In other words, the Quraysh should not think that what is being narrated to them does not concern them. It does. A similar example has occurred earlier in verse 45.

This verse speaks of how those people made fun of the religion revealed to them. Everything has its time and occasion. Religions are revealed to explain the correct path in every aspect of life so that people tread this path and not end up falling in a pit. However, those who regard this world to be a place of amusement become blind in their desires to such an extent that they regard the most serious of facts which is against their desires to be a joke and try to make fun of it.

The words “were deceived by the life of the world” depict the reason why these people turned a blind eye to the serious facts of life. When they saw that they were living with such relish and comfort and there was none to question them, they thought that the world has been created for just this end. If someone tried to tell them that after this world a day of accountability would arrive, they regarded him to be a lunatic who was trying to take away their freedom from them.

The expression “We shall forget them” means that God will ignore them. In other words, the verb “forget” signifies its consequence. Otherwise God never forgets anything.

31. And the dwellers of Hell will call out to the companions of Paradise: “Give us water or grant us some of what God has blessed you with.” They will reply: “God has forbidden both these things to the disbelievers.”

32. – For those who made their religion an entertainment and amusement and who were deceived by the life of the world. Thus, today We shall forget them the way they forgot this day of their meeting and the way they used to deny Our revelations.



Consider the expression لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَذَا. It is evident from parallels in the Qur’ān that the verb لِقَاءَ at times is annexed to its object and at times to its locus. However, the meaning in both cases is the same: meeting the Lord in the hereafter. “They forgot this day of their meeting” means “they forget meeting their Lord on this day.”

The sentence وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ is coordinated to the previous one. Hence the sense is: كَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ. The word كَمَا besides connoting example also connotes causation. Thus if it is translated as “and because they continued to deny Our revelations” then this would be very precise.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ ۚ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ نَسُوهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شُفَعَاءَ فَيَشْفَعُوا لَنَا أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۚ قَدْ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

The pronoun “them” in “and We have delivered to them a Book ” refers to the Quraysh. The first verse mentions God great favour to them by revealing the Qur’ān to them. The attribute of the Book stated is that God in the light of certain knowledge has explained all those matters whose comprehension was necessary for success in this world and the next. This explanation also refers to the details mentioned earlier about the companions of Paradise and Hell and the people on the turrets. Though they belong to the next world, none should consider them to be fictitious. The word عِلْم in عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ is undefined for magnification (*tafkīh*). In other words this is based on the grand and supreme knowledge of God; all that is said is certain. God knows what will happen on the Day of Judgement the way He knows what will happen today and tomorrow. Thus if someone makes fun of them by regarding this information to be baseless, he should keep in mind that the day is not far off when he will see each of these things with his very eyes and call out that whatever God and His messenger informed him of was correct.

The words “guidance” and “mercy” in “as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe” are used with respect to the beginning and the hereafter and for this world and the next. In other words, this book is guidance in this world for people and the consequence of accepting this guidance is mercy in the hereafter.

The verb يَوْمِنُونَ in يَوْمِنَ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ connotes intention ie. those who want to believe.

33. – And We have delivered to them a Book which We have explained on the basis of certain knowledge, as a means of guidance and mercy for those who believe. These people only wait to see its reality? The day its reality comes forth, people who had ignored it earlier will say: “Indeed, the messengers of our Lord had brought the absolute truth. Then are there any intercessors who may intercede in our favour or is there a possibility that we may be returned so that we do different to what we have been doing?” They inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished.



The implication of the word تَأْوِيل is that whatever things the Qur’ān is informing people about are the absolute truth. However, since they have not materialized in the form of events and are hidden in the veil of the future, the disbelievers think that they are only threats. They await their manifestation to believe in them.

Consider the words: “they inflicted themselves with loss and whatever they fabricated have all vanished.” The real value of life is that virtues be earned in this world, as is evident from Sūrah al-‘Aṣr. If a person failed to do this, his life will become a curse for him and he will be doomed. “Fabrication” here refers to their concocted deities. They turned out to be a farce and something they fabricated of their own and ascribed them to God.

Section V: Verses (54-58)

The earlier section concluded on the baseless nature of polytheism and how it will lead people to an evil fate. In the coming verses, this topic is brought to a completion by explaining various aspects and implications of monotheism. It is stated that God created the heavens and the earth and after making this universe did not become aloof. He is governing it ever since. The night and the day, the sun and the moon, planets and stars, all are subservient to Him and moving in their prescribed paths. It is the creator whose orders are implemented in this universe. Who other than the creator can have the right to run its affairs? Then this universe from its very existence bears witness that its creator is very benevolent and blessed. So, people should call Him alone, whether in public or in private and pin all hopes on Him, whether in hope or in despair. They must not associate partners with Him. If they do so, this is tantamount to being rebellious against God and spreading anarchy in the land. God never likes those who are disobedient to Him and spreading disorder in the land.

After this, a parable of rain is presented. Three facts are simultaneously evident from this.

Firstly, God’s mercy is very close to His pious people. Thus both in hope and in despair, only He should be turned to. People must not seek other supports considering that His mercy is not accessible to them. It is He Who sends rain after the land gets dry and people lose hope and then drenches the earth.

Secondly, just as it is seen that as soon as dry land receives a brief burst of rain it becomes revived, in a similar way, God will re-create human beings after they die and decompose.

Thirdly, rain has different affects on different lands depending upon their potential; some places become lush and luxuriant; barren land produces thorny bushes. On a similar basis, the rain of mercy and guidance of the Qur’ān has different affects. Those who preserved their natures from getting distorted will obtain any benefit from it and their hearts will light up with the radiance of faith. However, this rain will only



produce scrubs and weeds of disbelief and malice in those who do not have the slightest potential.

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

Text and Translation

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اذْعُورَابَكُمْ تَضْمَعًا وَخَفِيَّةً ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّحَ بُشْرًا لِّبَيِّنَ يَدَىٰ رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَاهُ لِبَدَلٍ مِّمَّاتٍ فَآخَرْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَابْدَأَ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِي حَبِطَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا يَكْدًا ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَصْرَفُ الْأَيَّاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Indeed, your Lord is the God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He ascended the throne. He covers the day with the night which comes running after it. And He created the sun, the moon and the stars which are subservient to His orders. Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs. Very blessed is God, Lord of the worlds. Invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private. Indeed, He does not like those who cross limits. And do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right and call Him alone in both fear and of hope. Indeed, God's mercy is close to those who are thorough. (54-56)

And it is He Who before sending rains of mercy drives forth winds as glad tidings. Until when they lift clouds laden with water, We propel it to a barren piece of land and send down rain there; then bring into existence from it fruits of all kinds. In this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded. And fertile land produces much at its Lord's directive; but defective land produces much less. We show Our signs in this manner in a variety of ways for those who want to be grateful. (57-58)

Explanation

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

34. Indeed, your Lord is the God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He ascended the throne. He covers the day with the night which comes running after it. And He created the sun, the moon and the stars which are subservient to His orders. Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs. Very blessed is God, Lord of the worlds.



The Arabs believed that the heavens and the earth and all other things have been created by God. However, they had set up other deities with Him. They believed that after creating this world, God had consigned the governance of its various spheres to His workers. Now, it was these workers who hold the final authority in their respective spheres. Hence, they must be worshipped as only they are the sole means of procuring God’s nearness. It is these workers who grant sustenance, wealth and children. If people do not earn their pleasure, merely relying on God would not be sufficient. They accorded these workers the status of deities and intercessors. Though ideologically they believed that God was the creator and the supreme deity, practically all their association was not with Him but with His deputies. In this verse, the Almighty has chided them by saying that the creator of the heavens and the earth is precisely their Lord. When they do not believe anyone else to be so, why have they set up His partners?

The days referred to in the verse are not the twenty four hour days. They refer to the days of God. The schemes and projects of God manifest according to the count of His days. The Qur’ān has specified that these days can be equal to a thousand earth years (32:5) as well as fifty thousand earth years (70:4). For this reason, six days mean six phases. The Torah and the Qur’ān both mention the world being created in six phases. Modern philosophy also reinforces its gradual creation. Hence, in this matter there is no dispute between ancient and modern views. However, the way advocates present the theory of evolution there are many gaps in it. They cannot be filled until the logical and natural principles put forth by the Qur’ān about this theory are accepted. They will inshaAllah be explained at an appropriate place.

The Almighty could have created this universe in an instant through His command of “Be” instead of creating in six days or six phases. This was not beyond His power. However, His wisdom entailed that it be created in six phases. Just as God has made evident His majesty of power at all instances, He has also made evident the majesty of His wisdom, providence and mercy. Their manifestation is as important for the completion of intellectual and spiritual aspects of a person as is that of the completion of power of God. It has been explained in Sūrah al-An‘ām that it was not beyond the power of God that He send down bread directly from the heavens. Then why do winds blow, clouds gather, rains descend, land is tilled, seeds are sown, spikes sprout, crops grow luxuriantly, then seeds appear in them, then warm winds blow to warm these seeds. Then after almost six months of warm and cold phases a seed of wheat reaches a farmer’s storehouse. All this is because in this way each and every particle and object of this universe has become a treasure of the signs of God’s creativity and governance and of His marvels of power and wisdom. Wherever a person looks, he becomes cognizant of God’s person if his mind and eyes are alert. A single object changes form and shape in so many ways in order to attract our attention and we are able to see in them the signs of God and learn a lesson from them. The state which the smallest particle of this universe is in is the same as that of the universe taken



collectively. It too has not been created suddenly as an accident. On the contrary, its creator has gradually brought it to completion with great wisdom by making it pass through various phases until finally it was accorded all the features necessary for human life to thrive. This gradual process shows that its creation could not have been an accidental happening or an act of amusement. It, on the other hand, shows that it has a purpose to it, which will one day necessarily manifest itself. I will discuss this point in detail under verse 7 of Sūrah Hūd.

The words “then He ascended the throne” express the consequence of this majestic creation of the universe in gradual stages. How is it possible that God becomes unconcerned about its governance after creating it? The obvious consequence of creating it is that He govern it. To delineate this fact, at some instances, an expression like يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ (He devises matter) is used with اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (He ascended the throne). It would be a very foolish allegation on God to say that He creates but does not govern what He has created. If a king conquers a land with great might and then becomes aloof and does not run its affairs like administering justice and maintaining peace and miscreants continue to create disorder in it, everyone will call him incompetent. When this is so for an ordinary king of this world, how can it be true for the master and creator of the heavens and the earth? This is a negation of the self-styled notion of the Idolaters that God did create the heavens and the earth but after their creation, He has consigned its administration to His associates and does not have anything to do with it. At the same time, this is also a refutation of those shallow philosophers who regard God to be the first cause: He was the cause of creation but once He created, He did not have any concern of its consequences or of who should control it.

The word الْعَرْشِ (the throne) signifies political authority. When عَلَى is used after اسْتَوَى, it means to sit and take charge.’

Consider the sentence يُعْشَى الْيَلَّ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا. The word حَثِيث means “fervour.” This is an explanation of the governance and planning encompassed in taking charge of the throne. The implication is that the movement going on the system of this universe is because of this governance and planning of the creator. All heavenly bodies are subservient to His commands as is the passage of night and day. All these elements follow a fixed pattern and path and there is not the slightest deviation in it. Not for a second can this happen.

The sentence “Listen! He alone creates and He alone governs” states that this actually is the case and is also an expression of the truth: everything is following the command of God with full fervour and efficiency and this is also befitting for them to do. The reason is that Who else can give commands than the one who creates?

It may be kept in mind that the word حَثِيثًا shows that everything is carrying out its orders with great zeal. There is not the slightest hesitancy anywhere. In other words, it is only worthy of a human being to worship and obey God Who has created him.

A thing worth noting here is that the zeal and fervour of the night is mentioned but



the zeal of the day is not mentioned, whereas we see this mention at other instances, as in *وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنۡ أَرَادَ أَنۡ يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا*.³⁵ The reason for this is that here sun has been mentioned after the night.

Consider the sentence: *تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ*. The form *tafā‘ul* has extreme exaggeration in it. For this reason, the expression *تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ* would mean “very blessed and merciful is God.” Earlier, evident from the various grand manifestations of God’s creation and governance is not only His power and exaltedness but also His providence, mercy and benevolence.

This is meant to dispel the misconception that has often misled idolatrous nations because they increased the extent of God’s loftiness and power so much that His mercy and blessings were sidelined as a result. The result of this misconception was that it was thought that it was impossible for human beings to access God and get in touch with Him. Therefore means were searched for that could become the source of presenting one’s needs before God. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah that this erroneous concept about the attributes of God is a major factor in the creed of polytheism. The idolaters began worshipping many hypothetical deities, in particular the angels, thinking that they were favoured daughters of God. If they were pleased with them, then they would also be instrumental in making their father pleased with them and all the world would become merciful to them. By the using the words “very blessed and merciful is God, Lord of the worlds” the Qur’ān has directed our attention to the fact that when just as this universe bears witness to the power and exaltedness of God, it also bears evidence of His unfathomable mercy and benevolence, there is no need to find a means or some mediation to ask from Him. Whether in hope or in despair, only He should be beseeched and called upon. Just as He is peerless in His splendour, He is also peerless in His mercy.

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَا تَقْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

The word *تَضَرُّعًا* is from *ضَرَعْتُ* and means “humility” and “coaxing.” This can be through actions and through words as well. Its most effective form is one in which there is harmony between both words and actions. The best form of this is the prayer ritual. To stand respectfully after ablution, tie one’s hands and bend one’s head, kneel, place one’s nose and forehead on the ground are all expressions and gestures of humility. The various words of supplications and glorification that are uttered with

35. And it is He Who made the night and day follow one another for those who want to be reminded or be grateful.

36. Invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private. Indeed, He does not like those who cross limits. And do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right and call Him alone in both fear and of hope. Indeed, God’s mercy is close to those who are thorough.



these postures are metaphorical expression of this humility.

The word حُفْيَةً means “secretly.” It is a mannerism of humility which also ensures the elements of sincerity and faithfulness in it. What is done secretly remains secure from the trial of show off. Moreover, since the Almighty knows and hears everything, there is no need to shout in order supplicate before Him. Here it must be kept in mind that “secretly” here is meant to close doors to pomposity and ill-mannered conduct. This does not negate the loud tone a person may sometimes adopt in his individual supplications or collective ones in a congregation. In other words, it lays emphasis on moderation. This topic will *insha’Allāh* be explained further in Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl under verse 110.

Let us now turn to the explanation of the verse after studying some of its words. Earlier, it has been explained that only God is the creator of the heavens and the earth. It is at His behest that the stars and heavenly bodies are moving in their respective orbits. It is He alone Who has created everything and He alone Who governs His creation. He is very benevolent and blessed. Now in this verse, the obligation God’s creatures owe to Him is stated: they must beseech and invoke Him only in secret. In other words, a show of arrogance and haughtiness from people is not appropriate at all. Every object of this universe is in submission to God and is fervently carrying out His orders. If this is the case, then what right does a human being have to show this arrogance? God does not like those who cross limits. The system of this universe shows that God does not let anything exceed its limits. Also, world history too bears witness that He did not give the arrogant respite beyond a certain limit.

The words “and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right” emphasize in a negative manner what has been just stated. It has been explained in the Qur’ān through various aspects that if there had been other deities in the heavens and the earth besides God, the whole world would have been disrupted. The only reason this world is intact is that only the single intent of God prevails in it. This monotheism in the ordained sphere entails that human beings too should worship and obey the one and only God in their own circle of authority and not associate anyone in this worship and obedience. If they do so, all the system of justice and order of this world will be disrupted. Just as in order to let this universe remain intact and thrive, it is essential that only the directive of God prevail in its ordained sphere, similarly to maintain peace in this world, human beings must obey Him alone. To regard someone other in God’s kingdom to be worthy of worship is to create anarchy and rebellion in it. There is no greater a crime than this. The words “and do not spread disorder in the land” are qualified by the expression “after it has been set right.” This is to express the heinous nature of the undertaking. In other words, spreading disorder in the land is a grave crime but it becomes graver if this is done after its affairs have been set right. This is because this does mean to disrupt something already in a disrupted state; it means that what is orderly and right has been disrupted.



It may be kept in mind that when God created this world, He did not leave it in a state of fear and disorder. Before sending Adam (sws) in this world, He actually took a promise from him to worship and obey Him only. This incident is mentioned later in this *sūrah* in verses 172-173. Then as mentioned earlier in verses 35-36, God promised the progeny of Adam (sws) that He will send messengers to guide them; those who follow them will succeed and those who arrogantly evade them will be destroyed. Then in accordance with this promise, He continued to send messengers. Its details are stated in verses 59-92 ahead. In the anecdotes of these messengers, as will become evident from verses 69, 74, 85, 100 and 102, whenever the progeny Adam (sws) spread disorder in the land by deviating from the path of monotheism, they were warned by God through His messengers. When they evaded these warnings they were uprooted from the land by God and were replaced by others to see how they fulfil their obligation towards their position of authority. In this way, this world has been repeatedly inflicted with disorder by Satan and his progeny and also repeatedly reformed by messengers and reformers. Viewed thus, whenever a nation has received the reins of authority, it was by setting right disorder in the land and if the new nation after being entrusted with these reins also created disorder, it did not further disrupt an already disrupted thing; it disrupted what had been set right. This makes its crime to be graver.

As far as the messengers are concerned, this afore-mentioned principle is absolutely relentless. Through them, the truth shines like the sun. For this reason, the system which is destroyed by them is evil and the system that is established by them is the truth. Muḥammad (sws) was the last of the messengers but it does not mean that after him the principle of rise and fall of nations has changed. Even today, if a nation is destroyed, it is not because of some chance and if a nation rises, then this too is not a chance happening. Actually moral principles govern this rise and fall. However, the inception of a nation because of a few moral factors that give life to it is something different from the existence of a system of truth. If a nation is at its zenith, it does show that it has more moral elements that give it life than a vanquished nation. However, this is not evidence enough to assume that this nation and its system are entirely the truth. Many of our reformers have found it very difficult to understand this principle, as a result of which they have gone to extremes in its regard. People who are inflicted with national bias always think that the dominance of a victorious nation is because of its deceptive measures and connivances. Because of their own bias they are neither able to see the moral superiority of the dominant nation nor can they see the moral weakness with which they themselves are afflicted. Similarly, people who have the mentality of being over-awed think that every dominant nation's dominance is proof enough of it being on the truth. As such, whatever disorder is created by the dominant nation is regarded by them to be order and is praised by them. The consequence of these extreme currents is that histories of nations were compiled in a totally wrong way. As a result, deriving correct results out of it and benefitting from it



for collective reformation became impossible. I will elaborate more on this issue in the explanation of Sūrah al-Rūm *insha’Allāh*.

The sentence “and call Him alone in both fear and of hope” occurs in parallel to “invoke your Lord while beseeching Him and in private.” The latter depicts the way in which God should be invoked which was opposite to arrogance and the former actually states the motive to invoke God which actually obliterates every speck of polytheism. Arrogance makes a person indifferent to God. If it is controlled, a person becomes content and humble and this links him to God. There are two aspects of this contentment: fear and hope. The instincts of human beings are also divided into these two aspects. If factors external to them are evaluated, it becomes evident that they too materialize under fear or hope. We desire many things in their literal and allegorical sense and want to stay away, ignore and repel many such things too. In both these states, the Qur’ān says that it is the requirement of monotheism that human beings only seek and invoke God. They should turn to Him regarding whatever they desire and seek His refuge only from things they fear and want to stay away from. The reason is that He alone gives or otherwise. Without Him, none can receive anything good nor remain secure from anything evil. Moreover, He alone is the true standard of good and evil. If only He is turned to in both hope and fear, it is not difficult for a person to determine what he should desire and what he should abstain from and how. It should be kept in mind that hope and fear can both prove to be dangerous pitfalls. Satan ambushes people through both and thereby entangles them either in open or in hidden polytheism.

The words “indeed, God’s mercy is close to those who are thorough” refer to people who regard God to be their real Lord and protector in both hope and fear. If a person is not fully devoted to God in both these states, then he cannot be regarded as thorough and will be far away from God’s mercy. Here a linguistic aspect must be kept in consideration: since the feminine gender of رَحْمَةٍ is unreal, it is not essential to use a feminine pronoun while referring to it. Moreover, the *fa’l* form in some situations is equal for the masculine as well as the feminine gender.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَكَلَتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَهُ لِبَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالْبَدِ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرِجُ نَبَاتَهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرِجُهُ إِلَّا تَكْدًا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

37. And it is He Who before sending rains of mercy drives forth winds as glad tidings. Until when they lift clouds laden with water, We propel it to a barren piece of land and send down rain there; then bring into existence from it fruits of all kinds. In this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded. And fertile land produces much at its Lord’s directive; but defective land produces much less. We show Our signs in this manner in a variety of ways



The word رَحِمَتْ connotes rain here. The Qur’ān has used this word for rain on more than one occasion. These verses depict a parable to show that only God should be turned to in both states of hope and fear. This is because only He is the source of mercy. Not a single drop of rain, on which depends life of this whole world, can come down except at God’s behest. He first brings forth monsoon winds which lift water-laden clouds and then drives them to barren lands. In verse 28 of Sūrah Shūrā, the words are: ³⁸وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنْزِلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ.

The word اِقْلَال means to lift something as if it has no weight. سحاب is the plural of سحابة. However, it is singular in form and shape. For this reason, a singular pronoun is used for it in: سُقْنُهُ. The ب in فَأَنْزَلْنَاهُ signifies locus. The verses direct our attention to His power and mercy and as a consequence to ask from Him alone in hope and fear. None else controls the universe.

The sentence “in this manner, We shall raise up the dead as well so that you are reminded” directs our attention to another fact that can be drawn from this parable: just as God through rain brings to life a dead stretch of land in a similar way He will bring all the dead back to life. How can this be beyond Him if He has powers people witness.? The purpose of all these signs is to remind people of the hereafter. The words “so that you are reminded” are the consequence of focusing attention to these signs signified by كَذَلِكَ.

Just as the words خَبِيث and طيب occur in the moral sense, they also occur in the material sense. Here occasion evidences that the expression الْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ means fertile land and وَالَّذِي خَبَتْ refers to barren land. The words at the end are: لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا. In the previous part of the sentence, the word parallel to نَكِدًا is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. It means “defective” and “little in number.” For this reason, the meaning of “lush” and “more in number” is suppressed in the first part of the sentence.

A third reality is also pointed to through this parable of rain. God’s merciful rain falls on all types of surfaces; however, its benefit is dependent on the potential found in the surface. Fertile land becomes lush through it but barren land either remains lifeless or produces wasteful shrubs. In a similar way, the mercy that is pouring down on the land in the form of the Qur’ān is not beneficial to all people. Only those who have the potential benefit from it. Thus, those whose natural abilities are intact, will become blossom like an orchard. However, those who waste them, one can only expect the thorns and shrubs of malice and enmity grow from them. This lesson is also found in a narrative of the Prophet (sww). It is reported that he said that he has been sent with knowledge and guidance. Its parable is that when there is rain, fertile land absorbs water and becomes lush. Similarly, there may be a piece of land which stores

for those who want to be grateful.

38. And He it is’ Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy.



water. So God makes people benefit a lot from it. People drink from it, water their crops and sow seeds. Similarly, there may be a barren piece of land. It neither absorbs water nor produces vegetation. This is a parable of people who acquire an understanding of religion and benefit from it from what I have been sent with from God. Thus they should learn and teach. This is also a parable of those who do not direct their attention to it and evade seeking guidance from it. (Bukhārī / Muslim).

Readers can thus see how many facts are revealed by just this single parable of rain: it lays credence to the belief of monotheism; a parallel is also furnished of the possibility of the Hereafter and the manifestation of the Day of Judgement; similarly, the practice of God about providing guidance also becomes evident. In other words, all the topics that were raised in this *sūrah* from its beginning until here are, in principle, alluded to. .. this universe has been made by the Almighty in such a way that if a person has a keen eye, then every object in it bears witness to the facts the Qur’ān is calling them to profess faith in. Alas! Where do we find insightful eyes and ears!

The word كَذَلِكَ نَصْرَفُ الْأَيَّاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ in تَصْرِيف means “to cause to circulate.” This word is used in the Qur’ān for winds. It is used here for its verses. Just as through the circulation of winds various manifestations of God’s power and wisdom, mercy and retribution come into being, in a similar way, through the Qur’ān the Almighty makes evident His signs in diverse ways so that people understand, recognize and value them. The words “for those who want to be grateful” point to the fact that the phenomenon of explaining facts through diverse and multiple verses is a great favour of God provided there are people who value it. The essence of gratitude is to duly value favours and blessings. It is on this acknowledgement that the benefit of each blessing is based. If this is not present, then presenting facts in diverse ways will not have any affect on the listeners.

Section VI: Verses (59-93)

In this section, the topic of warning the Quraysh of the hereafter that was continuing from the previous verses is reinforced through historical evidence. The account of every single nation that inhabited Arabia in the past is taken up and it is shown how they were given political authority by God. However, the consequence of this was that each of them showed ingratitude, spread anarchy in the land and disrupted the system of justice. Ultimately, God sent His messenger to each of them who invited them to adhere to justice and fair play. However, because of their arrogance, not only did they did not accept this invitation, they went after the life of their messenger. The result was that after being given respite to a certain extent, they were destroyed. The purpose of narrating these anecdotes to the Quraysh is that they too are facing the same situation and their fate is about to be decided by God’s court of justice the way it was



decided for other nations. There is no reason that if they too adopt the same behaviour these nations adopted, the decision of this unbiased court of justice would be any different. The law of God is the same for all. When God sends a messenger to a nation, it is faced with either of the two options: to accept reformation or be put to death. There is no other way left for them.

It is evident that the accounts of nations that are mentioned in this section were well known to the Arabs. However, this knowledge was based on ambiguous and hazy traditions. Their moral aspect, in particular, was totally ambiguous. The Qur'an has lifted the veil from this ambiguity and revived their history. It has asked the Quraysh to intently listen to these accounts and learn a lesson from them. They are not merely anecdotes of others; rather their own anecdote.

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

Text and Translation

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥١﴾
 قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾
 أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَوْ عَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ
 لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَانْتَبِهْ ۚ وَ الَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَ اغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
 إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ إِلَىٰ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالَ
 الْهَلَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي
 رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ أَوْ عَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ
 رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۖ وَ اذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَ زَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَضْطَةً ۖ فَادْكُرُوا الْآءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوا اجْعَلْنَا مِثْلَ لُوطٍ ۚ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَهُ وَإِنَّا لَمُتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَ نَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا ۖ فَأَتَيْنَا بَعْدَآءَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾
 قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ رَجْسٌ وَ غَضَبٌ ۖ أَتَجَادِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ سَيِّئَةٍ مَّا أَنْتُمْ وَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ
 سُلْطَانٍ ۖ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَانْتَبِهْ ۚ وَ الَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَ قَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا
 بِآيَاتِنَا وَ مَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَ إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۖ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ
 بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَ بَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُھُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَ تَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا
 ۖ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَ بَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُھُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَ تَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا ۖ



فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالَ الْهَلَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا ابْنًا
 آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ اتَّعَلَبُونَ أَنَّ صِلَاهُمْ مُرْسَلٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي
 آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يُصْلِحْ أئِمَّتَنَا بِنَا تَعِدْنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾
 فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَيَيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَ
 لَكِنْ لَا تَحِبُّونَ النَّصِيحَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَلَوْ طَافَ الْأَرْضَ لَقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنَّكُمْ
 لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ الرِّسَاءِ ﴿٥٤﴾ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ
 قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا
 فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ
 جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَادْعُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْبِيزَانَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَقْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا
 ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَ
 تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَرْتُكُمْ وَاَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ
 آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلَتْ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّى يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ الْهَلَّا الَّذِينَ
 اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَشْعِيبُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَنَعُودَنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا قَالَ أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا
 كَرِهِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّانَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ
 يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ
 الْفَاتِحِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْهَلَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَخَسِرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ
 فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَيَيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا يَمُوتُونَ فِيهَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾
 فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ آسَى عَلَى قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

We sent forth Noah as a messenger to his people. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.” The elders of his nation replied: “We see you in manifest error.” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not in any error. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the whole universe. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and being your well-wisher and know from God which you do



not know. Did you find it strange that you received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may inform you and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you?” Then these people rejected him. So, We saved him and those who were with him on the ship and drowned those who denied Our revelations. Indeed, these people were blind. (59-64)

And to ‘Ād, We sent their brother Hūd. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. Then do you not have fear ?” The elders of his nation, who had taken to disbelief, replied: “We see you inflicted with foolishness and We regard you to be among the liars.” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not inflicted with any foolishness. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the worlds. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and am a sincere well-wisher of yours. Did you find it strange that you have received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may warn you? And recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah and made you strong and mighty in physique. So, keep in mind the majesties of God so that you may succeed.” They replied: “Have you come to us so that we worship only one God and leave aside those who our forefathers have been worshipping? So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful. ” He said: “Filth and wrath will come upon you from your Lord. Are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction? So wait; I shall also be among those who wait.” Thus, We saved him and his companions through Our grace and severed the roots of those who denied Our revelations and they were not prepared to believe. (65-72)

And to the Thamūd, We sent their brother Šāliḥ. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you. And recall when God made you succeed the nation of ‘Ād and granted you authority in the land: you make forts in its lands and carve houses from mountains. So, remember the majesties of God and do not spread disorder in the land.” The arrogant elders of his nation said to the subservient among them who had accepted faith: “Do you think that Šāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” They replied: “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent.” The arrogant said: “We disbelieve in what you have believed.” Then they hamstrung the she-camel and disobeyed the directive of their Lord and said: “Šāliḥ! If you have been sent by God, bring on us the torment you are threatening us with.” Thus a shudder overtook them and they were left lying face down in their homes. So, Šāliḥ walked off from them, saying: “O People of My Nation! I have delivered to you the message of My Lord and have been your well-wisher. But you do not like well-wishers.” (73-79)

And We sent Lot when he said to his nation: “Do you commit open vulgarity? No nation before you has perpetrated it. You fulfil your sexual desires through men



leaving aside women? You are absolutely senseless; in fact people who have crossed the limits.” At this, his nation merely replied: “Expel these people from your settlement ; they pose to be very pious.” So, We saved him and his family except his wife who was among those who were left behind. And We ravaged them by a shower of stones. Then observe the fate met by these wrongdoers. (80-84)

And to Madyan We sent their brother, Shu‘ayb. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear proof has come to you from your Lord. Thus weigh and measure full. Do not decrease the things of people in any way and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right. This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith. And do not sit on every path intimidating people, stopping the believers from the path of God and distorting it. Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers. And whereas one group from among you has professed faith in what I have been sent with and another did not; so, wait until God passes His judgement between us and He is the best of judges.” And the elders of his nation who had turned arrogant said: “O Shu‘ayb ! We shall turn out from our settlement you and those who have professed faith with you or you must return to our ways.” He said: “Even in the case when we hate it? 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. Lord! Judge fairly between us and our nation. You are the best of judges.” And these elders who had disbelieved from among his nation said: “If you follow Shu‘ayb, you will end up in great loss.” So a jolt shook them and they were left lying face-down in their houses. Those who denied Shu‘ayb were such as if they never lived in that settlement. Those who denied Shu‘ayb, it was they who ended up as losers. So, Shu‘ayb left them saying: “People of My Nation! I have delivered the messages of my Lord to you and remained your well-wisher. So now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!” (85-93)

Explanation

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

Since the Quraysh are warned in this *sūrah*, first the accounts of those nations are taken up which became famous while inhabiting the north, the south and the north west of Arabia. All of them were destroyed because they denied their respective messengers. The sequence adopted is historical. For this reason, the nation of Noah (sws) is taken up the first. Only that portion of the account of each nation is mentioned

39. We sent forth Noah as a messenger to his people. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.”



which was essential for the purpose of warning the Quraysh.

It has been referred to earlier that the root of all anarchy in a society is polytheism. If a nation becomes incriminated with it, it means that it has deviated not only in its faith and ideology but also, as a consequence, in morality. Now its existence will not produce and good; it will create disruption in the society and as long as it exists, disorder and disruption will continue to plague every sphere of individual and collective lives. It is for this reason that God’s Messengers begin their preaching with this tenet. This is such a distinctive feature of the preaching of a messengers that it is not possible that it be left out.

The words “I fear for you the torment of a horrible day” depict the actual warning sounded by Noah (sws). This refers to the horrible day in which they will encounter their punishment in this world. Messengers of God warn their nations of two types of punishments: one that visits them in this very world if they deny their respective messenger and the other that they will encounter on the Day of Judgement. Concomitant indications show that here the first of these punishments is referred to. The reason that this punishment is mentioned in such words is that it is not of the nature of warning or admonition: such is its intensity that it uproots a whole nation. After that they cease to exist in their nation capacity. In verse 135 of Sūrah Shu‘arā’, the words ascribed to prophet Noah (sws) are: ⁴⁰ إِنَّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ. Verses 138-139 depict the response and the worldly punished that visited them as a consequence of this response: ⁴¹ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذِّبِينَ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً.

⁴² قَالَ الْهَلَا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

This retort by the elders of the nation to Noah (sws) meant that in the first place he has humiliated the religion of his forefathers by denying the deities they have been worshipping and in the second he is threatening them with divine punishment whereas their financial and living conditions are far superior to him and his followers.

قَالَ يَقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ ⁴³

This reply from Noah (sws) reflects his utter concern and sympathy as well as the selfless nature of his invite. He fears for his nation a great punishment if they do not

40. Indeed, I fear for you the torment of a horrible day.”

41. No torment is going to visit us. So, they rejected him. Thus We destroyed them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this.

42. The elders of his nation replied: “We see you in manifest error. ”

43. He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not in any error. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the whole universe. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and being your well-wisher and know from God which you do not know.



mend their ways. In spite of its malice, stubbornness and enmity he is standing firm only for its benefit and tolerating all the pain and sorrow inflicted on him. These people only see the apparent; hence to them the threat of the punishment seems very strange; however, Noah (sws) has knowledge from God what they do not have. If they look beyond their outward prosperity and concentrate on their follies, they would realize the truth of what Noah (sws) is saying.

44 ﴿أَوْعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَيَسْتَقْبِلَ أَعْيُنَكُمْ تُرْحَبُونَ﴾

No answer is given to the question raised in this verse. This is because the question is meant to express sorrow. Concealed in this style is that if they had reflected and done away with arrogance, they would have expressed gratitude at God’s favour of sending a messenger from among themselves. Noah (sws) is not a stranger to them. His past and present as well as his character and conduct are well known to them. He speaks the same language and his heart reflects their nature. So would this have been better that for the conclusive communication of the truth an angel descends from the heaven or that a well-wisher from their own lot bears witness to the truth before them in their own language. All these details are concealed in this style and this concealment is in fact a requisite of eloquence at this instance. After all, what is the use to express one’s anguish before people who have already taken to criticism and objection.

Evident from the words “and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you” is that the real purpose of a messenger’s warning is to produce God’s fear and it is this fear that will make people entitle to His mercy both in this world and in the next. On the other hand, those who demand a sign for punishment and want to observe angels only invite God’s doom.

45 ﴿فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَبِيدَ﴾

Finally what Noah (sws) had warned them of actually materialized. It should be kept in mind that only those were drowned who persisted in his denial and in the denial of God’s signs. The established practice of God is that His punishment visits only those people to whom truth has been conclusively communicated by their respective messenger. Noah’s people inhabited the land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Whether in those times, human beings existed in other parts of the world or not is a question whose answer is based on information that is speculative. So I would refrain from commenting on it. However, what is certain is that only those people

44. Did you find it strange that you received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may inform you and so that you fear and mercy be shown to you?”

45. Then these people rejected him. So, We saved him and those who were with him on the ship and drowned those who denied Our revelations. Indeed, these people were blind.



were visited by the punishment who had denied Noah (sws).

Here the difference between punishment and trial must be kept in mind. At times a nation is afflicted with some disaster, famine, epidemic, earthquakes or storms etc. These are God-sent in order to awaken it from its slumber. In such situations, it is not necessary that a calamity strike only those who are the wrongdoers; in fact, both good and bad people are affected by it. On the other occasions, after conclusive communication of the truth the Almighty sends a decisive torment to a nation because of its misdeeds. In this case, only the wrongdoers are affected by it. Others who have taken up the task of reformation or are followers who take up this task are saved.

The word *عمون* is the plural of *عمى*. This word means those who are blind in the eye and can also mean those who are blind in their intellect. Here it is used in the latter meaning. In other words, the reason of why God destroyed this nation is stated in this word: they had lost their intellect. A messenger of God is the final means of conclusive communication of the truth. Once he fulfils this obligation, no other means is left for such communication. For this reason, those who do not open their eyes after his warnings negate their own existence in this world. Why should God keep alive those whose eyes of the heart have become blind?

وَإِلَىٰ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَبْعَثُوا إِلَهُكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرِهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ الْبَلَاءُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ
 إِنَّا لَنَرُّكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَنُظَنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ قَالَ يَبْعَثُوا لِي رَسُولًا مِّنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾
 أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾⁴⁶

The ‘Ād were the oldest nation of Arabia. They belonged to the Semitic race. Their abode was the land of Aḥqāf. It is evident from the words “and recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah” that after the deluge, some elders of this nation migrated to the northern part of Arabia and gradually achieved great majesty and splendour. In classical Arabic literature, they are proverbial for their height and also in their bravery and chivalry. The word “their brother” refers to God’s favour to the people of Hūd (sws) mentioned at other instances as “a messenger from among them.” That a messenger is from among the people to whom he conclusively communicates the truth is a huge favour of the Almighty. This has already been explained above as well as in Sūrah al-Baqarah. However, like every other favour, this favour too was not valued by nations.

46. And to ‘Ād, We sent their brother Hūd. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. Then do you not have fear?” The elders of his nation, who had taken to disbelief, replied: “We see you inflicted with foolishness and We regard you to be among the liars.” He said: “O People of My Nation! I am not inflicted with any foolishness. In fact, I am a messenger of the Lord of the worlds. I am communicating to you the messages of my Lord and am a sincere well-wisher of yours.



The words “then do you not have fear” of Hūd (sws) occur in the same context as “I fear for you the torment of a horrible day” of Noah (sws) cited earlier.

The implication of “we see you inflicted with foolishness” is that the people of Hūd (sws) thought that their prosperity was not a means of earning wrath; it showed that they have favour in the eyes of God and are on the straight path. Thus his claim of being a messenger of God is a total lie and bluff.

The attribute *أَمِينٌ* in *وَإِنَّا لَكُم نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ* occurs the same way as it does in verse 143 of Sūrah Shu‘arā: *إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ* (I am for you a trustworthy messenger). A great trait of a messenger is that he is trustworthy. Whatever message is entrusted to him is delivered by him with full sincerity and faithfulness of content.

The words “and recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah ” do not mean that the people of Hūd (sws) were given political authority in exactly the same land as that of the people of Noah (sws). The latter inhabited the north and the former lived in the south. In other words, the similarity is only in political authority. These words of Hūd (sws) not only recount God’s favour to his nation but also carry warning in them. The favour obviously relates to political authority; the warning they encapsulate is that when they have been made to succeed the people of Noah (sws), then they should also bear in mind their anecdote and their fate. If they too adopt a similar attitude, there is no reason that they too should not meet a different fate. The law of God is the same for all.

أَوْ عَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۚ وَادُّكُرُوا ۚ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ ۚ وَرَادَّكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصُطَةً ۚ فَادُّكُرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

In the expression *وَرَادَّكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصُطَةً*, the word *خَلَقَ* means “form” Thus for example in verse 119 of Sūrah al-Nisā, it is said: *وَلَا مُرْتَهُنَ فَلَیَغَیِّرَنَّ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ* (I will induce them such that they would distort the form created by God). This form can refer to both internal and external forms. This is because at the behest of Satan, the Idolaters perverted their own natures and also slit the ears of animals, as is referred to in the Qur’ān. The word *بَصُطَةً* and *بُصْطَةً* are the same. It means “vastness” and “immensity.” Granting vastness in both internal and external forms means that they were given superiority in their intellect and in their physique. Historical traditions of the Arabs also substantiate this fact that the ‘Ād were prominent with regard to both these aspects. In verse 247 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, about Saul it is similarly said: *وَرَادَّهُ بَسُطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ* (He gave him plentiful knowledge and physique).

47. Did you find it strange that you have received your Lord’s reminder through a person from among yourselves so that he may warn you? And recall when He made you succeed the people of Noah and made you strong and mighty in physique. So, keep in mind the majesties of God so that you may succeed.”



The word آلاء is the plural of إِلٌّ and أَلٌّ and إِلٌّ. Generally, lexicographers regard it to mean “favours.” However, this is not true. It means feats, miracles, majesty and splendour. My mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, in his *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān* has researched the meaning of this word and cited ten couplets from poets belonging to the pre-Qur’ānic era to corroborate these meanings.⁴⁸

What Hūd (sws) has said here encapsulates both favour and warning. The implication is that his people should duly value the favour of intellect and physique God has blessed them with and express gratitude to Him and must not fall into any trial because of them. They must keep in mind the splendour and majesty of God because this is precisely the path of success. If they show arrogance, they should know that very stern is God’s grasp.

قَالُوا اجْعَلْنَا مِثْلَهُ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى آبَائِنَا لَفَتَنَابِعْدُ تَعْدُوا إِنَّ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Concealed in this sentence from his nation is both anger and sarcasm. It also indicates that his people actually had high expectations from Hūd (sws) to further increase the respect of their ancestral religion and their own too; on the contrary, he ended up an enemy of everyone.

They further meant that they will not be over-awed by his threats and abandon their ancestral religion even if Hūd (sws) is truthful in his claim of bringing God’s punishment to them.

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ ۚ أَتُجَادِلُونَنِي فِيْٓ اَسْمَاءِ سَيِّئَاتٍ لَّهَا اَنْتُمْ وَاَبَاؤُكُمْ مَّا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ۚ فَانْتَظِرُوْا اِنَّنِىْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The style قَدْ وَقَعَ is the same as اَتَىٰ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ⁵¹. In other words, this thing has been destined to happen and they have become worthy of it. Only its time of manifestation is awaited. The word رِجْسٌ means “filth” and “impurity.” Here it refers to the filth of disbelief and polytheism as well to misdeeds and bad conduct. There is an intrinsic relation of cause and effect between رِجْسٌ (filth) and غَضَبٌ (anger). In other words, if the people of Hūd (sws) are demanding punishment, not much time is left in its

48. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maṭba‘ Islāh, 1358 AH), 11.

49. They replied: “Have you come to us so that we worship only one God and leave aside those who our forefathers have been worshipping? So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful.”

50. So, bring the punishment you are threatening us with, if you are truthful.” He said: “Filth and wrath will come upon you from your Lord. Are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction? So wait; I shall also be among those who wait.”

51. The directive of God has been pronounced. (16:1)



manifestation. It has all but arrived because they have gathered all the filth that can ignite God’s anger. His torment is now at hand.

The words “are you quarrelling with me about those imaginary names which you and your forefathers have kept, about which God has revealed no sanction?” are a response to the statement of his nation that how can they leave their deities that are being worshipped since the time of their forefathers. When these deities are mere names whose entities have no proof of existence, why have they given them this status and fighting with Hūd (sws) about them? As far as God is concerned, they know that His existence is indisputable and they have its proof; but as for these idols, what proof of existence do they have?

The advent of punishment is a certainty as they have made themselves worthy of it. However, it is God’s prerogative of bringing it forth. So both should wait.

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَقَطَّعْنَا أَيْدِي الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

This verse depicts the established practice of God that necessarily manifests itself once the truth has been conclusively conveyed. Through His special grace and favour, He sifts out His messenger and his companions from the place where the punishment is destined to descend and the rest of the nation is destroyed. This decisive punishment comes when a nation because of its stubbornness and obduracy shows that it has no capacity left in it to accept faith. The words “and they were not prepared to believe” point to this very aspect.

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ طَيْحًا قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ كُنتُمْ

آيَةً قَدَرُواهَا تَأْكُلْنَ فِي أََرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ آلِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

The Thamūd are from among the remnants of the ‘Ād and are also called the second ‘Ād. They lived in north west Arabia. It may well be that at the time of their destruction some of them remained safe and they may have migrated from the south to the north and then started to live in the land of Hījr. The attributes of the ‘Ād and the Thamūd are very similarly mentioned in the Qur’ān and Arab traditions. Some poets mention them in a way as if there is no difference between them. The leaders of both – Qayl and Qaydār – because of which these nations were punished, have become proverbial in Arabic literature and it seems that both had the same traits and attributes.

52. Thus, We saved him and his companions through Our grace and severed the roots of those who denied Our revelations and they were not prepared to believe.

53. And to the Thamūd, We sent their brother Sāliḥ. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you.



Consider the words: “A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. This is God’s she-camel, as a sign for you. So, leave it that it may graze in the land of God and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you.” They form Ṣāliḥ’s answer to his nation’s demand for punishment. He repeatedly warned them that they must not think that their days of comfort will remain forever. Their luxurious life-style, their orchards and fountains, their crops and fields and their advancements and developments will see their end. They should fear God’s retribution and listen to Ṣāliḥ (sws). If they follow their unrestrained leaders, who are spreading disorder in the land, they will end up in the pit of destruction. His nation responded to him by saying that he was a lunatic and why should he believe in his boastful claims when he is an ordinary human being like them. They stated that they will only listen to him if he brings a sign of the punishment. In return, Ṣāliḥ earmarked a she-camel and ascribed it to God, as this sign. If they harm her, they would be inflicted with God’s punishment. She is a shield for them against God’s punishment. If they break it, then nothing will be able to save them from this punishment.

Ascribing the she-camel to God meant that it was dedicated to God the way animals of sacrifice are dedicated to Him in Islam. Just as it is a great crime in Islam to attack such animals, about the she-camel too, Ṣāliḥ (sws) warned that none should harm her lest God’s torment would crush them.

This she-camel was earmarked by Ṣāliḥ (sws) as a feeler: if they kill her, it would be a certain proof that now these oppressors will show the audacity to kill Ṣāliḥ regarding him to be a liar. As per God’s established practice, it is at this stage when a messenger is asked to migrate and punishment visits his nation.

From no word of the Qur’ān is it indicated that this she-camel was a sign because of having some extra-ordinary features in her form. In fact, it is evident from the words “and do not harm it otherwise a painful torment will visit you” that it was a sign with regard to the consequence of harming her. To the best of my knowledge, there is no authentic narrative that says that this she-camel was born from a mountain or a hillock. For this reason, it should not be given any importance. The word آية means “sign” and “indication.” This she-camel was demarcated as a sign of punishment in response to the demand that such a sign be presented. Thus it is mentioned in the Qur’ān that when the leader of the Thamūd hamstrung her, the punishment descended on them on the third day. This incident is narrated in the Qur’ān with various details in different *sūrahs*. Here is one example to facilitate our understanding:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطُغْيَانِهِ وَاتَّخَذَ آلُهَا كُفْرًا. إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَتَتَّخِفُونَ. إِنِّي نَكَمٌ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا. وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجَرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. أَتَتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِينَ. فِي جَنَّتٍ وَعَيْوُنٍ. وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضْبُهُمْ. وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا لِفِرْيَدِهِمْ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا. وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ. الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي



الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ. قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ. مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا ۖ قَاتِ بِآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ. قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ لِهَٰمٍ ۖ لَكُمْ شِرَابٌ يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ. وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسَوْءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ. فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَدِمِينَ. فَآخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ. وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ. (١٥٩-١٤١:٧)

The Thamūd also denied the messengers when their brother Šālīḥ warned them: “Do you people have no fear of God? I am for you a trusted messenger. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not demand any recompense on this from you. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds.” Will you be left to dwell here among these favours secure from every danger? Amid orchards, springs, cultivated lands and date palms whose bunches are closely-knit? And continue to happily carve out houses in mountains? So, fear God and obey me and do not listen to those who exceed limits who spread disorder in the land and do not mend affairs.” They said: “You only seem to be a person under the influence of magic. You are but a human being like us. So, bring a sign if you are truthful.” He said: “This is a she-camel. One day, it will be her turn to drink water and another turn of a fixed day is for you. And do not harm it otherwise the torment of a horrible day shall seize you.” Thus they slew her. So, they were left to regret. Ultimately, the torment seized them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And indeed your Lord is Mighty and Merciful. (7:141-159)

It may be noted that instead of sending punishment at the demand of the Thamūd, a sign for punishment was given. This signifies God’s mercy. He shows delay in wrath and haste in mercy. For this reason, He gave them further respite so that those who could pay heed are given the opportunity to do so. However, instead of paying heed they took the last step of audacity by killing the she-camel. After this, it is evident from other instances of the Qur’ān that they were given a further respite of three days so that even then if they wanted they could desist from their evil ways.

Šālīḥ (sws) had directed that the she-camel must be allowed to graze in the whole land wherever she wanted to. No one should go near her. A separate day was fixed for her to drink water from the rest of the animals of the nation. This directive was meant to test the nation so that the malice and animosity they have is exposed and nothing remains concealed.

وَإِذْ كُنَّا إِذَا جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ تَنْخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا ۖ فَادْكُرُوا الْآيَةَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۚ⁵⁴

54. And recall when God made you succeed the nation of ‘Ād and granted you authority in the land: you make forts in its lands and carve houses from mountains. So, remember the majesties of God and do not spread disorder in the land.”



As a nation, the Thamūd attained great heights in the land of Hījr which they inhabited. They enjoyed power and authority there and a lot of remnants of their architectural feats still exist. While travelling to Syria, the Quraysh used to pass by their settlements. For this reason, they were fully aware of their account and had also observed the place they lived. If Ṣāliḥ (sws) reminded them of their position of authority as successors of the ‘Ād nation, it was, as mentioned earlier, to not forget the power of God while being themselves inebriated with power. He will deal with them in the same manner He dealt with the ‘Ād. He has the same yardstick for all.

The words جبل and سهل are opposites. The former means a hilly area and the latter refers to flat land at the base of hills. The Thamūd reached great heights in the art of construction. They constructed grand palaces both in hilly areas by carving them out and also in flat areas of land. Some of their feats of construction still exist. They show their finesse and perfection. Ṣāliḥ (sws) expressed his sorrow on their passion for building structures right when they had reached their pinnacle. This shows that constructing grand buildings is not a sign of development of a nation; it is in fact a sign of its decadence. These sky scrapers ultimately become its tombs and graveyards and are inhabited by wild animals. Ṣāliḥ (sws) reminded them to bear in mind the majesty and splendour of God and not spread disorder in His land.

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مُرْسَلٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

The invitation of a messenger is first always accepted by the poor and the weak because they are devoid of arrogance and it is this arrogance which is the greatest hindrance in accepting the truth. I have explained it under the incident of Satan and Adam’s creation.

The question “do you think that Ṣāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” posed by the arrogant individuals of Thamūd to the believers was sarcastic in nature. It meant that if these believers think that Ṣāliḥ (sws) is a messenger of God, then they are very naïve. The answer given by the believers “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent” is a step ahead from the actual answer. They did not merely confine themselves to acknowledging the messengerhood of Ṣāliḥ (sws), they expressed their strong conviction at the veracity of his real message. Such was the nature of this stern and assertive answer that it proved that those who were hitherto subservient will not any longer remain subservient in the matter of the truth.

It is evident from these details that though initially the poor and the weak first

55. The arrogant elders of his nation said to the subservient among them who had accepted faith: “Do you think that Ṣāliḥ has been sent by his Lord?” They replied: “We do believe in the message with which he has been sent.” The arrogant said: “We disbelieve in what you have believed.”



profess faith in messengers of God, what appeals to them is the strength in arguments presented by the messenger and not by any miracles. On the other hand, those who claim to be superior and intelligent remain entangled in the demand of miracles and signs until the very end. Their eyes only open when the torment breaks their backs.

56. **قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ**

These words express the final dismay of the arrogant elements.

57. **فَعَقَرُوا السَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يُصَدِّقُ أَثْبَتًا بَعْدَنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الرُّسُلِينَ**

The word **عَقَر** means to hamstring a male or a female camel. When the verb **عَتَوْا** occurs with **عَنْ** it encompasses the meanings of both arrogance and disobedience. This was the ultimate step of rebelliousness taken by the nation. By killing the she-camel, they challenged Ṣāliḥ (sws) to bring the punishment he was threatening them with.

This was the final expression of his nation in denying Ṣāliḥ (sws). Any further respite given to them would have resulted in their killing him. Because of this reason, the punishment visited them on the third day. Though it was only the rebellious leader of the Thamūd who killed the she-camel, as is specified in Sūrah Shams; however, since everyone consented to this heinous act, her killing is ascribed to the whole nation.

58. **فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جِثِيَيْنَ**

The word **رَجْفَةٌ** means “a shudder” and “a jolt. It signifies the punishment that visited the nation of Thamūd. At another instance (54:31), the word **صَبْحَةٌ** is used to depict this punishment. At some places (eg. 41:13), the word used is **صَاعِقَةٌ**. In verse 5 of Sūrah al-Hāqqah, the word used is **الطَّاعِنَةُ** which means something that crosses the limits. Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt has discussed in detail the nature of punishments which visited the ‘Ād and the Thamūd. He has summarized the discussion at the end in the following words:

It is evident from these details that God sent on them the punishment of winter clouds, stormy winds and horrific thunder. Since the real destruction actually took place because of the severity in winds, if the effect produced by the cause is considered, it will become evident that God had sent striped clouds of winter which concealed horrific thunder and a deafening shout the way He had sent

56. The arrogant said: “We disbelieve in what you have believed.”

57. Then they hamstrung the she-camel and disobeyed the directive of their Lord and said: “Ṣāliḥ! If you have been sent by God, bring on us the torment you are threatening us with.”

58. Thus a shudder overtook them and they were left lying face down in their homes.



clouds of thunder and lightning to the nation of the ‘Ād.⁵⁹

Nevertheless it does not necessarily follow from the word رَجْفَةً that their punishment was of the nature of an earthquake. It merely signifies a torment. It seems that the northern wind called *ṣarṣar* blew in the form of a storm. It ravaged everything. Such was the nature of its intensity that people fell on the ground facewards and died in this state.

The word دار is used here in the meaning of ديار.

Thus in verse 65 of Sūrah Hūd, the word دار used and in verse 67 the word ديار is used in connection with the Thamūd. It is as if the Qur’ān has itself explained the word.

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰ قَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّصِيحَةَ ۝۶۰

These words constitute the last address of Ṣāliḥ (sws) to his nation. It is obvious that he said these words before the advent of the punishment at the time when the she-camel had been killed. After uttering these farewell words, he left his people. This was in accordance with God’s established practice that messengers migrate from the place at His behest from the place where the punishment is destined to come. It is specified in the Qur’ān that after the killing of the she-camel, the Thamūd were given a further respite of three days. Besides having other benefits, one reason of this was that Ṣāliḥ (sws) and his companions were afforded with the opportunity to go far enough from the area so as to not be the target of the punishment.

Here a question arises about the sequence of narration. Why is this statement of Ṣāliḥ (sws) mentioned after the torment? The answer to this question is that this sequence of narration has much to do with the requisites of eloquence. To highlight the immediate consequence of the crime, the torment is mentioned right after the killing of the she-camel and the mention of Ṣāliḥ’s (sws) migration is deferred. In other words, as soon as they challenged God by harming the she-camel, the torment visited them. The immediate and forthwith arrival of the punishment could not have been demonstrated if its mention was deferred by stating something in between. There are many examples of this style in the Qur’ān. One such example is coming up in the anecdote of the nation of Shu‘ayb (sws) further down in this *sūrah*. In verses 42-45, of Sūrah Hūd another very obvious and eloquent example can be seen.

One thing which is evident from these anecdotes is that the words “O My Nation” occur very frequently. They are not merely something to pacify it; in fact, just as a person’s own self and his family have a right on him, in a similar way, his nation and country also have this right. The requisite of this right is that a person should be its

59. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 134.

60. So, Ṣāliḥ walked off from them, saying: “O People of My Nation! I have delivered to you the message of My Lord and have been your well-wisher. But you do not like well-wishers.”



well-wisher with full sincerity, sympathy and concern. Without this, he cannot fulfil this obligation towards his nation. He who is able to fulfil it is successful in the eyes of God and will not be help answerable if the nation takes to the path of destruction. Conversely, people who did not fulfil this obligation will necessarily be held accountable.

The sentence “but you do not like well-wishers” does not merely express sorrow at their response; it is also a statement of fact. There may come a phase in the disorder and disruption in the behaviour of a nation when values and norms become topsy turvy: even expressing concern for it becomes a dangerous proposition. Those who invite the wrath of God become its leaders and heroes and those who try to save it from torment are regarded as its ill-wishers and enemies. The reason for this is evident: when a sick person becomes an enemy of his doctors and care-givers and only likes to accept the advice of those who would want to increase his ailment, then the only consequence of this is death.

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

Lot (sws) was Abraham’s (sws) nephew. His people lived in the area that lies to the south of Syria around the river Jordan. The style in which he is mentioned here is different from the ones Hūd (sws) and Šālīḥ are mentioned earlier. They are mentioned by the words أَخَاهُمُ هُودًا (their brother Hūd) and أَخَاهُمُ شَالِيحًا (their brother Šālīḥ) in relation to their nations. However, Lot’s nation is regarded as his nation but he is not ascribed to it as its brother. It is evident from this that his nation was regarded to be his because he preached to them and not because he belonged to them. This slight distinction is made evident in the way he is mentioned by the Qur’ān. God’s established practice is that a messenger belongs to the nation he preaches. The wisdom behind this is that a nation be aware of his past and present, character and conduct as well as their language. In this way, he is well known to them and they do not feel the discomfort of encountering someone from outside. Just as this status is obtained by being part of its lineage, it is also acquired by living a long period with and among it. Since Lot (sws) spent a long time with his nation; in fact, concomitant indications show that he had married among it, it was as if he belonged to it. It is evident from the Torah that Abraham (sws) had groomed him. Because of these traits, he was sent to this nation as a messenger. This is precisely the same case as with Moses (sws). Even though he did not belong to the nation of the Pharaoh, he had spent a long time among them. For this reason, the Almighty had sent him as a messenger to it.

The word الْفَاحِشَةُ in the verse means blatant sexual impropriety and lewdness. The interrogative nature of the sentence is meant to express disgust and aversion. Though

61. And We sent Lot when he said to his nation: “Do you commit open vulgarity? No nation before you has perpetrated it.



the nature of this misconduct is not specified, This quite evidently shows that such was its rampant nature in the society that it was known to all and sundry without even naming it

The expression *مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا* is not an attribute of *الْفَاحِشَةِ*. Had it been so, the latter should have occurred without the definite article. In my opinion, this expression actually is an independent sentence. Here Lot (sws) has expressed his disgust on this wrongdoing in two different ways: first he regarded them to be guilty of a blatant indecency which is evident to every upright person as a heinous sin. He then stated that this was never done by any earlier nation.

The words “no nation before you has perpetrated it” do not necessarily mean that this indecency was not perpetrated by any previous nation. The word *أَحَدٍ* also implies plurality. For example, in verse 285 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: *لَا تَفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ* (we do not differentiate between any of His messengers) and in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Ahḏāb: *لَسْتَنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ* (you are not like other women).

For this reason, it can also mean that before them there never ever has existed a wretched society in which this filth became a part and parcel of their lives the way it has enveloped their society.

Here a question arises: the preaching of all the messengers mentioned earlier began with inviting their respective nation to the belief of monotheism; however, in the case of Lot (sws), his preaching began by taking notice of the lewd practices of his nation. Does this mean that his nation was not incriminated with the evil creed of polytheism? If it was present, then why did Lot (sws) choose to ignore it? The answer to this question, in my opinion, is that evils have different types. One type of evil, however grave it may be, is the one that afflicts human nature and is found in human beings. The second type is one which is so horrible in extent that if it is found as a habit in a person or as a fashion in a society, then this is only possible if the nature of that person and that society has been completely perverted. Where such people exist, the real need is to set right their evil habit however much important other deviations may be. They will all be regarded as secondary. If you go to a person and see that he is standing eating filth, will you urge him to be more religious or will this pathetic situation attract your attention foremost? Lot (sws) was faced with such an ordeal. His people were inflicted with the evils of polytheism and disbelief and other evils too which were the consequence of polytheism and disbelief. However, people whose nature has been perverted to the extent that men seek men for sexual pleasure, the need is to take them out of this quicksand of filth first of all. Any other discussion with them must relate to a second phase.

It can be estimated from this discussion the heinous status sodomy occupies in the eyes of the Qur’ān.



٦٢ ﴿إِنَّكُمْ لَتَنَاصُتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّسَاءِ ۖ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ﴾

This is the third aspect of hate. Its intensity is apparent from the stress found in the sentence. The word رجال is also meaningful here because it is used for men of mature age. By using this verb, firstly the heinous nature of the act is depicted and secondly of the licentiousness that a nation is necessarily overcome with when this wretched ailment becomes rampant in it. The consequence of this is that the sensitivity regarding age is done away with. Licentious individuals of all ages scatter and spread in the nation and this curse become a habit and profession for them.

The words “leaving aside women” depict the transformation that is the natural consequence of this perversion: creative energy is wasted in the pursuit of a totally wrong target. Barren lands are watered and crops are left dry. The result of this is destruction of civilization and humanity, and humiliation in the Hereafter. The words “you are absolutely senseless; in fact, people who have crossed limits” depict their rebelliousness against human nature and its fate.

٦٣ ﴿وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ﴾

It is evident from the style of the discourse that every sentence uttered by Lot (sws) was an eye-opener that was meant to jolt and shake them. However, such words can have no effect on people whose nature has become perverted and who have lost their senses. Their reply shows that the society had reached its lowest level of decadence. When a society reaches this level, a time comes that every person becomes an embodiment of evil and being evil becomes a requisite of fashion. It is evident from the words “they pose to be very pious” what the people of Lot’s nation regarded him and thought of themselves as incriminated with filth. However, instead of regarding his piety to be a likeable trait, it weighed down heavily on them and they wanted him to become one of them.

٦٤ ﴿فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ ۖ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا ۖ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

The words “they pose to be pious” show that there were some people who had professed faith in Lot (sws). However, this verse shows that only his family members were the ones who had accepted faith. Had there been others besides them, they would have been mentioned among those who had been delivered. In my opinion, a very

62. You fulfil your sexual desires through men leaving aside women? You are absolutely senseless; in fact people who have crossed the limits.

63. At this, his nation merely replied: “Expel these people from your settlement ; they pose to be very pious.”

64. So, We saved him and his family except his wife who was among those who were left behind.



small group professed faith in him as is evident from the word “people” (الْأَنَاسُ); however, all of them belonged to his family. For this reason, they are referred to by the word أَهْل.

From among his family too, his wife was not included. Its obvious reason was her perversion and the reason for her perversion could have been reinforced by belonging to this morally corrupt nation by birth, as referred to earlier. One’s bias towards one’s family and nation often becomes a hindrance in the cause of the truth. Only those people are able to break this barrier who are so intensely attached to God that this attachment prevails over all other feelings. The Qur’ān has mentioned this case especially to make evident the fact that only they are led to the path of salvation who seek it and are able to forsake other desires that hinder it. If someone does not have this love for the truth and he does not have the spirit to sacrifice for its sake, then even being the wife of a prophet or his son or father or uncle cannot earn him salvation. Thus the fate of Lot’s wife, Noah’s son, Abraham’s father and Muḥammad’s uncle is an indisputable evidence of this fact.

Here rain refers to the rain of pebbles and stones. The tempestuous wind that visited Lot’s nation arose from the desert and the pebbles and stones it picks up are showered on caravans and settlements that totally ravage them. The Arabs call it حَامِص or a storm that rains down pebbles. Ustādh Farāhī, while referring to the details of this storm, writes:

The Almighty unleashed a dust-laden storm on the people of Lot (sws) which finally took the shape of a pebble and stone hurling wind. This at first rained down pebbles and stones on them and later when the storm picked up, it destroyed all the houses. While referring to the people of Lot (sws), it is stated: فَسَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ أَرْسَنَاءٍ عَلَيْهِ حَامِصًا (٤٠:٢٩) (on some We sent down a violent stone-hurling wind, (29:40)). At another instance the words used about them are: فَجَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَافِلَهَا وَآمَظَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ (٧٤:١٥) (We razed their city to the ground and let loose a shower of clay-stones upon them, (15:74)). In other words, such was the nature of this strong wind that the houses and roofs were razed to ground and the pebbles and stones completely covered them. At another place, the words are: (٥٤:٥٣ : ٥٤) وَالْبُؤْسُ فَكَفَّ أَعْيُنَهُمْ فَغَشَّيَهَا مَا غَشَّى (and overthrew the overthrown cities; thus there covered them that which did cover them, (53:53-54)).⁶⁵

After that, Ustādh Farāhī, while criticizing the translators of the Torah, has explained how by making a mistake in the translation they ended up totally misstating the while incident. He has then summarized his critique thus:

It is evident from this that the Almighty sent upon them the punishment of a

65. Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 129.



stone-hurling windstorm which covered them as well as their dwellings. If the statement of the Torah in this regard is also accepted, it will become further evident that besides this stone-hurling windstorm, they also faced the punishment of lightning and thunder.⁶⁶

وَالْمَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَادْعُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْبَيْزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَقْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ⁶⁷

The place inhabited by the nation of Madyan was along the shores of the Red Sea towards the south east of mount of Sinaī. The Prophet Shu‘ayb (sws) was sent to them. He was the same person who had wedded his daughter with Moses (sws). The latter had stayed a long time with him and attended to his herd. This whole anecdote is mentioned in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ and is a very noble account of a very noble prophet.

Since the people of Madyan lived along an important trade route, they had become very advanced in trade. Later, just as their beliefs got corrupted, other evils that generally corrupt a trading nation also contaminated them. These evils are mentioned ahead when Shu‘ayb (sws) began to preach to them.

The details of “the clear proof” referred to here are neither mentioned in the Qur’ān nor in the Torah. It may refer to a visual miracle which in accordance with God’s established practice may have been given to Shu‘ayb (sws) also, just as it was given to other messengers. However, the Qur’ān has just referred to it without explaining its nature. It is also possible that this refers to his own self and his preaching. This is because a messenger in his being is a complete proof and a conclusive means of communication. He delineates the truth from every aspect to such an extent that no one except the stubborn are left with an excuse to deny it. A miracle is not a requisite of prophethood; it is from among its secondary elements. If at the demand of a nation, God wants, He shows to it a miracle through its prophet for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth. The actual content of the preaching of a prophet is based on clear and conclusive proofs which are innately found in human nature and intellect. His life is an embodiment of these and he is like a light from God walking among his compatriots. Such is the evidence borne by every word he utters, every gesture he makes and every action he does that only those people deny him who refute an evidence their own hearts bear.

Since in trading things are generally weighed and measured, so this is what is

66. Ibid., 131.

67. And to Madyan We sent their brother, Shu‘ayb. He invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no other god than Him. A clear proof has come to you from your Lord. Thus weigh and measure full. Do not decrease the things of people in any way and do not spread disorder in the land after it has been set right. This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith.



mentioned in the verse. The real purpose is that all dealings must be based on honesty and uprightness. Being dishonest in measuring and weighing is not an independent wrongdoing: it actually is an expression of many wrongdoings that are found in a nation. It is a sign of disruption in the concept of justice and fairness and of a nation become bereft of adhering to truth and justice. The resultant disorder engulfs every sphere of life but like a cancer cell manifests in some bodies in some way and others in other ways. Since the people of Madyan were traders by profession, it manifested itself in them in the form of dishonesty in measurement and weighing. However, it had actually infiltrated in their whole society. For this reason, the Qur’ān while emphasizing honesty in measurement and weighing has also explained the negative aspect of it by saying that they should not spread disorder in the land. The implication is that such dishonesty totally disrupts the society. If they do not change their ways, every building block of a society will get displaced from its place because God has set up the heavens and the earth on a scale. If this scale gets disrupted even for a moment, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed. This is a reference to the fact that even in their own circle of authority people will be able to establish the system of the country as long as they are able to establish justice. If they disturb this justice, then every connection of the building blocks of a society will be severed. In verses 7-9 of Sūrah al-Rahmān, this fact is explained thus: *وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْبِيزَانَ أَلَّا تُظْلَمُوا فِي الْبِيزَانِ وَلَا تَخْسِرُوا الْبِيزَانَ*.⁶⁸

The emphasis found in the conditional clause “after it has been set right” has been explained earlier. Here its meaning has become further evident after the aforementioned discussion. It is evident from earlier verses that nations because of their rebelliousness repeatedly disrupted the system of truth and justice and each time this happened, God restored it. From the anecdote of Noah (sws) to that of Shu‘ayb (sws), the history of every nation bears witness to this. The people of Madyan too were granted political authority after a corrupt system had been destroyed. These people were not unaware of religion; they, in fact, belonged to the descendants of Abraham (sws) and claimed to be the carriers of the guidance of the previous prophets. However, like other nations they had modified these teachings to bring them in harmony with their personal desires. Thus, it is on this very basis that Shu‘ayb (sws) addressed them and said: “This is what is better for you if you are to accept faith.” In other words, if they lay claim to faith, then to prove it they should desist from spreading disorder and take to mending affairs to which he is calling them to. It is this attitude which is the requirement of the faith they lay claim to.

وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۖ وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا

68. And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it so that you too should not transgress that balance. And weigh justly and do not measure less.



فَكَثُرُوا ۖ وَانظُرْ ذَاكُمُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ۚ

This is an allusion to the evil practices of his nation and how they would relish and plan in harming Muslims. They would threaten them so much that they are forced to leave Shu‘ayb (sws) and the way of faith and come back to their ways.

The path to reach God is monotheism. If some tries to distort it, it will lead people to polytheism and they will go astray.

Consider the words: “Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers.” The first sentence invites people to express gratitude and the second depicts the fate of the ingrates. The implication is that at the time of Abraham (sws), they came to inhabit this land when they were a small family. God then made them into a powerful nation. Not only did they increase in number, their means and resources also increased. So much so, they flourished and developed and reached the state they are in at the advent of the final prophet. All this was God-given and it entailed their gratitude to God and the adoption of the path He likes. On the contrary, they have shown ingratitude and rebelliousness and are spreading disorder in the land of God after it had been set right. So they must not forget the fate of the wrongdoers. Close by them are the remnants of the signs of destruction of the nations of Thamūd and Lot (sws). They should learn a lesson from them.

وَإِنْ كَانَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ ۖ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ۚ

Here a clarification is given regarding a point about the fate the wrongdoers were earlier threatened with. The implication is that this fate is certain to befall them. If they are being given respite, they should not think that what Shu‘ayb (sws) is saying is false. Everything has a fixed time with God. The reason for this respite is that there may be others besides those who have already accepted faith who may also follow suit. Once this respite is over, God will announce His verdict.

In this verse, Shu‘ayb (sws) has referred to an established practice of God. It may be noted that one situation that may arise for messengers is that the majority of the nation rejects their invitation and becomes adamant on it. In this case, it soon becomes evident that this nation has no potential to accept faith. Then as a necessary consequence of this, the punishment also soon visits it. Another situation that can arise is that a group from among the nation accepts faith and another opposes it. This shows

69. And do not sit on every path intimidating people, stopping the believers from the path of God and distorting it. Remember when you were few. Then God increased you, and observe the fate of those who were mischief -mongers.

70. And whereas one group from among you has professed faith in what I have been sent with and another did not; so, wait until God passes His judgement between us and He is the best of judges.”



that the nation has some potential in it. It is possible that if more time is given to it, some more people may accept faith. Since God is extremely merciful to His creatures and takes time to show anger, He gives it some more time for the reason just stated. Once this period reaches its culmination, God decides the fate of the nation. Also evident from this verse is that a nation gets this respite because of the presence of the righteous in it. They are the ones who have accepted the invitation of the messenger. The word “wait” here encompasses the meaning of patience. In other words, they must patiently wait because the decision will be in accordance with justice and will be announced right at the time when it should be.

قَالَ الْبَلَاءُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَشْعِيبُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا قَالَ أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كَارِهِينَ ⁷¹

This is the final warning to Shu‘ayb (sws) and his companions by the arrogant elements of their nation. His response shows that he has ignored the warning of being expelled from the nation but he took string notice of the second warning. Details are forthcoming.

قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُوذَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبُّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ ⁷²

This is a very decisive answer. It has unrelenting resolve on faith and is also a proclamation of aversion to the disbelievers. In the first place, Shu‘ayb (sws) regarded the ways of the disbelievers to be falsehood imputed to God. In other words, they consists of a pack of lies that have has been ascribed to God without any proof. In the second place, he stated that why should they return to their ways when God’s grace has delivered them from this curse.

It should be kept in mind that Shu‘ayb (sws) is also answering on behalf of his followers who before accepting faith had lived a life of error. For this reason, he has used the words “after God has delivered us.” As far as God’s messengers are concerned, even before being called to their duty they are guided by their nature. They are never contaminated with polytheism.

71. And the elders of his nation who had turned arrogant said: “O Shu‘ayb ! We shall turn out from our settlement you and those who have professed faith with you or you must return to our ways.”

72. 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. Lord! Judge fairly between us and our nation. You are the best of judges.”



Consider the words: “This is not possible for us that we return to this nation except only if our Lord intends.” The first part expresses their determination and the second one their trust in God. It is this determination and trust that is the essence of monotheism. Shu‘ayb (sws) announces to his nation in unequivocal terms that returning to it is impossible; however, God’s will prevails on everything. Succeeding in His trials depends on the urge He provides. Only He knows what is ordained for who and what fate a person is going to meet. Thus they trust God alone. He has guided them to this path and it is hoped that He will make them triumph. Thus it is their prayer to God that He judge them with fairness because He is the best of judges. Precisely the same words were uttered by Abraham (sws) as cited in verse 80 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: قَالَ أَتَحْجُجُنِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ۚ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا ۖ وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (He replied: “Do you argue with me about God even though He has guided me? I do not fear those who you regard as His partners. Indeed, unless my Lord wills something. My Lord’s knowledge encompasses all things.)

وَقَالَ الْبَلَاءُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَبِئْسَ عِبَادًا إِذَا الْخُسُوفُ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمْ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَثًا ۚ

After hearing a decisive answer from Shu‘ayb (sws), these arrogant elements were left with nothing to say to him; however, they vented their anger by giving a final warning to the poor among them who had professed faith in him. They did not explain what they meant by “great loss” because concealed in this ambiguity was everything. Moreover, this expression also had a ring of sympathy in it. In other words, they meant that have made the pros and cons evident to them but they are not understanding what is beneficial to them. So they should endure its consequences too.

The second of the verses occurs in precisely the same words in the anecdote of the nation of Ṣāliḥ. There it was stated that it signifies punishment per se. These words do not explain its nature. In verse 94 of Sūrah Hūd, the explanation is furnished by the word صَيْحَةً which means a shout and thunder. In verse 189 of Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’, the words used are: عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ (the torment of the day of the canopy). It is evident from this that looking from afar, the torment seemed like a column or mountain of dust or smoke. It is evident from the anecdote of Lot’s nation that it was visited by a حَاصِب (a stone-hurling wind). In the torment of حَاصِب all three: رجفة, صيحة, and ظلة exist. Details have already been given earlier. From another instance of the Qur’ān also, it is evident that the same torment visited them as the one that visited Lots’ nation. In verse 89 of Sūrah Hūd, we find the following words of warning from Shu‘ayb (sws) sounded to

73. And these elders who had disbelieved from among his nation said: “If you follow Shu‘ayb, you will end up in great loss.” So a jolt shook them and they were left lying face-down in their houses.



his nation: ⁷⁴وَيَقَوْمٌ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقَ أَنْ يُؤَيِّبَكُمْ مِثْلَ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ
It is evident from the last verse that Shu‘ayb’s nation too met the same fate (حَاصِب) as that of Lot (sws) which live close by.

⁷⁵الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شَعِيبًا كَانُوا لَمْ يَخْنَوْا فِيهَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شَعِيبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخَاسِرِينَ

The consequence of the torment is stated here. Both these sentences contain a veiled reference to the threats made to Shu‘ayb (sws) and his followers by the disbelievers of their nation. They threatened them that they would turn them out from their settlement. While referring to this threat, it is said that they themselves were wiped out from their settlement as if they never existed. They had threatened the companions of Shu‘ayb (sws) that if they did not stop following him, they would incur a great loss. While referring to this, it was said that those who rejected Shu‘ayb (sws) were the ones who had incurred a loss.

⁷⁶فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رَسُولَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ آتَىٰ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ كُفْرًا

With very minor variation in words, this verse has also occurred earlier during the anecdote of Ṣāliḥ (sws). Readers may look up verse 79. Its context and occasion were explained there. Ṣāliḥ said these words when he migrated from his nation at the behest of the Almighty and announced his acquittal. However, to show haste in the advent of punishment, it is stated after the mention of punishment. Very subtle examples of this style are found in the Qur’ān.

The words “so now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!” are not meant to negate mere sorrow; they negate sorrow shown in sympathy. The implication is that he has delivered to them God’s message and has shown his fervent and incessant care for them. If in spite of this they are bent upon their own destruction, how can he have any sympathy for them.

Section VII: Verses (94-102)

The purpose of narrating all the previous anecdotes was to inform the Quraysh that they will be judged with same criteria on which these nations were judged. If they end

74. “And O People of My Nation! Your stubbornness against me may become a cause of you being also visited by the calamity which visited the people of Noah or the people of Hūd or the people of Ṣāliḥ and the people of Lot are also not far away from you.”

75. Those who denied Shu‘ayb were such as if they never lived in that settlement. Those who denied Shu‘ayb, it was they who ended up as losers.

76. So, Shu‘ayb left them saying: “People of My Nation! I have delivered the messages of my Lord to you and remained your well-wisher. So now what sorrow should I express on those who have taken to disbelief!”



up deny their messenger, they will meet the same fate. For this reason, in the succeeding verses the principles and lessons that can be drawn from these anecdotes so that the Quraysh know the consequences of whatever step they take.

Text and Translation

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبِاسِ ۖ وَالضَّرَآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضْمَرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّىٰ عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَآءُ وَالسَّرَآءُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ أَوْ آمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ أَوْ لَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِن بَعْدِ أَهْلِهَا أَن لَّوْنُهَا أَن لَّوْنُهَا أَصْبَنَهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ تِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِهَا ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِن قَبْلُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ ۖ وَإِن وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

And in whichever settlement We sent a prophet as a messenger, We tested its inhabitants with financial and corporal trials so that they may realize. Then We changed their sorrow into joy so until they greatly prospered and said: “Good and bad days came to our forefathers as well.” Then We suddenly seized them while they were not even aware of it. And had the people of the settlements professed faith and adhered to piety, We would have opened the doors of blessings of the heavens and the earth to them. But they denied; so, We seized them because of their misdeeds. (94-96)

So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing? Then could they protect themselves from God’s plan? So, remember that only those people are secure from God’s plan who are to become losers. Did not those who inherited the land from its previous inhabitants learn a lesson that if We intend We can seize them right now because of their sins and put a seal on their hearts so that they are not able to hear anything? These are the settlements a part of whose anecdotes We are narrating to you. Their messengers came to them with clear signs but they did not accept faith because they had been denying earlier. In a similar manner, God seals the hearts of the disbelievers. And, in most of them, We did not find those who abide by promises. Most of them turned put to be those who break promises. (97-102)

**Explanation**

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبِئْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّ عَوْنٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّى عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَّاءُ وَالسَّرَّاءُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

Research on **الْبِئْسَاءِ** and **الضَّرَّاءِ** has already been presented in verse 42 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. When both these words occur in parallel, the first refers to financial trials like famine and market slumps and the second to corporal trials like disease and epidemics. However, when the latter word is used with **السَّرَّاءِ**, both these words encompass in themselves all types of good and bad circumstances.

The expression **عفا الشيء** means something developed and became lush. The expression **عفت الارض** means that the earth was covered with vegetation and plants.

These verses state the established practice of the Almighty which necessarily manifests itself in the times of His prophets. It can be seen in the anecdotes of the prophets that have been narrated earlier. According to this established practice, when a prophet proclaims among his people to repent and informs them of reward and punishment, factors which facilitate this call also start to appear in this universe. On the one hand, a prophet warns people of the consequences of negligence, forgetting God and spreading anarchy in the land as well as of God’s punishment in this world and the next; on the other hand, the Almighty inflicts people with trials of famines, epidemics and storms so that people can see, if they have insight, that in this manner God can seize them whenever He wants to and then none but He can save them. In this way, events corroborate the prophetic call and the effect of visual observation strengthens the evidence found in human intellect and nature. It is as if the heavens and the earth display whatever a prophet says so that those who have even the slightest ability to be influenced, bend before God and reform themselves.

They who have eyes that see and hearts that melt benefit from these trials and their attention is directed towards God. It is as if they hear the call of their messenger’s preaching reverberating from all elements of nature and they just do not listen to it from their ears, they also see it from their eyes. However, for those who have become stone-hearted and deaf, God’s established practice assumes a new form: God gives them respite. Prosperity replaces decadence, development and abundance of resources prevails and the days of travail and trial are erased from the minds. Then these arrogant people start to be merry and make fun of the prophet and his companions. They think that, God forbid, these naive people regard the previous famine or flood or

77. And in whichever settlement We sent a prophet as a messenger, We tested its inhabitants with financial and corporal trials so that they may realize. Then We changed their sorrow into joy so until they greatly prospered and said: “Good and bad days came to our forefathers as well.” Then We suddenly seized them while they were not even aware of it.



some calamity to be the result of their deeds and warn them in various ways and strike weakness in their hearts, whereas what have these things got to do with faith and morality? Such change of fortunes does come in the life of nations. It is not that only they have encountered such problems; their forefathers too who were good and pious people went through them. These are all turns of fortune; sometimes constriction and sometimes abundance; at times, there is harvest and at times not; at times, there is flood and at times famine. To link these things with faith and morality is insanity and superstition.

Just as the purpose of trials and calamities is to shake and jolt people, the purpose of respite is that people who do not wake up from such instances are lulled to deep slumber so that when God’s torment catches them unaware.⁷⁸

It needs to be kept in mind that trials and tribulations which in the words of the Qur’ān are meant to make people realize their follies are general in nature. Both good and bad people become their targets. This situation becomes a source of trial and misconception for the naïve and the rebellious. They think that when such a famine or epidemic has not differentiated between people of different beliefs and ideologies and people who would rebuke them have also become its target, how can it be accepted that such an event relates to faith or morality? This thing could only have been correct if the prophet and his companions had been protected from these calamities. They contend that while they should have been doomed, these companions should have received God’s blessings. When this did not happen, how can it be accepted that this calamity had anything to do with good and evil? It is this delusion which even today inflicts those inebriated with vice. They see that a cyclone drowns both good and bad people without any distinction. Similarly, they see an earthquake ravages both a mosque and a temple and a famine makes both those who pray and who do not suffer and makes no distinction between a believer and a non-believer. Such events become a trial for them. In the first place, they are not effected in any way by such events and if there is some effect, it is only transient. Very soon desires make leads them to their former indifference and heedlessness. Satan, their ring leader, once again teaches the philosophy mentioned in the first verse of this section: such good and bad circumstances befall nations as a general practice. In order to secure one’s self from this fiendish delusion, one should always keep in mind that the purpose of such trials which inflict both good and evil people is not punishment; it is rather to make them realize their mistakes. The consequence of such trials is very different. If the pious are effected by it, their realization increases, as a result of which their sins are expiated and their ranks are enhanced. On the other hand, the wrongdoers who still do not realize their follies are conclusively communicated the truth from God and after this a decisive punishment visits them and they are destroyed. Only those people are

78. This established practice of God has also been explained under verses 42-46 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. More aspects will become evident when verse 130 of this *sūrah* is discussed.



delivered among them who continue to call them to reform themselves.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا فَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

The people of the settlements referred to here are the nations whose anecdotes of denial have been narrated earlier.

Here two facts become evident:

Firstly, if a nation is given respite by providing it with means and resources, then this is not a favour or blessing from God; it is, in fact, a last ditch effort to save a patient. After that, death is imminent. It is much like a candle shining more brightly before going out.

Secondly, just as a life of faith and piety guarantees God’s blessings in the hereafter, in a similar way, if a nation adheres to these traits in this world too, it is the key to all the blessings of the heavens and the earth. Naïve are those who think that God’s fear is a hindrance in the development of a nation.

أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ أَوْ آمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضَعًى وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

The expression “people of the settlements” refers to those nations whose accounts have been narrated earlier. The plan of God is relentless. No one has the power to secure himself against it. Thus it is not appropriate for anyone to become indifferent to it. Only those people adopt such an attitude who are destined to be doomed and they will end up as losers. The word مكر means a secret plan. Secret plan means that God seizes a person from where he cannot even imagine. His established practice stated earlier in which He gives respite to a person after warning him is an example of this secret plan. People think that they have succeeded but in reality this is the very place where they will be decimated.

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَهْلِهَا أَن لَّوْنَشَاءُ أَصَابْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۚ وَنَضْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَهْرٌ ۚ لَا يُسْمِعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

79. And had the people of the settlements professed faith and adhered to piety, We would have opened the doors of blessings of the heavens and the earth to them. But they denied; so, We seized them because of their misdeeds.

80. So could the people of these settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may visit them at night while they are fast asleep? Or could the people of the settlements remain secure from Our torment that it may come to them right in daytime when they are involved in playing? Then could they protect themselves from God’s plan? So, remember that only those people are secure from God’s plan who are to become losers.

81. Did not those who inherited the land from its previous inhabitants learn a lesson that if We intend We can seize them right now because of their sins and put a seal on their hearts so



The expression “those who inherited the land” refers to the Quraysh.

The sentence *وَنُطْبِعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ* has the same occasion as verse 46 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: *قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَبَصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ* (Ask them: Have you ever thought that 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?) It should remain evident that sealing of hearts is a prelude to God’s torment. Before His torment visits a nation, its hearts are first sealed. The law which governs this has been repeatedly explained in this exegesis. The Quraysh are threatened of it here that as yet their hearts have not been sealed by God; however, it may not be far when this happens because of their persistent stubbornness and they will become totally bereft of hearing and comprehending. After this prelude, His decisive punishment shall necessarily descend on them.

تِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِهَا ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

When are hearts sealed? Whose hearts are sealed? What is the ultimate consequence of this? This verse answers these questions.

It is a person’s trait that when he habitually denies and deviates from the general signs of the Almighty, gradually his heart is hardened so much that if special signs are shown by messengers of God even then he is not moved. The verse states that this is how God seals the hearts of people. The task of the heart is to reflect and draw lessons. If a group becomes a blind follower of its wishes that even reminders and admonitions do not awaken it, then the ears of people belonging to this group become deaf. It may be noted that *بِمَا كَذَّبُوا* ereis not the object of *يُؤْمِنُوا*; ب is actually causative in nature.

وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِنْ عَهْدٍ ۖ وَإِنْ وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

This verse states the consequence and effect of God setting a seal on hearts: when this happens they lose their insight and they refuse to budge even after every sign is shown to them. They will repeatedly swear that if such and such a miracle is shown they will accept faith. But when they will be shown that that miracle, they will start demanding some other miracle and break their promise. The word *فاسق* here means

that they are not able to hear anything?

82. These are the settlements a part of whose anecdotes We are narrating to you. Their messengers came to them with clear signs but they did not accept faith because they had been denying earlier. In a similar manner, God seals the hearts of the disbelievers.

83. And, in most of them, We did not find those who abide by promises. Most of them turned out to be those who break promises.



“breach of promise.” Verses 109-110 of Sūrah al-An‘ām discuss this topic in more detail:

وَأَقْسُوا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ آيَاتِهِمْ لَيِّنَ جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُّومٍ مِّنْ بَہَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ. (١٠٩-١١٠)

And they swear emphatic oaths by God to convince [others] that if a miracle comes to them, they will definitely believe in it. Say: Miracles are with God alone, but what do you know that even if a miracle comes, even then they will not believe? And We shall turn away their hearts and eyes the way they did not first profess faith and shall leave them to wander in their rebelliousness.

Later in this very *sūrah*, it is stated:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالْدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ ۖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ. وَكَذَّابُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الرِّجْزَ قَالُوا يَمُوسَىٰ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۖ لَيِّنَ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ ۖ وَكَذَّابُكَ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ. فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِلُغْوِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُشُونَ. (١٣٣-١٣٥)

So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained. Even then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: “O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you.” Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise. (7:133-135)

Section VII: Verses (103-171)

In the succeeding verses, the anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh is narrated. At the same time, the complete history of the political and religious rise and fall of the Israelites is concisely yet comprehensively stated. From the historical perspective, this anecdote is the supplement of the all others recounted earlier. These anecdotes had ended on the account of Shu‘ayb (sws). According to the chronological sequence, Moses (sws) is the next in line Messenger. He had been sent to the Pharaoh and his nation. Through him, on the one hand, the truth was conclusively communicated to the Pharaoh and his nation and because he faced rejection at their hands, the latter was punished in same way as the nations from Noah (sws) to Shu‘ayb (sws) were. On other hand, the Israelites became prominent as a nation and gradually they were blessed with the mantle of religious leadership by the Almighty. They were also



granted political authority by Him. However, they did not duly value both these favours. Gradually, they become incriminated with graver sins than those of the earlier nations. After the advent of Muḥammad (sws), the Quraysh were subjected to God's law and the fate of the Israelites also hung in the balance. A decisive moment had come in the latter's history. It was to be seen if according to the covenant they had made with God they profess faith in the unlettered prophet or not. This covenant has been mentioned in the Torah and in all previous scriptures. If they do not do so, they will meet the same fate as that of the previous nations.

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

Text and Translation

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَىٰ بَالِيْتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ ۖ فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ۚ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَ قَالَ مُّوسَىٰ لِفِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ حَقِيقٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا أَقُولَ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالَ إِنَّ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَاتْلُ عَصَا ۖ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْعَبُ وَ مُّوسَىٰ إِذْ هِيَ يُصَوِّدُ لِّلنَّارِ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قَالَ الْبَلَاءُ مِنْ قَوْمٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا السَّحَرِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٨﴾ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْبَدَايِنِ حٰشِرِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ يَأْتُونَكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَرٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿١١١﴾ وَجَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَبِنِ الْبَقَرِ بَيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالُوا يٰمُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَىٰ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ نَحْنُ الْبٰقِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ أَتَقْوٰ ۚ فَلَمَّا أَتَقَوْا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسَحَرٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۖ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَغُلِبُوا هُنَاكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صٰغِرِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَجْدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ رَبِّ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اامَنْتُمْ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ اٰذِنَ لَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ هَٰذَا الْبَكْرُ مَكْرٌ تُفْئِدُونَ فِي الْبَدِيَّةِ لِتُخْرِجُوْا مِنْهَا اَهْلَهَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَا تَقْطَعَنَّ اٰيِدِيْكُمْ وَارْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ۚ ثُمَّ لَا صَلْبَبِنَّكُمْ اٰجَعِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ قَالُوا اِنَّا اِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَمَا نَنفَعُ مِنْآ اِلَّا اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاٰيَاتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَآءَنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَقَالَ الْبَلَاءُ مِنْ قَوْمٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا السَّحَرِ لِيُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ ۚ قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِ نِسَاءَهُمْ ۚ وَآنَا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَاصْبِرُوْا ۚ اِنَّ الْاَرْضَ لِلّٰهِ يُورِثُهَا مَن يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَاعَابَةُ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ قَالُوا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا



جِئْتَنَا^ط قَالَ عَلَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَهْدِكَ عَذُوكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ فَاذْجَبْنَا عَنْهَا لَنَا هَذِهِ^ع وَإِنْ تُصْنِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةً يَّطَيَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَّعَهُ^ط إِلَّا إِنَّا طَبَّيْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾ وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا^ل فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفْصَلَةٍ^ل فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يُوسَىٰ اذْهَبْ لَنَا رَبِّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ^ع لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِلُغْوِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُشُونَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ فَانْتَقَبْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِآثَمِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَعَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا^ط وَتَبَّتْ كَلْبَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُشْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ^ل بِمَا صَبَرُوا^ط وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُعْرِشُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَجُوزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَىٰ أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ^ع قَالُوا يُوسَىٰ اجْعَلْ لَّنَا إِلَٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ^ط قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١٧٨﴾ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مَتَّبِعُوا مَا هُمْ فِيهِ وَبِطُلَّ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾ قَالَ أَغَيَّرَ اللَّهُ أَبْغَيْكُمْ^ط إِلَٰهًا وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِّنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُقْتَتِلُونَ أِبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ^ع وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَلَوْ عَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَّيْلَةً^ط وَأَثْبَنَّا بِعَشْرِ فِتْنَةٍ^ع مِّيقَاتٍ رَّبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَّيْلَةً^ع وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلَحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٨٢﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِبِيعَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ^ط قَالَ رَبِّ ارْنِ أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ^ط قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي^ع فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا^ع فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَنكَ تُبُّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾ قَالَ يُوسَىٰ إِنَّي اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسَالَاتِي وَبِكَلَامِي^ط فَخُذْ مَا آتَيْتُكَ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٨٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَنْوَاعِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ^ع فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُوا بِأَحْسَنِهَا^ط سَأُورِيكُمْ دَارَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ سَاصَرَفَ عَنِ الْيَتَى الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ^ط وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّآيَةً^ع لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا^ط وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذْهُ سَبِيلًا^ع وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَىِّ يَتَّخِذْهُ سَبِيلًا^ط ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ



الْآخِرَةَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوسَى مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ خُلَئِيهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهُ خُوَارٌ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلًا اتَّخَذُوا وَكَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي أَعَجَلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ وَأَلْقَى الْأَوَاةَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ ۚ قَالَ ابْنَ أُمْرَانَ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَصَفَعُونِي وَكَادُوا يُفْتَلُونَنِي ۖ فَلَا تُشْسِتْ بِي الْأَعْدَاءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي الْأَحْيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَآمَنُوا ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُوسَى الْغَضَبَ أَخَذَ الْأَوَاةَ ۖ وَفِي نُحُسْخَتْهَا هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا رِئَاسَةً فَلَمَّا أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا ۖ إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۖ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَاتَّخَذْنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُنَا أَلَيْنَاكَ ۖ قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ ۖ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۖ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَبِينًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى أُمَّةٌ يَهُودُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا ۖ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَى إِذِ اسْتَسْقَمَهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنْ اصْرِفْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى ۖ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ۖ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ



اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّعْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ ۖ سَتَرِدُ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَسَأَلَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ
شُرْعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعْبُدُونَ قَوْمًا
لَّهِ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ قَالُوا مَعْدَرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنْجَيْنَا
الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ ۖ وَآخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بَعْدَ آيِ بَيْتِيسَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَا لَهُوَ عَنْهُ
قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قَوْمَ فَارُوقَ ۖ فَخَسِبَ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ إِنَّ
رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمَاً ۖ مِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ
كَذَّبُوا ۖ وَكَثَرُوا بِالْحَسَنَاتِ ۖ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا
الْأَذَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۖ وَإِن يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُ الَّذِي أَخَذُوا ۖ كَذَّبُوا ۖ وَلَمْ يُخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِثْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَن لَا يَقُولُوا عَلَىٰ
اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ۖ وَاللَّذَا أُولَٰئِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُسْكِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَ
أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّا لَا نَنْصِفُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوا مَا
آتَيْنَكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ ۖ وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

Then after these, We sent Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and His chiefs, as a messenger. So, they were unjust to their souls and denied the signs. Then observe the fate of these who spread disorder. And Moses said: “O Pharaoh! I have come from the Lord of the worlds. This is what I should do and this is precisely my craving that I say to you nothing from God but the truth. I have come to you from your Lord with a clear sign; so, let the Israelites go with me.” He replied: “If you have brought a sign, present it, if you are truthful.” At this, Moses placed his staff; then, it suddenly turned into a real serpent. And he withdrew his hand; so, it suddenly appeared dazzling to the onlookers. The chiefs of the Pharaoh’s nation said: “This person is a very adept magician ; he wants to expel you from your country; so, what is your opinion?” They said: “For now, put him off and his brother and send forth workers in every city who gather and bring to you all adept magicians.” The magicians came to the Pharaoh. They said: “If we are dominant, we shall certainly be rewarded abundantly?” The Pharaoh replied: “Yes, indeed and you shall also be included among our favoured ones.” (103-114)



The magicians said: “O Moses ! Will you present or should we present?” He said: “You present.” Thus when they presented, they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them, and they brought forth a great trick. And We sent this revelation to Moses: “Put down your staff. ” Then it suddenly went on engulfing the magic they had fabricated. So, the truth became evident and whatever they were doing was all ruined. Thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated. And the magicians fell down in prostration. They said: “We profess faith in the Lord of the worlds Who is the Lord of Moses and Aaron. ” (115-122)

The Pharaoh said: “You people have professed faith in him without my permission? This is a conspiracy which you have hatched in the city so that you expel its inhabitants from here. So, you will soon know. I shall chop your hands and feet from alternate sides; after that shall crucify all of you.” They replied: “We shall only return to our Lord. You are harming us in anger only because when the signs of our Lord came to us, we professed faith in them. Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam.” (123-126)

And the chiefs of the Pharaoh ’s nation said to him: “Will you leave Moses and his people in this manner to spread strife in the land and forsake you and your idols?” He said: “We shall kill their sons and let their girls live and We are fully dominant on them.” Moses said to his nation: “Seek help from God and remain steadfast. The earth belongs to God. He makes whomsoever He wills from His servants to be its inheritors and success finally belongs to those who fear God.” They said: “We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival.” He said: “Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land to see how you behave.” (127-129)

And We kept the people of the Pharaoh inflicted with famine and loss in produce so that they pay heed. So when they prospered, they would say: “This is but our share.” And when some calamity struck them, they would ascribe its cause to be the ill-omen of Moses and his companions. Listen! The fate of these people is with God but most of them do not know. And they say: “Whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you.” So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained . Even then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: “O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you.” Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise. So, We took revenge from them and drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs and remained indifferent to them. And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed. And the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled because they remained steadfast. And We ruined all the structures the Pharaoh and his people had made and all their



orchards and gardens. (130-137)

And We led the Israelites across the sea. Then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols. They said: “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also.” He said: “You are a very ignorant people. What they are involved in will be ruined and what they are doing shall be destroyed.” He said: “Should I find some other deity for you than God, even though it is He Who has granted you superiority over other nations of the world?” And recall when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh who inflicted you with great torments: they would mercilessly kill your sons and let your women live and in this there was a great trial for from your Lord. And We took a promise of thirty nights from Moses and completed it with ten further nights; so, forty nights were completed as the time appointed by his Lord. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: “Rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief-mongers.” And when Moses reached at the time appointed by Us and his Lord conversed with him, he requested: “Lord! Give me the opportunity to see you.” God said: “You shall never be able to see Me. Look, however, towards the mountain; if it stays in its place you will also be able to see Me.” Then when His Lord revealed His radiance on the mountain, He shattered it to pieces and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he regained consciousness, he said: “Exalted are you. I turn towards You I am the first of the believers.” God said: “Moses! I have given you preference among people by My message and speech. So, take whatever I have given you and be among the grateful.” And We wrote on the tablets every type of counsel and detail of everything for him. So, hold fast to them, and ask your people to follow the good way in it. I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant. I shall turn them away from My signs those who unjustly show arrogance in the land and if they see signs of all kind, even then they will not believe in them. If they see the path of guidance, they will not adopt it and if they see the path of error, they will adopt it. This is because they denied Our revelations and paid no heed to them. And wasted are the deeds of those who denied Our signs and rejected the meeting of the Hereafter. And in return, they will they receive precisely what they had been doing? (138-147)

And in the absence of Moses, his people carved out a calf from jewellery: a body from which a sound similar to that of a calf would come. Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them? They made it and were extremely unjust to themselves. And when they realized and saw that they had gone astray, they said: “If our Lord does not show mercy to us and does not pardon our mistake, we shall end up among losers.” And when Moses returned to his nation, full of anger and sorrow, he said: “You have represented me very badly in my absence. Did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” And he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head. Aaron said: “O son of my mother! These people overpowered me and almost killed me. So, do not give my and your enemies an opportunity to laugh at me and do not count me with the unjust.” Moses prayed: “My



Lord! Forgive me and my brother. Admit us into Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.” (148-151)

Indeed, those who regarded the calf as a deity will be inflicted with wrath of their Lord and with humiliation in this very world. And it is in this way that We punish those who fabricate falsehoods. However, those who did evil deeds, then repented after them and accepted faith, then after this your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.” (152-153)

And when Moses’ anger cooled down, he picked up the tablets. And what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord. And Moses selected seventy men from his people for the time appointed by Us. Then when an earthquake seized them, Moses said: “Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier. So will you kill us for a crime perpetrated by the foolish among us? This was but a trial from You. You can lead astray through this whomsoever You wish and guide whomsoever You wish. You alone are our guardian. So, pardon us and have mercy on us, and you are the best of forgivers. And ordain what is good for us both in this world and in the Hereafter. We have turned towards You.” God said: “I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend to and My mercy encompasses everything. So, I shall ordain it for those who are pious and who keep paying *zakāh* and for those who will believe in Our revelations – who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. 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. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed. (154-157)

Say: People! I am sent to all of you as a messenger of the God. The God to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity but Him. He alone gives life and death. So, profess faith in God and in His unlettered prophet, His messenger who believes in God and His words and follows Him that you may be guided. (158)

And there has always remained a group of people among the nation of Moses who guides according to the truth and passes judgement according to it. And We divided them into twelve tribes to make separate groups. And when his nation asked for water from him, We revealed to Moses: “Strike the rock with your staff.” So, twelve springs gushed forth. Each group appointed its place to acquire water. And We made the clouds cast a shadow over them and sent down *mann* and *salwā* to them. Eat these pure things We have given you. And they did not harm Us in any way; in fact, they remained being unjust to their souls only. (159-160)

And recall when they were told: “Dwell in this city and eat in it from wherever you desire and keep asking for forgiveness and enter its gate while bowing your heads. Thus, We shall forgive your sins. We shall bless the thorough with even more favours



in future.” Then those among them who were unjust to themselves changed what was said to them by other words. Thus We sent down a torment on them from the heavens because they had remained unjust to themselves. (161-162)

And ask them about the state of affairs of that settlement which was near the sea shore when they would exceed the bounds of God. On day of the Sabbath, their fish would become prominent before them with heads raised and would not come on other days. In this way, We used to test them because they would be disobedient. And recall when one of their groups said: “Why do you counsel people whom God is going to destroy or sternly punish?” They replied: “This is because it becomes from us an excuse before your Lord and so that they can be secure from God’s wrath.” Then when they forgot the thing through which they were reminded of, We delivered those who were forbidding from evil. And those who had been unjust to themselves, We seized them in a stern punishment because they continued to be disobedient. So when with rebelliousness they continued to do precisely that from which they had been forbidden, We said to them: “Go, turn into despicable monkeys.” (163-166)

And recall when your Lord decided that until the Day of Judgement, He will keep raising against them people who would inflict them with extremely cruel punishments. Indeed, your Lord is very swift in retribution and indeed is Forgiving and Merciful. And We scattered them in the land in the form of various groups. Among them, some are pious and some otherwise also. And We tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they may take heed. Then, after them such people became inheritors of the Book of God who reap the provision of this world and say: “And we shall be forgiven for everything.” And if they are given a similar provision once again, they will grab it as well. Was not a promise taken from them about the Book that they will ascribe nothing but the truth to God? And have they even thoroughly read whatever is in it. And the Hereafter is better for those who fear God. Then do you not understand? And those who strongly hold on to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer, then We will not waste the reward of the reformers. And recall when We suspended the mountain above them as if it were a canopy and they thought that it was about to fall upon them. “Hold fast to what We have bestowed on you and remember whatever is in it so that you remain secure from God’s wrath.” (167-171)

Explanation

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْأَيِّنَّا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ۚ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾⁸⁴

The expression “after these” refers to the messengers and their nations that are mentioned earlier from verses 59 to 92.

“Signs” here refers to the miracles shown by Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his

84. Then after these, We sent Moses with Our signs to the Pharaoh and His chiefs, as a messenger. So, they were unjust to their souls and denied the signs. Then observe the fate of these who spread disorder.



nation as well as to the natural and logical arguments of his prophethood and the hereafter which he and Aaron (sws) presented with full clarity before the Pharaoh and his courtiers. These arguments are mentioned at various instances in the Qur’ān. I shall, God willing, explain them in the exegesis of Sūrah Tāhā. The message of all prophets of God is based on clear signs found in human nature and intellect. Visual miracles are not among the essentials of prophethood; they are among its secondary traits. In order to conclusively convey the truth to stubborn and obdurate people, God arms His prophets with visual miracles. Since Moses (sws) was sent as a messenger to the Pharaoh and his nation, his responsibility was not merely to liberate the Israelites from their clutches but he was also given the responsibility of inviting the Pharaoh and his nation to faith. Thus it is substantiated from the Qur’ān that he fulfilled this latter responsibility even though without the desired result. Very few people professed faith in him and they also migrated with him. In the anecdote of Moses (sws) mentioned in the Torah, he has assumed the shape of a fascist national leader because of the peculiar mentality of its translators and compilers. The fact is that he was a mighty prophet and messenger. How can his message and its methodology be different from other messengers?

In the expression فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا, the preposition ب evidences the fact that ظَلَمُوا here encompasses the meaning of جحدوا (they denied) or similar words. In other words, the meaning would be: they were unjust to their souls and denied Gods revelations. The translation takes into account this linguistic style.

The anecdotes of prophets narrated earlier brought to a completion with the anecdotes of Moses (sws), the people of the Pharaoh and the Israelites. One of the reasons for this is that this anecdote was not a forgotten tale of the past; its historical record was found in the Torah even though in interpolated form and the Israelites who bore this record were right there as well. The other reason for this is that it was the Israelites from whom God took back the responsibility of the religion entrusted to them and transferred to the Ishmaelites. For this reason, every section of this anecdote has lessons to be learnt both for the Ishmaelites and the Israelites.

The real purpose of narrating this anecdote is stated in this verse as: “then observe the fate of these who spread disorder” so that the reader does not lose focus. While stating the theme of this sūrah, I have explained that in it the Quraysh, in the light of history, are informed that the advent of a messenger in them has placed them in God’s court of justice. If they end up denying this messenger, they will be regarded as those who spread disorder in the land and will meet the same fate such people have met. It should be kept in mind that an upright society is based on the message of a prophet. For this reason, denying and opposing him is tantamount to spreading disorder.

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يُفْرِعْ عَوْنُ اللَّهِ إِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣٣﴾ حَقِيقٌ عَلَىٰ أَن لَا أَقُولَ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَاتٍ



مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ۚ ⁸⁵

The word *حَقِيقٌ* is of the pattern *فَعِيل* from *حَقَّ* and *حَقَّقَ* and in its meaning occurs as an object (*maf'ūl*). Thus the expressions *هو حَقِيقٌ أَن يَفْعَلَ كَذَا* and *حَقِيقٌ بِهِ* mean “to be worthy of something.” Here the preposition *عَلَى* is used which incorporates in it the meaning of “craving,” or “to be desirous.” In the light of this, the expression would mean: I am worthy and desirous that I attribute to God only what the truth is. It is but obvious that the person who is the messenger and representative of God is someone who is the most worthy of speaking on His behalf and does not impute forgery on Him because his knowledge is not based on conjecture but directly on God’s revelation and inspiration. He is also very desirous that nothing except the truth come out of his tongue. This is because no one else can have the same fear of the extent of his accountability.

The words “clear sign” refer to the miracle of Moses’ staff and white hand with which God had sent him to the Pharaoh. It is evident from the Torah that since Moses (sws) was fully aware of his rebellious nature, he felt very anxious to bear the heavy burden of going to him at God’s behest. He told God that the Pharaoh will not to listen to him unless he shows them a clear sign that strikes awe in them. Thus God because of this special situation granted Moses (sws) miracles in the very beginning and because Moses (sws) was aware of the mentality of the Pharaoh and his courtiers, he showed them these miracles in the very first meeting. He wanted to strike at their arrogance so that they were prepared to listen to him.

Here two questions arise in the mind. Firstly, Moses (sws) did not invite the Pharaoh and his courtiers to God; instead, without any prior introduction, he asked the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go with him. Secondly, where exactly did Moses (sws) want to take the Israelites to?

The answer to the first question is that the anecdotes of prophets and their nations are narrated in the Qur’an in different *sūrahs* in a fragmentary nature keeping in view the theme of the respective *sūrah*. In each *sūrah*, only that part of an anecdote is related that is in consonance with its theme. The remaining parts are related in other *sūrahs* with respect to their themes. Thus other *sūrahs* do mention how Moses (sws) entered into a dialogue with the Pharaoh and his courtiers about monotheism and hereafter and reminded them of showing humility. This was in accordance with the general practice followed by all messengers of God. Hopefully, this will be alluded to in *Sūrah Ṭāhā* or at some other appropriate instance.

The answer to the second question is that the Qur’an does not explain at any instance the place Moses (sws) wanted to take the Israelites to. It is evident from the

85. And Moses said: “O Pharaoh! I have come from the Lord of the worlds. This is what I should do and this is precisely my craving that I say to you nothing from God but the truth. I have come to you from your Lord with a clear sign; so, let the Israelites go with me.”



Book of Exodus of the Torah that Moses (sws) initially demanded from the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go with him for the purpose of worship. The Pharaoh flatly refused; in fact, he became very angry and ordered to increase the hours of the unpaid labour he used to exact from the Israelites. He reckoned that they have become lazy and shirk work and thus making excuses for doing worship. Then when being cornered by the miracles shown by Moses (sws), he softened his stance, he asked him about the place he wanted to take them and why does not he conduct the worship in the city. Moses (sws) replied that he wanted to take them to a place which was at a distance of three nights and that if they offer the worship of sacrifice in the city, the Copts would stone them to death. This dispute continued between Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh for quite a while. Ultimately, being disheartened by the calamities that emanated from the miracles shown by Moses (sws), his courtiers forced the Pharaoh to let Moses (sws) take the Israelites where he wanted to otherwise Egypt would be destroyed at the hands of Moses (sws). The Pharaoh finally succumbed to their pressure but once Moses (sws) set off with all the Israelites as well as with their assets and resources, he realized that he had made a mistake. As a result, he went in their pursuit with a big army to force them to return. However, he and his army were drowned in the sea.

It is evident from this that Moses (sws) had not delineated his full scheme before the Pharaoh and the courtiers. He only disclosed that he wanted to take them to a desert located at a distance of three days for the purpose of worship and animal sacrifice. The latter actually being of the cow which the Copts did not allow them – much like how Hindus in India today do not allow Muslims to slaughter a cow. Moses (sws) wanted to take them away from the environment of slavery they had become accustomed to in Egypt and organize them and revive all those religious traditions in them which had faded away in the environment of slavery in Egypt. My inference is that the place he wanted to take them was situated near Sinai where he had seen the radiant manifestation of God while returning from Madyan, and where he was blessed with the ten commandments in this journey of migration.

It is evident from the Torah that it took a long time for Moses (sws) to have this demand accepted. During this time, he, on the one hand, through miracles and intellectual arguments conclusively conveyed the truth to the Pharaoh and the Copts, and, on the other, by making the Israelites pass through various trials, made them capable enough to once again receive God's *sharī'ah*. In this way, in accordance with the established practice about God's messenger, the time for his migration arrived. Thus he migrated and through this migration the way to success opened for him and his companions who had accepted faith and his enemies were inflicted with God's punishment. This is God's established practice about migration, as has been indicated at a number of instances in this exegesis and just as this practice manifested itself for all messengers it did so for Moses (sws) too.

Here, it is not the occasion to go into details. Those who want to know them can read my article on this topic in my anthology of essays *Tanqīdāt*. I have shown in it



that this migration was in accordance with the known practice of God’s messengers and those have tried to present Moses as a nationalist leader have not understood the true meaning of his words “Send the Israelites with me.”

قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَلْتَبِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧١﴾ وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنّٰظِرِیْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾⁸⁶

The Pharaoh found it quite strange that a person from his own subjects come to him and claim to be God’s messenger. He regarded himself to be the avatar of the supreme sun god and the exalted lord of his people. For this reason, he immediately asked for a sign from Moses (sws) if he was truthful in his claim. As the verses say, they were shown the miracles of the serpent and white hand by him. About miracles, God’s established practice that becomes evident is that they are given in deference to the temperament and inclinations of a nation so that they can become a conclusive argument to them.

It is evident from history that in the Egypt of those times, magic and sorcery were very rampant and magicians held a high status in the society. For this reason, the Almighty blessed Moses (sws) with miracles that would put the tricks and sorcery of the magicians to shame. In the Arabs, on the contrary, eloquence and articulacy of orators and poets held sway. For this reason, Muḥammad (sws) was given the miracle of the Qur’ān which showed the door to the eloquence of orators and poets of the time.

The attribute of مُبِينٌ (manifest) for ثُعْبَانٌ (serpent) shows that the staff actually changed into a serpent and such a manifest one that no one could doubt it. It was not a delusion in any way whatsoever. Similarly, in the expression بَيْضَاءُ لِلنّٰظِرِیْنَ, evident from the word نَظَرَ is that the shine that appeared on the hand was not a deception and if it is deeply observed and reflected upon, it would become absolutely evident that its shine was real. It may be noted that in the Arabic language, the verb نَظَرَ primarily means “to reflect and think deeply.”

Here it should be kept in mind that the distinction between magic and miracle cannot be made through a logical definition. Their real difference becomes evident through two things: firstly through mutual comparison: just as when pure gold and raw copper are placed side by side, their difference becomes evident, in a similar way the majesty of a miracle, the way of its manifestation, its dominance over evil and its potent power shows that it is not some magical trick hatched to fool its observers. The second thing is the character and conduct of the presenter. People who show tricks and magic are generally of lowly and decadent character; their base and wretched nature is

86. He replied: “If you have brought a sign, present it, if you are truthful.” At this, Moses placed his staff; then, it suddenly turned into a real serpent. And he withdrew his hand; so, it suddenly appeared dazzling to the onlookers.



proverbial. On the other hand, miracles are worked by those people who stand at the pinnacle of human attributes. They are ones from whom the world learns lessons of knowledge and wisdom and whose words and deeds becomes an example for others. They are ones who remain one hundred percent pure in the strongest of trials.

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا السَّحَرُ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ يَأْتُونَكَ بِكُلِّ سِحْرِ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

These verses depict the consultation done by the courtiers among themselves after they saw the miracles worked by Moses (sws). Once they reached a final conclusion with consensus, they presented before the Pharaoh.

Here it should be kept in mind that it is not necessary that the words uttered by them be a true reflection what they felt inside. They were very well aware of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). By evaluating their past and present and their character and conduct, they could have easily come to the decision that neither was Moses (sws) a magician nor could he have any other purpose except reforming their affairs. However, this is a customary practice of those in power that when a movement of reformation is launched against them, they try to discredit it in the eyes of the common man. They try to give it a dangerous political slant. Pharaoh's courtiers did exactly the same. In order to discredit this very noble reformation endeavour of Moses (sws), they floated this false notion that he was conspiring to expel the aristocracy of the country from there.

This stunt played by the courtiers was a very effective one if the circumstances of that society are kept in mind. If the history of that period is studied from the Torah, it becomes evident that the Pharaoh and the courtiers regarded the large number of the Israelites to be a big threat to their existence. They reckoned that a stage may reach when they become so powerful that they expel all others from the land. In the book of Exodus, it is stated:

But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them. Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were

87. The chiefs of the Pharaoh's nation said: "This person is a very adept magician ; he wants to expel you from your country; so, what is your opinion?" They said: "For now, put him off and his brother and send forth workers in every city who gather and bring to you all adept magicians."



oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.” (1:7-22)

I have cited this longish excerpt to show how scared the Egyptian aristocracy was of the swelling numbers of the Israelites and their power wielded as a result. It is at precisely this time that Moses (sws) began his preaching and put forth his demand to take the Israelites away to a desert at a distance of three days to celebrate the ‘īd of sacrifice. In these circumstances, nothing better a plan could have been hatched by the courtiers to scare their people from Moses’ message than saying that he is trying to organize his people in order to drive out the original inhabitants from there.

The verses depict the well-thought of opinion of the courtiers to the Pharaoh. Their implication was that things should not be done in a hurry and must be planned as stated and to combat Moses (sws), ordinary magicians should not be employed.

Consider the words: أَرْجُهُ وَأَخَاهُ. The word أَرْجُهُ is actually أَرْجِيهِ. Such changes in the form of a word often occur in the Arabic language to lighten it.

88 ﴿وَجَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَمُوتُ أَوْ نَحْيِي ۚ﴾ ﴿١٧٣﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَبِينَ الْمُتَقَرَّبِينَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

Here the Qur’ān, in accordance with its conventional style, has suppressed a part of the anecdote: in deference to the suggestion of the courtiers, the Pharaoh sent his workers to all parts of his dominion to gather and bring forth adept magicians. Since this part of the account was self-evident, it was not mentioned in words.

As soon as these magicians arrived, like the way of professionals, they expressed

88. The magicians came to the Pharaoh. They said: “If we are dominant, we shall certainly be rewarded abundantly?” The Pharaoh replied: “Yes, indeed and you shall also be included among our favoured ones.”



their desire for a reward in a cajoling style. The Qur’ān has specially mentioned this here to show how lowly these magicians were in their character. Then later it has shown how these magicians turned into directly the opposite direction: they did not even care for their lives after they accepted faith what to speak of their greed for wealth. They openly said in response to the threat of the Pharaoh stated later that they were prepared to sacrifice their lives.

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَىٰ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ الْمُبْذَرِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالَ ألقُوا فَلَمَّا ألقُوا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرِ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١١٦﴾⁸⁹

The opportunity offered by Moses (sws) to the magicians to go first shows the confidence he had in God. He knew that with His help, he would be able to defeat whatever spell they weave.

Here the Qur’ān has clarified the nature of magic by the words: “they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them.” it does not change the form of a thing. It only influences the eye and the faculty of imagination of the onlookers. As a result, they begin to see what the magician wants them to see.

When magicians want to display their skill to people they usually throw something like the arrows of gambling before them and show their magic to them. That is why the word انقاء is used in the verse.

وَإِذْ هَبْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَوَقَّمَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَغُلِبُوا هُنَاكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صُغُرٍ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سُجُودِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾ رَبِّ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾⁹⁰

The word تلقف means to hurriedly gulp something and أفك means to say something contrary to the truth. It has just been explained that magic does not change the shape or form of a thing; it only deludes the vision of the onlookers. It is merely a deception. On the other hand, a miracle refers to an actual happening.

This is exactly the same as if the sun comes out to dispel a false moon. It is obvious that in the presence of the real sun the shine of thousands of artificial suns and moons will vanish. Thus, this is what actually happened. As soon as the miracles of Moses (sws) appeared, the spell cast by the magicians vanished. It has been stated earlier that

89. The magicians said: “O Moses ! Will you present or should we present?” He said: “You present.” Thus when they presented, they weaved a spell of magic on the eyes of people and terrified them, and they brought forth a great trick.

90. And We sent this revelation to Moses: “Put down your staff. ” Then it suddenly went on engulfing the magic they had fabricated. So, the truth became evident and whatever they were doing was all ruined. Thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated. And the magicians fell down in prostration. They said: “We profess faith in the Lord of the worlds Who is the Lord of Moses and Aaron. ”



the real difference between magic and miracle becomes evident from the actual contest: falsehood vanishes and the truth necessarily prevails.

The words “thus at that time they were vanquished and humiliated” do not merely relate to the magicians. Included in them is the Pharaoh and all his followers. At another instance in the Qur’ān (20:59), it is pointed out this contest was held in an open ground on the occasion of a festival and the Pharaoh had arranged for a large audience so that his triumph is widely applauded. However, he faced utter humiliation.

In the sentence *وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سُجُودًا*, the verb *أَلْقَى* occurs in the passive. It expresses the sentiments of respect and veneration of the magicians. Honouring something through prostration was a common practice among Egyptians, Arabs and the Israelites and on most occasions took the form of kneeling, the way it is done in the prayer.

It is evident from this that magicians are the most capable to distinguish between magic and miracle provided they have the courage to acknowledge the truth. A magician knows the limitations of his knowledge and the extent of his trick. Thus as soon as he encounters a miracle, he immediately comes to know that this something beyond his skill. The magicians of the Pharaoh too acknowledged their helplessness and Moses’ (sws) superiority forthwith and bowed their heads in his respect.

The magicians did not merely express their acknowledgement: they went on to openly profess faith in God in very strong words. This was an open rejection of the Pharaoh’s divinity. Who can imagine the affect of this declaration on the audience that had gathered and how humiliated the Pharaoh and his courtiers would be. Here it needs to be kept in mind that even though these magicians had the lowly traits referred to above, yet some semblance of liking for the truth still remained in them. Thus it is evident from verse 73 of Sūrah Tāhā that they did not come willingly; they had been forced to come: *مَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ* (the magic you have forced us to). It may well be that they already know that Moses (sws) was not a magician nor what he would present was of the category of magic. For this reason, they wanted to evade any contest with him and it was only under compulsion from the Pharaoh and his workers that came. If this inference is true, it would mean that the liking for the truth was latently found in them and it came to the surface when they saw the miracles worked by Moses (sws). If even an iota of such a spark is found in a person, it is ignited with God’s graciousness.

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اامَنْتُمْ بِهِ قَبْلَ اَنْ اَدْنٰكُمْ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَكُم مَّكْرٌ نُّنْوَهِ فِي الْبَدِيَّةِ لِنُخْرِجَ اَوْلِيَّاهَا اَهْلَهَا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾
لَا قُطْعَنَ اَيْدِيكُمْ وَاَرْجُلُكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافِ ثُمَّ لَا صَلْبَيْنَاكُمْ اَجْعَلَيْنَا ٩١

This was a very precarious instant. The Pharaoh and his courtiers – in fact, the

91. The Pharaoh said: “You people have professed faith in him without my permission? This is a conspiracy which you have hatched in the city so that you expel its inhabitants from here. So, you will soon know. I shall chop your hands and feet from alternate sides; after that shall crucify all of you.”



whole nation stood disgraced. Yet the Pharaoh was a very clever person. To turn the tide in his own favour, he floated the notion that these magicians had connived with Moses (sws) and both were partners in the scheme to expel them from the land. They contended that the magicians had already discussed with Moses (sws) that they would concede defeat right in the contest and declare acceptance of faith; in this way, Moses (sws) would prevail on the hearts of the people and together with the magicians they would be able to dislodge the current regime. Thus the Pharaoh announced to punish them in the way criminals guilty of conspiracy and rebellion are punished, as per the law of the land.

It is evident from the Pharaoh’s words “you people have professed faith in him without my permission?” that there was no religious freedom in his kingdom, and how can it possibly exist when the king regards himself to be the supreme God. In this situation, anyone who accepted someone other than him as god, should necessarily be regarded as a rebel.

قَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا نُنْقِمُ مِنْكَ إِلَّا أَنْ أَمْنًا بِأَيِّتِ رَبِّنَا لَبَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ رَبَّنَا أَفْرَغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَقَّئْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾⁹²

The verse depicts the fruit of faith in God. These are the same magicians whose meanness and faintheartedness was such that just a few minutes before, for displaying their skill, they requested for a handsome reward from the Pharaoh like jesters and mimickers. And now as soon as faith entered their hearts, every portion of their inner self started to dazzle in such a manner that it seems that darkness never enveloped their hearts and that they are not ordinary mortals but are actually paragons of steadfastness and determination and as noble and pure as the angels. One can see how big a threat the Pharaoh sounded; but their answer was that they are not the slightest bothered if the Pharaoh has their hands and feet severed and crucifies them as this will only take them to God. They challenged the Pharaoh to do whatever he likes since his wrath on them is because of their crime of believing in their Lords signs when they have come to them. If this was the punishment of this crime, they welcome it.

If one deliberates on the this change of heart of the magicians, it becomes evident that if a person is devoid of faith, there is none more despicable than him and if he has the treasure of faith in his heart, there is none more exalted than him.

The prayer of the magicians: “Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam” is a request for strength. They meant that they have declared their faith if the Pharaoh has declared the punishments he wants to give them. They trust God.

92. They replied: “We shall only return to our Lord. You are harming us in anger only because when the signs of our Lord came to us, we professed faith in them. Lord! Pour on us loads of patience and let us die on Islam.”



وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَنْذَرُنَا مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَالْهَيْكَلُ قَالَ سَنُقْتِلُ آبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِ نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ⁹³

Moses' (sws) victory in this open contest had totally routed the senses of the Pharaoh and his courtiers. So they came up with the scheme mentioned in the verses and thought that they can still have their way. This scheme has already been mentioned earlier. It had been adopted to check the increase in number of the Israelites and to prevent them from becoming a danger for the aristocracy. In the beginning, this scheme did not succeed because of non-cooperation from the wet nurses. However, the Pharaoh did not lose hope; he, in fact, took a step ahead: he ordered the masses to throw the children of the Israelites into the sea. In the last verse, the Qur'an has indicated that the Pharaoh expressed his resolve that he will not let them become a threat and if needed reinforce further this scheme.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that though the Pharaoh and his followers were afraid of the Israelites to this extent, yet they were not prepared at any cost that they leave the country. The reason for this was that all the prosperity of Egypt depended on these slaves. From preparing dung for fire to cultivation to construction – everything owed itself to their hard work. The Pharaoh and his followers lived a life of luxury because of them. They governed them and forced them to unpaid labour. Obviously, in these circumstances they could not have allowed them to become educated and develop nor was it possible to let them leave Egypt at once. In order to remain secure from this two-pronged danger, the Pharaoh and his followers hatched this scheme. When a person crosses his bounds and interferes in the bounds of God, he loses his senses in this way.

Our exegetes have faced great difficulty in interpreting the words “will you leave Moses and your idols?” It seems from these words that there were some idols and deities whom even the Pharaoh himself worshipped. If this is correct, then what does his claim of being the supreme god mean?

The answer to this question is that the Pharaoh regarded himself to be the avatar of the Sun god, who was the greatest god among the Egyptians. In this way, he regarded himself to be the God-king. In other words, he was simultaneously the king of the Egyptians and also the manifestation of their greatest god and as such was their supreme god. He had carved out many statues of himself and had them placed at various places in the country. His subjects would prostrate before them. In this way, the king had both divine and royal rights over his subjects. The words “your idols” actually refer to these statues which represented his self. Remnants of the ancient temples of Egypt verify this.

93. And the chiefs of the Pharaoh's nation said to him: “Will you leave Moses and his people in this manner to spread strife in the land and forsake you and your idols?” He said: “We shall kill their sons and let their girls live and We are fully dominant on them.”



قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ الْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾
 قَالُوا أُوذِينَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا ۚ قَالَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ أَنْ يَهْدِيَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَ يَسْتَخْلِفْكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾⁹⁴

In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have explained the importance of patience and the prayer in the cause of establishing God’s religion in the society. In reality, these two resources in this struggle can lead to victory. At every instance in the Qur’ān, it is these two weapons that are referred to as a means of procuring help through. Though the word God is used here (seek help from God), it actually alludes to the prayer. This is because it is through the prayer that help can be sought from God. It was but natural for the Israelites to feel worried when after being victorious over the Pharaoh the latter expressed his opinion to destroy their race. It is very difficult to remain steadfast during trials and tribulations. It is not possible without God’s help. The Qur’ān mentions this fact in the following words in verse 127 of Sūrah al-Nahl: وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (you can only acquire patience through God’s help). This means asking for God’s help is the prayer. In fact, it also refers to that special prayer to which the Prophet (sws) and his companions were directed to in the early part of the Makkan period that was replete with trials and difficulties. It is precisely this which Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) were directed to as well. I will explain this further under verse 87 of Sūrah Yūnus.

The words “The earth belongs to God” are meant to negate the arrogance showed by the Pharaoh earlier in verse 127 in the words “We are fully dominant on them.” The implication is that however much he may claim to be powerful, the earth belongs to God. About the messengers, it has been explained at several instances in this exegesis that as per God’s established practice they are necessarily made to dominate their enemies whether it takes place in their lives or after them by their followers and also regardless of the fact whether they occupy the land in which a messenger began his preaching or God directs them to migrate from that place and chooses some other piece of land to establish them there. Thus Moses (sws) achieved this dominance in his life – in fact, soon after the incidents alluded to earlier took place but his *ummah* was given the land of Palestine and this happened after he passed away. Here this also needs to be understood that after the punishment that visited the Pharaoh and his people, all of Egypt’s aristocracy was destroyed and was replaced by others who had

94. Moses said to his nation: “Seek help from God and remain steadfast. The earth belongs to God. He makes whomsoever He wills from His servants to be its inheritors and success finally belongs to those who fear God.” They said: “We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival.” He said: “Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land to see how you behave.”



different families and traditions. The former rulers had political rivalries with them too and the Pharaoh and his followers feared that by joining hands with the Israelites, they would expel them from the land and become its rulers. Since this is an historical issue and does not directly relate to us, I will content myself to these short hints. Those who are interested in more details should look up books of history.

Because of the lack of conviction in the Israelites and their weak faith, this advice by Moses (sws) had no effect on them. They said: “We were also harassed before you came and are being harassed even after your arrival.” In other words, they contended that when such are the circumstances and events, who can trust his promises and childish assurances; instead of becoming a boon for them, he has become bane for them. It has been indicated earlier by referring to the Torah that the aristocracy of Egypt had become very worried at the ever-increasing numbers of the Israelites and had launched a heinous campaign to racially exterminate them. Later, when Moses (sws) began a movement to organize and reform them, this worry increased. They reckoned that the Israelites now have a powerful leader and soon they will displace them by becoming an organized force. Overcome by this worry, on the one hand the Pharaoh ordered to enhance the intensity of the campaign of racial extermination, and on the other, he asked his administrators and heads to increase the extent of unpaid labour that was being exacted from the Israelites. The stuff that was given to them to make bricks was to be stopped and they were to be directed to produce this stuff by their own hands. At the same time, each of them must be asked to make the same number of bricks he was formerly making. In this way, the yoke of oppression that was already very tight around their necks was further tightened after Moses (sws). The Israelites credited Moses (sws) with all these bothers.

In order to assure the Israelites, Moses (sws) once again assured them by words: “Hopefully, your Lord will kill your enemy and make you inherit the land.” Land here does not refer to the land of Egypt; it actually refers to Palestine, as has been explained in verse 137 later: *وَأَوْزَيْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَعَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا*.⁹⁵ It is obvious that the words “We had blessed” refer to it. It is evident from the words of this verse that by giving them the rule of this land, the Almighty fulfilled His promise the verse under discussion mentions through the tongue of Moses (sws).

The words “to see how you behave” is reminder to them of the purpose of granting this political authority: when God destroys a nation and makes another rise, it is merely to see the attitude it adopts after being given political authority: whether it also behaves in a rash way like the previous nation or duly fulfils its obligation this position entails. If it also follows the same path, it will also be destroyed by God after being given some time of respite. He then replaces it by another and puts it to the same test. This cycle of test is continuing and as long as this world exists, it too will

95. And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed.



continue. For this reason, no nation should be misled to think that once it has found favour with God, it will continue in this manner howevermuch its beliefs and deeds become wavered.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾⁹⁶

The word سِّنِينَ is the plural of سَنَةٌ and generally means “years”; however, it is also used for “years of famine and difficulty.” It is used here in this sense.

Earlier in verse 94-95, it has been explained that when God sends a messenger, then as per His established practice, He creates various corroborations of his message in the form of different trials so that people awaken from their slumber, learn a lesson and turn to God. It is to this established practice that this verse refers.

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَتَكَبَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَّعَهُ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّا طَائِرُهَا مِمَّنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلِكِنِّ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾⁹⁷

The word طَير is from طير and the latter means “birds.” Since superstitious people used the flight of birds to try to find out good or bad fortunes, the word طَير began being used in this meaning. Then it began being dominantly used to find out bad fortunes and omens. From the same root is the word طائر which is used for the object from which good or bad fortunes are found out. Then it further developed in meaning from this and came to be used for “share” and “fate.”

The verses state that the trials sent by God to shake and jolt the Pharaoh and his people and to make them turn to the message of Moses (sws) were regarded by them to be the ill-effects and ill-omens of Moses (sws).

The words “whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you” depict their final answer.

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ ۖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزَ قَالُوا يَأْتِيُنَا إِذْ نَمُوتُ نَارًا ۚ لَنَا رَبٌّكَ بِمَا عَمِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ كَلِّمْ كَشَفْتِ عَنَّْا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ آجَلٍ هُمْ بِلِغْوِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾⁹⁸

96. And We kept the people of the Pharaoh inflicted with famine and loss in produce so that they pay heed.

97. So when they prospered, they would say: “This is but our share.” And when some calamity struck them, they would ascribe its cause to be the ill-omen of Moses and his companions. Listen! The fate of these people is with God but most of them do not know. And they say: “Whatever sign you bring to us to weave a spell on us, we shall not listen to you.”

98. So, We let loose on them storms, locusts, lice, frogs and blood, as signs explained . Even



As indicated earlier, the trials mentioned in verse 137 manifest themselves as a result of God’s established practice regarding His messengers. They are meant to reinforce their message and, as a consequence of God’s mercy, to induce people to pay heed. However, when the Pharaoh and his people were not effected by them, God showed them some very significant miracles at the hand of Moses (sws) that are referred to here in these verses. I will present their details in the light of the Torah:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on people and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.” When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. (Exodus, 9:22-25)

It is evident from this that this storm consisted of thunder and lightning. Rain and tempestuous winds also generally accompany it. The fire mentioned in it is a mistake on the part of the translators of the Torah. It actually refers to the lightning which is a consequence of such storms.

The onslaught of the locusts is mentioned thus in the Torah:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous *were they*; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. (Exodus, 10:12-15)

The details of the lice attack are stated thus:

then they showed arrogance and they were wrongdoers. And when a calamity struck them, they would say: “O Moses ! Pray to God for us on the basis of the promise He has made with you: if you put off this calamity from us, we shall certainly listen to you and shall definitely let the Israelites go with you.” Then if for some period, which they had to reach, We warded off that calamity from them, they would immediately break their promise.



Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.” They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came on people and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. (Exodus, 10:16-17)

The torment of the frogs is related thus:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs on your whole country. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will come up on you and your people and all your officials.’” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’” So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. (Exodus, 8:1-6)

The way the torment of the blood manifested itself is mentioned thus:

The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.’ Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone. Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. (Exodus, 7:19-21)

The expression *آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ* occurs as an accusative of state (*ḥāl*), and occasion and context evidence that the locus (*ẓarf*) of *مُفَصَّلَاتٍ* is suppressed ie. their details have been mentioned in the scriptures of the Israelites. Thus it is a fact that not only these but other similar miracles are also comprehensively mentioned in the Torah up to their minute details. Since the Qur’ān has just referred to them, I have cited these excerpts from the Bible.

It is stated that instead of showing humility, these people became arrogant and the reason for this is that these people are wrongdoers and God does not let such people have their way. Such signs instead of guiding them only become a source of hardening their hearts and of conclusive communication to them.



In the expression *لَا يَأْتِيهِمُ الرَّجُزُ*, the word *لَا* means *لَمْ*. The purpose is to portray the situation. An example of this usage can be seen in verse 189 ahead.

The implication is that when they a torment would visit them, they would plead before Moses (sws) to intercede before his Lord because of the position of favour he has in His eyes. If this happens, they will definitely accept his demand and let the Israelites go with him. However, if the torment would be delayed, they would once again break their promise.

This breach is mentioned thus in the Torah:

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.” (Exodus, 8:8)

Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.”

But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go. (Exodus, 8:28-32)

The meaning of the expression *بِمَا عَاهَدَ عِنْدَكَ* in my opinion is that since God listens to Moses (sws) and accepts his requests, so pray to him for us.

The words “then if for some period, which they had to reach” are meant to point towards their lack of conscience and wretched nature: even though they knew that they would not be able to hide their falsehood and deception for long, they would make a false promise just to earn its benefits for as long as possible.

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَآوَرَّضْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضَعُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَعَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَتَبَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ۖ لَمَّا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانُوا يَفْضَحُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ ۙ

“Revenge” here means revenge for their crimes to which they staunchly adhered even after the truth had become conclusively evident to them. In the first place, they remained indifferent to the signs of God and when they manifested themselves with an open challenge before them, they rejected them: they said that these were not from

99. So, We took revenge from them and drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs and remained indifferent to them. And those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the East and the West of that land We had blessed. And the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled because they remained steadfast. And We ruined all the structures the Pharaoh and his people had made and all their orchards and gardens.



God and were a product of magic and trickery. In retribution for this, they were drowned in the sea.

The words “and those who had been oppressed” refer to the severe bouts of oppression and persecution faced by the Israelites at the hands of the Pharaoh and his people and some of which have already been alluded to earlier. The Almighty took them out from these horrific cruelties and gave the land of Palestine under their control. The word إِيْرَاث is used here to connote that they were given this land. This means that God dislodged its former rulers and made the Israelites its heirs. The words “that land We had blessed” are very evidently spoken for Palestine because this is the only land which has been mentioned in the Qur’ān with this attribute. Secondly, these words refer to both material and spiritual blessings of the land. This is because the Arabic word مبارك includes both.

The words مَغَارِبَ and مَشَارِقَ refer to the vastness of the land. Sometimes, a plural occurs in Arabic to connote vastness and extensiveness of something. Earlier the word أَعْرَاف has also been used such, as already discussed.

The words “and the gracious promise of your Lord with the Israelites was fulfilled” refer to the promise mentioned earlier in verses 128-129. The implication is that the promise made by God with the forefathers of the Israelites and which was finally revived through Moses (sws) was fulfilled.

The words “because they remained steadfast” refer to the fact that God shows His favours to nations because of their character and conduct. Their lineage has no role in this.

Two expressions are used here: وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ and مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ. In my opinion, the first refers to buildings and the other to orchards. The Pharaoh mentioned here had a special interest in construction and it was to make structures and building that the Israelites were forced to work without being paid. Of the expressions mentioned above, the latter specifically relates to orchards of grapes because it was their wines that would be made to spread on vertical structures. Thus in the Qur’ān (6:141), the expression جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ exists. However, at times, something is named after its dominant element. Though the words used are specific yet their connotation is general. In those times, Egypt was very prominent in the production of grapes. Some instances in Sūrah Yūsuf also indicate this.

Also evident from this is that the nation of the Pharaoh, besides being drowned, was visited by other forms of destruction as well: their cities and orchards were totally ravaged. It has been mentioned earlier that their orchards were already destroyed by hail and locusts. It seems that during this time an earthquake also came and razed their buildings to the ground. Thus whatever remained intact from previous calamities was also destroyed.



وَجُوزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَى أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ قَالُوا يَمُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٣٢٨﴾ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مَتَّبِعُوا مَا هُمْ فِيهِ وَبُطُلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٢٩﴾ قَالَ اغْذِرْ اللَّهُ أَبْغِيكُمْ إِلَهَا وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٣٠﴾¹⁰⁰

The eloquence found in “and We led the Israelites across the sea” as well as the favour of God, has been explained in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Until here that part of the history of the Israelites has been narrated that related to Egypt and the Pharaoh. Evident in it are manifestations of God’s splendour and majesty, the way the Israelites were divinely helped and the way the Pharaoh and his nation was destroyed. Viewed thus, this anecdote becomes the supplement to the anecdotes mentioned earlier. From here on that part of the history of the Israelites is narrated that relates to the time following their exodus from Egypt and crossing the sea. It will become apparent from this part of their history how the Almighty helped and guided them at every step but they continued to show ingratitude at every step and stumbled.

The word “nation” in “then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols” refers to a nation from other ones that the Israelites encountered when they had crossed the sea. All of these nations were idol-worshippers. The expression يَعْكُفُونَ has an element of derision in it. It means that these people were so foolish and silly that they had stuck to idols they themselves had carved out while leaving aside the merciful and gracious God. They would fervently worship them. When the verb عَكَفَ occurs with the preposition عَلَى the meaning of strongly adhering to something is incorporated in it.

It is evident from the words “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also” that the Israelites proved sillier than that nation. They show that their long period of servitude in Egypt had made their minds so stale and decadent that even after seeing so many signs of God’s majesty and splendour they still remained enamoured with the desolate darkness of Egypt. It is not easy to let go of old traditions. It is perhaps because of this reason that after the conquest of Makkah the Prophet (sws) forthwith destroyed all signs of polytheism there so that they do not become a trial for those of weak and raw faith. Moses’ (sws) response stated in this verse points to the extreme ingratitude of the Israelites.

100. And We led the Israelites across the sea. Then they passed by a nation who were worshipping some of their idols. They said: “Moses! Just as they have gods, make a similar god for us also.” He said: “You are a very ignorant people. What they are involved in will be ruined and what they are doing shall be destroyed.” He said: “Should I find some other deity for you than God, even though it is He Who has granted you superiority over other nations of the world?”



وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُقْتُلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾

The explanation of this verse has been mentioned in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as well as earlier in this *sūrah* too. However, what is specific to this verse is that from here until verse 147, the elaborate arrangement the Almighty made to guide the Israelites through His *sharī‘ah* is referred to. Yet the response shown to this by the Israelites was that as soon as Moses (sws) went to Sinai to receive God’s *sharī‘ah*, in spite of all his counsels and in spite of the efforts of his brother Aaron (sws), they carved out a deity they had demanded from Moses (sws). It is known that he had admonished them on this, as mentioned earlier. The purpose of relating all these details is to show that what a nation – who is very proud of its status today – did earlier on in the presence of its messenger even after witnessing grand miracles.

وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَّمْنَا فِيهَا بِعَشْرِ فِتْنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَرَىٰ ۚ رَبِّهِ أَزْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

This verse mentions the elaborate arrangement made by God to give His *sharī‘ah* to Moses (sws). He was asked to appear at a specific location on mount Sinai and stay there for thirty days. It is mentioned in verse 84 of Sūrah Tāhā that he reached that place well before the appointed time. Even though this haste shown by him was to seek God’s pleasure, he was checked by God for it and His wisdom entailed that this period be increased from 30 days to 40. It may be noted that the nature of blemish of a prophet does not relate to he succumbing to base desires; rather it is committed by him while crossing the bounds in trying to seek God’s pleasure. As a result, they are stopped by God because they are the barometer of justice and this barometer must be precise in every respect.

The words “rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief -mongers” refer to the arrangement made by Moses (sws) for his period of absence by delegating his authority to Aaron (sws). It is evident from the last part of this sentence that Moses (sws) was aware of the mischief-mongers present in his nation and because of their former pranks he also feared them.

101. And recall when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh who inflicted you with great torments: they would mercilessly kill your sons and let your women live and in this there was a great trial for from your Lord.

102. And We took a promise of thirty nights from Moses and completed it with ten further nights; so, forty nights were completed as the time appointed by his Lord. And Moses said to his brother Aaron: “Rule on my behalf over my people, keep reforming them and do not follow the path of the mischief -mongers.”



So he specially directed Aaron (sws) in their matter. The purpose of mentioning this is to show that the Israelites indulged in the heinous act of worshipping the calf inspite of all this arrangement.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ بِبَيِّنَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَ رَبَّهُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْنِي أَنْظُرَ إِلَيْكَ ۖ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَ بَنِيَّ وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَ بَنِيَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَنَكَ ثَبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ¹⁰³

The word مِيقَات means “prescribed time.” Here it refers to that time which the Almighty had fixed to converse with Moses (sws).

Instead of rebuking Moses (sws) on his demand, the Almighty explained to him why it could not be fulfilled. The Almighty revealed Himself in this manner to assure Moses (sws) that even mountains are not able to bear the vision of God – mountains which are the most solid and firm structures of this earth; so how can man who is so feeble an entity before these mountains bear this vision? A human being has a limited power of tolerance. His eyes can see light; however, if the intensity of this light exceeds a certain limit his eyes are dazed by it and at times he even loses his sight. Similarly, his ears are able to hear sounds; however, his ears can only hear to a certain extent. If the roar of thunder, for example, exceeds a limit it can shatter his ear-drums. The sun is an essential requirement of man; however, its light and heat are only beneficial to him if the sun remains at a certain distance from him and passes on its light and warmth through many layers and filters of the atmosphere. If some day, the sun comes a little near to the earth, all life forms will be burnt down. So when human beings are such a feeble entity how can they have the strength and ability to see the pure and untainted being of the Almighty who is absolute light and is beyond and above this universe and what is going on in it?

The expression دَكَّ الحائط means “to raze down a wall and level it with the ground.” Here the word “mountain” does not refer to its complete structure. It only refers to a part of it or to its peak where God’s radiance manifested itself. Referring to a part of something while referring to its whole is common in every language. It may be kept in mind that this radiance would have been only be a manifestation of God’s being; however, even a stable structure as a mountain could not bear this.

God showed His radiance to Moses (sws) as a remedy for an intellectual ailment

103. And when Moses reached at the time appointed by Us and his Lord conversed with him, he requested: “Lord! Give me the opportunity to see you.” God said: “You shall never be able to see Me. Look, however, towards the mountain; if it stays in its place you will also be able to see Me.” Then when His Lord revealed His radiance on the mountain, He shattered it to pieces and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he regained consciousness, he said: “Exalted are you. I turn towards You I am the first of the believers.”



with which the Israelites were suffering. It is mentioned at a number of instances in the Torah that the Israelites asked Moses (sws) to make them see God. They contended that when God talks to him directly, why cannot He talk to them face to face because His splendour and majesty they have hitherto seen have not been sufficient for them to satisfy their hearts; who can be convinced of an unseen God? It has been cited earlier that they had asked Moses (sws) to make for them a deity. This actually reflects their desire to see God as an observable reality. In order provide a remedy for this ailment of servitude to what can be seen, Moses (sws) was told and shown in the very first phase that God cannot be seen by eyes or touched by hands. He can only be understood by the intellect and accepted by the heart. Eyes can only see the manifestation of His attributes and do not have any access beyond it. Moses (sws) taught all this to the Israelites but this desire did not leave them. Thus because of it he too had to face God's anger as mentioned earlier and shall also be mentioned later.

It is evident from this discussion that yogis and sufis who regard observing God as the highest form of comprehending Him and have made this their objective, they have crossed the stipulated bounds and this will lead to nothing substantive. This is tantamount to a fly hunting for an eagle. I shall explain in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Najm that even Gabriel who has the most proximity with God cannot go beyond a certain limit. It was from a distance that he accesses God's commands and taking any step further would only burn his wings.

104 ﴿قَالَ يٰمُوسٰى اِنِّىْ اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسٰلَتِيْ وَبِكَلٰمِىْ ۚ فَخُذْ مَا اٰتٰىتُكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِيْنَ﴾

The implication of being thankful to God is that Moses (sws) should fulfil his obligations towards the words of God by duly valuing them, asking others to value them and teaching them their message. A very subtle insinuation found in this verse is that whatever has been given to Moses (sws) is quite sufficient for him. He should be content with it and not demand seeing God.

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِى الْاَوْحٰى مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يٰاُخْذُوْا بِحُسْنِهَا ۚ سَاُوْرِيْكُمْ دٰرَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Whether God wrote down on the tablets Himself or had them written, both cases are mentioned in the Torah:

When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they

104. God said: "Moses! I have given you preference among people by My message and speech. So, take whatever I have given you and be among the grateful."

105. And We wrote on the tablets every type of counsel and detail of everything for him. So, hold fast to them, and ask your people to follow the good way in it. I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant.



responded with one voice, “Everything the LORD has said we will do.” Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. (Exodus, 24:3-4)

At another instance, it is said:

Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. (Exodus, 32:15-16)

Both interpretations are possible viz. the viz. the Qur’ān and primarily there is no difference between the two: if Moses (sws) wrote at God’s behest, it is as if God Himself wrote. If a bridge is constructed by an engineer at the behest of a ruler, it is equally correct to say that the ruler made it. The arrangement of preserving the Qur’ān took place through the Prophet (sws) and his companions. However, since it was done at God’s directive, it has been stated in the Qur’ān (15:9) that God has preserved and protected it.

The words of the verse under discussion point to the elaborate arrangement made by God in giving His *sharī‘ah* to the Israelites. The Prophets who came before Moses (sws) taught their nations orally but for the Israelites written instruction was employed. Moses (sws) did not teach them merely through his words and deeds, he also taught them by writing out God’s instructions for them so that they were able to have them in secure form. Alas! The details of the way they valued this elaborate arrangement can be seen in Sūrah al-Baqarah and more are coming up.

When the words *مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ* and *يَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ* occurs in such a context, they relate to the topic that is being discussed and do not have a general connotation. In other words, whatever from among religion was needed to be communicated was done so. At the same time, details of directives related to communal organization were also written down. It has been generally understood that only the ten famous commandments were inscribed in the tablets. However, this does not seem to be true. The excerpts cited earlier from the book of Exodus show that there were two tablets and both were fully written on from both sides. Moreover, at these instances in the Torah, there are several other details related to collective organization and such is their nature that it was essential for the Israelites to be informed of them at such an occasion.

Moreover, what is further worthy of note is that the Qur’ān like the Torah has not mentioned two tablets. It as used the word “tablets” which is a plural and in Arabic it refers to things that are more than two in number.

The words “so, hold fast to them” counsel Moses (sws) to follow these instructions in all circumstances with full force and also direct his nation to do so instead of asking to make deity for them by following the footsteps of other nations. They must not follow their way. In fact, they should follow the good way written in these tablets.



The superlative tense in *يَاخُذُوا بِأَحْسَنِهَا* is used in its absolute meaning and these words occur in contrast to the ways of the idolatrous people which the Israelites met after crossing the river, as indicated in verse 138 earlier. In other words, it is not a comparison between what is written and they are not told that they should adopt what is good among them – for all of the written directives were equally good. The implication is that the Israelites should be told to not be lured by the foolish acts of the idol worshipping nations; on the contrary, they should follow the good and noble way which these tablets guide them to. The superlative tense is used in this meaning at other instances in the Qur’ān too. For example, in verse 55 of Sūrah al-Zumar.

The words “I shall soon show you the abode of the defiant” point to why God’s directives should be strongly adhered to: soon they will pass by the lands and abodes of the defiant and encounter them. These teachings will help them in dealing with these people and through them they will triumph. If they do not stick to them, there is a strong chance that they will be misled at every step.

سَاَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

These verses sound a comprehensive warning show which people will duly value these teachings and those who would turn away from them.

وَإِذَا أَخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ حُلِيِّهِمْ عَجَلًا جَسَدًا لَّهُ خَوَارٌ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلًا اتَّخَذُوا وَكَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Such was the ingratitude shown by the Israelites to the arrangement of guidance made for them by the Almighty that after Moses’ (sws) departure, they became involved in calf-worship.

It is evident from the Torah that in order to make the statue of calf, they donated their jewelry. From them, it was carved out. The mechanism employed was that

106. I shall turn them away from My signs those who unjustly show arrogance in the land and if they see signs of all kind, even then they will not believe in them. If they see the path of guidance, they will not adopt it and if they see the path of error, they will adopt it. This is because they denied Our revelations and paid no heed to them. And wasted are the deeds of those who denied Our signs and rejected the meeting of the Hereafter. And in return, they will they receive precisely what they had been doing?

107. And in the absence of Moses, his people carved out a calf from jewellery: a body from which a sound similar to that of a calf would come. Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them? They made it and were extremely unjust to themselves.



when wind would pass through it, the sound of bellowing would come out of it. The word حُورٍ refers to the sound made by an ox.

The Qur’ān has pointed out all these things to highlight the foolishness, naivety as well as the ingratitude of the Israelites: this is how they valued the one and only God Who showed them the signs of His majesty described above that they fashioned out a calf from their own jewellery and that too was such an artificial structure that merely resembled its physical shape and that produced its typical voice. They then regarded it to be the God who had delivered the Israelites from the slavery of the Egyptians and it is this calf who, in its guidance, would obtain for them the kingdom of the promised land? In this way, they satisfied their desire which they expressed to Moses (sws) before he went to mount Sinai and on which they were scolded by him.

Translators of the Torah have regarded this trial of calf-worship to be originated by Aaron (sws). The Qur’ān has, however, vehemently negated it, as will be seen in later verses and as shown in Sūrah Tāhā regarded it to be Sāmīrī’s fabrication. He was a very cunning, wily and hypocritical person who had entered the faction of Moses’ for his own dirty objectives. For a person who was well versed with the art of idol making, it was not difficult at all to carve out a calf that bellowed. The worshippers at temples and their keepers in every period of time have shown such tricks and gimmicks to lure the common man that one is astonished. The famous traveller, Ibn Baṭūṭah (d. 1369 AD) has mentioned even more eerie things in his travelogue. It is natural that in areas where idols are worshipped the art of idol-making be very developed. I have had the chance to read the details of the ancient temple of Abū Sumbul that was transported from its place under international supervision because of the construction of the Aswan dam in Egypt. I was amazed to note that the idols of the Pharaoh and the queen were placed in the temple at such an angle that the first sun ray would shine on the Pharaoh’s forehead on his birthday. One can imagine what more can over-awe the minds of the common man that this arrangement for a king who was regarded to be the avatar of the sun-god.

In short, it was not difficult at all for Sāmīrī and his associates to fashion out such an idol that produced the voice of a calf. However, he went a step ahead and weaved another trick of allusion which over-awed the people. More details will be given in the exegesis of Sūrah Tāhā.

The words “Did they not see that it can neither speak to them nor can guide them?” occur in between as a parenthetical sentence. In other words, a deity is not a speechless and motionless toy; his greatest utility is to provide guidance. If he cannot do so, why should he be regarded as a deity and worshipped?

108 ﴿وَلَبَّاسُقَطٍ فِيْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَرَاَوْا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ۚ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ﴾

108. And when they realized and saw that they had gone astray, they said: “If our Lord does



The expression سَقَطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ is an idiom that is normally translated as “to be ashamed.” However, since the necessary consequence of being ashamed is to realize one’s folly, so it can be translated thus. Lexicographers disagree regarding the origin of this idiom and it is but natural as investigating the origin of an idiom is a very difficult task. I am inclined to believe that something that is made to fall in hand makes it visible in such a form that even the most thick-headed person can see it and no one needs to ask about it. If this interpretation is correct, then it would mean that the Israelites were foolish enough to be lured by Sāmīrī and his associates but when they saw the calf bellowing before them and they had regarded this to be their deity, they were dumbfounded. They saw their own silliness before their eyes.

Concomitant indications show that this realization came only to those among them who were sensible. Initially, when everyone was overcome with frenzy they were swept away like all others, but when the result came before their eyes they realized their mistake. In the collective sphere, such instances can be very dangerous and become a source of trial. Just one devil is needed to instigate the masses and work such mischief that the adhesion of the collectivity is undone, and at times sane and sensible people also realize this when it is too late.

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي ۖ أَعْجَلْتُمُ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَأَلْقَى الْأَلْوَاءَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ ۚ قَالَ ابْنَ أُمَّ إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونَنِي ۖ فَلَا تُشْهِتُ فِي الْأَعْدَاءِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

It is evident from both the Torah and the Qur’ān that news of calf-worship reached Moses (sws) when he was still on mount Sinai. In fact, it is evident from the Qur’ān that it was God who informed Moses (sws) of it. Thus he came back angrily and in a state of sorrow. His anger was on the success of the prank shown by the mischievous elements and sorrow on the ignorance and foolishness of his nation. He first took to task those who were made responsible of their well-being.

The interrogative style in “did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” has a ring of rebuke in it: before God could disclose His prescribed way of worshipping Him, they invented one of their own. It may be kept in mind that idol-

not show mercy to us and does not pardon our mistake, we shall end up among losers.”

109. And when Moses returned to his nation, full of anger and sorrow, he said: “You have represented me very badly in my absence. Did you show haste even before your Lord’s directive?” And he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head. Aaron said: “O son of my mother! These people overpowered me and almost killed me. So, do not give my and your enemies an opportunity to laugh at me and do not count me with the unjust.” Moses prayed: “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother. Admit us into Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.”



worship has come into being as a result of the belief of pantheism. The idolaters think that God dwells in these idols and thus worshipping them is worshipping God. More details are coming up in this *sūrah* on this issue.

The words “and he threw down the tablets and began pulling his brother to himself by his head” depict how Moses (sws) was overcome with emotions. Since Aaron (sws) was entrusted with looking after the Israelites by Moses (sws) and he had full confidence in him as well, he was rebuked by him the most. This zeal on Moses’ part was because of his sense of honour for God and also because of his love for his brother.

The style of address adopted by Aaron (sws) is very affectionate. He did not call him by the words يَا أَخِي (my brother); instead, he used the words: اِبْنُ أُمِّ (o son of my mother) evident from which are both affection and assurance. In his defence, he responded by saying: “People overpowered me and almost killed me.” It is evident from these words that he not only tried to stop this mischief but also endangered his life in doing so but the majority of the nation was lured away by Sāmīrī. Aaron (sws) was left with such a small number of companions that it was not possible for him to forcibly stop the perpetrators. For this reason, he deemed it appropriate to wait for Moses (sws) lest any measure that he take may cause further harm. Thus it is stated in verse 94 of Sūrah Tāhā: اِنِّیْ حَشِیْبٌ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ فَرَّقْتَ بَیْنَ بَنِیْ اِسْمٰیءَ اَیْنِیْ وَلَمْ تَرْجُبْ قَوْلِیْ.¹¹⁰

These details also refute the false claim of the compilers of the Torah that it was Aaron (sws) who was responsible for the calf-worship of the Israelites. Not only was he vindicated, the actual perpetrator of the wrong-doing and the way he went about doing it were also exposed.

It is evident from the words “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother” that Moses (sws) had accepted the excuse presented by Aaron (sws). There was no way in the world that it could be imagined that he was from among the originators of this mischief; however, Moses (sws) must have thought that he did not do enough to stop it. Aaron’s answer cleared Moses (sws) of this doubt. It was obvious that if such were the circumstances that even sacrificing his life, was not enough to stop this mischief, it was only better for him that he stay clear of it and wait for Moses (sws) to return. Once the situation became clear, Moses (sws) sought his forgiveness and that of Aaron (sws) from God. He first requested for his own forgiveness because this is the etiquette for such a supplication. Also evident from this is that God will forgive any excess Moses (sws) has committed against his brother in his zeal for protecting the truth.

اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَیَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِی الْحَیٰوةِ الدُّنْیَا ۗ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِی الْمُتَفَتِّرِیْنَ ۚ وَالَّذِیْنَ

110. He replied: “O the one given birth to by my mother! Grasp not my beard nor my head. I feared that you would but say: ‘You have created a rift among the Israelites and did not give regard to what I said.’”



عَبِلُوا السِّيَّاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَآمَنُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١١﴾

This is the punishment sounded to the Israelites at this juncture. The way it manifested itself is mentioned in verse 84 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: Moses (sws) directed the sincere and righteous of every tribe to execute those guilty of calf-worship. Thus this punishment was carried out and only those could save themselves who repented. Here faith is mentioned as a condition with repentance. This is because there are certain sins which wipe out the faith in a person. This sin of the Israelites was among them. Had this not been the case, mere repentance would have been sufficient.

وَلَبَّاسَكَ عَنْ مُوسَى الْغَضَبُ أَخَذَ الْأَلْوَامَ ۖ وَفِي نُسخَتِهَا هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْتَدُّونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

In the expression: سَكَتَ عَنْ مُوسَى الْغَضَبُ, the preposition عَنْ after the verb سَكَتَ evidences that this verb encompasses the meaning of زال or a word of similar meaning. The implication is that Moses (sws) became silent and his anger died.

This verse also refutes the statement of the Bible that the tablets broke when they were thrown down. It is evident that placing these tablets on the ground was not because of showing any disregard to them; rather, it was an expression of anger and sorrow on the Israelites showing disregard to this grand favour: while they had been chosen for religious leadership by God, they ended up humiliating themselves because of this horrible sin.

The word نُسخة also means a word for word copy of something. Since the actual Torah was a copy of these tablets it is called so.

The words “and what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord” say precisely what is also mentioned in verse 3 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that the Qur’an is a guidance for those who fear God.

When the words “guidance” and “mercy” are mentioned together, they mean that guidance will be provided in this world and in the next, God’s mercy and blessing will be attained which is actually the consequence of following this guidance.

وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا رِيبَقَاتِنَا ۖ فَلَبَّاسَكَ أَخَذَتْهُمْ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ وَإِيَّائِي ۖ أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا ۖ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۖ أَنْتَ وَرِيبُنَا فَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ۖ أَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَاتَّكَبَ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ إِنَّا هَذَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ

111. Indeed, those who regarded the calf as a deity will be inflicted with wrath of their Lord and with humiliation in this very world. And it is in this way that We punish those who fabricate falsehoods. However, those who did evil deeds, then repented after them and accepted faith, then after this your Lord is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.”

112. And when Moses’ anger cooled down, he picked up the tablets. And what is written in them is guidance and mercy for people who fear their Lord.



مَنْ أَشَاءَ ۖ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَاكُنْ بِهَا الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

These verses mention Moses' second visit to mount Sinai to seek forgiveness for calf-worship. The narrators of the Torah have mixed up the first and second visits and because of this a lot of confusions have arisen. The Qur'ān has narrated both visits separately because the second one has great significance in the history of the Israelites. A special time was prescribed for it by God and for this Moses (sws) chose seventy people from his nation so that collective repentance could be expressed for a collective crime. Moreover, whatever happens, happens before the eyes of the nation's distinguished individuals so that they are able to bear witness to it before others.

The advent of the earthquake at this instance was a manifestation of God's power and splendour so that the Israelites are reminded that the God they are encountering has such might. In the Torah, this incident is mentioned thus:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled ... and Mount Sinai was covered with smoke ... and the whole mountain^[b] trembled violently. (Exodus, 19:16-19)

Though the Torah mentions this incident at the time when the ten commandments were given to the Israelites, it seems that a similar situation arose on this occasion too when Moses (sws) took seventy of his people to mount Sinai for repentance.

The words "Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier" show how Moses (sws) beseeched God and hoped to be shown mercy. And his subsequent words shows that only those people repent who are divinely given this urge given to those who pass their trials and received guidance. Those who are not given this urge go astray. It may be kept in mind that Moses (sws) has referred to the law of guidance repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān. At the same time, with full respect, he has also subtly stated that it is not easy to succeed in God's trials: it is dependent on His blessing and urge.

The word *حَسَنَةً* is suppressed in the verse where the hereafter is mentioned because

113. And Moses selected seventy men from his people for the time appointed by Us. Then when an earthquake seized them, Moses said: "Lord! Had you willed, You could already have killed them and me earlier. So will you kill us for a crime perpetrated by the foolish among us? This was but a trial from You. You can lead astray through this whomsoever You wish and guide whomsoever You wish. You alone are our guardian. So, pardon us and have mercy on us, and you are the best of forgivers. And ordain what is good for us both in this world and in the Hereafter. We have turned towards You." God said: "I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend to and My mercy encompasses everything. So, I shall ordain it for those who are pious and who keep paying *zakāh* and for those who will believe in Our revelations.



what is mentioned evidences it. The verb هُذِنَا means “to turn and to repent.” There is a subtle reminder for the Jews too in using this word: if they have any shame left in them, they should at least honour their own name.

The supplication of Moses (sws) was unconditional and absolute and precisely this was the need: because of his love for his people, he should have asked God in general words to ordain good for them in this world and the next. In the Torah also, the supplication mentioned at this instance is general in its wording. However, in response, the Almighty has delineated the real principle of His torment and mercy. The intention of God referred to in the words “I shall inflict with My torment only those whom I intend” is governed by His mercy and justice. In other words, this would mean that God will inflict His torment only on those who deserve it as per His principles of justice. As far as His mercy is concerned, it is for everyone in this world: people who are alive are alive because of God’s mercy and those who are receiving His sustenance are also indebted to His mercy; whatever the rich and the poor, the king and the commoner, the believer and the disbeliever have is because of God’s grant. However, the mercy that relates to the Hereafter is reserved only for those who fear Him in this world, pay the *zakāh* and specially for those who profess faith in His revelation.

It may be noted that the words are not يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا. They are in fact: وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. This change in style is meant to stress the *mubtadā* ie. specially those people who will profess faith in the revelations God. Those who have knowledge of parallel verses of the Qur’ān may well comprehend that this refers to the covenant made with the Israelites regarding professing faith in future prophets. It is explained in the following verse of Sūrah al-Mā’idah:

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا
لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ
السَّبِيلِ (١٢: ٥)

And God said: “I shall be with you. If you diligently adhere to the prayer, pay the *zakāh* and profess faith in My messengers and help them and keep giving a generous loan to God. If you do this, I shall brush away your mistakes from you and will admit you into orchards below which streams flow.” Then after this he who showed disbelief strayed from the straight path. (5:12)

This covenant was taken about all prophets and messengers who came after Moses (sws). However, it specifically refers the unlettered prophet whose arrival was prophesied by Moses (sws) himself in very clear words, as has been referred to in Sūrah al-Baqarah. In Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is mentioned thus:



وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ^ط
 قَالَ أَأَقْرَضْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذُلِّكُمْ إصْرِي^ط قَالُوا أَفَرَأَيْنَا^ط قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٣: ٨١)

And recall when God took a covenant from them about the prophets: “We gave you the law and wisdom ; then if a messenger comes forth in confirmation of what is before you, you shall profess faith in him and support him.” He asked: “Do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility given to you?” They replied: “We agree to it.” He said: “Then bear witness and I also bear witness with you.” (3:81)

The answer to Moses’ prayer ended in the previous sentence. From here onwards, the Almighty has added His own words to make the discourse relate to the circumstances of the times of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) that who in those times will be connoted by the words: وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. It is thus stated:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْنُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَ يَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ^ط
 فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ^{١١٤} أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

The “unlettered prophet” obviously refers to Prophet Muḥammad (sws). Three words are used here as his attributes and also serve as his introduction: prophet (*nabī*), messenger (*rasūl*) and unlettered (*ummī*). The difference between a prophet and a messenger is that the latter sets up a court of justice of his nation in this world as per whose verdict it is punished or rewarded. He conclusively conveys the truth to his nation to the extent that they are not left with any excuse to deny it. For this reason, if it does not accept faith, it is necessarily destroyed and the messenger and his companions are necessarily given dominance, regardless of whether this takes place in his life or after his passing away. On the other hand, a prophet does have these traits. Viewed thus, every messenger is a prophet but no every prophet is a messenger. Muḥammad (sws) was both a prophet and a messenger.

The word *ummī* (unlettered) has been discussed under verse 20 of Sūrah Āl-i

114. Who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. 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. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed.



‘Imrān.

This word refers to Muḥammad’s link with the Ishmaelites. They were a people devoid of education and religious scriptures. Ever since the departure of Ishmael (sws) no prophet came to them whereas during this time period several prophets arose among the Israelites. Among them, Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) were both prophets and messengers. For this reason, the Israelites called the Ishmaelites as unlettered. They used this word for them not merely as a factual distinction but also as a derogatory title. However, since being uneducated nomads without having any divine book was a fact, for this reason, as will become evident from Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah, the Qur’ān used this word as a title for them. It is evident from certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) too used this word in this connotation and the companions too would use it without any feeling of inferiority. It was as if this was a distinctive title for the Ishmaelites in contrast to the Israelites.

Here the verse refers to the predictions of the arrival of Muḥammad found in the Torah and the Gospel. Some of these exist even in the extant copies of these books. In the exegesis of the earlier *sūrahs*, they have been cited too. They are reproduced below merely to remind our readers. It is evident from these excerpts that the People of the Book were already waiting for a messenger from among the Ishmaelites and this had become a tradition among them:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow brethren. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.” The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow brethren, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. (Deuteronomy, 18:15-19)

It is evident from this that Moses (sws) himself had made it evident to the Israelites that the coming prophet would be from among the Ishmaelites. The reason is that in this context the words “from your brothers” or “from their brothers” can only mean that he shall be from the Ishmaelites. This through the tongue of Moses (sws) was a reiteration of the glad tidings which Abraham (sws) gave of a prophet from the lineage of Ishmael (sws). Details have been presented in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Also evident from this is that he will not merely be a prophet; he will also be a messenger because the words “like me” and “like you” means like Moses (sws) when he was sent as a messenger to the Pharaoh and his nation. Through him, the Israelites were delivered and the Almighty destroyed the Pharaoh and his nation. On similar



lines, Muḥammad (sws) too was sent as a messenger to the Quraysh and to the people of Arabia.

At another place in the Torah, the words are:

The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with thousands of holy ones from the south and on his hand was a fiery *sharī'ah* for them.(Deuteronomy, 33:2)

In my opinion, the expression fiery *sharī'ah* refers to what Jesus (sws) had said: He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire, (Matthew, 3:12). This is precisely the feature stated that we referred to above: a messenger sets up a court of justice for his nation and through him judgement is passed regarding right and wrong.

Isaiah (sws) has prophesied thus:

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not nuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” (42: 1-4)

Jesus (sws) has said:

Jesus said to them, have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” (Matthew, 21:42-44)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17)

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)

Reflect on these prophecies. Jesus (sws) was the last of the Israelite prophets. No



one after him came to the Israelites as a prophet. Then who else except Muḥammad (sws) can be the person predicted in them? Which is the stone that was broken by the builders but it ultimately became the stone placed in the corner? Whose majesty is being reflected in the statement that it will crush everything that falls on it and it will squash everything it falls on? Whose status is being referred to by the words as the chief of the world who will stay with them until eternity and will say to people what Jesus (sws) was not in a position to say. If a person reflects on these prophecies in a just and unbiased way without being obdurate and dismissive, he will cry out that if there is a person who these words predict, it can be none other than Muḥammad (sws). Who else can be the person prophesied in them?

The following words also serve as an introduction to his personality: “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.” The Jews had self-imposed many restrictions and the Almighty too had imposed some on them because of their rebelliousness. All these restrictions could only have been lifted with the advent of the last prophet. Thus it happened that with Muḥammad (sws)’s arrival, they were set free of these burdens but because of their wretchedness, they did not value this favour. I have already discussed this in detail under verses 93 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, verse 5 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah and in the exegesis of Sūrah al-An‘ām. For this reason, I will not go into more details.

The words “thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed,” are an invitation to profess faith in this new messenger to get rid off all restrictions and unnatural burdens. It is their foremost obligation to profess faith in him, introduce others to him, support him against his enemies and follow the light which is the Qur’ān sent down to them from God.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَبِيْعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾¹¹⁵

When the discourse reached the mention of the Prophet (sws), the Israelites were invited through his tongue to profess faith. The words “all of you” mean that he is a messenger for the Ishmaelites, the Israelites as well all Arabs and non-Arabs. In the prophecy mentioned earlier too, it was stated that though the last messenger will be from the Ishmaelites, yet his sphere of jurisdiction would be towards all and all nations of the world will receive a share from his blessings. And it happened that he

115. Say: People! I am sent to all of you as a messenger of the God. The God to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity but Him. He alone gives life and death. So, profess faith in God and in His unlettered prophet, His messenger who believes in God and His words and follows Him that you may be guided.



conclusively conveyed the truth directly to all the Arabs of his times whether they were the Ishmaelites or the Israelites, and also invited the kings of his times to faith. After him, this responsibility of bearing witness to the truth and inviting people to profess faith rests with his followers.

When such is the power and might of God as depicted in the verse, then they should not evade the call of the messenger – whose predictions are mentioned in their own book – on some false pretext or undue arrogance.

The words “who believes in God and His words” hint at what is mentioned in the prophecy of Moses (sws): I will put my words in his mouth and whatever I command him, he will say to his people.

The implication is that they should not think that this invitation towards faith by the messenger is a baseless notion or thought or a desire to impose his superiority and leadership on others; whatever they are being told is from God; the messenger himself professes faith in what he receives from God and invites them to this; he is not saying things from his own self. Moreover, also concealed in these words is the threat that is found in the prophecy mentioned earlier: since it is something God-sent, nothing can be added or subtracted from it by the prophet. On the contrary, if the prophet shows any slackness in this, he will be accountable before God and if people, in spite of this elaborate arrangement, do not realize their obligation towards him, they will be punished.

116 ﴿وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ﴾

It has been mentioned earlier on many occasions that wherever the Qur’ān has severely rebuked and reprimanded the Israelites for breaking their promises, it has also lauded a small group among them that adhered to truth and justice and because of which the Israelites, in spite of their wrongdoings, were continued to be given further respite. Here too this group is referred to. The word أُمَّة is not defined in order to refer to the small number of people in this group.

Also, because of concomitant indications, there is an incomplete verb suppressed before يَهْدُونَ and يَعْدِلُونَ. This is a reference to their scholars and judges who always had among them a group of the righteous. Such people were present in the time of the revelation of these verses as well and viewed Islam with an open mind and proclaimed its veracity. It is these people who will profess faith in Muḥammad (sws). Here they are mentioned for the purpose of encouragement. Also found in it is a subtle indication that the invitation of faith by the prophet will affect the hearts of the righteous among them and they will profess faith in the unlettered prophet.

The insertion (*tadmīn*) that began with the words الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ ends on this verse. From here onwards, the discourse connects to the anecdote that was being narrated earlier.

116. And there has always remained a group of people among the nation of Moses who guides according to the truth and passes judgement according to it.



وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا ۖ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّٰنَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ ۖ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَكُمْ ۖ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَوَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ ۖ وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ ۖ سَنَزِيدُ الْبُحْسِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِم رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

With slight variation, these verses occur in Sūrah al-Baqarah (57-60). They have been fully explained there. The word *أَسْبَاط* has also been discussed in detail under verse 136 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The word *قَطَّعْنَهُمْ* is used positively: the progeny of one father grew and developed as twelve independent families and God made each family grow and develop in the form of nations and communities and in this respect blessed them with favours but they showed ingratitude to each favour.

وَسَأَلْنَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَافِرَةً الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَاعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعْطُونَ قَوْمًا اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعْدَرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَلَبَّاسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَدَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَلَبَّاسُوا عَنَّا عَنَّا مَانَهُوَ عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

117. And We divided them into twelve tribes to make separate groups. And when his nation asked for water from him, We revealed to Moses: “Strike the rock with your staff.” So, twelve springs gushed forth. Each group appointed its place to acquire water. And We made the clouds cast a shadow over them and sent down *mann* and *salwā* to them. Eat these pure things We have given you. And they did not harm Us in any way; in fact, they remained being unjust to their souls only. And recall when they were told: “Dwell in this city and eat in it from wherever you desire and keep asking for forgiveness and enter its gate while bowing your heads. Thus, We shall forgive your sins. We shall bless the thorough with even more favours in future.” Then those among them who were unjust to themselves changed what was said to them by other words. Thus We sent down a torment on them from the heavens because they had remained unjust to themselves.

118. And ask them about the state of affairs of that settlement which was near the sea shore when they would exceed the bounds of God. On day of the Sabbath, their fish would become prominent before them with heads raised and would not come on other days. In this way, We used to test them because they would be disobedient. And recall when one of their groups said: “Why do you counsel people whom God is going to destroy or sternly punish?” They replied: “This is because it becomes from us an excuse before your Lord and so that they can be secure from God’s wrath.” Then when they forgot the thing through which they were reminded of, We



The settlement mentioned here is also referred to in verses 65-66 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The whole incident has been explained there. Here I will take up only those things which were not explained there.

The interrogative expression “and ask them” reflects rage and rebuke. The implication is that in spite of their mischief and misdeeds, they do not desist from their arrogant claims of piety and regard themselves to be the favoured ones of God, then they should be asked of the city that violated the sanctity of the Sabbath and as a result God made them an exemplary lesson.

The Qur’ān has not mentioned anything more about this city than that it was near the sea. The Torah also does not mention it. However, the way the Qur’ān has mentioned it shows that the Jews who lived at the time of the Qur’ān’s revelation knew it as a known tradition among them. Thus in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is mentioned hence: **وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ**: (and you know those among you who exceeded the bounds of God in the matter of the Sabbath). Obviously, these words can only be uttered directly to the Jews about a thing that is famous among them.

Some people say that it was a city near Ilāh or ‘Aqabah. This inference could be correct. Cities that are situated near the sea become centre of trade activities if their location is appropriate and develop a lot. Since ancient times, ‘Aqabah had great significance in the history of the Israelites. In the times of the Prophet Solomon (sws), it was the principal port for his fleets.

It is evident from the usage of the word **الْقَرْيَةِ** that just as it is used for small villages, it is also used for large cities.

The word **شُرَاع** is the plural of **شارعة**. When this word is used for spears, it means those carried vertically. Here it is used for fish. Thus it meant fish that have raised their heads. If a person stands at the side of a pond containing fish that have been reared, he will see this majestic view at the time when they appear: fish will be seen with their heads raised above water as if carrying vertical spears. At sea-side places of hunting, this view must be even more fantastic and enchanting. In the *sharī‘ah* of the Jews, they were prohibited to work and hunt on the Sabbath (Saturday). However, they could not contain themselves. They invented various subterfuges to catch fish on Saturday. It is the practice of God that when a nation becomes adamant on disobedience and does not desist even after the good people among them try to stop it, then its trial toughens from one degree to another. This happens by it reaching the extent of utter defiance and becoming worthy of punishment. Thus God created this situation for the Israelites. On week days, these fish would not be seen or seen very little but on the Sabbath it would seem that they appeared in arrays and processions.

delivered those who were forbidding from evil. And those who had been unjust to themselves, We seized them in a stern punishment because they continued to be disobedient. So when with rebelliousness they continued to do precisely that from which they had been forbidden, We said to them: “Go, turn into despicable monkeys.”



This would incite the greed of the Israelites even more. It is well-known that a person begins to want more the things he is forbidden and desires at times blind a person. When a person is overcome with desire, he is not able to see clearly. It is a known fact that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. The Israelites because of their evil ways became entangled in this double trial and then went so far in it that they did not receive warning of even God’s torment, let alone the advice and counsel of the pious. Ultimately, God inflicted His curse on them.

Under verse 94 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah, it has been explained that just as restrictions were imposed on the Israelites regarding Sabbath, similarly, Muslims were stopped from hunting land animals when they were wearing *ihrām* and were advised to protect themselves from such trials as ones the Israelites were afflicted with and ended up being destroyed. The verse reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَاءَلْ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَمِمَّا حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ اللَّهُ مَن يَخَافُهُ بِالْغَيْبِ
فَمَن اعْتَذَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٥: ٩٤)

Believers! God will test you through a prey which will be accessible to your hands and spears so that God may see who fears Him without observing. Then they who transgressed the bounds prescribed by God even after this admonition, for them there is a woeful punishment. (5:94)

If the expressions *تَنَاءَلْ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَمِمَّا حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ* and *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ* are reflected upon, their similarity will become evident.

It is evident from the words “and recall when one of their groups said ...,” the people of that settlement had adopted this unfortunate opinion even after they had been advised against it by their well-wishers. It was not that such people were not present there. Such servants of God were there who not only tried to stop them from this wrongdoing but also went to this extent in doing this that a group from among them regarded this exercise to be a fruitless one, as cited in later words. However, these people did not accept this view and replied that they will continue with their counsel; if these people do not understand, they will at least be able their obligation before God and contended that it may well be that they do understand. If they do, then this is precisely what is needed.

This also ascertains the extent of responsibility which is imposed on every believer in enjoining good to others and in stopping them from evil. It becomes evident that there never comes a phase in this process when those who counsel think that they have fulfilled their responsibility and they should leave the rejecters to face the torment. In fact, they should continue with this counsel and advice until their last breath even if a single soul does not value it. It is such people who would be considered absolved of their responsibility when they face God. Those who may not indulge in evil but



remain unconcerned about the good and evil choices made by others will not be absolved before God. Insha’ Allāh, this topic will be discussed in detail under verse 25 of Sūrah Anfāl.

Also evident from the verse under discussion is that when the Almighty punishes people for their collected misdeeds, only those people are secured from it who stop people from evil.

The curse of turning them into monkeys is also mentioned in verse 65 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 61 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. A curse is severer than that punishment which destroys a nation. This is because the consequence of a curse is that it keeps a nation alive but this life is that of disgrace and humiliation. I have explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah that such was the nature of the curse on this settlement that they became an example of God's wrath for the onlookers.

وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ لِيُبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّكَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾

The word تَأَذَّن means to inform someone of one's decisive verdict. The warning mentioned in the verse was given to them by Moses (sws) a number of times and so did the later prophets in very vehement words.

Thus it is mentioned in the book of Leviticus:

But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you. (26:14-17)

Similarly, in the book of Deuteronomy, it is stated:

Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. (28:32)

The practical corroboration of this verdict of God is found in the annals of history. One can read the accounts of Nebuchadnezzar, Titus and Hitler. In every phase of history, the disgrace suffered by the Israelites can be seen in tantalizing words. It should be kept in mind that any intermediate respite given to them does not change the law of God. In fact, the style of the Qur'ān itself shows that they will be granted such periods of respite. However, each period of lull would be a prelude to a new calamity.

119. And recall when your Lord decided that until the Day of Judgement, He will keep raising against them people who would inflict them with extremely cruel punishments. Indeed, your Lord is very swift in retribution and indeed is Forgiving and Merciful.



Today they are gathered in the blessed land of Palestine. This is only a temporary phase after which they will face a new form of punishment. More details of this will be found in the explanation of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.

In the last part of the verse the nature of this divine verdict is reflected through God’s attributes: none should think that God is unconcerned with the affairs of this world. Those who deviate from the path prescribed by Him are severely punished and He is very merciful and forgiving to those who turn to Him. The reason that it is said that God is swift in His retribution is to warn people who think that if there is a delay in it, then it means it is not going to happen at all. The implication is that none should remain under any misconception because of this respite given by God. When He seizes people, He does it in the blink of an eye and those who are seized also experience its extreme swiftness.

120 ﴿وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمَاً مِنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَبَلَوْنَهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ﴾

Contrary to its positive connotation in verse 160, here the word قَطَّعْنَهُمْ is used to point to their disorganized and chaotic circumstances. The way Moses (sws) organized the Israelites reached its pinnacle in the times of David (sws) and Solomon (sws). After Solomon (sws), their organized and systematic state began to weaken and gradually the situation became so precarious that the Jews even lost their centre. They became divided into many groups and scattered to various parts of the world. Though in their individual capacity, there were both good and bad people among them but they become devoid of the traits that were necessary for a nation to develop and prosper. God, in accordance with His established practice, tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they turn to Him. Yet, they were so overcome by their desires that their personal resolve and determination were paralyzed. In spite of knowing that they are indulging in wrongdoing, they continued with it and would deceive their conscience by thinking that they are progeny of God’s favoured ones and hence will be forgiven by Him.

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ط وَالْأُولَآئِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ 121 ﴿﴾

120. And We scattered them in the land in the form of various groups. Among them, some are pious and some otherwise also. And We tested them through good and bad circumstances so that they may take heed.

121. Then, after them such people became inheritors of the Book of God who reap the provision of this world and say: “And we shall be forgiven for everything.” And if they are



The word حُف means “unworthy descendents.” This refers to the gradual decadence of the Jews. They became morally corrupt as days passed. Even if something pricked their conscience because they orally laid claims to God’s book, they would lull it to sleep through the lullaby of false desires. They nurtured their hearts with these baseless desires: they think that they are chosen people, children of prophets like Abraham (sws), Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws), the fire of Hell will not touch them and that God would forgive them in deference to His favoured servants. In this way, they have compromised their faith and conscience so much that they continue to indulge in evil one after the other. It is because of this wretched behaviour on their part that further ahead in the *sūrah*, they are compared to dogs whose tongues continue to dangle out of their mouths whether they are scolded or not.

It has been referred to in verse 145 earlier and repeatedly mentioned in the Torah too that about the Torah they had repeatedly given their word that they would fully follow what was written in it, not deviate from its teachings and not wrongly ascribe anything to God. When this was so, why did they end up doing exactly what they committed not to?

The word درس has been discussed in detail in verse 105 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. Its real meaning is “to become dim.” When a book is read repeatedly and that too by sliding a finger over its lines, it becomes dim.

Here it is used derisively for the Jews that while reading the Book they have made it dim and faint, but even after reading it so many times they could not grasp its message.

The last part of the verse refers to the fact these slaves of this world have become indifferent to the dictates of their Book and become involved in this world to such an extent that they have no idea of the favours of the hereafter. The fact is that these favours are the real thing but these foolish people have no sense.

122 ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُسَيِّئُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَآقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نَضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ﴾

The words تَسِيئُكَ and تَسِيئُكَ have the same meaning: “to strongly hold something.” In the light of the previous verse, this verse means that these unfortunate people have taken to following their desires while leaving aside the Book of God, whereas their attitude should have been different: those who strongly adhere to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer are ones who reform the character and conduct of people and God

given a similar provision once again, they will grab it as well. Was not a promise taken from them about the Book that they will ascribe nothing but the truth to God? And have they even thoroughly read whatever is in it. And the Hereafter is better for those who fear God. Then do you not understand?

122. And those who strongly hold on to the Book of God and are diligent in the prayer, then We will not waste the reward of the reformers..



will not waste the reward of such reformers. Diligence in the prayer is mentioned here a sign of strongly adhering to the Book and this is also something which guards God’s covenant. In my opinion, this verse sounds an encouragement to a small group among the People of the Book who adhered to the truth in spite of the general decadence around them. It was this group which later professed faith in the last prophet.

123 ﴿وَإِذْ تَبْتَغَيْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝﴾

This verse has been explained under verse 63 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It refers to the covenant taken from the Jews to strongly hold on to the Book of God. It was taken in the valley of the mountain and on this occasion God had made them observe His might and splendour so that they keep in mind that the God with whom they are making a promise has tremendous power. However, they forgot everything in following their desires.

Section VIII: Verses (172-206)

The *sūrah* ends on this section. It has been pointed out in the introduction that its real addressees are the Quraysh. First they are narrated the accounts of the past nations of their land. After that the history of the Israelites – who were present before them – is also recounted. The purpose of narrating the accounts of these nations is to show that the creator of the heavens and the earth is not unconcerned about the affairs of this world. He has been sending His messengers to guide people. Whenever these messengers came, they set up His court of justice on this earth. Nations who denied their respective messengers were destroyed and those who attested to them were successful. The Quraysh now face this decisive phase.

On verse 171, the series of historical anecdotes ended.

From here, the Quraysh are addressed and first reminded of the covenant found in human nature. It was made by with all the progeny of Adam (sws) by the Almighty regarding His oneness and providence. On its bases, the Quraysh are conclusively told that they can never present an excuse before God that they were not aware of it. Not only was this covenant made, a messenger of God has now been sent to remind them of it. It should be kept in mind that the Arabs were unlettered in the sense that they had not received any divine scripture. For this reason, debate with them could either have been based on the history well-known to them or on the obvious facts drawn from human nature and intellect. Thus first, their history was recounted to them in the

123. And recall when We suspended the mountain above them as if it were a canopy and they thought that it was about to fall upon them. “Hold fast to what We have bestowed on you and remember whatever is in it so that you remain secure from God’s wrath.”



right way and now the discourse has turned to human nature and intellect.

After they are reminded of the above-mentioned covenant, the example of the Israelites is presented before them. They are told that like these Israelites, they should not show ingratitude to God's favour. The Israelites did not value it and adopted a thankless attitude. God always wanted to lift them, but they were always inclined to lowliness. Just as how a dog's tongue dangles from his tongue whether one expresses love for him or scold him, for the Israelites, warning them and showing favour is the same.

After that, they are asked to value the gifts of eyes, ears, hearts and minds they have and are invited to use them in the right way. They must not tow just one line in religion by saying that they will worship whatever their forefathers used to without using their intellect. They should bear in mind that people who do not use the abilities of their head and heart and the faculties of their hearing and sight and in spite of being reminded continue to fall down are consigned to Hell by the Almighty.

After that, the attention of the Quraysh is directed towards the Prophet (sws). They are told that the person who is informing them of an imminent great danger is not mad or possessed. If they reflect on the system of the universe, their intellect will bear witness that this world is not meant to be a place of mere amusement or entertainment. It has been created with a very wise purpose. So it may well be that the time of the decision the Prophet (sws) is informing them is near at hand. If he is not able to tell them about its exact time of arrival, it does not mean that it is not certain to come. A prophet is not aware of the future; he is only a bearer of glad tidings and warnings.

After that, sorrow is expressed on human beings that while they receive all favours from God, they thank and appreciate others. They associate such partners with God who can neither benefit nor harm them.

At the end, the Prophet (sws) is urged to be steadfast in the wake of the nonsensical statements of his opponents and their baseless objections. He is then told what can become a means for him to attaining this resolve and perseverance.

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

Text and Translation

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ؕ قَالُوا بَلَى ؕ شَهِدْنَا ؕ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ؕ أَتَتَّهَلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْبُاطِلُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ الْأَيَّاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَآتِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الذِّمَى اتَيْنَاهُ أَيَّتَنَّا فَأَنسَلَخْ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ ؕ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ؕ إِنْ تَحِيلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرَكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ؕ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ؕ



فَأَقْصَصَ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنفُسُهُمْ كَانُوا بِظُلُمٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾ مِّنْ يَّهْدِي اللَّهُ فَهُوَ أَنْتَهَدِي ۖ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ ۖ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ أَنفُسٌ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ بِهَا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانُوا لَنَا نَعَامًا ۖ بَلْ هُمْ أَصْلٌ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَبِاللَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِيٓ أَسْمَائِهِ ۖ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةً يَّهْدِيهِمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَأُمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ۖ إِن كِيدِيٓ مَتِينٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا ۚ مَا بِصَاحِبِهِم مِّنْ جَنَّةٍ ۖ إِن هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ وَأَنْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ ۖ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ ٓأَيِّ مَنُونٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾ مَّنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ ۖ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسُهَا ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي ۖ لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمُ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۖ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ خَافِيٌۢ عَنْهَا ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنِ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَا سْتَكْتَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَبِيرِ ۖ وَمَا مَسَّنِي السُّوءُ ۖ إِن أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ ۖ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّلْقَوْمِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا ۖ فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَبَلٌ مُّخْمَلٌ ۖ فَفَرَّتْ بِهِ ۖ فَلَئِمَّا أَتَقَلَّتْ دَعَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهَا لَبِنِ أَتَيْتَنَّا صَالِحًا لَّتَكُونَ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهُ شُرَكَاءَ فَيُبَايِعُتَاهُمَا ۖ فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ أَيُشْرِكُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلَا أَنفُسُهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ ۖ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدَعَوْتُهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتُمْ صَامِتُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ أَنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ أَلَهُمْ أَزْجَلٌ يَّشْهَوْنَ بِهَا ۖ أَمْ لَهُمْ آيْدٌ يَّبْتَطِشُونَ بِهَا ۖ أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۖ أَمْ لَهُمْ أَذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ قُلْ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيدُوا ۖ فَلَا تُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ إِنَّ وَلِيََّ اللَّهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ ۖ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنفُسُهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَسْمَعُوا ۖ وَتَرَاهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٦٨﴾ خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ وَإِن يَنْزَعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ ۖ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ سَيَعِزُّكَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ



الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَيفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوهُمْ فِي النَّعْيِ ثُمَّ لَا يَقْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِنْ رَبِّي هَذَا بَصَإِيرٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾ وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيُسَبِّحُونََهُ وَلَهُ يُسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

And remember when your Lord had brought forth from the loins of Adam 's children their progeny and had made them testify to themselves. He had asked: "Am I not your Lord?" They replied: "Yes, You are our Lord and We bear witness to it." This We did lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: "We remained unaware of this," or present this excuse: "Our forefathers had already adopted polytheism and we later became their children; then, will You destroy us on account of what these wrongdoers did?" And, in this way, We explain Our revelations so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth and so that they may turn to the right path. (172-174)

And narrate to them the account of the person to whom We had given Our revelations. But he ran away from them. The result was that Satan pursued him until he ended up among those who had gone astray. And if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires. Thus his example is like that of a dog: if you snub it, it pants or if you leave it alone, it still pants. This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations. So, narrate their anecdote so that they may reflect. What an evil parable is it of the nation which denied Our revelations and continued to be unjust to its own self. Those whom God guides are the ones who are guided. And those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers. (175-178)

And We have created many among the jinn and men for Hell. They have hearts through which they do not understand; they have eyes through which they do not see; they have ears through which they do not hear. They are like animals. In fact, they are even more misguided. It is these people who are totally heedless. And God has only good attributes. So, call Him by these only and leave aside those who are adopting a wrong attitude about these attributes. Whatever they are doing, they will soon receive its due. And amongst those We have created, there also is a group that has been guiding people according to the truth and also passing judgement according to it. And those who have denied Our revelations, We are leading them to destruction from where they cannot even know. And I am continuing to grant them reprieve because My strategy is very secure. (179-183)

Have they not reflected that their companion is not inflicted with any lunacy? He is



only an open warner. Have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near? So, after this, in what word will they profess faith? None can guide those whom God leads astray. He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness. They ask you about the Judgement Day: “When at last will it arrive?” Say: Its knowledge rests with my Lord alone. Only He will bare it at its appointed time. The heavens and the earth are burdened with it. It will come upon you suddenly. They ask you as if you have researched into it. Say: Its knowledge rests with God alone, but most people do not know this fact. Say: I do not have any authority to benefit or to harm even my own self except what God intends. And had I been aware of all the unseen, I would have gathered a big treasure of good and no harm would have ever come to me. I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith. (184-188)

It is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it. So when the man overspreads the woman, she bears a slight burden. Then she keeps moving about with it for some time. So when she becomes burdened, both pray to God, their Lord: “If You grant us a healthy child, we shall certainly remain among those grateful to You.” But when God gives them healthy children, they associate others in what they have been blessed with. Exalted is God from the things they associate. Do they associate those who do not create anything; in fact, are created themselves! And neither can they help them in any way nor their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not come after you. Whether you call them or remain silent, it is the same. Whomsoever you call besides God are people like you. So call them; they should reply to you, if you are truthful. Do they have feet with which they walk? Do they have hands with which they grasp? Do they have eyes with which they see? Do they have ears with which they hear? Say: Bring all your partners you associate with God. Then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite. My guardian is God Who has revealed this Book and He is the guardian of the righteous. And those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not hear what you say. And it seems to you that they are looking towards you; yet in reality they see nothing. Forgive, enjoin good and pay no heed to the ignorant. And if you feel any temptation from Satan, seek refuge with God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. Those who are God-fearing, when they are tempted by Satan in any way they direct their attention to God and their hearts light up at once. And those who are brothers of these who do not fear God, they only increase them in error; then they do not relent in this in any way. (189-202)

And when you do not bring a sign to them, they say: “Why did you not fabricate it?” Say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord. These are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe. And when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be



shown mercy. (203-204)

And remember your Lord morning and evening in your heart with humility and with fear and in a low voice and do not be among those who are indifferent. Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only. (205-206)

Explanation

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ أَكُنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ ؕ قَالُوا بَلَى ؕ شَهِدْنَا ؕ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِمَّنْ بَعْدَهُمْ ؕ فَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْبَاطِلُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ الْآيَاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ¹²⁴ ﴿١٤٤﴾

The word إِذ also serves to remind people of an incident that they accept as a certain happening regardless of having forgotten it or having deviated from it. Moreover, in the presence of concomitant indications an address in the singular encompasses plurality. In such cases, the speaker is addressing every person of the group individually.

In the expression: مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ, the words مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ are a *badal* (permutative) from مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ. It is evident from this that this incident does not relate to Adam's progeny belonging to a certain era. On the contrary, it relates to all his progeny that will be born until the Day of Judgement and was done at the time before these spirits were blown into their bodies.

It is evident from these verses that God did not take a promise from the progeny of Adam (sws) that merely he was their God; He asked them to accept him as their Lord (*rabb*) also. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs never rejected him being God; however, they had many Lords besides God even though in this pledge they had acknowledged the providence of God alone.

In the expression: أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ, a word to the effect كراهة (lest) is suppressed before أَنْ. Thus its precise translation would be: lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: “we remained unaware of this.”

It is evident from this that as far as monotheism and obvious innate guidance provided by human nature are concerned, every person will be held accountable about

124. And remember when your Lord had brought forth from the loins of Adam's children their progeny and had made them testify to themselves. He had asked: “Am I not your Lord?” They replied: “Yes, You are our Lord and We bear witness to it.” This We did lest you should present this excuse on the Day of Judgement: “We remained unaware of this,” or present this excuse: “Our forefathers had already adopted polytheism and we later became their children; then, will You destroy us on account of what these wrongdoers did?” And, in this way, We explain Our revelations so that they are left with no excuse to deny the truth and so that they may turn to the right path.



them on the basis of the afore-mentioned pledge whether he has received the message of a prophet or not. In case he did, it will be a further burden of proof on him and his accountability will become two-fold. However, if this was not the case, then a person will not have an excuse regarding the obvious innate guidance he was provided by his nature.

Similarly, ancestral polytheism will not be accepted as an excuse from a person. In other words, if polytheism is an obvious reality found in one's nature, any external excuse against it will not be acceptable.

In the last of the above quoted verses, the coordinated clause of *وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ* is suppressed. If this is taken into account, the translation of the verse would be: "In this way are We explaining our revelations so that We can conclusively convey the truth to people and so that after this explanation those who want to repent from polytheism can do so." In other words, after taking this pledge from mankind, the Almighty has further looked upon them with favour by narrating to them the details of this pledge so that those who want to rectify their mistake can do so and those who want to be adamant on their stubbornness should regard themselves responsible of its consequences and not blame anyone else.

The Qur'ān has mentioned this incident as a real happening and explained its significance that as far as God's providence is concerned, everyone will be held accountable before God on the basis of this pledge. Considering this significance, a question arises: do people have any recollection of such an incident? If not, then how can it be accepted that human beings did in fact make such a pledge and on its basis they will be held accountable before God regarding monotheism.

The answer to this question is that as far as this pledge is concerned, its cognizance is found within human nature. However, if human beings do not remember its time and location, then this does not mean that the pledge never took place. At most what a person can say is that he remembers the pledge but does not remember its occasion. So, God has informed him of this occasion: before human beings were born, they made this pledge with God in the unseen world (*'ālam al-ghayb*). And only God could have informed them of this because only He knows the unseen world. Since human beings have remembrance of this pledge in their nature, it is sufficient to be used as a conclusive proof against them.

A further question arises here: if from the very beginning human beings were aware of this pledge, then its consequence should have been that after creation human beings should have worshipped one God. On the contrary, our modern philosophers say that human beings began their religion with polytheism. The manifestation of various calamities created a fear in them of various unseen forces. This fear led them to worship these unseen forces. So, they started to worship them. Then gradually they grew in knowledge and this led them to an abandonment of these hypothetical deities and acceptance of one God. I have refuted this view of these philosophers in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah and presented even more details in my book "Essence of



Polytheism.” In my opinion, this logic presented by them totally lacks logic. I have shown on both these instances that fear is the name given to an emotion that arises because of a possibility of losing something that a person has and is also dear to him. This proves that the awareness of favours and their provider and the zeal to express gratitude for them comes before fear and the factors that cause it. For this reason, human beings did not begin their religion on the basis of fear; they, in fact, began it by thanking their Lord for His favours and by worshipping Him. However, later because of various causes – as referred to in my above book – they deviated from this straight path and stumbled into various side-tracks.

One group says that when a person is born, his nature is like a clean slate. Whatever is written on this slate is written later once his cognizance develops and is added merely because of the effects and influences of his environment on him. However, this is an absolutely wrong view. The question is: what is the origin of the effects and influences of his environment? Whatever good and bad traditions and currents are found in the environment are themselves the consequence of human nature itself. What purely arise through his nature are good, just and universally acknowledged facts. However, if these pure things are overcome by unbridled desires of human beings, they become evil. The unbalanced and crooked approach about God too has arisen from here. In true human nature, there exists only the acknowledgement of a single God. The monotheists and polytheists of the world are united thus far. Hence no argument is needed for it. However, the onus of proof for the existence of other deities lies with the proponents of polytheism. Thus the Qur’ān has demanded from them on many occasions to produce any proof of their self-styled deities.

The whole philosophy of the Qur’ān is based on human nature. It claims that whatever beliefs and deeds it instructs people about and whatever sins it stops people from are not externally imposed on them. They are only reminded of what is already innately found in their nature. However, in order to acquire immediate gains and pleasures, they have ignored this ingrained guidance. For this reason, the Qur’ān calls itself *ذِكْرٌ* (reminder) and *ذِكْرٌ* (reminder) and regards its teachings to be *تَذَكُّيرٌ* (reminder).

These are all undeniable facts. However, today the magic of Marx and Freud has mesmerized people. People have been blinded by their baseless views so much that they only regard a human being to be an amalgam of hunger and sexual desires. In their view, all the philosophy and ideology of human beings revolve around these two things. Religion and morality have been moulded on these two aspects by Marx and Freud. In this way, people who were already slaves to the cravings of food and sex have been provide with two guides they proudly cite in their favour.

وَإِثْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَدَّ مِنْهَا فَاَتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْعَوِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَ لَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ۖ إِنْ تَحِيلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ



الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ وَأَنفُسُهُمْ كَانُوا
يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ مَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدَىٰ ۖ وَمَن يُضِلِّ ۖ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

Though the word الَّذِي primarily connotes a defined entity but in parables it is not essential that it refer to a particular person that exists physically. A speaker in fact imagines the person whose parable he wants to cite in his mind and then mentions a certain description that also fully applies to that person. Since only a portrayal of the incident is meant, eloquence demands that he be mentioned as a defined entity. This transforms the parable into the portrayal of a particular personality to the listener as if he has not merely heard about him; he has also observed him. Here this demonstrative pronoun refers to the Jews as a nation. They are compared to a person who was blessed by God with His signs. However, they did not duly value them and ignored them. As a result in accordance with God's established practice, devils are deputed on them and they are led astray. Thus in verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, it is said: وَمَنْ يَنْشُ ۖ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ يَقْنِصْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ كَذَّابٌ ۖ ۞¹²⁵ The fact that this is not a mention of a known person and is a parable of a nation that has denied God's signs is evident from the words of the verse itself: "This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations."¹²⁷ So, as contended by some exegetes, this pronoun is not meant for some Bal'ām ibn Bā'awrā'.¹²⁸ There was none by this name among the Jews. It is evident from the account narrated earlier about the Jews that the whole nation was Bal'ām ibn Bā'awrā'. The word إِنْسَلَخَ means "to take off one's clothes and become naked." The expression إِنْسَلَخَ مِنْ ثِيَابِهِ refers to the fact that the Almighty blessed them with a royal robe but they stripped themselves of it and became naked.

Consider the words: "and if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires." The expression أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الشَّيْءِ means to bend and incline towards something in such a way that a person becomes infatuated with it. The words actually refer to God's established

125. And narrate to them the account of the person to whom We had given Our revelations. But he ran away from them. The result was that Satan pursued him until he ended up among those who had gone astray. And if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires. Thus his example is like that of a dog: if you snub it, it pants or if you leave it alone, it still pants. This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations. So, narrate their anecdote so that they may reflect. What an evil parable is it of the nation which denied Our revelations and continued to be unjust to its own self. Those whom God guides are the ones who are guided. And those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers.

126. And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion.

127. The parable will be discussed further under verses 91-92 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

128. See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 267.



practice regarding providing guidance: if people value the signs blessed to them by God, they are given success in worldly and religious affairs through them. Their intellects and souls are elevated. However, people who follow their own desires even after being blessed with these signs and walk like hounds by smelling the ground are consigned to their desires by God and Satan gets the better of them.

Next the verses state a parable that depicts their continuous inclination towards lowliness and following their desires. Readers may note how effective and appropriate this parable is. It is stated in verses 168-169 earlier how the Almighty tested them through His favours as well as His warnings. However, they were so helpless because of their desires that neither did the favours nor did the warnings have any impact on them. Every instance of greed made them stumble. This situation of theirs resembles a dog. A dog never walks with its head held straight. It always walks while smelling the earth. In search of food, its nose evaluates every fair or foul thing it comes across. Its guide is not his eye but his nose which acts like its radar for quenching hunger. Moreover, another trait that a dog has is that its tongue is always protruding from his mouth. In this way, it becomes a picture of greed and meanness. Whether someone pats him or shoves him away, it continues to remain in this state. Similarly, whether it is hungry or fully satiated, there is no change in its state. Dogs which are well kept and treated royally in all respects are no different too. The Qur’ān says that the state of the Jews is no different. They have no self-control. Their volition has totally deserted them. They have become slaves to their desires. Voracity and meanness has become their second nature. Outwardly, they are like human beings; but inwardly their instincts are the same as that of dogs.

The expression *تَحِيلَ عَلَيْهِ* implies *تَحِيلَ الْعَصَا عَلَيْهِ* (you lift a stick on it) or *تَحِيلَ الْحِجَرِ عَلَيْهِ* (you life stones on it). The word *يلهث* means to extend the tongue out of the mouth and is mostly used for dogs

As indicated earlier, this parable of the Jews is recounted before the Quraysh and the purpose is induce them to value the favour that was being bestowed to them in the form of the last *sharī‘ah*. Instead of valuing it, they were disregarding it. In other words, the Prophet (sws) was directed to narrate the state of the affairs of the nation who denied God’s revelations. God blessed them with these revelations because He wants to grant them success provided they value these revelations, follow them and are guided by them. If they do not value them and remain a slave to their desires, they will meet the same fate as that of the Jews.

A nation that denies God’s revelations because of its desires becomes wretched and heedless. Its example is very evil and horrible and the Quraysh should not follow it. Those who follow it will not harm God’s revelation in any way. They only harm their own selves. This deplorable attitude will only lead them to their own humiliation.

The words “those whom God guides are the ones who are guided; and those He leads astray are the ones who end up as losers” on the one hand sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and on the other warn the Quraysh. In other words, only they will be



guided who are blessed by God with the urge to seek guidance and this urge only arises in those people who want to be guided and use their God-given abilities. People who follow their desires and shut their eyes and ignore the calls of their mind and heart are left by God to wander about. It is these people who are the real unfortunate ones.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ ۚ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۚ وَلَهُمْ أَذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

The verse says that people who deprive themselves of guidance ultimately become the firewood of Hell. The understanding, seeing and hearing mentioned in the verse refer to their essence. In other words, they used expended all their abilities and faculties in following their desires and anything besides it they never paid heed to. Thus they are like animals. This is because just as animals confine their efforts to satisfy the needs of their bodies, in a similar way, their endeavours too are restricted to their material needs and desires. They are less sensible than animals because animals at least take advantage of all the abilities found in their instincts and leave no stone unturned in this regard. On the other hand, human beings not only do not take real advantage of the higher abilities which the Almighty has bestowed on them, they also at times end up doing things which even an ox or a donkey would not do. For example, human beings in spite of being human beings become so foolish and silly that they start worshipping trees, stones and animals but an ox or a donkey can never be so imprudent. The Qur'ān states that it is such people who are not aware in the real sense because even animals are not inflicted with this unawareness.

It is evident from this that if the Almighty has said that He has created people to consign them to Hell, it does not mean that since birth they are destined for this evil abode. On the contrary, when they are born, they are given the ability to think, understand, see and hear. The principle He enunciated was that those who use these abilities correctly will be guided by Him to Paradise and others will be sent to Hell. It may be kept in mind that this is basically a warning to the Quraysh.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۚ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

This verse relates to verse 172 in which the pledge of monotheism found in human nature is mentioned. In between, people who did not value the revelations of God

129. And We have created many among the jinn and men for Hell. They have hearts through which they do not understand; they have eyes through which they do not see; they have ears through which they do not hear. They are like animals. In fact, they are even more misguided. It is these people who are totally heedless.

130. And God has only good attributes. So, call Him by these only and leave aside those who are adopting a wrong attitude about these attributes. Whatever they are doing, they will soon receive its due.



were referred to and became blind and deaf in spite of receiving some grand abilities from God.

It is said that those who have adopted a deviant attitude regarding the attributes of God, ascribe partners to Him or assign sons and daughters to Him negate His attributes of power, knowledge and peerlessness. Only those attributes should be ascribed to God that are in accordance with Him being one and only. No such attribute should be ascribed to Him that equates Him with His creation

The word يُجِدُّونَ is used here to connote disrespect to the attributes of God. The implication is that they ascribe names and attributes to God which are not befitting for His majesty in any way, which are derisive to His being and attributes and from which He is exalted and beyond.

Leaving such people alone means to consign their matter to God. They will soon encounter punishment for what they are doing.

131 ﴿وَمِنْ خَلْقِنَا أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ﴾

The verse implies that everyone is not the same in God's creatures. If, on the one hand, there are the blind and the deaf as mentioned earlier, then on the other hand there are those who use their intellect, recognize the truth, guide people according to it and also decide matters in its light. Just as earlier in verse 159, the good souls among the Israelites are mentioned and encouraged, in a similar way, here after saying that many people have been created for Hell because of their own ill-ways, some good souls are pointed to. In other words, amongst a decadent lot, some pious people who tread the path of truth also exist who ultimately were able to accept faith.

132 ﴿وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ ﴿وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ﴾ ﴿إِن كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ﴾

This is a further explanation of the warning sounded in verse 180 to those who were denying God's revelations. If these people are being given respite, they should not think that they are beyond God's grasp. This respite is being given to them so that fully indulge in their misdeeds and are left with no excuse for clemency. When a fisherman has full confidence in himself, he gives the fish reprieve to the ultimate extent. The fish thinks that it has won the day whereas the fisherman continues to give it respite because he knows that however much it may exert, it will never be able to escape his grasp. However much it may swim about will not help it flee from his hold. On the contrary, all its efforts will make it so tired that finally it will end up on the

131. And amongst those We have created, there also is a group that has been guiding people according to the truth and also passing judgement according to it.

132. And those who have denied Our revelations, We are leading them to destruction from where they cannot even know. And I am continuing to grant them reprieve because My strategy is very secure.



shore, haggard and exhausted. Similar is the case with God’s planning. His plans are bound to materialize and His grasp is inescapable. No one can run away from His control. For this reason, He continues to give respite to people in spite of their rebelliousness. The rebellious think that they have succeeded in their plans whereas the more they try to run away, the closer they come to their own destruction. Only he who fears that his planning may fail is in a hurry. But he who is going to hit the bulls eye and hunt down his target come what may does not need to show haste.

The word *استدرجه* means to gradually be deceived. This is the greatest trial of God and is inflicted upon those who rebel against Him.

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۖ إِن هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣٣﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَكْرُوتِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَأَنْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجْلُهُمْ ۖ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ مَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلاَ هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

The word *صاحبه* refers to Prophet Muḥammad (sws). It is used to direct the attention of the Quraysh that this prophet of God is not a stranger to them. In fact, he is their everyday companion. His childhood and adult age were spent among them and with them. They have seen and tested him in every period and at every stage and he was tried in all sorts of circumstances. Why then do they not reflect that how can this person who was the best among them in uprightness, veracity, selflessness, purity, determination and wisdom has suddenly gone mad and crazy? What have they seen in him that resembles madmen and lunatics? The fact is that he is not mad and crazy at all. Just as a naked warned in their times while standing at an elevated place would sound alarm in case of any enemy attack, in the same way, the Prophet (sws) is an open warner from God who is warning them of their future and the punishment that will befall them. He is so concerned and worried about them that he is trying day and night to convince them to reflect on the truth. He is not doing this because there is some kink in his mind but because he is observing a huge danger lurking over their heads. On the other hand, because of their lack of insight they are not able to see this imminent danger. It is not madness but real awareness of the truth and profound love for his people that has made him so worried about them. It is their extreme foolishness, cruelty and ingratitude that they regard him to be mad and crazy.

It may be kept in mind that if the Quraysh called the Prophet (sws) to be mad, then it was not because they actually thought so. How can the intelligent among them be so

133. Have they not reflected that their companion is not inflicted with any lunacy? He is only an open warner. Have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near? So, after this, in what word will they profess faith? None can guide those whom God leads astray. He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness.



naïve as to regard someone who was an embodiment of solemnity and intellect to be so? Moreover, if they had said so with their hearts, who would have believed them? In reality, the leaders of the Quraysh thought it strange that the Prophet (sws) warn them day and night of the punishment – which was necessarily to visit them in accordance with God’s established practice regarding those who deny their messengers. They could not comprehend how and why could such a punishment befall them. On the other hand, they could also not ignore the vehement and fervent way in which a person of high character and conduct would warn them with such conviction and certainty of its imminent arrival. They had to come up with an interpretation of this. Their own political standing also needed an interpretation because those among them who were uninitiated and were not inflicted with any arrogance were bound to get impacted by his selfless sympathy and concern. It was to do away with this impact and maintain their own political awe and authority that they floated this hoax: just as a fairly normal person, sometimes gets afflicted by craze and lunacy, becomes infatuated with delusions and is controlled by this madness, in a similar way, he too has become delusive; he is deceived by his mental state in thinking that a punishment is going to visit his people. So, the Quraysh would imply that people should ignore this craze of his. The Qur’ān has actually refuted this childish assurance of the Quraysh: they know that he has no parallel among them as regards poise and balance in thoughts and deeds as well as in his mind and heart. How then do they have the audacity to call him mad. He is the pinnacle of mental maturity and stability. He is not a lunatic; he is an open warner from God and has holy attributes; he can see the imminent storm that is going to visit his people.

The words “have they not observed the system of the heavens and the earth and all the things created by God” imply that if these people had reflected on this system, it would have become evident to them that the person who is warning them of punishment is not mad; it is, in fact, they themselves who are blind and deaf. Whatever he is saying is reverberated from every nook and corner of this universe. Any person who reflects on the system of this universe will cry out that this universe is not without a purpose; it is going to necessarily culminate on a day of judgement. On that day, only they will succeed who lead a life of purity and uprightness. Those who deviate from this path will become the firewood of Hell. This evidence borne by the collective system of the universe can only be denied by those who have closed their eyes and ears and have disregarded their intellect and cognizance. Moreover, every component of this universe also bears witness to this conclusion. Whatever God has created is a manifestation of His power, mercy, wisdom and providence. God has also prescribed a time for what He has created. Then how is it possible that the wise and powerful being – none of whose acts is without wisdom – leave this world without any purpose and not judge the good and evil that ensues in it? Moreover, if He has prescribed a time period for everything in this world, how can He not prescribe a



time period for this world and for the nations that thrive in it? Here it may be kept in mind that an obvious part of the consequence that a person derives after reflecting on the heavens and the earth has been suppressed. If this is stated in words, it would be: Have they not reflected on the heavens and the earth and on what has been created by God so that it could have become evident to them that this universe is not without a purpose. At some instances in the Qur’ān, this suppression is stated in words. Thus in verse 191 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is said: وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth and say: “Lord! You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You for You do not do anything in vain! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.”)

The words “and on the fact that it may well be that their time period may well have drawn near?” are coordinated to the suppression just referred to. In other words, if they had reflected on the system of the heavens and the earth and on the wisdom on which creation has been done, it would have become evident to them that this universe has a purpose and will exist until a certain prescribed time. It may also have become evident to them that their own time of respite – which the Prophet (sws) was warning them of – has drawn near. This is because if the Almighty has not created this world to be a place of mere amusement or entertainment, why would He not check it? If He has seized other nations – whose history has been recounted earlier – why would He not seize the Quraysh for their misgivings? This is in fact a corroborating evidence in favour of the veracity of Prophet Muḥammad (sws): whatever he is saying should not be regarded as lunacy; if anything, they should shed tears on their own thick-headedness and madness.

There can be two opinions about the pronoun “this” in “so, after this, in what word will they profess faith?” One could be the prescribed time mentioned earlier and the other could be the revelations of the Qur’ān, the denial of which has produced this result. Ustādh Farāhī seems more inclined to the second of these views; however, I am in favour of the first. In other words, the implied meaning is: what will they believe in when their time expires? The time to accept faith is before their time expires but they are adamant on seeing the warning the Prophet (sws) is threatening them with to materialize. However, someone should ask these wretched people what else would they profess faith in after it arrives. Once this happens, everything will reach its culmination. The real test is to accept it before its arrival. Once it comes, they will have to face its consequences.

The words cited earlier express sorrow and yearning. Now the next sentence “none can guide those whom God leads astray; He leaves them to wander in their rebelliousness” further emphasize the earlier words. These people do not realize that they are facing an established practice of God and those who face it cannot be guided by anyone. Such people keep wandering about in their rebelliousness.



يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسُهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۖ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَافِيٌّ عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

A question can be posed to make fun. Here, concomitant indications show that this precisely is the case here. The word السَّاعَةِ means “time” and here it refers to the time of punishment and to the hereafter. The Prophet (sws) was warning them of its sudden arrival. It is known that every messenger warns his nation of two punishments: first, which appears in this world for nations that reject their respective messenger; second, the punishment these disbelievers would encounter in the hereafter. The word السَّاعَةِ encompasses both these punishments because those who reject God’s Messengers make fun of both these punishment.

The word أَيَّانَ connotes متى (when). However, it is used when the purpose is to ask about something in order to express amazement and improbability about it. Similarly, the word مُرْسَى is used for the anchoring of a ship. The sarcasm concealed in the question can well be gauged from this word. It is as if it is being said: when will that threatened warning materialize? Where has this ship got stuck? When will it come to the shore to anchor?

The words “the heavens and the earth are burdened with it; it will come upon you suddenly” have generally interpreted to mean that the Day of Judgement will be a heavy incident in the heavens and the earth. Though this itself is a correct inference, this style also refers to another aspect: this hour is a burden on the heavens and the earth. Just as a pregnant woman puts on weight near delivery because of the child she is carrying even though no one knows the exact time of delivery – yet every person with eyes can see and is certain that this woman will deliver the child and this will happen soon – the case of discerning minds who reflect on the heavens and the earth regarding the Day of Judgement and punishment is no different. They see that the heavens and the earth are burdened with this weight. And even though they cannot say with certainty when the heavens and the earth will be able to relieve their burden, yet just as a pregnant woman in her final days anxiously awaits the time of delivery, a similar anxiety and longing is prominent in the heavens and the earth. Hidden in this verse is also a subtle indication for those who are not able to see the signs of the Day of Judgement and punishment in the heavens and the earth. They are similar to those who are not able to see the bulge of a pregnant lady who is about to deliver. The part “will come upon you suddenly” implies that people should observe its signs of arrival

134. They ask you about the Judgement Day: “When at last will it arrive?” Say: Its knowledge rests with my Lord alone. Only He will bare it at its appointed time. The heavens and the earth are burdened with it. It will come upon you suddenly. They ask you as if you have researched into it. Say: Its knowledge rests with God alone, but most people do not know this fact.



and being convinced about its arrival as a result. They should prepare for it. Whenever it will come, it will all of a sudden and none except God knows when it will come. If its time of arrival is not known, it does not mean that it will not come. Everyone knows that a pregnant lady will deliver though none knows the exact time of her delivery.

Consider next the part “they ask you as if you have researched into it; say: its knowledge rests with God alone.” The word حَفِيٌّ means “someone who deeply researches and investigates something.”

The implication is that contrary to what they think no sane person can go after something which is beyond his circle of knowledge and research.

The words “but most people do not know this fact” imply that most people do not know what a person must go after knowing and what is beyond the bounds of his knowledge. Trying to find out about such things is a mere waste of time and may lead to unwarranted trials. It is strange and unfortunate that people generally go after things which they can never find out nor are they needed to be found out. Then they use this as an excuse to turn away from facts that are essential to know for success in this world and the next. Those who go after the *mutashābihāt* while leaving aside the *muhkamāt* also suffer from precisely this ailment. I have explained this aspect at beginning of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān’s *tafsīr*.

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَا سْتَكْتُمْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ
 إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝١٣٥

The implication of the verse is that true and real knower of the unseen is God. Like that of others, the Prophet’s affairs also are dependent on the will of God. He claims to be a messenger of God and not God Himself. So his addressees must not demand from him things which are under God’s will and jurisdiction. He has been blessed with divine revelation and not the keys of the knowledge of the unseen world. Had he been given this knowledge, he would have gathered a lot treasure of all that is good and none would have been able to harm him. Yet people see that he is inflicted with various harms and the good he can acquire is also to the extent of his knowledge of making God happy. The desire of gathering as much good (خَيْرٍ) as possible mentioned in لَا سْتَكْتُمْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ is in accordance with the capacity and desire of a prophet. Such is the lofty status of a prophet with respect to his courage and desire that he does not want to leave out any good that he can gather; yet he is aware of good to the extent he

135. Say: I do not have any authority to benefit or to harm even my own self except what God intends. And had I been aware of all the unseen, I would have gathered a big treasure of good and no harm would have ever come to me. I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith.



has been divinely guided. If he is made aware of all the unknown (*ghayb*), it is quite obvious that he will try his best to get hold of as much good as is possible. However, outside the sphere of divine guidance, he too has to rely on his discretion and depend on his intellect in which both options of success and failure are present.

The words “I am only a warner and a deliverer of glad tidings for those who accept faith” are a further explanation of what is said earlier that he neither has knowledge of the unseen nor has absolute power and authority. He does not even have the power to make someone accept faith. Accepting faith is dependent on people’s will and on God’s urge.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيًّا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ
فَلَمَّا أَتَتْكَ دَعَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْنَا صَارِحًا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهُمَا صَارِحًا جَعَلَ لَهُ شُرَكَاءَ
فِيمَا أَتَاهُمَا فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

The words “it is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it” have already been explained under the first verse of Sūrah al-Nisā’. The implication of “so that it may receive comfort from it” means that the relationship between a man and woman is not an accidental happening. In other words, they did not have any natural affinity for one another and out of mere coincidence they turned out to be of the same species and were able to mutually soothe one another and be in harmony with one another’s needs. Similarly, it was not coincidence that they became a means of producing children. On the contrary, it is as evident as the midday sun that all this occurred by design. God created desire, attraction and affinity in a man for a woman. Then to appease this desire, He created a woman. Such is the deep harmony and consonance in their natural needs and in their internal and external forms that except for a stubborn person none can say that this harmony was created out of its own accord by some force of matter or that they evolved like self-growing trees and then wandering about suddenly met one another and then hugged one another out of this desire and want.

Moreover, this harmony between the two shows that only a single wise and knowledgeable intent prevails in this whole universe. Had this not been the case, such harmony between opposite elements and entities would not have been possible the way it is seen in this universe. Men and women have opposite traits; yet the planner of

136. It is He alone Who has made you from a single soul and created its pair from its very species so that it may receive comfort from it. So when the man overspreads the woman, she bears a slight burden. Then she keeps moving about with it for some time. So when she becomes burdened, both pray to God, their Lord: “If You grant us a healthy child, we shall certainly remain among those grateful to You.” But when God gives them healthy children, they associate others in what they have been blessed with. Exalted is God from the things they associate.



this universe has made them amazingly compatible with which each other.

While reflecting on “and created its pair from its very species,” readers may also keep in mind the discovery of modern science as per which in the beginning human existence was in the form of a single cell like a leech. This unicellular being then divided into two living cells. Later one of them evolved into the male species and the other into the female species.¹³⁷

Consider next the sentence: فَلَمَّا تَعَشَّىٰ حَمَلٌ خَفِيضًا فَهَرَّتْ بِهِ. Under verse 134-135, I have explained that the word لَمَّا is also used in the meaning of كَمَا and إِذَا. For this reason, here the circumstances of a specific person are not depicted. In fact, those of every individual are portrayed: even though both men and women have been created by God and their mutual affinity and harmony shows that none other has any role in their creation, yet it is a matter of such foolishness on their part that when a child is about to be born to them, they pray to God to bless them with a sound descendent but when they are given what they had prayed for, they attribute this grant to some shrine, saint or idol.

Some people regard this to be a specific happening because of the word لَمَّا. As a result, they had to find someone to whom they could attribute it. Thus they ascribed this to Adam (sws) and Eve and for this fabricated a baseless incident and inserted it into their exegesis. However, notwithstanding the fact that Adam is a prophet, what is sufficient to refute the ascription of this incident to him is that what is being stated here is an example of violation of the pledge based on human nature mentioned earlier in verse 172. It is obvious that Adam (sws) was the first person to be part of this pledge and if he proved to be someone who could not abide by it, what can be expected of others?

Consider now the next the sentence: فَلَمَّا أَنْقَلَتْ دَعَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنُكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ. The word صَالِح is also used in Arabic as someone who is fine and is capable. The implication is that when the women fully bears the burden of the child and time to deliver it draws near, both the husband and wife are overcome with worry. In this state, they turn to God alone since in actual human nature only God exists as a deity. Yet when they are blessed with a child they ascribe to others.

This specific aspect of human nature is mentioned at various instances in the Qur’ān that when a person is in real need, he only calls upon the one and true Lord. However, once this need is fulfilled, he regards it to be due to other means and resources. This is such a reality that every person can experience it personally. This is how human beings behave generally and here these general circumstances are stated. It is possible that there still exist some thick-headed people who do not turn to God in any circumstances. Yet even someone like the Pharaoh turned to God when he was

137. This information is cited by Dr Rafī al-Dīn in his book *Qur’ān and ‘ilm jadīd*. Unfortunately, I myself am not a student of science.



drowning, as referred to by the Qur’ān. Nevertheless, exceptions do not nullify this rule. When a person is in real need, he pleads to God in his heart or in both in his heart and through his tongue and also makes this promise that if he is delivered from this whirlpool of problems, he will become a grateful servant of God. However, as soon as this phase passes, he forgets his promise and returns to his previous state. I have dealt with this issue in detail in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk-o tawḥīd* (Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism). Those interested can look it up.

With regard to coherence, this verse relates to verses 172-174 where the pledge found in human nature is discussed. In between, some verses of warning and admonition were inserted and once they ended, the discourse connects back. It is shown that the real call found in human nature is that of God and people (reference here is to the Quraysh) have shut their ears to this call and are now stumbling about.

The sentence “exalted is God from the things they associate” means that ascribing attributes to God that negate his basic attributes is absolutely illogical. Polytheism – whatever be its type – negates all attributes of perfection in God. For this reason, God is far above all such ascriptions.

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138 ﴿١٣٨﴾ اٰیِسْکُوْنُ مَا لَا یَخْلُقْ شَیْئًا وَهُمْ یُخْلَقُوْنَ ۚ وَلَا یَسْتَطِیْعُوْنَ لَهْمُ نَصْرًا وَّلَا اَنْفُسُهُمْ یَنْصُرُوْنَ

This verse is an explanation of the last sentence ““exalted is God from the things they associate.” God alone is the creator and helper of all. So what is the justification of ascribing such partners to him as do not create and are in fact created and who can neither help others nor their own selves?

وَ اِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَی الْهُدٰی لَا یَتَّبِعُوْکُمْ ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَیْکُمْ اَدْعَوْتُہُمْ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ صَامِتُوْنَ ۚ ﴿١٣٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰہِ عِبَادٌ اَمْثَلُکُمْ فَادْعُوْهُمْ فَلَیْسَتْ جَیْبُوْا لَکُمْ اِنْ کُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِیْنَ ۚ ﴿١٤٠﴾

The implied meaning here is that the greatest need a worshipper has from the worshipped is guidance in every phase of life. However, this is something which the Quraysh never obtain from their idols. Here the word إیتباع is in its initial literal meaning, ie. مشى خلفه (he walked behind him). This is explained in the first of the above-cited.

The second of the above-cited verses in reality is a challenge similar to the one mentioned in verse 23 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنَ دُونِ اللّٰہِ اِنْ کُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِیْنَ (and call all those you associate with God if you are truthful in your claim).

138. Do they associate those who do not create anything; in fact, are created themselves! And neither can they help them in any way nor their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not come after you

139. Whether you call them or remain silent, it is the same. Whomsoever you call besides God are people like you. So call them; they should reply to you, if you are truthful.



The implication is that until then they acknowledged their hypothetical deities the way they wanted to; however, now the Prophet (sws) and the Qur’ān has thrown a challenge to them. It is now time that these deities come to their rescue. If these they are able to save themselves, it will become evident that the Quraysh are truthful in their claims. It may be kept in mind that the idols worshipped by the Arabs were according to them statues of angels, jinn and stars. For this reason, the words used are “whomsoever you call besides God are people like you.” More details can be looked up in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk-o tawḥīd* (Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).

أَلَهُمْ أَزْجُلُ يَسْئُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا قُلِ ادْعُوا
شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيدُوا فَلَا تُنْظِرُون ¹⁴⁰

Idol-worship has two components. One, those beings which idol worshippers regard to be partners of God and regard them as deities. Two, the stones and statues of gold and silver whose forms they carve out and think that these deities manifest in them and thus become a means and vehicle of worshipping them. This is the philosophical and ideological basis of idol-worship. However, practically what happens is that the masses regard these statues to be everything. So they prostrate before them and present them with offerings and animal sacrifices.

The Qur’ān has taken up both these components of idol-worship and refuted them. In the previous verses, the first component was refuted and in this verse the second is negated. These statues cannot even ward off a fly from their faces and cannot even protect the milk and sweet dishes – that is placed in front of them – from the attacks of cats and dogs. How then can they save their worshippers?

The Psalms point precisely to this aspect in the following words:

But their idols are silver and gold.
made by human hands.
They have mouths, but cannot speak
eyes, but cannot see.
They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.
They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk,
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.
Those who make them will be like them,

140. Do they have feet with which they walk? Do they have hands with which they grasp? Do they have eyes with which they see? Do they have ears with which they hear? Say: Bring all your partners you associate with God. Then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite.



and so will all who trust in them. (Psalms, 15:4-8)

The sentences: “bring all your partners you associate with God; then execute all your schemes against me and do not give me respite” are a response to the warnings of the Idolaters.

إِنَّ وَلِيَ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ ۖ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ عَنْكُمْ فَتَبْصُرُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ لَا يَسْمَعُوا ۚ وَتَرْهَبُهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

The word وَلِي means “supporter, helper, protector and guardian.” It is mentioned earlier in verses 192-194 that how can these idols help the idolaters when they cannot even help themselves. Whether they are called for help and guidance or not, it is the same; they will neither help nor guide them. Now from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) God’s majesty is stated in contrast to this helpless state of the idols. The word نَزَّل means to reveal with an elaborate arrangement. In other words, God has sent down His book in a very thorough and elaborate way. A human being needs God to fulfil all his needs. However, in particular, his greatest need is guidance. It is God Who has made this available for him. So what then is the use of these idols for which they are being worshipped.

The sentence “and those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves” is precisely the same in intent as is verse 192.

Consider the verse: وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ لَا يَسْمَعُوا ۚ وَتَرْهَبُهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ. Here the words لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (they do not hear) actually explain لَا يَتَّبِعُونَكَ (they do not follow you) of verse 192.

The words بصير and نظر are used with such beauty in the verse under discussion that they reflect the supreme eloquence of the Qur’ān. The implication is: “O People without any Insight! You think they are staring at you, whereas they are not aware of anything around them.”

The singular address in تَرْهَبُهُمْ actually connotes plurality.

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾ وَإِنَّمَا يَنْتَظِرُكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٩٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٥﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَبُدُّوهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ثُمَّ لَا يَقْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

141. My guardian is God Who has revealed this Book and He is the guardian of the righteous. And those whom you call besides God cannot help you nor can they help their own selves. And if you call them for guidance, they will not hear what you say. And it seems to you that they are looking towards you; yet in reality they see nothing.

142. Forgive, enjoin good and pay no heed to the ignorant. And if you feel any temptation



Now here near the end of the *sūrah*, some apt and appropriate directives are given to the Prophet (sws) and through him to all Muslims.

When the word عفو occurs in the given context, it does not mean to forgive someone by one's heart; it rather means to ignore someone.

The actual word عرف refers to all those practices which are regarded to be pious and noble in the eyes of all upright people, and in this regard are something known and recognized. Here it refers to monotheism, hereafter and righteous deeds to which the Arabs were being called to believe and undertake respectively in those times. They were entirely based on the evidence of human nature and intellect and are in fact the call of every upright person.

The word نزع means “to inflict harm or injury.”

The second of the above cited verses states the strategy suggested of how the Prophet (sws) should ignore them and protect himself from their hurt. He should seek refuge with God. His pleadings and supplications are heard by Him and He fully knows his worries and the mischief worked by the devils and miscreants. He will ward off all sorrows of the Prophet (sws).

Though the address in “forgive” is singular, but through the Prophet (sws) it is directed to all Muslims, as referred to earlier. Thus the plural “those who are God-fearing” occurring in a later verse points to this multiple address. This verse also explains the way to seek God's refuge: people should remember God for this remembrance will create such insight and strength in them that their vision will become absolutely clear and they will see the reality.

The antecedent of the pronoun “these” in “brothers of these” are the “ignorant” mentioned in verse 199. The word “brothers” refer to their compatriots who control them, regardless of whether they are the devils among mankind or humankind.

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُؤْتَى إِلَىٰ مِن رَّبِّي ۖ هَذَا بَصَائِرُ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾¹⁴³

The first of these verses depicts an example of devilish incursions faced by the Prophet (sws) from the disbelievers at all times. The implication is that when the Prophet (sws) does not show them a miracle at their demand they taunt him by asking

from Satan, seek refuge with God. Indeed, He knows and hears all. Those who are God-fearing, when they are tempted by Satan in any way they direct their attention to God and their hearts light up at once. And those who are brothers of these who do not fear God, they only increase them in error ; then they do not relent in this in any way.

143. And when you do not bring a sign to them, they say: “Why did you not fabricate it?” Say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord. These are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe. And when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be shown mercy.



him that why could he not fabricate a miracle. What these wrongdoers would imply through this statement was that as far as the Qur’ān is concerned, its matter is quite simple: whatever the Prophet (sws) liked from among the incidents of earlier people and from the traditions of soothsayers and the People of the Book, he gathered from here and there and knitted them together into a discourse; he brought forth all this material and recited it out to them with the claim that this has been sent to him by God as a revelation through His special angel. However, now that they have demanded from him a miracle as a sign for his prophethood, he is not being able to present any. This is because putting together a discourse from here and there is something different and showing a miracle is another. This cannot be put together by selecting it from here and there that it may be assembled from somewhere and then be shown to them on demand. In other words, found in this allegation and censure is not merely the blame of not being able to show a miracle but a more poisonous blame in it is that, God forbid, the Qur’ān is a fabrication that has been put together after selecting material from here and there.

The word إجتباء literally means “to choose and select a thing from an assortment.” However, when it is used in the context of sarcasm the way it is here, it means “to fabricate.” Al-Farrā’ has also interpreted the word in this meaning.¹⁴⁴

The verse: “say: I only follow what is revealed to me by my Lord” is an answer to this sarcasm. Earlier, the Prophet (sws) was also asked to disregard the ignorance of the ignorant. This answer is the best example of this disregard. He should not even take notice of their foolish banter and go on to state the reality in these simple but majestic words: “these are eye-opening revelations from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for those who believe.” They are guidance with regard to the beginning and mercy with regard to the end. The part “for those who believe” carries this subtle insinuation that whatever the Prophet (sws) is presenting has no shortcoming; it is their hearts which really fall short because they do not want to believe.

The verse “and when the Qur’ān is recited, listen attentively to it and remain silent so that you may be shown mercy” states the way to benefit from the guidance and insight provided by the Qur’ān. The verse also hints at the wrong attitude of the disbelievers which they had adopted regarding the Qur’ān. Thus, in verse 26 of Sūrah Hā Mīm al-Sajdah, it is stated: *وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ*.¹⁴⁵ In other words, the attitude they have adopted is that of ignorance and its consequence is that they will be deprived of mercy. The correct attitude is totally opposite to it: they should listen intently instead of making noise. This attitude will afford them God’s mercy.

One group of our jurists also presents this verse in support of their view that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should be recited by those who pray behind a prayer-leader. However, it is

144. See: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 14, 130.

145. And the disbelievers said: “Pay no heed to this Qur’ān. Raise an uproar during its recital.”



evident that this verse has a different context. Nevertheless, even if this context is disregarded, its words does not support their view; they support the view of those who say that in the loud prayers Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should not be recited while in the silent prayers, it should be recited.

وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْعُدُوِّ وَالْأَصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ ¹⁴⁶

Earlier, the way to acquire God’s refuge was explained. Now the way to remember God is mentioned. For this, three things have been stated:

Firstly, it should be in one’s heart and should be with humility, meekness and fear. It is evident from this that arrogance and conceit are opposite to it.

Secondly, if it is to be audible, then it should not be very loud. In verse 110 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl, this is stated as: ¹⁴⁷ وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافُتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا. This directive was also given to secure one’s self from the way of the idolaters and also because God hears and knows all and not deaf. It may be noted that on one occasion, the Prophet (sws) had stopped his companions from praying in a loud voice. Moreover, this may lead to pretension and showing off, which are totally against sincerity.

Thirdly, one should continuously keep God in remembrance. The words “morning and evening” are meant to comprehensively cover all times. The subsequent words “and do not be among those who are indifferent” further emphasize this. In other words, not a moment should pass without remembering God. Just as for the life of the body, breathing is essential, in the same way, for the life of the soul, God’s remembrance is essential. Satan is ever-ready to launch his onslaught and for this reason human beings even for a moment cannot afford to ignore the protection they have against him. The form of this remembrance changes with circumstances and needs but it is not permissible to forget it at any instant. As soon as a person stops paying heed to this remembrance, he will be attacked by Satan. It may be noted that though the address of the verse is in the singular, it denotes plurality, as in verse 199 earlier.

Consider now the last verse: “Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only.”

This refers to the angels. The verse, on the one hand, depicts the status of those who

146. And remember your Lord morning and evening in your heart with humility and with fear and in a low voice and do not be among those who are indifferent. Indeed, those who are in the presence of your Lord, never show disdain in worshipping Him. And they glorify him and prostrate before Him only.

147. And do not offer your prayer very loudly or in a very low tone; adopt a middle way between the two.



continuously keep God in remembrance: though such people inhabit the earth, they actually are related to the holy communion of angels. This is because just as the latter are constantly glorifying and praising God, these people too are doing so. On the other hand, this verse is a slant on the Idolaters: they show arrogance because they think that they will receive intercession from angels; they neither give importance to God nor to the Prophet (sws); yet such is the state of these angels that they are constantly glorifying and prostrating before God.

With these words, I come to an end to the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. Whatever I have correctly interpreted is through God’s blessing and wherever I have erred, I bear full responsibility. May God protect me and the readers of this book from its harm. **وَالْآخِرُ** دَعَوْنَا أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
21st Sha‘bān 1388 AH
13th November 1968 AD
