

Surah 21
Al-Anbiya'

(The Prophets)

Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] People's Reckoning has drawn close,² but they turn away in heedlessness.³

اقتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ
 مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿١﴾

1. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud has said in a report in Bukhari, "*Al-Kahf, Maryam, Ta-ha* and *Al-Anbiya'* are the earliest (of revelations) and they are my earliest acquisitions" (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). In fact, writes Alusi, there is no difference in opinion that this is a Makkan chapter except for a verse or two such as no. 44.

2. Imām Razi raises a question and then answers it. How can the Reckoning be close when several centuries have passed since the promise? The answer is, this is a relative statement. That is, being close is in reference to the total time span since creation. A very long time has already passed. What remains is an extremely short span in relation to what has passed. Therefore, the Day is close.

3. Thanwi's sharp sight does not miss to note that it is the "turning away" that makes the "heedlessness" blameworthy. Otherwise, are we not all heedless to some extent or the other?

Other commentators have reported instances of "living the Qur'an" from the lives of early Muslims. It is reported that `Amir b. Rabi`ah treated someone very generously while hosting him. Impressed, the man, who had recently received a valley as gift from the Prophet (*saws*), expressed his wish to cut a part of it for him saying. "It will come in handy for you and your offspring." `Amir replied, "I do not think I stand in any need of your piece of land. It has just been revealed, 'People's Reckoning has drawn close, yet they turn away in their heedlessness. This chapter

[2] No new reminder⁴ comes to them from their Lord but they listen to it in sport.⁵

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٢﴾

has taken our minds off this world” (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani, Alusi).

It is also reported of a Companion that he was building a wall. Another passed by. He asked him, “What has been revealed lately?” He replied, ‘People’s Reckoning has drawn close, yet they turn away in their heedlessness.’ The Companion gave up the construction saying, “I will not resume when Allah says that people’s Reckoning has drawn close” (Qurtubi).

4. The Qur’anic revelation is the latest and will ever remain fresh. Ibn ‘Abbas has said, as reported by Bukhari, “What’s wrong with you that you seek to know about what they posses (of the Scriptures) when they have altered it, added to it and deleted from it, while you possess latest of the revelations that will never become old?!” (Ibn Kathir).

5. Majid presents the Arab situation, which was no better than what prevails in our contemporary world: “The entire lack of interest in other-world conditions, among the pagan Arabs, arising from their sceptical outlook is a well-known fact of his-

tory. Reckless, sceptical, materialistic in their outlook, ‘a great majority believed in no future life nor in a reckoning-day of good and evil’ (LSK, Intro. P. xxxiii).”

As corollary Sayyid Qutb writes: “The people thus described by the Qur’an treated Qur’anic revelation - being sent down as a complete code of life, a comprehensive practical system, and a law for all kinds of interactions - as no more than sport. They responded to the closeness of the Day of Reckoning with total heedlessness! And people of this sort have been there throughout the ages. Whenever a person is bereft of meaning, purposefulness, and spirituality, then this is what it becomes: as sick as the Qur’an has portrayed. Such of them treat the whole life as a jest and a meaningless affair that has no aim and no purpose.

“On the other hand, those who treated the Qur’anic message with seriousness, responded to it in a manner described above, it is portrayed in the story of ‘Amir who refused a plot of land on grounds that the Reckoning had drawn close.”

[3] *Their hearts (toying with) trifles. And the evildoers kept secret their whispering to one another,⁶ 'Is he any more than a man like you? Will you go for magic while you are seeing?'*

لَا هِيَّةَ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَسْرُوءَ النَّجْوَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشْرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ أَفَتَأْتُونَ السِّحْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] *He (the Messenger) said,⁷ 'My Lord knows every word (spoken) in the heavens and the earth. He is the Hearing, the Knowing.'⁸*

قَالَ رَبِّي يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

[5] *Nay, but they said, 'Medley of dreams. Nay, he has forged it. Nay, he is a poet.'⁹ So let him bring us a sign even as the Messengers of the past were sent (with signs and miracles).'¹⁰*

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ بَلِ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِآيَةٍ كَمَا أُرْسِلَ الْأَوْلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

6. Zamakhshari raises the question: every whisper is done in secret, why then did Allah say, they keep secret their whispering?" - and then answers that it is to express their great anxiety to conceal their secret discourses, as they asked each other by way of consultation: "Shall we respond to this revelation by calling it a magical feat, or shall we think of something else?"

Although Asad's emphasis is on a different point, we can pick out from him a sentence of our profit. He writes, "... by rejecting the message of the Qur'an on the specious plea that Muhammad is but a human being endowed with 'spellbinding eloquence', the opponents of the Qur'anic doctrine in reality 'conceal their innermost thoughts': for, their rejection is due not so much to any pertinent criticism of the doctrines as such, rather, to their instinctive,

deep-set unwillingness to submit to the moral and spiritual disciplines, which the acceptance of the Prophet's call would entail."

7. The present reading of the text as "qala" follows the reading of Hafsi of Kufa. The Busri reading however is "qul" meaning, in the imperative, "say."

8. "... so He knows well the secret plots against Islam and the Prophet, and will punish every culprit accordingly (Majid).

9. Just like the Orientalists, Western scholars and the modern-day media, the Quraysh contemporary to the Prophet were also in a state of confusion. How should they counter the Prophet's growing influence? In Mawdudi's words: "The Prophet's sphere of influence was continuing to expand and this prompted the

Makkan leaders to mutual consultation so as to decide the lines along which a propaganda campaign could be launched against him.

“... A number of people were assigned to visit the pilgrims’ camps to poison the visitors’ ears against the Prophet (peace be upon him). A variety of notions were put before these pilgrims. At times they were told that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer. At times they were told that the Qur’ān had in fact been composed by Muhammad himself and was falsely attributed to God. At times the Qur’ān was dismissed as a series of insane outbursts, as a conglomerate of incoherent ideas. On other occasions the Qur’ān was condemned as a piece of poetic imagination, a collection of rhymed discourses falsely ascribed to God.

“In short, a variety of things were said but with just one purpose in mind – to mislead people about Islam. The Quraysh were not the least concerned with considerations of truth or veracity and hence they made no attempt to formulate and express a well-considered and definitive opinion on any matter. All this false propaganda, however, had one redeeming effect – it carried the

name of the Prophet (peace be on him) to all parts of Arabia and made him known far and wide. The Muslims would not have been able to give the Prophet (peace be on him) and Islam the same amount of publicity as the hostile propaganda campaign launched by the Quraysh generated in a very short span of time.

A few lines down, Mawdudi continues, “Another report narrated by Ibn Is-haq, indicates that the Quraysh leaders themselves conceded that their propaganda campaign against the Prophet (peace be on him) was totally false. According to Ibn Ishaq, Nadr b. al-Harith once addressed the Quraysh, saying: ‘The way you have been trying to confront Muhammad will be of no avail. As a youth he was the best mannered among you. He was regarded as one most truthful and most trustworthy. Now that his hair is graying, you have taken to branding him as a magician, a soothsayer, a poet and a lunatic. By God, he is not a magician. We have seen magicians and we are fully conversant with their craft. By God, he is not a soothsayer. We have listened to their feigned utterances and their enigmatic sayings. By God, he is not a poet either. We are aware of all genres of poetry but his discourse does not fall into any of those cat-

[6] No town that We destroyed before them believed.¹¹ So, will these (people) believe?¹²

مَا آمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

[7] We did not send before you (O Muhammad) but men to whom We revealed.¹³ Ask then the people of Remembrance, if you do not know.¹⁴

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧﴾

egories. By God, he is not a mad person either. Are we not aware of the condition of a mad person, and of the stupid things he says? O leaders of the Quraysh, think again. What confronts you today is far too serious to be met with (such) recourse...”

10. Shabbir and Sayyid comment in effect: “The Quraysh could not decide and hold on to a single opinion because at heart they knew that every opinion they thought of, held no ground. So from one, they switched to another, and then to another - confused and unsure. Ultimately they thought they would get out of the hopeless situation by crying out: ‘So let him bring us a sign even as the Messengers of the past were sent (with signs and miracles).’”

The Qur’an said elsewhere about their inability to get out of their conundrum (17: 48),

انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا [الإسراء : ٤٨]

“So, see how they strike examples for you. Thus they lost (the truth) and find no way out” (Shabbir).

11. That is, signs and miracles were shown to earlier nations. But, did they believe? (Ibn Kathir)

12. The apparent meaning is, “So, will these people believe in this message?” But Mujahid thought the meaning is “Will these people accept that the earlier ones were destroyed because of their refusal to believe?” (Ibn Jarir)

13. This is the answer to the objection raised by the unbelievers as stated in verse 3, “Is he any more than a man like you?” Messengers have always been humans (Razi).

Sayyid comments: “Those who suggested during the time of the Prophet that Messengers should have been angels, were similar to those of our times who think that a Messenger should be above human senses, feelings and passions. This kind of people have always been unmindful

of the fact that firstly, angels cannot live the life of human beings. They are beings of a different nature altogether. They can never feel like the humans can, who are constitutionally so different from them. On the other hand it was important for the Messengers to have been endowed with the capacity to feel like the humans do, to have the same inner urges, and be affected in the same manner - physically, emotionally and spiritually - as the humans, in order for them to offer workable solutions to their problems.

“Secondly, if Messengers were to be of the angels, they could never evoke among their followers the desire to follow them in their ways and practices being a different species, and of different nature from them.

“Thirdly, those who suggest that Messengers ought to be angels, do not accord as much respect to Man as he deserves and are unaware of the honorable position he occupies with his Lord. (They do not believe humans are worthy of being given revelations).

“Therefore, it has been Allah’s way that He should select human beings for Messengership - such humans as who took birth and died, ate, drank and married, bore hopes and fear,

and were affected by other emotions exactly in the manner of the humans. And then Allah made the greatest of His Messenger and the final one, the best of examples in everything that the humans attempt to remain an ideal for them up to the end of time.”

14. The general opinion is that the allusion by the “people of Remembrance” is to the Jews and Christians. ‘Ali’s opinion however is that it is Muslims, “people of the Qur’ān” who are intended. Ibn Zayd was also of the same opinion who said, “We are ‘the people of Remembrance.’ Allah (*swt*) has referred to this revelation as ‘*Dhikr*’ in several places in the Qur’ān (e.g.15: 9: ‘Indeed, We have revealed this *Dhikr*, and We shall surely guard it (from corruption); and we happen to carriers of the *Dhikr*.’” (Ibn Jarir).

Imām Razi however thinks that since the argument is about the Prophet, his followers - being one of the party - cannot be asked about his authenticity. Therefore, it is the People of the Book who can be identified as the people of Remembrance.

In either case, it should be clear that the people of Remembrance are to be asked a simple question: were the Prophets of the past humans or not? Their opinion is not to be sought on

[8] Nor did We fashion them as bodies that did not eat,¹⁵ neither were they immortal.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ
وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Then We made true the promise to them and rescued them and those We wished, and destroyed the transgressors.

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ نَشَاءُ وَأَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] Indeed, We have now sent a Book to you wherein is your mention.¹⁶ Will you not think?

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] How many towns We destroyed that were transgressors, and brought forth after them another people?

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً
وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ ﴿١١﴾

other religious truths which some people think the present verse allows. This verse is a repetition of verse 43 of *Surah Al-Nahl* where too the suggestion is, ask the people of Remembrance whether Prophets of past were men or not (Au.).

The meaning and application however, adds Qurtubi, is general, and leads us to the rule that following opinions of a scholar (*taqlid*) is a necessity for common men. It is not allowable for a non-specialist to deliver rulings as he is ignorant of the principles of law, following which something becomes lawful while another unlawful.

15. The *Sufi* Thanwi writes that the implication of the words, "We did not fashion them as bodies that did not eat," is that abstaining from food is not a sign of sainthood as imag-

ined by most of the unknowledgeable people, and some of the knowledgeable ones too.

16. Mujahid believed in the meaning expressed in the translation. But Sufyan (ibn `Uyaynah) thought – to which meaning Ibn Jarir is inclined – that the term "*Dhikr*" here alludes to "honor". That is, it is a revelation that promises to ennoble those who follow and live by it (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi), as Allah said, adds Zamakhshari (43: 44),

وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ وَسَوْفَ تُسْأَلُونَ [الزخرف
: ٤٤]

Surely, it (the Qur`ān) is a (thing of) honor: for you and your people."

Sufyan ibn `Uyayna also explained, as in his biography, "The Qur`ān was revealed to a people who regarded qualities such as good neighborliness,

[12] When they felt Our chastisement (coming) they began to run away from it.¹⁷

فَلَمَّا أَحْسَبُوا بِأَسَانَا إِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] 'Do not run, return to the luxuries you were in, and to your homes, perhaps you will be questioned.'¹⁸

لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَا أُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسَاكِينِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] They said, 'Woe unto us. We had been transgressors.'

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

fulfilling oaths, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc., as noble qualities and which they themselves tried to live by. The Qur'an reminded them that by promoting the same values it was mentioning them" (Au.).

Hasan however understood the term "Dhikr" of this occurrence as "religion (Ibn Kathir).

Asad's commentary is on the same lines, "...the above phrase contains, apart from the concept of 'reminder', an indirect allusion to the dignity and happiness to which man may attain by following spiritual and social precepts laid down in the Qur'an."

If we take the standard meaning, then Mawdudi's comment explains what the verse means, "What was so exotic about the Qur'an which drove its opponents to hold such a collection of mutually conflicting opinions about it (as expressed in verse 5 above: au.)? The Qur'an should have been familiar material to them for its

discourses centered on the human psyche and on human affairs; on man's nature, man's beginning and end."

17. The textual word "yarkudun" is richer in meaning than simply running away. Zamakhshari points out that the word "rakada" is used for spurring a riding beast with the heels, in an effort to make it gallop. At another place Allah used the word in the sense of "rubbing." He said (38: 42)

ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ [ص : ٤٢]

"Rub (the ground) with your foot."

18. This is a satirical suggestion meaning, 'perhaps you will be asked whether the promise made to you was true' (Au).

Another possible explanation, as in Kashshaf, Razi, Qurtubi, Alusi and others is: Maybe your attendants and dependents will seek to know your

[15] That remained their claim until We rendered them as mowed down (fields),¹⁹ burnt out (coals).

فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ دَعْوَاهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ
حَصِيدًا خَامِدِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] Nor have We created the heaven and the earth and what is between them in sport.²⁰

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
لَاعِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

opinion about what to do and how to do in everyday affairs, as you were wont to be consulted in ordinary times. Or maybe they will ask you for orders to do things pleasing to your majesties.

19. That is, they were lying dead, like corn plants cut from the roots.

20. Yusuf Ali comments: "The Hindu doctrine of Lila, that all things were created for sport, is here negated. But more, with Allah we must not associate any ideas but those of Truth, Righteousness, Mercy, Justice, and other attributes implied in His Beautiful Names. He does not jest or play with His creatures."

One might be confused by the Qur'anic statements such as (6: 32),

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَهْوُ [الأنعام : ٣٢]

"And this life is nothing but game and sport."

Or (57: 20),

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَهْوُ وَزِينَةٌ [الحديد :
٢٠]

"Be aware that the life of this world is game and sport and some adornment.

There is no contradiction between these verses and the present verse. These verses are speaking of the nature of man's life on earth: an ephemeral, dream-like microsecond-stay, in comparison to the eternal life, the truly real everlasting one of the Hereafter. All the pleasures and pains of this world, the relationships of love and hatred between the humans, the quarrels between nations over the resources of the world, and all the great events that shook the world, would appear from the Next World like episodes of a short dream. Nevertheless, all this does not reduce the seriousness of this life or its importance even in mundane affairs as they have no important bearing on the life to come (Au.).

[17] Had We wished to take a sport,²¹ We would have surely taken it from within Ourselves,²² if We were to do that.²³

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَاتَّخَذْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا
إِنْ كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] But rather We hurl the Truth against falsehood,²⁴ and it smashes (its brains),²⁵ and lo! it is vanished.²⁶ And woe unto you for what you ascribe.²⁷

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ
فَيَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ وَلَكُمْ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ
﴿١٨﴾

21. Mujahid, Qatadah, Hasan and others have said that in one of the several Yemeni dialects, “*lahw*” stood for a wife (Tabari, Ibn Kathir).

22. “From within Ourselves!” what does it mean? Thanwi answers, “That is, ‘One of Our Perfect Attributes’ that are eternal and hence worthy of projection.”

23. Asad throws further light on this difficult passage: “..meaning that, had God ever willed to ‘indulge in a pastime’ (which, being almighty and self-sufficient, He has no need to do), He could have found it within His Own Self, without any necessity to create a universe which would embody His hypothetical – and logically inconceivable – will to ‘please Himself’, and would thus represent a ‘projection’, as it were, of His Own Being. In the elliptic manner of the Qur’ān, the above passage amounts to a statement of God’s transcendence.”

24. Asad again, and in line with the previous comment, “I.e., the truth of God’s transcendence against the false idea of His existential immanence in, or co-existence with, the created universe.”

25. “*Damgh*” is used for a blow on the head that smashes the brain (Ibn Jarir and others).

26. The following from Asad may be read in conjunction with the above two comments. He comes close to what Thanwi wrote half a century earlier (but which Asad would have been unaware of): “The obvious fact that everything in the created universe is finite and perishable effectively refutes the claim that it could be a projection’ of the Creator, who is infinite and eternal.”

27. And, finally, this comes in logical sequence from Asad, which, while connecting the two verses 17 and 18, also removes a misconception held by many intellectuals including Muslims. He writes: “Lit., ‘for all

[19] And to Him belong those in the heavens and the earth. And those that are with Him²⁸ do not wax proud against His worship, nor do they grow weary.

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] They glorify (Him) by night and day, and do not take a break.²⁹

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

that you attribute [to God] by way of description' or 'of definition' .. implying that the idea of God's 'immanence' in His creation is equivalent to an attempt to define His Being."

28. Since Allah is in His limitlessness beyond space and time, what does the word 'near' Him mean? Asad takes the explanation from Zamakhshari and Razi, ".. their 'being with Him' is a metaphorical indication of their spiritual eminence and place of honor in God's sight, and does not bear any spatial connotation of 'nearness'.

29. 'Abdullah ibn al-Harth says he asked Ka'b al-Ahbar about how the angels could be in the act of glorification day and night, without a break, when they also have to perform various duties such as, bring down the revelation? He replied, "Chanting out glory is like breathing unto them. Do you not go about eating, drinking and doing your works, while you keep breathing? In the like manner,

they chant glory while going about their duties" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). But the allusion could be to those of the angels who do nothing but worship Allah, or sing his glory. For instance, as Ibn Jarir reports,

بَيْنَمَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي أَصْحَابِهِ ، إِذْ قَالَ هُمْ : ” نَسْمَعُونَ مَا أَسْمَعُ ؟ ” قَالُوا : مَا نَسْمَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ، قَالَ : ” إِنِّي لَأَسْمَعُ أَطِيطَ السَّمَاءِ ، وَمَا ثَلَامُ أَنْ تَبْطَأَ ، وَمَا فِيهَا مَوْضِعٌ شِبْرٍ إِلَّا وَعَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ سَاجِدٌ أَوْ قَائِمٌ . ”

“While the Prophet (*saws*) was with men around him he asked, ‘Do you hear what I hear?’ They replied, ‘We hear nothing O Apostle of Allah.’ He said, ‘I can hear the heaven creaking. And it cannot be blamed for creaking when there is not an inch of space in it but with an angel either in prostration or standing (in Prayers).”

The report comes down through two chains of narrations preserved in Ibn Abi Hatim, but both weak (Ibn Kathir).

[21] Or, have they taken (for worship) earthly deities who will raise the dead?³⁰

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا آلِهَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ
﴿٢١﴾

[22] (Why), had there been other gods besides Allah, surely the two (the heavens and the earth) would have been ruined.³¹ But glory to Allah, the Lord of the 'Arsh, far above what they ascribe (unto Him).

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا
فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ
﴿٢٢﴾

The report is also in Ibn al-Mundhir, Abu al-Sheikh and Bayhaqi (Alusi).

Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut judged its chain of narration as trustworthy (Au.).

30. Yusuf Ali comments, “.. the reference is to the gods of the earth, whether idols or local godlings, or deified heroes, or animals or trees or forces of the nature around us, (or rivers: Majid) which men have from time to time worshiped.”

31. “After the false gods of the earth (verse 21), are mentioned the false gods in the heavens and the earth, like those in the Greek Pantheon (verse 22), who quarreled and fought and slandered each other and made their Olympus a perfect bear-garden (Yusuf Ali).

Ibn Kathir comments: Allah said elsewhere (23: 91),

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ
كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ
اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ [المؤمنون : ٩١]

“Allah did not take a son and there is no other god along with Him, otherwise every god would have taken away what he created, and some would have tried to overcome others. Glory to Allah, far above what they ascribe (to Him).”

To the above, Shabbir and Shafi` add: Had there been two gods, then either they would have been equal in powers or unequal. If unequal, there is no need to bow down to the weaker. If equal, then if one said it should rain, the other would have said, no. If one said it was time for appearance of the dawn, the other would have thought it could wait for a while. The two would have ruined this world. Further, if a state cannot have two rulers, without they fighting each other for control of territory, how can there be two gods in the universe?

The argument, typically Qur`anic, is so simple. But the polytheists seem to be bereft of simple reasoning ability (Au.).

[23] He is not questioned for what He does, لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ
but they shall be questioned.³² ﴿٢٣﴾

32. That is, He does what He will. At no point can He be questioned for what He does. In contrast, He has the right to question His slaves about anything that He likes. They cannot ask back a question in reply. The following is an interesting conversation between 'Ali and another person. The man asked him, "Leader of the faithful! Does our Lord approve of it that He be disobeyed?" 'Ali answered, "Is Our Lord disobeyed unwillingly? He asked, "Supposing He does not send me guidance, but instead, sends across the unsavory. Did He do me good or evil?" 'Ali replied, "If He refused to give you your right then surely He did evil. But, instead, if He refused to bestow on you one of His blessings, then, obviously, it is His own blessing. He can bestow on whom He will. Then 'Ali recited this verse, "He is not questioned for what He does but they shall be questioned" (Qurtubi).

And, Alusi adds, the Prophet has quoted Allah's words in the same context, ".. O My slaves, it is your deeds that I reckon and then reward you against them. So if someone finds good, let him praise Allah. But

if someone finds it otherwise, let him not blame anyone but himself. (This is part of a long *hadith* in Muslim and Tirmidhi: Au.).

By the first question the man tried to force 'Ali to concede that the evil that men commit is by Allah's own will. Ali countered him by saying that granted Allah enforces His will, but what answer do you have to another aspect, viz. when you disobey, do you do it willingly, well-pleased about it, or, are you displeased? If you are displeased, why do you do it in the first place? (Au.)

We might at this point add a short treatise by Ibn Rushd who tried to reconcile free will with predetermination, in the hope of enriching our discussion which is spread over several volumes in this work. The discourse is from his *Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah fi 'Aqaid al-Millah* (Exposition of the Methods of Argument in matters of the Doctrines of the *Ummah*) as translated by Ibrahim Najjar:

"This question is one of the most difficult religious questions, for if the evidence of reported testimony sup-

porting it is examined, it is found to be conflicting and the same is true of the evidence of rational arguments.

“The conflict in the reported proof exists both in the Book and in the orthodox tradition (*al-Sunnah*). In the Book, we find many verses that indicate that every thing is predestined and that man is determined to act; and at the same time we find many verses which indicate that man earns credit for his actions and that his actions are not determined.

“The verse indicating that everything is necessary and predetermined include the saying of the Almighty [54: 49]:

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ [القمر : ٤٩]

‘Indeed, We have created everything in measure,’ and His saying [13: 8]:

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ [الرعد : ٨]

‘And everything with Him is by measures,’ And His saying [57: 22]:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ [الحديد : ٢٢]

‘Not a disaster befalls in the earth or in yourselves but is in a Book, before We created it. That for Allah is an easy matter’. There are many verses indicating this notion.

“However, the verses indicating that that man earns credit and that existing things are contingent and not necessary, include the saying of the Almighty [42: 34]:

أَوْ يُؤْفَكُ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ [الشورى : ٣٤]

‘Or destroy them for what they have earned, while pardoning many,’ and His saying [42: 30]:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ [الشورى : ٣٠]

‘[Whatever calamity might hit you] is due to what your hands have earned,’ and His saying [2: 286]:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ [البقرة : ٢٨١]

‘Fear a day when you will return to Allah; then each soul will be rewarded fully for what it has earned; and none shall be wronged’. And His saying [41: 17]:

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ صَاعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُونِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ [فصلت : ١٧]

‘But as for Thamud, we extended guidance to them; yet they preferred blindness to guidance.’

“Sometimes in the same verse the conflict appears in this sense, as in the saying of the Almighty [3: 165]:

أَوْلَمَّا أَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ مِثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّى هَذَا قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ [آل عمران : ١٦٥]

'And when a misfortune befell you after you had inflicted twice as much, you said: 'whence is this?'; say: 'It is from yourselves.' Then He says regarding this calamity itself, [3: 166]:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجُمُعَانِ فَيُؤَذِّنِ اللَّهُ [آل عمران : ١٦٦]

'And what befell you on the day the two armies met was by Allah's leave,' as well as His saying [4: 79]:

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنَ نَفْسِكَ [النساء : ٧٩]

'Whatever good visits you, it is from Allah; and what ever evil befalls you, it is from yourself,' and His saying: 'Say, everything is from Allah'.

"Likewise we find conflicting Prophetic traditions regarding this issue, such as his saying, God's peace be on him:

مَا مَوْلُودٌ يُوَلَّدُ إِلَّا عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ أَبَوَاهُ يُهَيِّدَانِهِ وَيُنصِرَانِهِ

'Everyone is born in the state of nature (*fitra*), but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian; and his saying:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ آدَمَ ثُمَّ مَسَحَ ظَهْرَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَاسْتَخْرَجَ مِنْهُ ذُرِّيَّةً فَقَالَ) خَلَقْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ لِلْجَنَّةِ وَيَعْمَلُ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ يَعْمَلُونَ (ثُمَّ مَسَحَ ظَهْرَهُ فَاسْتَخْرَجَ

مِنْهُ ذُرِّيَّةً فَقَالَ) خَلَقْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ لِلنَّارِ وَيَعْمَلُ أَهْلُ النَّارِ يَعْمَلُونَ

'I [Allah] made these for paradise, and thus they performed the actions of the people of paradise, and I made those for Hell and thus they performed the actions of the people of Hell.'

"The first tradition indicates that the cause of unbelief is the person's upbringing, and the cause of faith is man's original nature; while the latter indicates that God creates disobedience and unbelief and that the servant's action are predetermined.

"That is why, the Muslim [community] split into two groups over this issue. One group, which is the *Mu'tazilite*, believed that man's 'earning' is the cause of disobedience and good deeds, and it is for this reason that he is punished or rewarded. The other group, which is the Determinist, believes the opposite; namely, that man is predetermined in his action and is compelled to act.

"The *Ash`arites* however wanted to come up with an intermediate position between the two position and said that, although man had the power to 'earn', what he earns thereby and the acts of earning are both created by God. But this is meaning-

less, because if God Almighty creates both the power to earn and what man earns, then the servant must necessarily be determined to earn it.”

“This is one of the reasons for the disagreement on this issue. There is a reason other than tradition for the disagreement; namely the conflicting rational proofs. For if we assume that man is the originator of his actions and their creator, then there must exist certain actions that do not occur according to God’s will or His choice, in which case there will be a creator other than God. But they object that this is a [breach] of the consensus of Muslim that there is no creator other than God Almighty. However, if we assume that [man] is not free [to ‘earn’] his actions, then he must be compelled [to perform] them [because there is no intermediate position between determinism and earning. Then if man is compelled in his action] religious obligation is intolerable. For, if the human being is obliged to perform what he cannot tolerate, then there would be no difference between imposing an obligation on him and on inanimate objects, because inanimate objects do not have any capacity to act. Similarly man would have no capacity to do what he cannot tolerate. That is why the common people came to believe

that capacity (*istita`ah*) is a precondition of obligation, exactly as reason is. We find Abu al Ma` ali saying in his [treatise], *al-Nizamiah*, that man earns his actions and he has the capacity to act, basing this on the impossibility of imposing what is intolerable, but not on the same ground precluded by the *Mu`tazilites*. However, the early *Ash`arites* permitted the imposition of what is intolerable in an attempt to escape admitting the principle upon which the *Mu`tazilites* denied it – namely it’s being rationally abhorrent-but the [*Ash`arites*] disagreed with them on this point.

“Moreover, if man has no power to earn, then the order to make preparation for calamities that might occur would be meaningless; and likewise [the order] to seek good things. Thus, all the acts intended to bring about good things would be useless, like the art of agriculture and similar useful arts. The same applies to all the arts that aim at self-preservation and warding off harms, such as the arts of war, invigilation, medicine, and the like. But all this is beyond the grasp of human reason.

“It may be asked: ‘If this is the case, then how can one reconcile the conflict between what is based on tradition and what is based on reason?’

“We answer that it appears that the intention of the lawgiver is not to separate these two positions, but rather to reconcile them in an intermediate position, which is the true solution of this problem. For it seems that God, the Blessed and Exalted, has created for us the faculties by means of which we can choose between opposites. But since the choice of these things cannot be accomplished except through the propitiousness of the cause that God has made subservient to us from outside and after the removal of their impediments, then the actions imputed to us occur for both reasons. If this is the case then the actions imputed to us are performed through our will, together with the propitiousness of external forces, and that is what is referred to as God’s decree. These external causes that God has made subservient to us do not only complement or impede the action we want to do, they are also the cause of our choice of one of the two opposites. For the will is a desire that arises in us from imagining something or from believing something. This belief is not part of our choice, but is something that arises by virtue of the things that are external to us. An example of this is that if something desirable presented itself

to us from outside, we would desire it necessarily without any choice, we would move towards it. Similarly, if something frightful descended on us from outside, we would necessarily hate it and run away from it. If this is the case, then our will is preserved by the things that comes from outside and is bound to them. [To] this is the reference in the saying of the Almighty [13: 11]:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ
اللَّهِ [الرعد : ١١]

‘There are guardian [angels] before him and behind him, guarding him by Allah’s command.’

“However, since the external causes occur in accordance with a definite pattern and a well-planned order, without the slightest deviation from what the Creator has decreed for them; and since our will and our action are not accomplished, and do not even exist, as a whole, without the concurrence of external causes, it follows that our actions occur according to a definite pattern - they take place at specific times and in a determinate measure. This must be the case because our actions are effects of the external causes. Now every effect that results from specific and determinate causes must necessarily be specific and determinate. This con-

nection is not found between our actions and their external causes only, but also between [our actions] and the causes that God Almighty has created within our bodies. The determinate order of the internal and the external causes (those that do not fail) is the decree and foreordination (*al-qada' wa al-qadar*) that God has prescribed for His creatures; that is the preserved Tablet. God's knowledge of these causes and of what results from them is the cause of the existence of these causes. That is why no one but God encompasses the knowledge of these causes. He alone is the true knower of the unseen, as He says [27: 65]:

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
[النمل : ٦٥]

'Say: 'No one in the heavens or on the earth knows the Unseen except Allah.' The knowledge of the causes is tantamount to the knowledge of the Unseen, because the Unseen is the knowledge of the existence of existing entities or their non-existence in the future.

"Now since the disposition and order of the cause call for the existence of the thing or its non-existence at a certain time, it follows that the knowledge of the certain thing is equivalent to the knowledge of the

existence of that thing or its non-existence at a certain time, and the knowledge of the cause absolutely is equivalent to the knowledge of what can exist or cease to exist from them at any particular time throughout all time. How marvelous is the One who encompasses all the causes of existing entities with His inventiveness and knowledge. These are the keys of the invisible world implied in His saying, [6: 59]:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
الْبُرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْتَعْطُ مِنْ رِزْقٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حِجَابَ
فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ
مُبِينٍ [الأنعام : ٥٩]

'With Him are the keys of the Unseen; only He knows them, and He knows what is on land or in the sea. Not a leaf fall but He knows it, and there is no grain in the dark bowels of the earth, nor anything green or dry, but is [recorded] in a clear Book.'

"If all this is as we have explained, then it is evident to you how we earn the merit [of our action] and how all our earnings are foreordained. This combination is what religion has meant by those general verses and Traditions that are thought to contradict each other, but if their generality were specified in the [above] manner, their contradiction would

[24] Or, have they taken gods other than Him? Say, 'Bring your evidence.³³ This is the Message³⁴ for those with me and the Message of those before me.' But most of them do not know the Truth, so they are turning away.

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ
هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مَنْ مَعِيَ وَذِكْرٌ مَنْ قَبْلِي بَلْ
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] And We did not send before you a Messenger but We revealed to him that 'there is no god but I, so worship Me.'³⁵

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا
نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] And they said, 'The Most Merciful has taken a son.' Glory to Him. But rather (angels are His) servants, raised to honor.³⁶

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بَلْ عِبَادٌ
مُكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

vanish. Similarly, all the doubts urged in this regards by which I mean the conflicting rational arguments to the effect that all the things that result from our will, in fact come to be by virtue of both factors - our will and the external causes. If the actions are attributed absolutely to one of these two factors, the previously mentioned doubts will arise." [Faith and Reason in Islam translated by Ibrahim Najjar published by Oneworld (Publishers), Oxford, 2001, p. 105-110]

33. Asad comments, Lit., 'produce your evidence', i.e., for the existence of deities other than God, as well as for the intellectual and moral justification of worshipping anything but Him."

Thanwi sees the verse as refuting any kind of Association. Allah has no equal in His greatness, then, how can there be any partner to Him in His Person.

34. The translation of the textual "Dhikr" as message follows the understanding of Razi and others who explain the word "Dhikr" in this occurrence as "the Book."

35. That is, the call to Oneness of God is nothing new. All previous Messengers raised the same call (Thanwi).

36. Qatadah has said that a few Jews and some others believed (like the Khuza`ah tribe: Razi) that God had reproduced the angels through intercourse with the Jinn. So Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

[27] They outstrip Him not in speech³⁷ and act by His command.

لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they intercede not except for those He approves of. Indeed, they tremble in awe of Him.³⁸

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] If any of them should say, 'I am a god apart from Him,' We shall reward him with Jahannum. That is how We requite the transgressors.³⁹

وَمَنْ يُّعَلِّمْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِّنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكِ نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Majid adds: "This particular blasphemy has been world-wide, the Semitics being no exception. "That the angels, as "sons of God", form part of the old Semitic mythology, is clear from Gen. VI, 2,4 (Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 446)."

37. That is, they do not speak without His leave (Qatadah: Ibn Jarir).

38. (In reference to people not esteeming Allah the way He should be esteemed) the Prophet said, (in a report accredited by Haythami: Au):

أنه رأى جبريل عليه السلام ليلة المعراج ساقطاً
كالجلس من خشية الله تعالى

"During his Nocturnal Journey and Ascension he saw Jibril lay fallen, like a (wet) piece of cloth worn down from Allah's fear" (Zamakhshari, Razi).

Thanwi urges us to pay attention to the word "*mushfiqun*" rendered here as "in awe." He says that the word promises pleasure rather than the pain of "fear" in His presence. (After all, to be awestruck is different from being in fear: Au.). This, Thanwi says, is the "fear" of the Near Ones.

39. Mawdudi has the following comment at the previous verse, "The Arabian polytheists used to worship angels for two reasons. First, they believed them to be God's offspring. Second, they wanted to ingratiate themselves with them by means of worship so that they might intercede for them with God: 'They say: "These are our intercessors with God" (*Yunus* 10: 18).' 'But those who take for protectors others than God say: "We only serve them in order that they may bring us near to God" (*Al-Zu-*

[30] Have not the unbelievers seen that the heavens and the earth were once united,⁴⁰ then We split them asunder.⁴¹ And from water We made every living thing.⁴² Will they not believe?

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا
مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

mar 39:3).’ The verses in this *Surah* show that both reasons, however, are false.”

40. Asad comments, “It is, as a rule futile to make an explanation of the Qur’ān dependent on ‘scientific findings’ which appear true today, but may equally well be disproved tomorrow by new findings. Nevertheless, the above unmistakable reference to the unitary origin of the universe – metonymically described in the Qur’ān as ‘the heaven and earth’ – strikingly anticipates the view of almost all modern astrophysicists that the universe has originated as one entity from one single element .. which became subsequently consolidated through gravity and then separated into individual nebulae, galaxies and solar systems..”

41. Ibn ‘Abbas, Qatadah, Suddi, Abu Saleh and others have explained that the heavens and the earth were once united into one body until Allah split them asunder. Mujahid added details by saying that there were no seven earths then, nor seven

heavens until Allah broke them apart and created the seven heavens and the seven earths positioning them where they are now. Ibn ‘Atiyyah added that when the earth and the heavens were one, neither did the heavens rain down water nor did the earth grow anything until Allah created life out of water (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Commentaries of the *Salaf* came so close to the modern finding that one wonders if theirs words had inspirational origin?

Nevertheless, it might be pointed out that it is scientifically erroneous to use this *ayah* as evidence to prove that the so-called Big Bang theory is correct, or that the Qur’ān confirms it, or that the Qur’ān had predicted the scientific theory a millennium and a half ago.

All that the above *ayah* is saying is that at one point of time the heavens and the earth were one, until Allah split them asunder. But what point of time was it, is not stated. In contrast, what the Big Bang theory claims is

that at one point of time (10-43 seconds after the Big Bang event, when the temperature was supposed to be 1032K, and density 1097 kg. m-3). What did the universe then constitute of? The answer is: it was energy. Thus, the Big Bang theory is talking of 'energy' at the time of the bang, while the Qur'an is talking of 'matter' at the time of the spilt.

Further, according to the Big Bang theory, the earth is a part of the heaven and there has been no splitting between the two. In fact, there has been no splitting of matter at any time in the entire history of the universe to create two entities: heaven and earth. The earth still remains part of the heaven. The situation – according to science - has been just the opposite, that is, matter has been coalescing – i.e. coming together (and not splitting asunder). From the state of energy, matter coalesced to become atoms, to molecules, to galaxies, to stars, to planets, etc. But, according to the Qur'anic *ayah*, the earth and the heavens are two distinct entities that were once one, which split asunder. Science maintains that the earth was perhaps first in the form of a cloud of gas, which coalesced, and due to cooling and gravitational inward pull, the gas became a ball, which, with further cooling, solidi-

fied the earth; although no scientist will place his best bet on the process.

At all events, the Big Bang theory also maintains that at the start, the universe was pure energy, while the Qur'an tells us that at the start of the affair there were the heavens, rolled up like the scrolls which made up books in former times, and that it will be returned to that state:

{يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِ لِلْكِتَابِ كَمَا
بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ }
[الأنبياء: ١٠٤]

"The Day We shall roll the heaven, like the rolling of scrolls to make books. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it: a promise upon Us, We shall be surely doing it."

That is how the affair began. What was there before that? The Qur'an is silent. But the *hadith* fills us the gap. It says that at the beginning it was water.

فَدَخَلَ نَاسٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ اقْبَلُوا الْبُشْرَى يَا
أَهْلَ الْيَمَنِ إِذْ لَمْ يَقْبَلْهَا بَنُو تَمِيمٍ قَالُوا قَبَلْنَا جِئْنَاكَ
لِنَبْتَفِّهَ فِي الدِّينِ وَلِنَسْأَلَكَ عَنْ أَوَّلِ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ مَا كَانَ
قَالَ كَانَ اللَّهُ وَمَ يَكُنْ شَيْءٌ قَبْلَهُ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى
الْمَاءِ ثُمَّ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ (صحيح البخاري)

Some people from the Yemen entered upon him (the Prophet). He said, "Accept the glad tidings, O people of Yemen, for, the

Banu Tameem would not accept it.” They answered, “We accept. We have come to you to understand the religion, and to ask you about the beginning of the affair: what was there?” He replied, “There was Allah, and nothing before Him. His *‘Arsh* was on water. Then He created the heavens and the earth.”

Obviously, the above Qur’ānic *ayah* and the *hadith* do not lay down clearly the process of creation, to afford, what the scientists would call as, ‘a rigorous theory.’ But neither does the statements make it all clear which says that the heavens and the earth were one until they split; especially in view of the astronomical fact that the earth is still within the heaven, or what Islam would say, as the first heaven.

As regards the Big Bang theory itself, it remains, even among the scientists, a theory to this date, because it does not explain itself in the fullest sense. Every fresh modification raises newest unanswerable questions. Time and again we shall be touching upon this topic –Allah willing - as we proceed with this work (Au.).

Ibn Kathir turns our minds around to what is rather more of benefit than theorizing about the heavens

and the earth. Ahmad and Ibn Abi Hatim have a report which meets the requirements of the two *Sahih* works. It says that Abu Hurayrah told the Prophet,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي إِذَا رَأَيْتُكَ طَابَتْ نَفْسِي وَفَرَّتْ عَيْنِي فَأَنْبِئْنِي عَنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَقَالَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ خُلِقَ مِنْ مَاءٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَنْبِئْنِي عَنْ أَمْرِ إِذَا أُخِذْتُ بِهِ دَخَلْتُ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ أَفْشِ السَّلَامَ وَأَطْعِمِ الطَّعَامَ وَصِلِ الْأَرْحَامَ وَنَمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ ثُمَّ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ بِسَلَامٍ

“Messenger of Allah! When I see you, I feel good, and my eyes feel cool. Let me know about every thing.” The Prophet told him, “Every thing was created out of water.” I asked, “Messenger of Allah, tell me about a deed which if I did will usher me into Paradise.” He answered, “Spread Salam, feed (the people) with food, help the kindred, and stand in Prayers while the people are asleep, and enter Paradise in peace.”

42. It must not be imagined, says Ibn Jarir, that the term living refers to those alone that have a soul. But rather, everything that enjoys some kind of life could be included. And, apart from the apparent meaning, some of the *Salaf* have thought that the term “*maa*” alludes to “spermatic fluid.”

This latter meaning is also scientifically correct. Even bacterium is noted to copulate and exchange genetic material through the medium of a liquid (Au.).

One question, haven't the angels and Jinn been created out of Light and Fire? The answer is, firstly, is it not the unbelievers who have been addressed here? Have they known that the angels and Jinn have been created out of other than water? Secondly, every rule has an exception. When rules are stated in general terms, the exception is ignored (Razi, Shanqiti). But the plain answer is, Allah was referring to the kind of life that humans encounter.

Asad adds: "The statement that God 'made out of water every living thing' expresses most concisely a truth nowadays universally accepted by science. It has a threefold meaning: (1) Water – and, specifically the sea - was the environment within which the prototype of all living matter originated; (2) among all other innumerable – existing or conceivable – liquids, only water has the peculiar properties necessary for the emergence and development of life; and (3) the protoplasm, which is the physical basis of every living cell – whether in plants or in animals –

and represents the only form of matter in which the phenomenon of life are manifested, consists overwhelmingly of water, and is, thus, utterly dependent on it. Read together with the preceding statement, which alludes to the unitary origin of the physical universe, the emergence of life-form, and within an equally unitary element, points to the existence of a unitary plan underlying all creation and, hence, to the existence and oneness of the Creator. This accent on the oneness of God and the unity of His creation is taken up again in verse 92 below."

It might be pointed out that in the above statement it is only the sea as the first place of origin that has been questioned by some scientists, but not water as the primary constituent of all living beings. In any case, we might at this point add a few scientific facts about water as the matrix of life:

Water

Oxygen and hydrogen are the constituents of water: both are gases. But when the two are mixed in the ratio of one oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms, a miracle happens. That miracle is water. And the bonding is pretty strong. Water will need to be heated to 2,0000 C, to break the

bond and separate apart the oxygen and hydrogen atoms. However, when heated beyond 100 deg. C., the mixture evaporates. And it evaporates as water molecules. The oxygen and hydrogen atoms do not separate out. Had the bond broken when heated, we would be in serious trouble not knowing how to combine them together to get back water.

Water has properties that are so unique to it that it deserves to be called a miracle. It is the only element that is present on the earth as solid, liquid, and gas. No other substance appears in these three states within the earth's normal range of temperature.

That water is liquid has made possible the appearance of life on earth. No other substance is liquid at ordinary temperatures. In fact, the temperatures at which water is a liquid are unusual. Water is a liquid between 0 deg. C, its freezing point, and 100 deg. C, its boiling point. But other substances with a structure similar to that of water are not liquid in this temperature range. These substances include gases that contain two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of other elements. E.g., tellurium, selenium, or sulfur. These substances, H₂Te, H₂Se, or H₂S, although so close to

water, are not found in liquid form on the earth at normal temperatures. If water behaved like these close relatives, it would be a liquid between about -100 deg. C and -90 deg. C. In that case, there would be no liquid water on earth because the earth's temperatures are far higher than -100 deg. C.

One of water's properties is its ability to climb up a surface against the pull of gravity. This property helps it circulate through soil, and up through the roots and stems of plants. It also helps circulate blood, which is mostly water, throughout our bodies, since blood has to climb up from the feet to the heart and further up to the head.

Another of water's qualities is that it is a good solvent. It dissolves and carries nutrients in the soil to plants and to the cells within plants. Water also dissolves the food that people and animals eat, and then carries this food to the cells. If the substances did not dissolve in water, like they do not in honey, then the stomach would have been unable to send the digested food to the cells of the body.

Yet, strangely, when substances dissolve into water, water molecules do not hold them into strong bonds. But rather, in very weak bonds that

separate out whenever need arises. E.g., water is the medium through which materials are transported from one compartment of the cell to another. However, once the material reaches the destination, magically, water is separated out from the nutrients and dismissed. Without water as the solvent and carrier, cells would not function. If water did not make weak bonds with the material it dissolves, the dissolved material would have risen with water molecules when they rise up as vapors. For example, sea-water has about 1% of salts dissolved in water. There are other chemicals too. But, when water rises up, it breaks away from the other materials to escape as water molecule alone: without any impurity whatsoever. This property assures supply of pure water.

Yet, water, although such a great solvent and also reactive with many agents, is the least reactive liquid compared to many alkalis and acids, which react very strongly and dissolve anything that gets in touch with them rendering them irrecoverable. Sulfur-dioxide for example, reacts strongly. It will make a hole if a quantity of it is poured on a human palm.

Water stands apart from every other substance in one of its strange qualities. It contracts as it cools until just before freezing point, after which it expands until it becomes ice. This is a unique property of water among all liquids. (And it seems it violates nature's laws). Most substances contract as they grow colder. Water also contracts when cooled. But that is only up to 40 C. If cooled further, to say less than 40 C, it expands. At 00 when it becomes ice it occupies more space than same amount of liquid water since it has expanded. For this reason it floats over liquid water. This is absolutely essential for all life on earth. If ice contracted, it would sink and settle at the bottom. That means, each winter more and more of ice would accumulate at the bottom and slowly the entire water system would turn solid. What would remain is a thin sheet of water, at the surface, and that also only in summer but the rest of it ice. In winter it will be all ice and water cycle would stop to function. The thin sheet of water would have absorbed the heat preventing the ice at the bottom from becoming liquid. But, because ice expands in volume, it floats at top so as to prevent the cooling of water below the surface. In laboratory experiments, the upper part of

a container of water with ice at bottom was heated from above to boiling temperature, but ice did not melt at bottom.

The latent heat of frozen water is again one of the highest of all known liquids. If not for this property, (a) the climate would be subject to far more rapid changes. Small lakes and rivers would vanish and reappear constantly. (b) Warm-blooded animals would have a far harder time ridding their bodies of heat. Actually, as Denton points out, the large heat capacity, high latent heat of evaporation, heat conductivity, and low viscosity (of water) conspire to serve the end of temperature regulation in a large organism like a man.

Water is different from all other substances in one another quality: specific heat. The thermal capacity or specific heat of water, (which is the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of water one degree centigrade) is higher than most other liquids. If not for this, the difference between summer and winter would be extreme and weather patterns would be less stable. It takes in lots of heat before boiling. It boils at 100 deg. C. Had it boiled at lower temperatures, the earth, whose temperature is largely controlled by the

watery sea, would have had very different weather conditions. We might quote Asimov: "In general, the greater the molecular weight, the higher the boiling point. Water, with a molecular weight of only 18, boils at 100 deg. C., whereas propane, with more than twice this molecular weight (44), boils at much lower temperature of -42 deg. C." (Asimov's New Guide to Science, Isaac Asimov, Penguins Pub., 1984, p. 476). This is another quality that is essential for life's survival.

The thermal conductivity of water, (which is the capacity to conduct heat), is four times greater than any other common liquid. Without this, it would be harder for cells which cannot use convection currents to distribute heat evenly throughout the cell. The thermal conductivities of ice and snow are low. If they were high, the survival of many forms of life in the higher latitudes would be lost. Also, water would cool more rapidly and small lakes would be more likely to freeze completely.

Again, water has a very high surface tension: the higher than any liquid except selenium. This helps draw the water up through the soil within the reach of the roots and assists its rise from the roots to branches in tall

trees. If surface tension of water was the same as most other liquids, tall trees would not have received water at the top branches.

The viscosity of tar, olive oil, or sulfuric acid, are 10 billion times, one hundred times and twenty-five times that of water. Water's viscosity is almost the lowest among the liquids. If it was higher, marine life would have been either extremely difficult, or impossible. Living bodies couldn't move in water. If viscosity was slightly lower, any movement of material within the cell would be impossible. In fact, the cells themselves wouldn't have been able to replicate, or move about. Blood circulation through extremely tiny capillaries would have been impossible if the viscosity of water was any higher. And, strangely, if the viscosity was lower, blood circulation would yet be more difficult.

The density of water is one gram per cubic centimeter. This plays an important role in marine life. If water was denser all the living organisms in the sea would have been possible only at the top surface. There would be no life at the bottom of the sea. And if it was a fraction less dense, all marine life would sink to the bottom of the sea, without the possibility of any life at the upper level.

Life, therefore, depends entirely on the strange properties of water. Protoplasm is the basis of all living matter, and the vital power of protoplasm depends on the constant presence of water. Also, replication is the key to the propagation of life. But no replication would be possible without water. Indeed, it is hard to even think of life except in a liquid state. A little consideration tells us that gases cannot be the ingredients of a living body. For, atoms in a gas are volatile, always moving about, jutting into each other, and bouncing away. How can we create a cell with complicated machinery inside it with the help of atoms floating around? Or, consider solids. Each atom in a solid is tightly held and is under compression from all sides. How could we make cells from it and make them replicate?

We might quote Michael J. Denton here, “.. Water gives appearance of being uniquely fit for the type of carbon-based life that exists on earth. Every one of its chemical and physical properties seems maximally fit not only for microscopic life but also for large warm-blooded organisms such as mammals.. If the properties of water were not almost precisely what they are, carbon-based life would in all probability be impossible.. If the thermal properties

of water were even slightly different, the maintenance of stable body temperatures in warm-blooded organisms would be problematical. No other liquid comes close to water as the ideal medium for carbon-based life." (*Nature's Destiny*, The Free Press, 1998, p.19).

The statement that all life is from water should come as a surprise to the unbelievers. For, it is science of the modern times that informs us that not only all life is water, but it is impossible to have life, as we know it, without water. In fact, not only life is impossible without water, but water is the major component of all life: A human is 60-65% water. An elephant is about 70% water, a potato 80% and tomato 95%. If our body loses 20% of its water, we will die in a short time. That is true of all living bodies. We all live in water as much as fishes do.

The question that an unbeliever in the Qur'an as a revelation of God can ask himself is, how did Prophet Muhammad make this statement, if we assume that he is the author of the Qur'an?

J.Z. Young wrote: "It has been suggested that ammonia might substitute for water in life-like systems elsewhere in the universe. But am-

monia is liquid only between -77 deg. C and -33 deg. C. A further serious disadvantage is that solid ammonia is denser than the liquid, whereas ice floats. Furthermore, if ammonia was split by organisms as water is by photosynthesis, it would presumably produce nitrogen, which would never have filled the place that oxygen has in making energy available for life." (*An Introduction to the Study of Man*, J.Z. Young, ELBS pub., 1979, p. 25).

In conclusion we could reproduce Denton's remark again, "There is indeed no other fluid which is remotely competitive with water as the medium for carbon-based life. If water did not exist, it would have to be invented." (*Nature's Destiny*, p. 46).

We might add that not only water seems to be the medium through which messages are sent across from organelle to organelle within the cells, but also that a recent discovery is that water (even outside a living cell) seems to have memory. This is the property that homeopathy seems to use to its advantage. However, what is more stunning is that even though diluted to such degree that it would hold not a single atom of a foreign element that was once in it, water retains the memory of that

[31] And We have placed in the earth pegs lest it should vibrate with them and have placed therein highways to serve as passes so that they may find the way.⁴³

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ
بِهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] And We have made the sky a well-protected ceiling.⁴⁴ But they remain turning away from its signs.

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَفْهُمًا مَحْفُوظًا وَهُمْ عَنْ
آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] He it is who created the night and the day, the sun and the moon. Each one of them swims along⁴⁵ in an orbit.⁴⁶

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ
وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

element, and chemically behaves as if that element is still there.

And, as if mysteries of water are not exhaustible, another newly discovered property of water is that each of its molecule has a magnetic polarity. In the words of John Gribbin (The Reason Why, Allen Lane, England, 2011, p.80, "The second most important property of water for life is that each molecule has a magnetic polarity. In other words, one end of a water molecule behaves like a very weak magnetic north pole, and the other end like a very weak south pole. This is an almost unique property in the world of molecules. This polarity encourages not only water molecules but molecules dissolved in water to line up in certain ways, and this is one factor in determining the shape of the amino acid molecules that are crucial for life" (Au.).

43. That is, neither the mountains are there by accident, as the geologists would have us believe, nor is their placement in the manner they are placed, by accident. The whole of the earth has been designed to its minutest detail to support and propagate life (Au.).

44. That is, well protected from falling off its place (Razi, Qurtubi), which is the meaning most of the *Salaf* have derived, although minor opinions also prevail (Au.).

45. Some people have imagined that space must be filled with water for Allah (*swt*) to use the word swimming", says Razi, but that is not necessary. Is not the word "*sabih*" used for (smoothly galloping) horses?

46. The translation reflects the understanding of Qatadah, Ibn Zayd and some others. But of the classi-

[34] And We granted not any human eternity before you. If you died, will they live forever?⁴⁷

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِن مَّتَّ فَهُمْ الْحَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Every soul shall taste death.⁴⁸ We try you with evil and good for a testing.⁴⁹ Then to Us you shall be returned.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَتَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْحَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

cal scholars, some, like Mujahid, Dahhak and others have understood the term “*falak*” not as “orbits” but as “axis” comparing it to the central steel pin of the grinding stone. That is, these celestial objects rotate around their own axis. A third opinion was that of Hasan. He said the whole universe rotated around an axis. One or all of the three, writes Ibn Jarir, could be true and at the same time. Imām Razi conjectures that any one of the three opinions could be correct: (a) space is stationary, celestial bodies move through it, (b) space moves while the celestial bodies are stationary, (c) both space and celestial bodies are moving in different directions.

That the Milky Way galaxy is slowly rotating around its own axis is quite well known, but the idea that the Universe could be rotating around its axis is not a far-fetched idea in modern cosmology (Au.).

47. Unable to stop the Prophet’s progress the pagans sometimes said,

in the language of the Qur’an (52: 30),

أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا نَأْتِيهِم بِالْمُتُونِ [الطور
: ٣٠]

“Or, do they say, ‘A poet for whom we await a misfortune of time!’” So, Allah asked them, “If he died, will they live forever?” (Qurtubi).

48. The use of the word “taste” in the statement, “every soul shall taste death” is indicative of the fact that death is a difficult process (of transfer from one world to another) – Shafi’.

49. “We try you with evil and good for a testing”: Thus both the situations, of evil as well as good, are for trying out man. Now, which of the two is easier? The answer is, to bear out with patience when passing through difficulties is easier, in comparison to remaining thankful and obedient in times of affluence. Hence ‘Umar said, “We were tested with difficulties and we showed patience. Then we were tested with ease and comfort, but we did not exhibit patience (Shafi’).

[36] When the unbelievers see you, they treat you not but in mockery: 'Is this the one who mentions your gods (contemptuously)?' While they are, at the mention of the Most Merciful, unbelievers.⁵⁰

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَذَّكُرُ آهَتَكُمْ وَهُمْ يَذُكَّرُ الرَّحْمَنُ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] Man has been created hasty.⁵¹ Soon shall I show you My signs, so do not seek Me to hasten (them).⁵²

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ سَأَرِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] They ask, 'When will this promise come to pass, if you are true?'

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

50. That is, they argued in favor of earthen idols, but never would they say anything in favor of their One Lord, the Most Merciful. How foolish?! (Qurtubi). They mock at you O Prophet, adds, Thanwi, but they need to mock at themselves (for not paying respects to the Lord of the universe but paying respects to idols).

51. Man has been hasty right from his first few minutes of existence. It is reported by Suddi that during the process of creation of Adam in the final hours of the day, when the soul had reached upper half, while the lower lay in clay, he tried to rise and said, "O Allah, hasten the creation before sunset" (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi). Ibn Abi Hatim also has a report to this effect (Shawkani).

The Arabic text, as in Ibn Abi Shaybah and others is as follows, but it must be noted that these are the words of, depending on source, the words of Salman al-Farsi, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid or others, and not a *hadith*. Shanqiti thinks this is an Israeli report (Au.).

أول ما خلق الله من آدم رأسه فجعل ينظر وهو يخلق ، قال : وبقيت رجلاه ، فلما كان بعد العصر قال : يا رب عجل قبل الليل

Should man be blamed then for being hasty? Shanqiti asks. The answer is, yes, because he can control his haste, placed in him for testing him.

52. Ibn Kathir attempts to provide the connection with the previous verse. He writes, 'When some people read about how the Prophet was ridiculed, they conclude in haste that

[39] *If only the unbelievers knew (the time) when they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces, nor from their backs, neither shall they be helped.*

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُونَ
عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَلَا
هُم يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] *Rather, it will come to them all of a sudden, leaving them bewildered, so that they shall not be able to avert it nor shall they be given respite.*

بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ
رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] *Messengers were indeed mocked before you. But those who mocked them, were hemmed by the very thing they were mocking.*

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأُوا بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ
بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ
يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] *Say, 'Who protects you by the night and the day from the All-Merciful?'⁵³ Yet from the remembrance of their Lord they are turning away.*

قُلْ مَنْ يَكْلُمُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ
بَلْ لَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

the detractors ought to have been punished. So Allah added, "Man has been created hasty." Rather, the rule is that every one of the human beings is given enough time to think, consider and adopt the right course. He is forgiven several times. Finally, when all hopes are lost, there comes the punishment, which cannot be averted.'

Mawdudi has more or less the same to say, "The unbelievers derided the very notion of God's punishment, of the Hereafter, and of Hell. They accepted that the Prophet (peace be on him) had warned them that if they rejected his call, they would be seized by God's punishment, would

be called to account on the Day of Judgment and would suffer the agonies of His Hell-fire. However, they contended that even though they heard the Prophet's warnings and had rejected his teachings, they nevertheless continued to flourish. God's punishment, they argued, was not forthcoming nor did it appear as if the Day of Judgment was imminent. This verse then is in response to such statements from the unbelievers."

53. As Zarkashi has pointed out (*Al-Burhan*) a second meaning of *Al-Rahman* is "the Most Powerful." It seems it has been used here in this sense (Au.).

[43] Or, have they gods apart from Us who will defend them? They are not capable of helping themselves, nor will they be protected from Us.⁵⁴

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنْ دُونِنَا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِنَّا يُصْحَبُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] Nay, We generously provided these people and their forefathers, until a great length of time passed over them.⁵⁵ Do they not notice that We set upon the land, decreasing it at its borders?⁵⁶ Then, is it they who will prevail?

بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا أَفَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

However, if we go by the standard meaning then we might note Asad's explanation, ".. in this context, as the Most Gracious (*ar-Rahman*) is meant to bring out the fact that He – and He alone – is the protector of all creation."

And, by way of connection it may be stated that when Allah (*swt*) said in a previous verse (no. 39) that the unbelievers will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces in the Next World, they are now being told that in this world too they have no protectors. If it was not for Allah's protection from natural calamities they could not have lived in peace on the earth (Razi).

54. Lit., "*La yus-habun*" should be rendered as "they will not be allowed (Our) company" which Ibn `Abbas explained as meaning, "they will not be given (Our) protection" (Ibn Jarir). That is because, Al-Mazini has

said, when you say in Arabic "*As-bahtha al-rajul*", it means, "you prevented him" (Razi). However, most commentators have understood the terms as expressed in the translation since, as Yusuf Ali pointed out, ".. with 'an or min it has also the meaning of defend or remove from someone."

Alternatively, as Majid rendered it, "and against Us they cannot be kept company with." Then? he explains with a sentence in Arabic picked up from Raghbi: "That is, they shall not enjoy from Us what will accompany them of peace, tranquility and the impulse to do good works, the kind of blessings that accompany Allah's Friends."

55. "Lit., 'until their lives ('umur) grew long' - i.e., until they grew accustomed to the thought that their prosperity will last forever" (Asad from Zamakhshari).

[45] Say, 'I only warn you by the Revelation.'
But the deaf do not hear the call when they are warned.⁵⁷

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ
الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] But if a whiff of the punishment of your
Lord should touch them, they will surely say,
'Alas for us! We indeed were the transgres-
sors.'⁵⁸

وَلَكِنْ مَسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ
لَيَقُولُنَّ يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

56. The allusion is, Hasan al-Busri said, to Islam's triumph over unbelief (Ibn Kathir). Its expansion into Kufr territory is another shade of meaning (Zamakhshari).

Yusuf Ali has some words that the Islamic Da'wah workers over the world, especially in the West, will do well to remember, "The particular significance is that Islam spread from the outer borders, social and geographical, gradually inwards. The social fringe was the humbler people, such as slaves and poor men. The geographical reference is to Madinah and tribes away from the Makkan center. The proud and unbelieving Quraish were the last to come in when the circle was gradually drawn tighter around them. The general signification applies to all times. Al-

lah's truth makes its way first among the poor and the lowly, those whose minds are unsoiled by prejudice of false pride or false knowledge, but it gradually hems in the obstinate, until it prevails in the world."

Also See *Surah Al-Ra`ad*, note 78 for further explanation.

57. The words "But the deaf do not hear the call when they are warned" could be intriguing to some. How can they hear the call when they are deaf? A sentence from Yusuf Ali clears the doubt, "According to the English saying, "none is so deaf as those who will not hear."

58. "This refers to God's punishment which the unbelievers sarcastically requested should strike them" (Mawdudi).

[47] And We shall set up the Just Scales for the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul shall be wronged in the least.⁵⁹ And, even if it were to be the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth; although, sufficient are We as reckoners.⁶⁰

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ حَرْدَلٍ آتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

59. We cannot be sure of the nature of the Scales. But *hadith* literature speaks of pans. Mawdudi adds, "This much, however, is certain: that it will weigh good and bad deeds and thereby indicate precisely the moral worth of every person."

Basing on the usage here in plural (not *meezaan*, but *mawaazeen*), it has been speculated that either there could be a Scale for everyone of those whose deeds will be weighed, or, there could be several kinds of Scales to weight different kinds of deeds (Qurtubi).

Accordingly, some men will be weighed as stated in *ahadith*. (Au.).

Ibn Kathir states here the oft-quoted *hadith* of Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, although weak, but which gathers strength from other directions:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيَخْلِصُ رَجُلًا مِنْ أُمَّتِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ سِجْلًا كُلُّ سِجْلٍ مَدُّ الْبَصَرِ، فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: أَتَشْكُرُ مِنْ هَذَا شَيْئًا؟ أَظْلَمَكَ كَتَبَتِي الْحَافِظُونَ؟ فَيَقُولُ: لَا يَا رَبِّ، فَيَقُولُ: بَلَى، إِنَّ لَكَ عِنْدِي حَسَنَةً، وَإِنَّهُ لَا

ظَلَمَ عَلَيْكَ الْيَوْمَ، فَيُخْرَجُ لَهُ بِطَاقَةٌ، فِيهَا أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ فَيَقُولُ: اخْضُرْ وَرُتِّقْ، فَيَقُولُ: مَا هَذِهِ الْبِطَاقَةُ مَعَ هَذِهِ السِّجْلَاتِ؟ فَتَنْقُلُ الْبِطَاقَةَ، وَلَا يَنْقُلُ مَعَ اسْمِ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا

A man will be brought in front of the entire humanity on the Judgment Day. Ninety-nine account books will be opened up before him, every book reaching the extent of the sight. He will be asked, "Do you deny any of it? Did My scribes do you any wrong?" He will reply, "No, my Lord." He will be asked, "Do you have an excuse? Or a good deed?" The (awestruck man) will reply, "No my Lord." Allah will say, "Rather, you have a good deed. No wronging today." At that, a piece of paper will be brought out saying, "I bear witness that there is no deity save Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger." He will say, "Come forward to (witness) your weighing." The man will say, "My Lord! What will this piece of pa-

per do against these books?" But the piece of paper weigh down (against the other). Nothing can be heavier against Allah's name.

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir cite another report, also in Ahmad. It says that one of the Companions of the Prophet came in and sat before him. He said,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ لِي مَمْلُوكَيْنِ يُكَذِّبُونِي وَيَخُونُونِي وَيَعْصُونِي وَأَضْرِبُهُمْ وَأَسْبُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ أَنَا مِنْهُمْ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِحَسَبِ مَا خَانُوكَ وَعَصَوْتَ وَيُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَعِقَابُكَ إِيَّاهُمْ إِنْ كَانَ دُونَ دُنُوبِهِمْ كَانَ فَضْلًا لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ عِقَابُكَ إِيَّاهُمْ يَقْدِرُ دُنُوبِهِمْ كَانَ كَفَافًا لَكَ وَلَا عَلَيْكَ وَإِنْ كَانَ عِقَابُكَ إِيَّاهُمْ فَوَقَّ دُنُوبَهُمْ اقْتَصَصَ لَهُمْ مِنْكَ الْفَضْلُ الَّذِي بَقِيَ قَبْلَكَ فَجَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ يَبْكِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَيَهْتَفُ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا لَهُ مَا يَقْرَأُ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ {وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ} فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا أَجْدُ شَيْئًا خَيْرًا مِنْ فِرَاقِ هَؤُلَاءِ يَعْنِي عِبِيدَهُ إِيَّيْ أَشْهَدُكَ أَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَارٌ كُلُّهُمْ

"Messenger of Allah! I have two slaves. They lay the lie on me, deceive me, and disobey me. So I beat them and abuse them. What will be my situation with them?" He answered, Their deceptions, disobedience and laying lies on you will be measured against your punishments. If your punishments happen to be exactly equal

to their wrongdoing, there will be nothing on you nor on them. But, if your punishments prove to be lesser than their wrongdoing, you will have the surplus. On the other hand, if your punishments prove to be in excess of their wrongdoing, they will be compensated for it (from your good deeds) in proportion to the excess. At that the man started to weep and murmur right there before them. The Prophet remarked, "What's wrong with this man? Does he not read in the Qur'ān, 'And We shall set up the Just Scales for the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul shall be wronged in the least?'" The man said, "Messenger of Allah! I do not think there is anything better than that I should free them. So, be a witness that I have freed them all."

The above narrative is from Tirmidhi who evaluated it as *Hasan Gharib*, but Albani thought it was *Sahih* (Au.).

And Shafi` adds from Mazhari a report originating from Hakim, Bayhaqi and Ajuri.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ : أَنَّهَا ذَكَرَتْ النَّارَ فَبَكَتْ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- : « مَا يَبْكِيكَ ». قَالَتْ : ذَكَرْتُ النَّارَ فَبَكَيتُ فَهَلْ تَذْكُرُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ

[48] Surely, We granted⁶¹ Musa and Harun the Criterion,⁶² a Light, and an Admonition⁶³ for the Godfearing⁶⁴

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ
وَضِيَاءَ وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- : « أَمَّا فِي ثَلَاثَةِ مَوَاطِنَ فَلَا يَذْكُرُ أَحَدٌ أَحَدًا : عِنْدَ الْمِيزَانِ حَتَّى يَعْلَمَ أَيُّنْفُ مِيزَانُهُ أَوْ يثْقُلُ وَعِنْدَ الْكِتَابِ حِينَ يُقَالُ (هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْرُوا كِتَابِيهِ) حَتَّى يَعْلَمَ أَيَّنَ يَقَعُ كِتَابُهُ أَيْ يَمِينِهِ أَمْ فِي شِمَالِهِ أَمْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ ظَهْرِهِ وَعِنْدَ الصِّرَاطِ إِذَا وُضِعَ بَيْنَ ظَهْرَيْنِ جَهَنَّمَ »

Once `A'isha wept. Upon asking why, she asked, "I thought of the Fire which brought me to tears. Will you remember us, your family folks, on the Day of Judgment?" He answered, "There will be three points at which no one will remember anyone else. One, when the Scales are set up, until a man knows whether the pan of good deeds will outweigh the pan of evil deeds. Second, when the Books of Deed when it will be said, 'Here, read my book) until it is known whether it will be received by the right hand or left or left, or from the rear. And three, when the Bridge is laid on *Jahannum*."

According to Hakim, the chain of narration meets with the requirements of the Sheikhayn (Au.).

60. Yusuf Ali has a comment on Western learning and integrity, "The literalism of Sale (a famous translator of the Qur'an: Au.) has here excelled itself: he translates, 'and there will be sufficient accountants with us'!" And anyone who doubts the intentional errors of this sort has no idea of the depth of dishonesty of the Western scholars (Au.).

61. Mawdudi gives us an overall view of the passage that follows: "From here on the Prophets form the subject matter of the discourse. References – both cursory and detailed – are made to the lives of several of them. The context in which these references are made emphasizes the following points:

- (1) That all Prophets were human beings, they did not belong to any other species..
- (2) That the earlier Prophets were also raised for the same purpose for which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was raised..
- (3) That God treated the Prophets in a special way in so far as they were subjected to great hardships for long

[49] Those who fear their Lord in the Unseen
and who hold the Hour in awe.⁶⁵

الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ
السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] And this a blessed Reminder that We
have sent down, will you then reject it?

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ
مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

periods of time. They not only suffered difficulties of a personal nature but also encountered difficulties created for them by their enemies. Eventually, however, God came to their rescue, blessed them with His grace and favor, answered their prayers and removed their difficulties..

(4) That even though the Prophets enjoyed God's special favour and were endowed with extraordinary powers by Him, they were, nevertheless, still human beings and were, like other creatures, His servants. None of them was invested with divinity."

62. Asad renders the term "*al-furqan*" as "the standard by which to discern the true from the false" and then comments that it has here "twofold implication: firstly, it alludes to the Qur'anic doctrine .. of the historical continuity in all divine revelation, and, secondly, it stresses the fact that revelation – and revelation alone – provides an absolute criterion of all moral valuation. Since the Mosaic dispensation as such was binding on

the children of Israel alone and remained valid only within a particular historical and cultural context, the term *al-furqan* relates here not to the Mosaic Law as such, but to the fundamental ethical truths contained in the *Torah* and common to all divine revelation."

63. "The three words – 'criterion', 'light', and 'admonition' – are used to characterize the Jewish *Torah*. The *Torah* was a criterion for distinguishing between truth and falsehood; a light to show man the right way and an admonition to call attention to their forgotten lesson" (Mawdudi).

64. "Although *Torah* was meant for all .. only those endowed with a certain set of qualities could in fact benefit from it" (Mawdudi, with some modification).

65. The term "*mushfiqun*" has special significance. Yusuf Ali explains: "Note the three kinds of fear mentioned in xxi. 48-49. ("godfearing, fear and awe" in our rendering: Au.). *Taqwa* is the fear of running counter

[51] We had certainly granted Ibrahim his rectitude earlier,⁶⁶ for We were of him well-knowing.⁶⁷

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا
بِهِ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] When he said to his father and his people, 'What are these idols unto which you are cleaving?'⁶⁸

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي
أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

to the will of Allah; it is akin to the love of Him; for we fear to offend those we love; it results in right conduct, and those who entertain are 'those who would do right.' Then there is *khashiyat*, the fear of Allah, lest the person who entertains it may be found, in his inmost thoughts, to be short of the standard which Allah wishes for him; this is also righteous but in a less high degree than *Taqwa* which is akin to love. And thirdly, there is the fear of consequences on the Day of Judgment (*ishfaq*); this also may lead to righteousness, but is on a still lower plane. Perhaps the three correspond to the Criterion, the Light and the Message (or Warning) of the last verse."

66. "*Min-qabl*" of the text has been understood by Mujahid, Qatadah and others as referring to Ibrahim's youth. That is, he was given at a very young age. An alternative meaning is, "We gave Ibrahim his rectitude before Musa" (Tabari, Razi, Qurtubi and others).

Asad comments, "The possessive pronoun 'his' affixed to the noun *rushd* (which, in this context, has the meaning of 'consciousness of what is right') emphasizes the highly personal, intellectual quality of Abraham's progressive realization of God's almightiness and uniqueness (cf. 6: 74-79); while the expression *min qabl* – rendered by me as 'long before [the time of Moses]' – stresses, once again, the element of continuity in man's religious insight and experience."

67. That is, Allah knew Ibrahim's (moral and spiritual) condition to declare him a Messenger and His Friend. In Mawdudi's words: "(The words) signify that God's favour was not arbitrary. He knew well what kind of man Abraham was and so He lavished His favours on him in consideration of that merit."

68. Majid comments: "Images and idols are looked upon by the idolaters not only as visible symbols and

[53] They said, 'We found our forefathers worshipping them.'

﴿٥٣﴾ قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ

[54] He said, 'Surely, you and your forefathers have been in clear error.'⁶⁹

﴿٥٤﴾ قَال لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

[55] They asked, 'Have you brought us the truth, or are you of those in jest?'⁷⁰

﴿٥٥﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ

[56] He replied, 'Rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth - He who originated them. And I am to you of those who bear witness.'⁷¹

﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

[57] And, by Allah, I will surely plan against your idols after you have turned and gone away.'⁷²

﴿٥٧﴾ وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ

representation of some higher beings but as tenements or veritable 'bodies' of their gods and fraught with divinity."

Thanwi clears a misconception: "Sheikh Shaheed Dehlavi (perhaps Sheikh Isma'il: Au.) has cited this verse to criticize the practice or efforts at 'Sheikh-imagery' recommended by certain extreme-going *Sufis*. (It is to imagine, on the part of a novice, the presence of the Sheikh before himself; and in a few extreme cases, even during prayers: Au.). However, if that happens without volition, and is not cloven to, then it is similar to other passing thoughts that could be forgiven."

69. In simple words Ibrahim pointed out to an error which pagans of all

times fail to see: a practice does not become valid if previous generations adopted it, and, secondly, as Razi put it, the acceptance by a large number of people does not convert a false idea into a true one.

70. "Abraham looked at life with a serious eye, and his people took it light-heartedly. He was devoted to Truth, and they cared more for ancestral custom. In the conflict he seemed to be in their power. But he was fearless, and he triumphed by Allah's Grace" (Yusuf Ali).

71. What he meant to say is that it was not an idle statement that he was making, but rather, he could offer sufficient proofs (Razi).

72. Qatadah said, "I believe Ibrahim said the words, 'I will plan against

[58] So he rendered them to pieces,⁷³ except the largest among them,⁷⁴ that they may return to him.⁷⁵

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ
يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] They exclaimed, 'Who has done this to our gods? Surely, he is of the wrongdoers.'

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآهْتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] They said, 'We heard a youth mention them (contemptuously). He is called Ibrahim.'

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ
﴿٦٠﴾

your idols after you have turned and gone away,' actually after they had turned and gone away." Some reports suggest a keeper who had delayed departure heard the words from him (Ibn Jarir).

Yusuf Ali has another opinion: "He wants to convince them the powerlessness of their idols. But he does not do it underhand. He tells them that he is going to do something when once they are gone and their backs are turned to the idols, - as much as to say that the idols are dependent on their care and attention. Apparently the people are amused and want to see what he does. So they leave him to his own devices.

73. Before leaving for their religious festival outside the town, the pagans had left food items in the hands of the idols hoping to receive blessing by the time they returned. So Ibrahim said, sarcastically, as they left (37: 91), "Why do you not eat?"

Then he added (37: 92), "What is the matter with you? Why do not you talk?" and (37: 93) ".. began to strike them with his right hand." Done with them, he hung the axe by the neck of the chief idol (Ibn Jarir).

74. The words "*kabirul lahum*" has also the indication of "the most important among them" as Ibn `Abbas understood it (Ibn Jarir).

75. Tabari understands the pronoun in "*ilay-hi*" as alluding to Ibrahim meaning, "hopefully they would return to him and to his message." Others however, such as Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir and others see the possibility that the allusion is to the chief idol. That is, they might return to him and realize that idols have no power over anything.

Yusuf Ali again, "He was enacting a scene, to make the people ashamed of worshipping senseless stocks and stones. He left the biggest idol untouched and broke the others to

[61] They said, 'Bring him before the people's eyes so that they may bear witness.'⁷⁶

قَالُوا فَأْتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] They asked, 'Are you the one who did this with our gods, O Ibrahim?'

قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ
﴿٦٢﴾

[63] He replied, 'Rather, it is this – the chief one – who did it.'⁷⁷ Ask them if they can speak.'

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ
كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

pieces, as if a fight had taken place between the idols, and the biggest had smashed the others. Would they turn to the surviving idol and ask him how it all happened?"

76. Yusuf Ali provides the missing links that some people have difficulty inserting: "Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham's speech in verse 57 ask, 'who has done this?' Those who were, at once name him, whereupon a formal council of the people was held, and Abraham was arraigned.

(Although convinced of his crime) they did not wish to punish Ibrahim without due trial held in public (Ibn Jarir).

77. Yusuf Ali writes: "(This was happening in) a place – known as Ur of the Chaldees – on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, not a hundred miles from the Persian Gulf. This was the cradle, or one of the cradles

of human civilization. Astronomy was studied here in very ancient times, and (along with idol-worship: Au.) the worship of the sun, moon and stars was the prevailing form of religion .. Nimrod's capital was in Assyria, near Nineveh (near modern Mosul), we may suppose that either the king's rule extended over the whole of Mesopotamia, or that Abraham wandered north through Babylonia to Assyria."

Ibn Jarir reports Ibn Is-haq's explanation, "They presented Ibrahim to Nimrod the king of the land. The king sought confirmation that it was he who broke them. Ibrahim said that it was the biggest of them who did it. He (the chief idol) was angry that although it was the biggest, the little ones were still being worshipped. So he broke them (Ibn Jarir).

In Yusuf Ali's words, "They asked him the formal question. There was

no mystery about it. He had already openly threatened to do something to the idols, and people who had heard his threats were there. He now continues his ironic taunt to the idol-worshippers. 'You ask me! Why don't you ask the idols? Doesn't it look as if this big fellow has smashed the smaller ones in quarrel?' If they do not ask the idols, they confess that the idols have no intelligence enough to answer! This argument is developed in verse 64-67. Note that while the false worshippers laughed at his earnestness, he pays them out by a grim joke, which at the same time advances the cause of Truth."

The above stated, Ibn Jarir protests that those who do not like to accept the reports that have come down from the elders, hold that what Ibrahim meant is that if the idols were capable of speech, then the big one broke them. In other words, since the idols are not capable of speech, the big one did not break them. This they say because they think Ibrahim could not have spoken a lie. But the rationalists forget that this is in the same vein as the words of Yusuf's caller who accused the caravan by saying, "O caravan! Indeed you are thieves" – although they were not. They also forget the *hadith* which says that Ibrahim did not lie but on

three occasions, and all of them were for the sake of Allah. First, when he said, "Nay, it is this – the chief one - who did it," second, when he said (37: 89), "Indeed I am unwell," and third, about his wife to the ruler of a land that she was his sister.

The *hadith* of above reference, reported by Abu Hurayrah, is in the *Sahihayn* as well as Tirmidhi (Qur-tubi).

But the *Sahihayn* version is slightly differently worded (Au.). The Prophet (*saws*) said,

لَمْ يَكْذِبْ إِبْرَاهِيمُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِلَّا ثَلَاثَ كَذَبَاتٍ
ثِنْتَيْنِ مِنْهُنَّ فِي ذَاتِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَوْلُهُ {إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ}
وَقَوْلُهُ {بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا} وَقَالَ بَيْنَا هُوَ ذَاتَ
يَوْمٍ وَسَارَةٌ إِذْ أَتَى عَلَى جَبَّارٍ مِنَ الْجَبَابِرَةِ فَقِيلَ لَهُ إِنَّ
هَذَا هُنَا رَجُلًا مَعَهُ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْ أَحْسَنِ النَّاسِ فَأَرْسَلْ إِلَيْهِ
فَسَأَلَهُ عَنْهَا فَقَالَ مَنْ هَذِهِ قَالَ أُخْتِي فَأَتَى سَارَةَ قَالَ يَا
سَارَةُ لَيْسَ عَلَيَّ وَجْهَ الْأَرْضِ مُؤْمِنٌ غَيْرِي وَغَيْرِكَ وَإِنَّ
هَذَا سَأَلَنِي فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ أَنَّكَ أُخْتِي فَلَا تُكْذِبِينِي فَأَرْسَلْ
إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ ذَهَبَ يَتَنَاوَلُهَا بِيَدِهِ فَأَخَذَ
فَقَالَ ادْعِي اللَّهَ لِي وَلَا أَضْرُكَ فَدَعَتْ اللَّهَ فَأُطْلِقَ ثُمَّ
تَنَاوَلَهَا الثَّانِيَةَ فَأَخَذَ مِثْلَهَا أَوْ أَشَدَّ فَقَالَ ادْعِي اللَّهَ لِي
وَلَا أَضْرُكَ فَدَعَتْ فَأُطْلِقَ فَدَعَا بَعْضَ حَجَجَتَيْهِ فَقَالَ
إِنَّكُمْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِإِنْسَانٍ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُونِي بِشَيْطَانٍ فَأَخَذْتُمَهَا
هَاجِرًا فَأَتَيْتُهُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فَأَوْمَأَ بِيَدِهِ مَهْيَا قَالَتْ رَدَّ
اللَّهُ كَيْدَ الْكَافِرِ أَوْ الْفَاجِرِ فِي نَحْوِهِ وَأَخَذَهُمْ هَاجِرًا قَالَ
أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ تَلَّكَ أُمَّكُمْ يَا بَنِي مَاءِ السَّمَاءِ

"Ibrahim did not lie but thrice. Twice of them about Allah, the Mighty, the Honorable. (First), when he said, 'Indeed, I am un-

well;' (second), when he said, 'Nay, it is this – the chief one - who did it.' (Third), one day he and Sarah passed by a tyrant – one of a dynasty of tyrants. A man told him (the tyrant), 'A man (has broken his journey in your land who) has an extremely beautiful woman in his company.' So he sent to him (Ibrahim) and asked him about her as to who she is?' He said, 'My sister.' He went to Sarah and told her, 'O Sarah. There is no believer on the face of the earth except me and you. This man (the tyrant) asked me about you and I said that you are my sister. Therefore, do not lay the lie on me.'

"He (the tyrant) sent for her. When she entered upon him, he desired after her and tried to take hold of her. But he was seized, strongly. He said, 'Pray to Allah for me and I shall do you no harm.' She prayed for him. He was released but again desired her and again tried to take hold of her. But he was again seized, strongly, or even more. He pleaded, 'Pray to Allah and I will do you no harm.' She prayed and he was released. He called in his attendant and told him, 'You haven't brought me a human. It's a devil. Send her away. He gave her Hajar (as a gift).'

She came back to him (Ibrahim). He was in Prayers. He signaled with his hand – 'what happened?' She said, 'Allah proved sufficient against the mischief of the unbelieving tyrant, and he gave me Hajar for services.'"

Abu Hurayrah said, 'That was your mother O men of the heavenly waters'" (Ibn Kathir).

(Note: As pointed out by some scholars, the rule that the tyrants followed was that when one of them desired after a woman, and she was married, he killed her husband before seizing her: Au.).

Qadi Abu Bakr b. al-'Arabiyy has a point worthy of note. The Prophet said that Ibrahim did not lie but thrice and twice it was in Allah's path. He did not count his statement about Sarah as a lie in Allah's path, for, after all, it was for her and his own sake. A deed is truly in Allah's path when it is not affected by any worldly consideration whatsoever. If it was we who had been involved, it could be referred to as being in the way of Allah. But, considering Ibrahim's high position, for him, no (Qurtubi).

Among the commentators of old, Imām Razi does not accept the above report – even though in Bukhari and Muslim - as trustworthy since it at-

tributes lies to a Prophet. He thinks it is easier to attribute a lie to the narrators rather than to a Prophet. One or two Qur'ānic commentators of our times have followed suit. But others have pointed out that firstly, rejection of the *hadīth* that speaks of Ibrahim's lies, leads up to another dilemma. There is another report, which confirms its trustworthiness. It is found in all major works and is none other than the famous *hadīth al-Shafa'ah* which speaks of mankind going from one Prophet to another on the Day of Judgment seeking their intercession with Allah to start off the Reckoning. They will all refuse referring to one of their errors of the past life. Ibrahim will cite his lies as the reason why he would not be able to help. And this one is a mutawatir report. (Mutawatir is a report, which is narrated by so many that their consensus to lie could not have been achieved: Au.).

Incidentally, it is overlooked that rejecting the *hadīth* is tantamount to rejecting the above Qur'ānic verse, which states first of the three lies (Au.).

Secondly, the scholars say that the *hadīth* concerning Ibrahim's lies has not been understood properly. For although the *hadīth* uses the word

“lie” it does not state anything that we can ordinarily consider as lies. Can any of the three lies be treated as lies? Aren't they of the allegorical nature? When Ibrahim said that the chief idol broke the rest, did he think they would buy that from him? Was he doing anymore than demonstrating the powerlessness of their hand-carved deities? When he said he was unwell, was he perfectly hale and hearty? Is not the word “saqem” used for feelings of depression, distress, anxiety, and sadness as well? Or, when he said Sarah was his sister, was he absolutely wrong? Isn't it reported that she was his cousin? Even today, don't the people refer to an uncle's daughter as “my sister,” adding up “a cousin” only when asked if she is a real sister?

What then is the meaning of the term “lies” as used in the *hadīth*? Well, we must once again recall that great men enjoy high status with Allah. And high status demands moral rectitude of an extremely high order. A minor error coming from such men is major in the sight of Allah. Hasn't Allah reproached our own Prophet in very strong terms for his minor errors? (This writer felt amused when – in a different context - a Hindu began to actually defend our Prophet over his attitude with Ibn Umm Maktum.

[64] So they turned to themselves and said (to each other), 'Surely, you are the ones who are in the wrong.'⁷⁸

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] Then they were thrown into confusion.⁷⁹ (They said), 'You know very well that these do not speak?!'

ثُمَّ نَكِسُوا عَلَىٰ رُؤُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] He said, 'Do you then worship other than Allah that which is neither of any profit to you nor of any harm?

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] Fie upon you and upon what you worship other than Allah. Will you not use reason?'

أُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

That is, he thought the error was too minor for rebuke). [Hasn't Adam's minor error been referred to as "Asa" and "Ghawa" in the Qur'an: Shafi`]? In short, although the three statements of Prophet Ibrahim were no lies at all, the term was used because of the status he held following the rule:

حسنات الأبرار سيئات المقربين

"Good deeds of the pious are evil deeds of those brought nigh (Au.).

Finally, warns Shafi', it is worthwhile reminding that although Allah or his Messenger used strong terms against Prophets, such as, in this instance, "kadhib" (lies), Muslims are not allowed to use similar terms when referring to the Prophets of Allah. They might directly quote a Qur'anic

verse or *hadith* but never attribute any such thing to them himself.

78. Yusuf Ali comments: "Abraham's biting irony cut them to the quick. What could they say? They turned to each other. Some among them thought he had the best of the argument. They were not keen on idolatry, and they told their fellows that it was useless arguing with Abraham. They all hung their heads in shame. But presently they thought they would face out Abraham, and take his words literally. They said, 'You know quite well that idols do not speak!' This was precisely what Abraham wanted them to say, and he delivered his first blow!"

79. The translation of "nukisu `aluru'usihim" expresses the understanding of the *Salaf*. Nakasa implies 'to

[68] They said, 'Burn him and protect your gods, if you are to act.'

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Ibrahim.'⁸⁰

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

turn around,' 'turn upside down,' etc. Of course, it was not they who had turned upside down, but instead, it was their argument that was turned upside down by Ibrahim, to which in truth is the allusion here. In Yusuf Ali's words, it denotes their "mental somersault."

Another possible meaning is, "Then they reverted to their folly and belligerent ways of old" (Qurtubi).

80. The story goes that they dug a huge pit and filled it with fire. The fire was so intense that a bird flying over would fall dead. It is said that it was lit for several weeks. Of the animals it was only chameleon that was blowing at the fire to intensify it. Hence the Prophet has asked us to kill it. (The report about the chameleon is in Ahmad, Ibn Hibban and Ibn Majah, declared *Sahih* by Albani: S. Ibrahim). Then Ibrahim was hoisted on a tall structure. (The Qur'an said, "They said, 'Build for him a building and then throw him into the blazing fire'": Alusi). Thereafter he was hurled in with the help of a catapult.

كَانَ آخِرَ قَوْلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حِينَ أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Ibrahim's last words before he was hurled into the Fire were, "Enough for me Allah, an excellent Trustee".

When he was hurled in, it was said,

يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ [الأنبياء : ٦٩]

"O fire. Be cool and safe for Ibrahim." If the words, "safe for Ibrahim" were not added, the fire would have frozen him. He came out unhurt. He was then sixteen. (Al-Mawardi has said that he was twenty-six: Qurtubi).

It is reported that he stayed in the fire for several days or weeks. When they found that Ibrahim was safe in the pit, one of the men claimed that it was he who had overpowered the fire with his magic. So they threw him in to test his claim. He was reduced to ashes (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Alusi).

The report about Ibrahim saying My Trustee is Allah, and excellent Trustee He is, is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir).

[70] And they intended a (secret) plan against him. But We made them the greater losers.⁸¹

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] We delivered him, and Lut,⁸² unto the land in which We have placed blessing for all beings.⁸³

وَوَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

As to the doubt concerning how Ibrahim could escape unhurt, Zamakhshari answers that one probability is that his skin was turned fireproof, like the skins of the Keepers of Hellfire.

Alusi adds that except for what is reported in the *hadith*, most other parts of the story as mentioned above come through the *Salaf*. Only that can be fully trusted which happens to be in the Qur'an or *hadith*. He also deals with the juggling of the con-*Sufis*. He writes, As regards the feats performed by the followers of Sheikh Rifa'i, it must be noted that they are not preformed by the true followers of the Sheikh - such of them as who adhere to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. But rather, by those who are closer to kufr than Islam because of their corrupt lives. "I have seen," writes Alusi, "one of them enter into fire, sit there coolly sipping wine, and emerge unscratched." Apparently, these are magical feats or what is known as *Istidraj*. Sheikh Rif a`i himself, or his true followers

never entered into fires, nor played with snakes, nor rode upon ferocious beasts.

81. Probably Ibrahim did not leave the town immediately and so some other methods of getting rid of him were devised but which failed. In Yusuf 'Ali's words, "As they could not get rid of him by open punishment, they tried secret plans, but were foiled throughout. It was not he that lost, but they. On the contrary he left them and prospered and became the progenitor of great peoples."

82. Lut (*asws*) was his nephew. The two, along with Ibrahim's wife Sarah left Iraq for Syria.

83. There are a few varying minor opinions about the identity of the region, but most scholars such as 'Ubayy b. Ka'b, Qatadah, Hasan and others have said that the allusion is to Syria (which, in its widest connotation includes present day Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon, a region which has been, as Yusuf Ali put it, "a bone of contention between

[72] And We bestowed on him Is-haq and, in addition,⁸⁴ Ya`qub.⁸⁵ And We made all of them righteous.⁸⁶

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

all the great kingdoms and empires (Au.).

Qatadah has a rather intriguing remark about the area: "Syria is known as the pillar (*`amud*) of emigration. The earth is not reduced from any part of the world but is added to Syria, and no part is reduced from Syria but is added to Palestine. Syria is also the place where people will be gathered, the place where Resurrection will take place, where `Isa ibn *Maryam* will descend, and where Dajjal will be destroyed. The Prophet has said,

رَأَيْتُ عَمُودَ الْكِتَابِ اشْرَعَ مِنْ تَحْتِ وَسَادَتِي، فَأَنْبَعْتُهُ
بَصْرِي، فَإِذَا هُوَ نُورٌ سَاطِعٌ حَتَّى طَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ قَدْ هَوَى
بِهِ، فَعُمِدَ بِهِ إِلَى الشَّامِ، وَإِنِّي أَوْلْتُ أَنَّ الْفِتْنَ إِذَا
وَقَعَتْ أَنَّ الْإِيمَانَ بِالشَّامِ

"I saw in a dream that the mainstay (*`amud*) of the Book was being withdrawn from underneath my pillow. I followed it with my eyes, and lo, it was a bright Light; until I thought it might be taken away. It was planted in Syria. I interpret it as meaning that faith (iman) will be in Syria at the time tribulations descend."

The report is in Ahmad and others, treated *Sahih* by Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut (Au.).

Accordingly, when `Umar wrote to Ka`b, "O Ka`b, why should you not come and live in Madinah? It is the place to which the Prophet migrated, and where his grave lies?" Ka`b replied, "O leader of the faithful. I read in the Book that Syria is Allah's treasure on earth and His slaves are treasured here" (Ibn Jarir).

According to another report, in Tirmidhi, the Prophet said,

طُوبَى لِلشَّامِ قَبْلَ وَبِمِ دَلِكِ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ قَالَ اِنَّ
مَلَائِكَةَ الرَّحْمَنِ بِاسِطَةً اَجْنِحَتَهَا عَلَيْهَا

"Blessedness is for the people of Syria." We asked, "Why is that O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Because the angels of the Most Merciful have spread their wings over it" (Alusi).

The tradition is in *Musnad Ahmad* and other collections, declared trustworthy (Au.).

84. Scholars such as Mujahid, `Ata' and others have understood the term "*nafilah*" as "bestowal" (Ibn Jarir).

And since Isma`il is not mentioned here, there are stray opinions that perhaps it was Is-haq who was sacrificed by Ibrahim.

But Yusuf Ali has a good explanation why Isma`il's mention was left out. He writes: "Nafilat has many meanings: (1) booty; (2) extra work or prayer; (3) extra or additional gift; (4) grandson. The two last significations are implied here. Not only was Abraham given a son in his old age .. but several sons, the chief being Isma`il and Isaac, who both joined in burying him (Gen. xxv. 9); and he also saw grandsons. Isma`il is specially mentioned later (xxi. 85) apart from Isaac's line, on account of his special importance for Islam."

In any case, that Isma`il was first-born can be substantiated from the Qur'an itself. It said in (37: 102-112),

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ
أَنِّي أَدْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا
تَأْمُرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢)
فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (١٠٣) وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا
إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٤) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٠٥) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُو الْبَلَاءُ الْمُئِمِّنُ (١٠٦)
وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠٧) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ
(١٠٨) سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٩) كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٠) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١١)
وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ [الصفات :
[١١٢ - ١٠١]

"Then, when he was of age of exertion with him, he said, 'O my little son! I see indeed, in my sleep that I am slaughtering you. So consider, what is your view!' He said, 'O my father! Do as you are ordered. You shall find me, Allah willing, of the steadfast.' So, when the two had submitted, and he had laid him down on his forehead, We called out to him, 'O Ibrahim, you have fulfilled the (purpose of the) vision. Thus indeed We reward those who do well. Surely, this indeed was a clear test.' And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice; and left for him (a good word) among the later folk. Peace upon Ibrahim. Thus indeed We reward those who do things well. He was surely (one) of Our believing slaves. And We gave him the glad tiding of Is-haq: a Prophet, one of the righteous."

Thus, Is-haq was not yet born until time of the sacrifice. Further, the Qur'an never mentioned the two together, but mentioned first Isma`il and then Is-haq. For example, 2: 136, 3: 84, 4: 163 and 14: 39 (Au.).

85. It is said that Ibrahim asked for a single righteous descendant when he prayed in words (37: 100), "O my Lord! Grant me of the righteous" but he was granted two: One his son Is-haq and second his grandson Ya`qub (Ibn Jarir).

[73] And We made them leaders⁸⁷ guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them doing of good deeds, proper performance of Prayer and giving of charity. And they were devoted to Us.⁸⁸

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] And Lut: We gave him Judgment and knowledge, and We delivered him from the township that had been practicing abomination.⁸⁹ Truly, they were an evil people given to wickedness.

وَلَوْطًا آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] And We admitted him into Our mercy. Surely, he was of the righteous.⁹⁰

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

86. This reminder was necessary in view of the extremely grave charges of immorality brought against these Prophets by the Israeli holy literature (Au.).

87. Majid comments: “i.e., exemplars; objects of imitation to the people. So these prophets of God were, the Qur’an expressly and repeatedly affirms, models of religion and piety, and pre-eminently virtuous and holy, not mere diviners or interpreters of the Law to their people.”

88. Compare the contrasting conditions of the two, the Prophets and their people. The former were “devoted to Our worship” while the latter “given to abominations” (Au.).

89. Sodomy was of course the great abomination. What were others? We

have a *hadith* in Alusi listing others. It comes down through Hasan as the first narrator. But the credentials of the narrative could not be traced and therefore, we have dropped them (Au.).

90. “This clear, powerful vindication of Lot’s saintly character was all the more needed to contradict and repudiate the most atrocious charge – of incest – brought against him in the *Bible*. (Gen. 19: 30-38) The rabbis, not to be outdone by the *Bible*, maintained that ‘he was given over to lust; therefore he chose Sodom as his residence’ (JE. VIII, p. 186).”

Mawdudi demonstrates the discrepancies between the Qur’anic account and those in the Biblical sources: “According to the Qur’an, Abraham’s idolatrous father played a leading

role in the perpetration of wrongs and excesses against Abraham. The *Bible*, however, refers to Abraham's father as among those who migrated to Haran along with his sons, grandsons and daughters-in-law (*Genesis* 11: 27-32)..

“The Talmud, however, contains most of the details mentioned in the Qur’ān regarding Abraham’s conduct during his Mesopotamia days. When one compares the Qur’ānic and Talmudic versions, however, one notes a distinct difference in their thrust. The Talmudic account of Abraham is conspicuously incoherent and full of incredible incidents. In sharp contrast, the Qur’ān presents the important details of Abraham’s life, creating the image of a person whose life is far from all those absurdities that might disfigure his personality. For illustrative purpose only, the gist of Talmudic version of Abraham’s life is given below. This will also serve to show how wrong it is to believe that the Qur’ān is derived from either Christian or Judaic sources. The Talmudic version is as follows:

“The wise men saw a large star in the sky on the night Abraham was born and they advised Nimrod to kill the child born in the house of Therach. The king decided to kill the child

but Therach hid his child and had the child of one of his servant’s son killed instead. Therach thereupon hid his wife and child in a cave where they lived for ten years. In the 11th year Abraham was taken by Therach to Noah where he lived under the guidance of Noah and his Shem for thirty-nine years. During these years Abraham married his niece, Sarah, who was 42 years his younger.

‘Abraham left Noah after the age of 50 and returned to his father. There he found that his father was an idolater and had twelve idols in the house representing the twelve months of the year. He tried to preach to his father against idolatry but when the latter did not listen to him, Abraham then broke all the idols in the house. Seeing this Therach went straight to Nimrod and advised him that this was the son who the wise men had advised Nimrod to kill on the day of his birth. Therach said that the babies had been switched at Haran’s instigation. (Haran being Abraham’s brother.) Nimrod accordingly let Therach go but threw Haran into the fire along with Abraham. Haran was consumed by it, but Abraham walked through the flames unscathed. When Nimrod witnessed this with his own eyes, he cried out, “Servant of the God of Heaven, come forth from the

[76] And Nuh - when he cried (to Us) afore-time. So We responded to him and delivered him and his family⁹¹ from the great distress.

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَى مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ
فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ
﴿٧٦﴾

[77] And We helped him against the people who cried lies to Our signs; truly, they were an evil people. So We drowned them all together.

وَنَصْرَانَا مِنْ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ
﴿٧٧﴾

[78] And Da'ud, and Sulayman - when they were judging concerning the field, when the sheep of a people strayed there at night. And We were witnesses to their judgment.⁹²

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ
إِذْ نَفَسَتْ فِيهِ عَنَّمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ
شَاهِدِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

fire and stand before me. Thereupon Abraham walked out of the fire and furnace and stood before the king who bowed before Abraham making him a gift of many valuable objects.

“Thereafter, Abraham stayed in Iraq for another two years. Meanwhile, Nimrod had a dreadful dream which the astrologers said came through Abraham and that he should, therefore, put Abraham to death. Although Nimrod sent people to kill Abraham, but Abraham came to know of the plot before-hand through Eleazer, a slave presented to him by Nimrod himself. Abraham accordingly fled and took refuge with Noah where Therach also met him secretly on a number of occasions. At last both father and son decided to leave the country and Noah and his son Shem also approved of their plan. Accord-

ingly, Therach, along with his son Abraham and his grandson Lot and his granddaughter and Abraham's wife Sarah left and went to Haran (*The Talmudic Selections*, pp. 30-42).”

91. (Although the term “ahl” is for one's family), here the allusion is to those who believed and followed Nuh (Razi, Qurtubi).

92. Ibn Mas'ud said in explanation of the verse that a man's sheep entered into another's field (or vineyard) and damaged the crop. The matter was referred to Da'ud (*asws*). He judged that the sheep be given away to the owner of the field in compensation of his loss. Sulayman (*asws*) suggested instead that the shepherd should be asked to work on the farm until the damage was recovered. And, until the recovery, the flock of sheep be handed over to the

owner of the orchard to look after and to make use of their milk, wool, or sell off the offspring. (In his good grace and wisdom, Da'ud accepted the suggestion even though, as Yusuf Ali put it, "it came from a little boy : Au.). Accordingly, when Bara' b. 'Azib's camel entered into an Ansari's orchard by night and wrought some damage, the Prophet (*saws*) recited this verse and ordered that the damage be repaired. Then he added, "It is upon the owner of an orchard to see that stray cattle is kept out, and upon the owner of the cattle during the night to keep them away of orchards" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Suhnun however has said, adds Qurtubi, that the Prophetic judgment varying for day and night is because the orchards in Madinah had boundary walls. Therefore, if there are no boundaries to orchards or fields, as in many parts of the world, the owner of the flock will be charged for damage whether it happens by day or by night. Imām Abu Hanifah however has ruled that if a shepherd is accompanying the flock, then the damages are payable, otherwise not. This is in view of the *hadīth* in the *Sahihayn* that says, "Damage (caused) by animals do not entail compensation." This is a much stronger report than that involving Bara' (Alusi, Shafi').

For greater details one might profitably look into Qurtubi.

Further, it might be noticed that although Sulayman has been praised here, Da'ud was not censored (Ibn Jarir). It is possible, adds Zamakhshari, that the value of the flock was equal to the damage that was done to the crop and so Da'ud judged that they be given away in compensation. Thus, writes Thanwi, both the judgments were correct, hence Allah's words, "and to each We gave Judgment and knowledge."

In Asad's words, ".. the fact that Solomon's judgment was more profound did not disprove the intrinsic justice of David's original judgment or deprive it of its merit."

In fact, even if one wished, he will find it hard to judge which judgment was better. Could the loss of the orchard owner be greater than the value of the sheep? Or, alternatively, when given charge of the sheep, could he have recovered all his losses by the time his orchard was restored to the original condition? And, when restored, would it have fetched the same price as last year's crop? These are open questions and it is possible, as Mufti Shafi' has suggested, that Sulayman's judgment was more of the nature of a "mutual agreement

[79] We gave Sulayman the insight thereof⁹³ and to each We gave Judgment and knowledge. And We subdued the mountains and birds to hymn praises along with Da'ud⁹⁴ - We were the Doers.

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعَلَّمْنَا وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

that also salvaged the relationship between the two parties, than an effort to render absolute justice” (Au.).

Report concerning Bara' b. 'Azib's case is in Ahmad, Abu Da'ud and Ibn Majah, but may not be very strong (Ibn Kathir). Nevertheless, because of a few other supporting evidences, most jurists have accepted it as trustworthy and used it for legal purposes. As for Allah not censoring Da'ud, we also have a *hadith* in Bukhari which says that when a judge does his best and judges correctly, he gets double the reward. But when he does his best, yet commits an error, then he gets a single reward. And the essential point to be noted is, “when he (the judge) does his best, that is, to uncover the facts and dig out the truth” (Qurtubi).

Furthermore, close to the story of Sulayman above is another reported in Muslim (also in *Musnad Ahmad* – narrated by Abu Hurayrah: Ibn Kathir). The Prophet said,

بَيْنَمَا امْرَأَتَانِ مَعَهُمَا ابْنَاهُمَا جَاءَ الذَّبُّ فَذَهَبَ بِابْنِ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَقَالَتْ هَذِهِ لِصَاحِبَتِيهَا إِذَا ذَهَبَ بِابْنِكِ

وَقَالَتِ الْأُخْرَى إِذَا ذَهَبَ بِابْنِكِ فَتَحَاكَمْنَا إِلَى دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَقَضَى بِهِ لِلْكُبْرَى فَخَرَجْنَا عَلَى سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَأَخْبَرْتَاهُ فَقَالَ اتَّشَوْنِي بِالسَّكِينِ أَشَقُّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا فَقَالَتِ الصُّغْرَى لَا تَفْعَلْ يَرْحَمَكَ اللَّهُ هُوَ ابْنُهَا فَقَضَى بِهِ لِلصُّغْرَى

“Two women had an infant each. A wolf snatched away one. (Both claimed the remaining one). So they appealed to Da'ud. He judged in favor of the elder woman. Then they went to Sulayman. He said, ‘Get me a knife. I’ll divide the child between the two.’ At that one the younger woman cried out, ‘No. Don’t do that – may Allah show you mercy. Let the child be given to her.’ So, Sulayman judged in favor of the younger woman (Qurtubi).

The above is Bukhari’s version (Au.).

93. That is, Allah (*swt*) bestowed on Sulayman in that particular case an understanding that He did not bestow on Da'ud (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

94. It is reported that when Da'ud recited *Zabur*, birds gathered around to listen. When our own Prophet

[80] And We taught him the fashioning of the coats of mail for you to save you from each other's violence.⁹⁵ Will you then be grateful?

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِيُحْصِنَكُمْ
مِّنْ بَأْسِكُمْ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

Muhammad passed by Abu Musa al-Ash`ari reciting the Qur`an, he stood by listening to him. Then he remarked,

لَقَدْ أُوتِيَتْ مِرْمَارًا مِّنْ مَّرَامِيرِ آلِ دَاوُدَ

“Surely, you have been given a melody from the melodies of Da`ud’s kinsfolk.”

And Abu `Uthman al-Nahdi said, “I have never heard any melody as sweet as that of Abu Musa al-Ash`ari. Yet and, despite that, the Prophet said about him, ‘Surely, he has been given a melody from the melodies of Da`ud’s kinsfolk’. (That is, one can imagine the power and beauty of Da`ud’s melodies if Abu Musa’s was of such order that the Prophet stood by to listen: Au.).

95. The words, “for you” denote that when the intention is to serve the people then learning of a trade or skill has promises of rewards in the Hereafter, whatever the worldly advantages (Shafi`).

Qatadah has said that earlier to Da`ud’s manufacture, coats of mail used to be in one piece-sheet. He

was the who first molded the chain-mails.

Mawdudi comments: “This point is further elaborated upon in *Surah Saba`*:

وَأَلَّنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ (١٠) أَنْ اِعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي
السَّرْدِ [سبأ: ١٠، ١١]

‘We made the iron soft for him (David) and commanded him: make coats of mail, balancing well the rings of the chain armor’ (*Saba`* 34: 10-11). Thus we learn that God granted David complete mastery over iron, especially for military purposes.

“In the light of the historical and archaeological information these verses can be explained as follows: The Iron Age began somewhere between 1200 B.C. and 1000 B.C. which was the time of the Prophet David. The Hittites, inhabitants of Syria and Asia Minor, who had their heyday during the period 2000 B.C. to 1200 B.C., were the first to invent techniques for melting and manufacturing iron; an expertise which they kept a closely-guarded secret. The iron that was thus made was, however, extremely expensive – like

[81] And for Sulayman (did We tame) the wind, blowing forcefully,⁹⁶ flowing to his order unto the land in which We had placed Our blessings.⁹⁷ And We were ever aware of all things.

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى
الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَالِمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

gold and silver – and consequently the requisite techniques were not widely used. Later on, the Philistines also acquired this knowledge but they too kept it a closely-guarded secret. Before Saul's ascension to the throne, the Hittites and Philistines had continually defeated the Israelites and had almost driven them out of Palestine. According to the *Bible*, one of the factors which had ensured their superiority was their use of chariots and other weapons manufactured from iron (Joshua 17: 16; Judges 1: 19 and 4: 2-3). When Saul, under God's command became ruler in 1020 B.C., he crushed the Hittites and Philistines and recovered a major portion of Palestine. The Prophet David (1004 B.C.-965 B.C.) extended the Israelite domain to the rest of Palestine to Transjordan and a major part of Syria.

“It was during this period that smelting technique, thus far only known to the Hittites and Philistines, were disclosed. Within a short period of time, other techniques of iron-man-

ufacturing produced inexpensive iron, as a result of which iron products were manufactured and commonly used. Edom, in the southern part of Palestine, is immensely rich in iron ore. Recent archaeological excavations show at several places remnants of furnaces obviously used for melting and moulding iron. Indeed a furnace excavated near Ezion-Geber, a port on the Gulf of Aqaba in the days of the Prophet Solomon, appears to have been built on the very same principles which are employed to this day in blast furnaces. Quite naturally, David would have used this discovery of iron for military purposes since it was armour manufactured from this metal which in the then recent past, had created such difficulties for the Israelites.”

96. It seems Sulayman had complete control over the winds so that when he desired they moved forcefully, or mildly as said in the verse (38: 36),

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُحَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ
[ص : ٣٦]

[82] *And of the Shayatin (We had tamed those)*⁹⁸ *who dived for him and did works other than that.*⁹⁹ *And We were of them guardians.*¹⁰⁰

وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَنْ يُغْوِصُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْمَلُونَ
عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ

﴿٨٢﴾

“We subjected to him the wind, it blew gently by his order whithersoever he wished” (Razi). Another possibility is that they moved as fast as high winds do, but remained mild in their effects (Alusi).

97 Commentators report that Sulayman was a great warrior too. The winds helped him up the sea voyage to a month’s distance, and back in another month. Hence Allah’s words, ‘And We subjected the wind to Solomon: its morning stride was a month’s journey, and the evening stride a month’s journey’ (Qurtubi).

98. The use of the term Shayatin in place of Jinn, contains the hint that they were unbelieving Jinn (Razi).

99. That is, the Jinn dived for him into the sea for pearls, and help build buildings and monuments (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi explains, “The furnace which Solomon had built at Ezion-Geber for melting and moulding iron ore was substantial – no other furnace of like size has been so far discovered anywhere in Eastern Asia or the Middle East. Archaeologists

believe that the ore used in this furnace was brought from the iron and copper mines of ‘Araban in Edom. The iron and copper melted in this furnace was used for ship-building and for other purposes. This would thus explain the meaning of the Qur’anic verse:

وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ [سبأ : ١٢]

‘And We caused molten copper to flow for Solomon’ (Saba’, 34: 12).’

He also writes, “The point is thus elaborated in *Surah Saba*’:

وَمِنَ الْجِنَّةِ مَنْ يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَنْ يَرِغْ مِنْهُمْ
عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٢) يُعْمَلُونَ لَهُ
مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبٍ وَتَمَاثِيلٍ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ
رَاسِيَاتٍ [سبأ : ١٢ ، ١٣]

‘There were jinns that worked in front of him by the permission of his Lord and if any of them turned aside from God’s command, God made him taste the penalty of the Blazing Fire. They worked for him as he desired, making arches, images, basins as large as reservoirs, and cooking cauldrons fixed in their places.’

100. Lest the Devils got out of control (Qurtubi and others).

[83] And (remember) Ayyub when he called unto his Lord, 'Truly, I am touched by distress,¹⁰¹ and You are the Most Merciful of the mercifuls.'¹⁰²

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ
وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] So We responded to him and removed that which was upon him of distress. And We restored to him his family, and the like thereof along with them:¹⁰³ a mercy from Us and a reminder to those who serve (Us).

فَأَسْتَجِبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرِّهِ
وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا
عِنْدَنَا وَذِكْرًا لِلْعَابِدِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

101. Majid comments and quotes the *Bible*, "(He suffered sudden loss of wealth property and family). He had seven sons and three daughters, all of whom suddenly died in a house collapse (Job. 1: 2,9)."

However, as Mawdudi has pointed out, the account of Job in the Biblical Book of Job cannot be reconciled with the concept of Prophethood as presented by the Qur'an, and hence it cannot be stated with any certainty that the two are speaking of the same person.

102. (It is possible that some people will miss the subtlety of the prayer. An illustrative example from the early Muslims might help). A woman complained to Sa'd b. Mu'adh that her house had no rats. He ordered that she be supplied with some good amount of bread, butter and meat (Alusi).

Sa'd understood that she had no provisions at home for rats to visit (Au.).

103. In the absence of reports coming from the Prophet or the Companions, it is difficult to establish Ayyub's identity (Wahab b. Munabih thought he was an Israelite). It is also not clear as to what trials Ayyub was subjected to. The authenticity of what is reported – in great detail – by some early commentators and narrators cannot be established. All the same, in sum it is as follows: Ayyub (*asws*) was subjected to trials affecting his wealth, crops, livestock, and children until he was left with nothing but a wife. She served him faithfully during his prolonged sickness and even worked outside to earn the living while Ayyub lay in bed. Notwithstanding the troubles, he stayed firm, not losing hope in Allah's mercy. The period of trials over, he was given back all that he had lost, twice over. A report of Abu Hurayrah, preserved by Ibn Abi Hatim, whose sum and substance is in Bukhari, says,

لَمَّا عَاقَى اللَّهُ أَيُّوبَ أَمْطَرَ عَلَيْهِ جَرَادًا مِنْ ذَهَبٍ ، فَجَعَلَ يَأْخُذُهُ بِيَدَيْهِ وَيَجْعَلُهُ فِي ثَوْبِهِ ، فَقِيلَ لَهُ: يَا أَيُّوبُ ، أَمَا تَشْبَعُ؟ فَقَالَ: وَمَنْ يَشْبَعُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِكَ

“When Allah cured Ayyub, he sent a shower upon him of golden locusts. He began to collect them together in his garment. He was asked, ‘Ayyub, have you not had enough?’ He replied, ‘Sure, my Lord. But who can claim to have had enough of Your mercy?’” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi in passing and Shawkani in full report the following *hadith* of Hakim, who declared it creditable, which is also in the *Sahih* of Ibn Hibban (declared trustworthy by Haythami: S.Ibrahim): Anas reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

إِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ أَيُّوبَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ لَبِثَ فِي بَلَاءِهِ ثَمَانٍ [عَشْرَةَ] سَنَةً فَرَفَضَهُ الْقَرِيبَ وَالْبَعِيدَ إِلَّا رَجُلَيْنِ مِنْ إِخْوَانِهِ كَانَا مِنْ أَحْصَى إِخْوَانِهِ كَانَا يَغْدُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَيُرْوِحَانِ ، فَقَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا لِصَاحِبِهِ : تَعْلَمُ وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا مَا أَذْنَبَهُ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ . فَقَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ : وَمَا ذَاكَ ؟ قَالَ : قَدْ أَصَابَهُ مُنْدُ ثَمَانٍ [عَشْرَةَ] سَنَةً لَمْ يَرِحْهُ اللَّهُ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا بِهِ . فَلَمَّا رَاحَا إِلَيْهِ لَمْ يَصْبِرِ الرَّجُلُ حَتَّى ذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَيُّوبُ : لَا أَدْرِي مَا يَقُولُ ، غَيْرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَتَى آتَى كُنْتُ أَمْرًا عَلَى الرَّجُلَيْنِ يَنْزَعَانِ فَيَذَكِرَانِ اللَّهَ ، فَأَرْجِعْ إِلَى بَيْتِي فَأَكْفِرْ عَنْهُمَا كَرَاهِيَةً أَنْ يَذَكُرُوا اللَّهَ إِلَّا فِي حَقِّ . وَكَانَ يَخْرُجُ إِلَى الْحَاجَةِ فَإِذَا قَضَاهَا أَمْسَكَتْ امْرَأَتُهُ يَدَيْهِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ ، فَلَمَّا كَانَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ أَنْطَأَتْ عَنْهُ وَأَوْحَى إِلَى أَيُّوبَ فِي مَكَانِهِ أَنْ {ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا

مَغْتَسِلَ بَارِدٍ وَشَرَابٍ } قَالَ : فَاسْتَبْطَأَتْهُ امْرَأَتُهُ فَتَلَقَّتْهُ تَنْظُرًا ، وَأَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِمَا قَدْ أَذْهَبَ اللَّهُ مَا بِهِ مِنَ الْبَلَاءِ وَهُوَ أَحْسَنُ مَا كَانَ ، فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ قَالَتْ : أَيُّ بَارِكَ اللَّهُ فِيكَ ، هَلْ رَأَيْتَ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ هَذَا الْمُبْتَلَى ، وَاللَّهِ عَلَى ذَلِكَ مَا رَأَيْتَ أَحَدًا أَشْبَهَ بِهِ مِنْكَ إِذَا كَانَ صَاحِحًا ؟ قَالَ : فَإِنِّي أَنَا هُوَ . قَالَ : وَكَانَ لَهُ أَنْدَرَانِ أَنْدَرٌ لِلْقَمْحِ وَأَنْدَرٌ لِلشَّعِيرِ ، فَبِعِثَ اللَّهُ - تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى - سَحَابَتَيْنِ فَلَمَّا كَانَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى أَنْدَرِ الْقَمْحِ أَفْرَغَتْ فِيهِ الذَّهَبَ حَتَّى فَاضَ ، وَأَفْرَغَتْ الْأُخْرَى فِي أَنْدَرِ الشَّعِيرِ الْوَرَقَ حَتَّى فَاضَ

“Ayyub remained under trial for 18 years. His friends, relatives, just everyone abandoned him except for two men who were his close brotherly companions. They used to visit him morning and evening. One day one of them remarked to the other, ‘Ayyub must have committed some grave sin for Allah not to have forgiven him for 18 years.’ The other mentioned it to Ayyub. He replied, ‘I don’t know what they are talking about. But Allah knows that I used to pass by two people arguing (and swearing in Allah’s name). I would come to my house and expiate for them as I did not like that Allah’s name be thus desecrated (through false oaths).’

“In any case,” the Prophet continued, “Ayyub used to go out to attend to the nature’s call. His wife would hold

[85] And (remember) Isma`il,¹⁰⁴ Idris and Dhu al-Kifl;¹⁰⁵ all were of the patient.¹⁰⁶ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

him by hand and help him return. One day she delayed in coming and Allah revealed to him at that place (*Sad*, 42), 'Strike with your foot. This is good for a bath – cold, and (good for) drink.' By the time she arrived, Allah had removed his affliction and he had become as good looking as he ever was. As she came close she asked him, 'Did you happen to see Allah's Prophet, the one who has been put to test? And, by Allah, he was almost like you, before he was afflicted.' He assured her, 'I am he.' He had two large bottles, one for wheat storage, and the other for barley. Allah sent two patches of clouds. One of them poured gold into the wheat bottle to its fill and the other filled his barley bottle with silver." (Free translation, with explanation from Qurtubi).

Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut treated this narration found in *Sahih* of Ibn Hibban as meeting with the requirements of Muslim (Au.).

It can be guessed in explanation of the above report that when Prophet Ayyub said, 'I used to pass by two people arguing ..' that he was speaking of those very two persons one of whom conjectured that 'he (Ayyub)

must have committed a grave sin..' In other words, he subtly complained, in effect, 'if that was my way with you – that I prayed for you in secret – this is your way with me, that you send across taunts to me!' Thus, this *hadith* should be enough to reject Ayyub's identity with Job of the *Bible*, which heaps upon him innumerable blasphemies and statements unbecoming of a Prophet. E.g., (Job, 10: 2-3), "I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why thou thus contend against me? Does it seem good to oppress, to despise the work of thy hands, and favor the design of the wicked?" (Au.).

104. Yusuf Ali comments, "Isma`il is mentioned specially, apart from the line which descended through Isaac (xxi, 72), as he was the founder of a separate and greater *Ummat*." Then he follows up to bring to light what most commentators have missed out, "His suffering began in infancy .. but his steady constancy and submission to the will of Allah were specially shown when he earned the title of 'Sacrifice to Allah' .. That was the peculiar quality of his constancy and patience."

[86] We admitted them into Our mercy. They were indeed of the righteous.

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] And (remember) the man of the fish,¹⁰⁷ when he went off in anger,¹⁰⁸ and thought that We would had no power over him.¹⁰⁹ But he cried out through the depths of darknesses,¹¹⁰ 'There is no God but You. Glory to You. I was indeed of the wrongdoers.'¹¹¹

وَدَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

105. Opinions have varied among the earliest scholars whether Dhu al-Kifl, was a Prophet or merely a pious person (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). But the company in which he has been mentioned here leads us to the opinion that perhaps he was a Prophet (Thanwi).

Majid offers us some information, although it cannot be wholly trusted for its veracity, since towns and people with identical names have always existed. His comments run as follows: "(Dhu al-Kifl is) Probably an Arabicized form of Ezekiel. 'He was among the aristocracy whom Nebuchadnazzar (597 B.C.), after the first capture of Jerusalem, carried off to be in exile in Babylonia .. His prophecies extended over twenty-two years (JE. V. 313). 'The traditional burial-place of the prophet Ezekiel, .. is shown at Kefil near Bira Nimrud: for centuries it has been a favorite place of pilgrimage for Moham-

medans as well as for Jews' (p. 316). Speaking of the ruins of Babylon, says an explorer and traveler of the last century:- 'To the south-west, in the extreme distance, rose the palm trees of Kefil, casting their scanty shade over a small dome, covering the tomb of Ezkiel. To this spot flock in crowds, as their forefathers have done for centuries, the Jews of Baghdad, Hillah and other cities of Chaldea the descendants of the captives of Jerusalem, who still linger in the land of their exile' (Layard, Nineveh and Babylon p. 281)."

106. "I.e., steadfast in faith" (Majid).

107. Lit., man of the fish, the allusion is to Yunus bin Matta of Nineveh (a town in the area of Mosul in northern Iraq), so called because he remained imprisoned in a fish's stomach for some time.

Yusuf Ali writes: "He was the Prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh .. When his first warn-

ing was unheeded by his people, he denounced Allah's wrath on them. But they repented and Allah forgave them for the time being. Jonah meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of Allah; for Allah had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh. He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm. He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of darkness, he cried to Allah and confessed his weakness.. Allah Most High forgave him. He was cast ashore, he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of mental and physical lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered."

108. Whom was he angry with? One of the answers is, for the sake of Allah. He was angry with his people, for not having believed in Allah's message. There are other explanations coming down from the past commentators, but none from the well-known experts such as Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud, or their students. For details see *Surah Yunus*, note 138-140 of this work.

109. The translation is literal. But the literal meaning, although coming down from Hasan al-Busri, stands, according to almost all ancient commentators, rejected since it is unbecoming of Prophets to think in those terms (Alusi, Shawkani). Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others have explained the meaning as, 'He (Yunus) thought he would not be taken to task (for having left his people).' That is, he left the town and his people before he was specifically commanded by Allah to do so, (thus making an error in judgment) [Zamakhshari]. A few other lesser class of commentators have offered one or two other explanations, but Ibn Jarir prefers the above as correct as does Ibn Kathir and others. Qurtubi also mentions this as one of the possible meanings and most of them quote the following verse in evidence (65: 7):

وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ بِمَا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ [الطلاق
[v :

"But he whose resources are restricted, may spend according to what Allah has bestowed on him."

It may be noted that in the above verse the word "qudira" has not been used in the sense of "power" but in sense of "restriction. The well-known *hadith* about the fearful man who in-

[88] So We responded to him and delivered him from distress. Thus do We deliver the believers.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَجِئْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ
نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] And (remember) Zakariyyah when he called unto his Lord, 'My Lord! Leave me not solitary, though You are the best of inheritors.'¹¹²

وَرَكِبَآ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

[90] So we responded to him and bestowed on him Yahya and cured his wife for him.¹¹³ They ever hastened to good (deeds) and supplicated Us in hope and fear. And they were humble to Us.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ
رَوْحَهُ إِتْمَمُ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ
وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ
﴿٩٠﴾

structed his corpse burnt and ashes spread into the sea, also uses the word "qadira" in more or less the same sense.

110. The textual word is "zulumat" i.e., darkness in plural. What darkneses were they? The answer given, although uncertain is: darkness of the night, darkness of the seas, and darkness of the whale's belly (Ibn Jarir). This is reported of several of the earliest commentators (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

111. Majid comments, "The forgiveness he craves is for the error of judgment, and not for any sin. The Prophets of God are the very first to own and acknowledge their mistakes, however unintentional or trivial they may have been."

A *hadith* (of Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, and Nas a'i [in *Yawm wa Laylah*): Ibn Kathir) reports the Prophet as having said that no Muslim uttered these words:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

in his prayer for anything, but Allah responded (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi).

112. Yusuf Ali once again, "It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself: all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry out my work for Thee; wilt Thou give me one whom I can train?"

113. That is, cured her of her sterility. Another reported explanation is that she was loose-tongued and Allah cured her (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

[91] And (remember) her who guarded her chastity,¹¹⁴ so We blew into her of Our spirit¹¹⁵ and made her and her son a sign unto the worlds.

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ
رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ
﴿٩١﴾

[92] Surely, this religion of yours is one religion¹¹⁶ and I am your Lord, therefore, worship Me (alone).

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ
فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٩٢﴾

114. Asad comments, “..the expression *allati ahsanat farjaha* occurring in the above verse .. (is) rejection of the calumny (referred to in 4: 156 and obliquely alluded to in 19: 27-28) that the birth of Jesus was the result of an ‘illicit union.’”

115. The use of the phrase “of My spirit” draws the following from Asad, “This allegorical expression, used here with reference to Mary’s conception of Jesus, has been widely – and erroneously – interpreted as relating specifically to his birth. As a matter of fact, the Qur’ān uses the same expression in three other places with reference to the creation of man in general – namely in 15: 29 and 38: 72, ‘when I have formed him .. and breathed into him of My spirit’; and in 32: 9, ‘and thereupon He forms [lit., ‘formed’] him fully and breathes [lit., breathed] into him of His spirit.’ In particular, the passage of which the last-quoted phrase is a part (i.e., 32: 7-9) make it abun-

dantly and explicitly clear that God ‘breathes of His spirit’ into every human being. Commenting on the verse under consideration, Zamakhshari states that ‘the breathing of the spirit [of God] into a body signifies the endowing it with life’: an expression with which Razi concurs.”

116. The translation of the textual *Ummah* as religion follows the understanding of Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid as in Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others.

The word has been used in this sense at another place in the Qur’ān. Allah said (43: 23),

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ [الرِّخْف: ٢٣]

“Indeed, we found our forefathers on a religion..” (Shawokani).

Majid comments, “I.e., this way of life which is prescribed for you is the same as has been preached and practiced by all the prophets and holy men and women, howsoever widely divided by time and space; Islam is

[93] But they split up their affair between themselves.¹¹⁷ (Nonetheless) to Us will they all return.

وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلًّا إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

[94] Then, whosoever works deeds of righteousness¹¹⁸ – and he is a believer – there is no denying (the rewards of) his endeavor, and We – indeed – are its recorders for him.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

[95] And it is forbidden unto a town We destroyed: that they should return.¹¹⁹

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

only a continuation of that old religion.”

An off chance exists that the *Ummah* alludes to community or nation. Yusuf Ali might then be quoted, “Our attention has been drawn to people of very different temperament and virtues, widely different in time, race, language, surroundings, history, and work to be performed, but forming the closest brotherhood as being men and women united in the highest service to Allah. They pre-figure the final and perfected Brotherhood of Islam.”

117. The textual “amr” refers to religion. That is, they split away from the true religion of One God, or differed between themselves to give rise to sectarianism (Ibn Jarir).

118. Considering that the textual “min” is “*tab`idiyyah*” (encamping a part), the literal translation should

be, “then whosoever works, whatever of good deeds..” (based on Qurtubi).

119. Ibn `Abbas used to read the textual word “*haram*” as “*hirmun*” interpreting it as “*azmun*” (meaning, “it is decided, decreed, or determined”) Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir.

However, some others have understood the term as meaning, “*wajibun*” (i.e., it is binding). Imām Razi quotes a poetical piece to prove the point. The verse would then mean, “It is binding upon every town which We destroyed, that they should not return (back to this world).” This is how Yusuf Ali rendered it.

Or, as Majid did it, “A ban (is laid) on every town We destroyed that they shall not return.” However, another possible allusion by “*laa yerji’un*” could be that, “they will not return from Association (with Allah) and denial of the truth” (Razi); i.e.,

[96] Till, when Ya'juj and Ma'juj are unloosed and they race down every hill.¹²⁰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

“*laa yerji`una min shirkihim*” (Au.)

Another understanding – as pointed out by Ibn `Aashur - is that the “*laa*” of “*laa yerji`un*” is “*laamu tawkeed*.” That is, it does not mean, they will “not return” but rather “they should return.” Another opinion – that noted by Qurtubi - is that the “*laa*” of “*laa yerji`un*” is “*laamu sila*” meaning “that” (in Arabic “*an yerji`un*”, meaning, ‘that they should return’). This is the first meaning given by Baghawi.

120. They are two tribes, or hordes that will be let loose, breaching the barrier against them, in the Final Hours of life on earth. (Attempts to identify them have failed: Au.). It is said that if mankind is ten parts, they will be nine parts of it (Razi), but this is not a *hadith*.

A *hadith* of Muslim and others says,

« إِتَّهَأ لَنْ تَعُومَ حَتَّىٰ تَرُونَ قَبْلَهَا عَشْرَ آيَاتٍ »
فَذَكَرَ الدُّخَانَ وَالْجَحَالَ وَالْدَابَّةَ وَطُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ
مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا وَتُرُوقَ عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ - وَيَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ وَثَلَاثَةَ حُسُوفٍ حَسَفَتْ
بِالْمَشْرِقِ وَحَسَفَتْ بِالْمَغْرِبِ وَحَسَفَتْ بِجَزِيرَةِ الْعَرَبِ
وَآخِرُ ذَلِكَ نَارٌ تَخْرُجُ مِنَ الْيَمَنِ تَطْرُقُ النَّاسَ إِلَى
حُشْرِهِمْ.

“Once as we were discussing the

Doomsday when the Prophet (*saw:s*) happened to come out of his house. He said: ‘Doomsday will not arrive until you have witnessed ten signs: the Smoke, Dajjal, the Animal, sunrise from the West, `Isa ibn *Maryam*, *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj*, three caving in of the earth: one in the East, one in the West and one in the Arabian Peninsula, and the fire that will start from Aden and drive the people to the Field of Resurrection”

The *hadith* does not specify the sequence. Among the ten, and in the light of other *ahadith*, we can be sure of the sequence of five: Dajjal, `Isa ibn *Maryam*, *Ya'juj Ma'juj*, the rising of the sun from the West and the fire of Aden. (Qurtubi has pointed out that since repentance will not be acceptable after the sunrise from West, it has to be the second last). As for the Smoke, the Animal and the three caving in of the earth, we do not know in what sequence they will happen (Au.).

For further details see note 115 under *Surah Al-Kahf*.

Ibn Kathir presents a relevant *hadith* here. It says,

[97] Then the true promise would draw nigh,¹²¹ and behold, the eyes of the unbelievers, fixedly staring (in terror - saying), 'O our woe! We were unmindful of this. Rather, we were wrongdoers.'

وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ
أَبْصَارُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي
غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] Surely, you and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of Jahannum. You shall go down to it.

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ
جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

[99] If those had been gods, they would not have arrived at it. And they shall all abide therein forever.¹²²

لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ آلِهَةً مَا وَرَدُوهَا وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

[100] In it there will be heavy sighing for them, and they will not hear (anything) therein.¹²³

لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ
﴿١٠٠﴾

[101] As for those about whom the good (word) had passed from Us, they shall be kept away from it.¹²⁴

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُم مِّنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ
عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِيُحَجَّزَ الْبَيْتُ وَلِيُعْتَمَرَ بَعْدَ
خُرُوجِ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ

“Surely, this house will be visited for Hajj and Umrah even after *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj*” (Bukhari).

See *Surah Al-Kahf*, note 115 of this work for details about *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj*.

121. That is, the new promise concerning the Day of Judgment (Razi).

122. That is, the worshippers as well as the worshipped.

123. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud has said that those that will abide in the Fire

will be placed in chests of fire. Then those chests will be placed in other chests of fire and nailed with nails of fire. Thereafter they will hear nothing and will imagine that there is no one who is being punished as severely as they (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

124. The verse has been interpreted in two ways. One, the allusion by, “But as for those about whom the best had passed from Us, they shall be kept away from it,” is to those about whom Allah’s decree has been that they will never enter Hellfire. Hence, it is reported of `Ali that he said, “Uthman and his colleagues are of them,” and then recited this verse.

Another interpretation, coming down from many of the *Salaf*, is that those are alluded who were worshipped without their consent such as, e.g., Jesus Christ, angels or others. Ibn Is-haq has reported that once Waleed b. al-Mughira, Nadr b. al-Harith and other Quraysh men were sitting before the Prophet. He presented Islam to them and then warned them in the words of the Qur'ān, "Surely, you and what you worship other than Allah are fuels of *Jahannum*. You shall go down to it. If those had been gods, they would not have arrived at it. And they shall all abide therein forever." Thereafter he left them. After he had left, `Abdullah b. Zib`ara entered the gathering. They complained to him of the Prophet's harsh words. He said, "O.K. This means what we worship: the angels, what the Jews worshipped: `Uzayr, and what

the Christians worship: `Isa, will be in fire. Right!" They were pleased with the idea and went back to the Prophet with their triumphant argument. He explained, "Yes, all those who consented to being worshipped will be in Fire with those who worshipped them" (Ibn Jarir). As for the lifeless, such as dust, stone, or wooden idols, they will be used as fuel to burn the unbelievers as additional pain for them.

The report is in Abu Da'ud, (in his *Nasikh*), Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Mar-duwayh and Tabarani (Alusi). Subsequently however, Ibn Kathir adds, `Abdullah b. Zib`ara embraced Islam.

125. Some have conjectured that "*Sijil*" was the name of one of the scribes of the Prophet. But such reports are not reliable (Ibn Jarir, Qur-tubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

[102] They shall not hear its slightest sound, and they shall be, in what their souls desire, dwelling forever.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا وَهُمْ فِي مَا
اشْتَهَتْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] The Great terror shall not grieve them, but rather, the angels will receive them (saying), 'This is your Day that you were promised.'

لَا يَحْزَنُهُمُ الْقَرْعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقَّاهُمُ
الْمَلَائِكَةُ هَذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ
تُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

[104] The Day when We shall roll up the heaven in the manner of rolling up scrolls¹²⁵ - as We began the first creation, We shall repeat it.¹²⁶ A promise binding on Us. We were indeed, wont to do it.

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِ
لِلْكِتَابِ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعَدَّا
عَلَيْنَا إِنََّّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir quote another verse of similar nature. It says (39: 67),

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ [الزمر : ٦٧]

"And they did not estimate Allah, the way He should be estimated. The earth, the whole of it, will be in the grip of His left hand on the Day of Judgment, and the heavens rolled up around His right hand. Glorified and Exalted is He above that they Associate with Him."

And a *hadith* of Bukhari says,

يقبض الله الأرض ويطوي السماوات بيمينه

"Allah will hold the earths (in one Hand), and the heavens will be in His right Hand." Ibn Abi Hatim used the word, "seven earths."

Thus it can be noticed here that the Qur'anic description of the end of the world radically differs from what the scientists conjecture. They once believed (and the great majority of people still hold the same opinion) that the world began with a "Big Bang" and will end up with a "Big Crunch." They thought that since the expansion of the universe was the result of an original explosion, it should be slowing down now and, at one time should stop expanding. When that happens, the gravitational pull of the matter within the universe would make it contract inward, which in turn would end up in one mass of matter, extremely hot and at extreme high pressures but of size less than the diameter of an atom.

[105] Surely, earlier We had written in the Zabur¹²⁷ after the admonition, that the land¹²⁸ shall be inherited by My righteous slaves.¹²⁹

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ
أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] Surely in this is a Message for a people devoted (to Allah).

إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

However, latest findings indicate that the expansion of the universe from all sides is not slowing down, but in fact, it is accelerating. This has put the scientists into confusion about how the world is likely to end.

Granted that the older theory is correct, and the world starts contracting backward, it is likely to end as a dot, ready to burst (another Big Bang), and not in the shape of a scroll - the kind that was used for writing purposes in ancient times. Thus, both ways, the scientific theories are at variance with the Qur'an (Au.).

126. While one opinion confirms the apparent meaning, viz., the world will be destroyed and recreated following the same process as of the first creation (Shawkani); others have explained this verse as meaning, "We shall create the human beings as they were created the first time." That is, barefoot, naked and uncircumcised. This is the explanation (as in Bukhari: Ibn Kathir) that has come down from the Prophet (Ibn Jarir).

127. Although the term *Zabur* is applicable to the Scriptures that were revealed after Musa, preferable is the meaning given out by Sa'id b. Jubayr, Mujahid and others that here the word is equivalent of *Zubr*, meaning the *Umm al-Kitab*, (that is, the *Lawh al-Mahfuz*) – Ibn Jarir.

Asad adds: "*Zabur* (lit., 'scripture' or 'book') is a generic term denoting any 'book of wisdom': hence, any and all of the divine Scriptures revealed by God to the prophets."

128. Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Mujahid, Abu al-'Aliyyah and others have said that by "*ard*" the allusion is to Paradise. That is, Paradise will be inherited by the righteous. Ibn Zayd quoted another verse in evidence (40: 74):

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ
تَتَّبِعُونَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ [الزمر
: ٧٤]

"And they will say, 'All praise be to Allah who made true His promise and gave us the earth in inheritance. We dwell in Paradise where

we wish. So, how well the reward of those who strove!" (Ibn Jarir).

But the prevalent meaning is that (if it is this earth that is meant, then: Au) Allah gave the Companions of the Prophet the lands of the unbelievers in inheritance (Shawkani).

Mawdudi clears some doubts concerning the inheritance of the earth: "This verse has been seriously misinterpreted by some people .. At the heart of (it) is the belief that it guarantees inheritance of the earth (i.e., governance of and control over the resources of the earth) only to the righteous.. This generalization is then used to derive further conclusions. Some, for example, inferring that the enjoyment of political power is the criterion of righteousness; that those who enjoy it are righteous; while those who do not have it are unrighteous. Such people even go a step further. They look around at those nations which have been 'inheritors of the earth' either in the past or currently so, and they note that unbelievers, polytheists, transgressors and sinners have all at one time or another enjoyed 'inheritance of the earth.'"

Then to refute a few other misconceptions he writes, "As for the inheritance of the land in this world,

Qur'anic law is set forth in *Surah al-A'raf*: 'The earth is Allah's. He bestows it on those of His servants He chooses.' In accordance with God's will this inheritance is conferred on unbelievers as well as believers, and both the sinners and the righteous share it.. As it is, this inheritance is not everlasting.. Being a trial, conducted in accordance with God's law, it is served on different communities in turn."

Nonetheless, if it is earthly dominance that is meant, then, obviously, it goes with the condition that is attached to it. Asad writes, "The statement that 'My righteous servants shall inherit the earth', is obviously an echo of the promise, 'You are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers' (3: 139) – the implication being that it is only through faith in God and righteous behavior on earth that man can reach the heights envisaged for him by his Creator's grace."

129. In what sense was the Prophet (*saws*) a mercy unto the worlds comprising of the believers as well as the unbelievers? One answer is that unbelieving nations previous to him were destroyed to non-existence, while, because of the Prophet, their immediate destruction was withheld during his tenure. Accordingly, Mus-

lim has a *hadith* which says that it was suggested to the Prophet that he pray against the pagans. He replied,

إِنِّي لَمْ أُبْعَثْ لَعَانًا وَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ رَحْمَةً

“I have not been sent as one who curses, but rather as a mercy.”

And a *hadith* in Ahmad reports the Prophet as having said,

أَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي سَبَبْتُهُ سَبَبَةً فِي غَضَبِي أَوْ لَعَنْتُهُ لَعْنَةً فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنْ وَلَدِ آدَمَ أَغَضِبُ كَمَا يَغْضَبُونَ وَإِنَّمَا بَعَثَنِي رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ فَاجْعَلْهَا صَلَاةً عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Whosoever I abused in my anger, or cursed him, (may note that) after all I am a son of Adam, who gets angry as one of you does. Whereas, Allah has sent me as a mercy for the worlds. Therefore, make it (O Allah), a peace blessing for and on him on the Day of Judgment” (Razi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others).

The report was declared trustworthy by Al-Arna'ut (Au.).

Another answer is that human life on this planet can only be organized on the basis of moral laws. The teachings of all previous Prophets gave place of prominence to moral laws that helped the earlier nations to organize their lives on their basis. But, after 'Isa, the system suffered negligence and barbaric ways began to be

adopted in the East and the West. That remained the situation until the appearance of the Final Prophet. He restored the moral laws as the central principles; and since then the rest of humankind borrowed from their previous as well as this new source brought by Muhammad (though they would not acknowledge it) and were able to organize their lives better than the barbaric nations of the past could do (Au.).

Asad has another aspect in mind. He believes it is the universality of the Prophet's message, and the fact that it will last till the end of the world, affecting a large number of people, which is the mercy to mankind. He writes, “The universality of the Qur'anic revelation arises from three factors: firstly, its appeal to all mankind irrespective of descent, race or cultural environment; secondly, the fact that it appeals exclusively to man's reason and, hence, does not postulate any dogma that could be accepted on the basis of blind faith alone; and finally, the fact that contrary to all other sacred scriptures known to history – the Quran has remained entirely unchanged in its wording ever since its revelation fourteen centuries ago and will, because it is so widely recorded, forever remain so in accordance with the di-

[107] *And, We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a mercy to the worlds.*¹³⁰

[108] *Say, 'Indeed, it is revealed unto me that your God is one God. Will you then submit?'*

[109] *But if they should turn away, then say, 'I have proclaimed to you all equally, and I know not whether, what you are being promised, is near or far.'*¹³¹

[110] *Surely, He knows the word (said) aloud, and He (also) knows what you conceal.*

[111] *And, for all I know, it could be a trial for you and an enjoyment for a time.'*

[112] *He said, 'My Lord! Judge in truth.' And our Lord is the Merciful whose assistance is sought against what you utter.*¹³²

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ
فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَعُلَّيْكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ
وَإِن أَدْرِي أَقْرَبُ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ
﴿١٠٩﴾

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا
تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

وَإِن أَدْرِي لَعَلَّهُ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ
﴿١١١﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ احْكُم بِالْحَقِّ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ
الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

vine promise 'it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruptions](cf. 15: 9..). It is by virtue of these three factors that the Qur'an represents the final stage of all divine revelations, and that the Prophet through whom it has been conveyed to mankind is stated to have been the last (in the Qur'anic terminology, the seal) of all prophets (cf. 33:40).;

130. That is, although I can proclaim that it is going to happen, but, it is such a closely guarded secret that

even I cannot say when it will happen (Au.).

131. Asad has a useful note, "Lit., 'against ('ala) all that you attribute [to Him] by way of description' or 'of definition: implying that only God's grace can save man from the blasphemous attempts – prompted by inherent weakness – to bring God 'closer' to his own, human understanding by means of humanly conceived 'definitions' of Him who is transcendent, infinite and unfathomable." ﷻ



Surah 22

*Al-Hajj*¹

(The Pilgrimage)

Makkan-Madinan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] O people! Fear your Lord; indeed, the convulsion of the Hour will be a mighty thing.²

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

1. This *Surah* has remarkable characteristics. Its parts were revealed both in Makkah as well as in Madinah, both during travel as well as in town, both during the day as well as night, both during war as well as peace, contains both the abrogating as well as the abrogated verses, and, finally, has both “*muhkam*” as well as “*mutashaabih*” verses (Qurtubi). Further, this is the only *Surah* which has two recitation prostrations (*sajda Tilawah*) as in the reports of Tirmidhi, Abu Da’ud, Ahmad and others (Alusi). The reports alluded to by Alusi and others have been questioned for their veracity, but there are several of them, some of which strengthen others (Ibn Kathir, under verse 18).

2. When exactly will this be? According to some early commentators this will happen just before the Judgment Day is called. That is, at the last hours of this earthly life. Hence, mention of abortion in the verse that follows. Although the possibility remains, writes Razi, that this will happen on the day of Judgment itself, and that those females that died pregnant are resurrected pregnant, who will abort because of the mighty convulsions.

Some others have said that the mighty convulsions will be followed by the sun rising from the West (Qurtubi).

Scientifically, the explanation that immediately comes to mind for the sun to rise from the west, (although others are possible), is that a celes-

[2] The Day you will behold it,³ every female giving suck will be distracted from her nursing,⁴ every pregnant (female) will abort her pregnancy, and you will see the people (as if) drunk although they will not be drunk, but rather, severe will be Allah's chastisement.⁵

[3] And yet among the people is such a one who disputes about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious Devil.

[4] Against whom it is written that whoever befriended him, surely he will misguide him, and lead him to punishment of the Blaze.

يَوْمَ تَرُوتُهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا
أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا
وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ
وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٢﴾

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
وَيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّرِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَن تَوَلَّاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ
وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٤﴾

tial object, such as a comet, or a stray planet from another orbital system, may pass by too closely, causing havoc on earth due to its powerful gravitational pull. Or it might actually crash into the earth, causing mass scale upheavals. In either case, the earth could slow down in its axial rotation, come to a complete halt and then, because of the celestial object being on the other side, or the gravitational pull of another object, reverse its rotation to allow the sun to rise from the West (Au.).

3. "Behold it," i.e., behold the convulsion (Qurtubi).

4. The textual word "*murdi`ah*" is for a woman "with a baby at her breast," that is, in the very act of breast feeding (Ibn Kathir and others).

5. Ibn Jarir, who believes the allusion is to the convulsions of the Day of Judgment, records in support several reports of sum and substance as follows. It is said that these verses were revealed during a journey. The Prophet recited them and asked,

ذَلِكَ يَوْمَ يَقُولُ اللَّهُ لَأَدَمَ ابْعَثْ بَعْثَ النَّارِ فَقَالَ يَا
رَبِّ وَمَا بَعْثُ النَّارِ قَالَ تِسْعُ مِائَةٍ وَتِسْعَةٌ وَتَسْعُونَ
إِلَى النَّارِ وَوَاحِدٌ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ قَالَ فَأَنْشَأَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ
يَبْكُونَ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَارِبُوا
وَسَدِّدُوا فَاتَّهَمَا لَمْ تَكُنْ نُبُوَّةَ قَطُّ إِلَّا كَانَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا
جَاهِلِيَّةٌ قَالَ فَيُؤَخِّدُ الْعَدُوَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَإِنْ تَمَّتْ وَإِلَّا
كَمَلَتْ مِنَ الْمُتَأَفِّقِينَ وَمَا مَثَلُكُمْ وَالْأُمَمُ إِلَّا كَمَثَلِ
الرَّقْمَةِ فِي ذِرَاعِ الدَّابَّةِ أَوْ كَالشَّامَةِ فِي جَنْبِ الْبَعِيرِ ثُمَّ
قَالَ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونُوا رُبْعَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَكَبَّرُوا ثُمَّ
قَالَ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونُوا ثُلُثَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَكَبَّرُوا ثُمَّ
قَالَ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونُوا نِصْفَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَكَبَّرُوا
قَالَ لَا أَذْرِي قَالَ الثُّلُثَيْنِ أَمْ لَا قَالَ هَذَا حَدِيثٌ
حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

“Do you know what Day it is? They replied, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “That will be the Day when Allah will say to Adam, ‘Send forth delegates of the Fire?’” He will ask, “My Lord! Who are the delegates of the Fire?” He will reply, “Of every thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine to the Fire and one to Paradise.” At that the Companions began to weep. When he saw that, he added, “Be as close (to the ideal) as possible. There was never any Prophet but there was before him *Jahiliyyah*. So, the numbers will be taken from the *Jahiliyy* period and if that is not enough, they will be made up from the hypocrites. And, your example against those of other communities is not but like a mark on an animal’s side or a mole on the flank of a camel.” After that he further added, “I hope you will be one-fourth of the inhabitants of Paradise. They said, “Allah is Great.” He said, “Rather, I hope you will be one-third of the inhabitants of Paradise.” They said again, “Allah is Great.” He added, “Indeed, I hope you will be one-half of the inhabitants of Paradise.” They said, “Allah is Great.” The narra-

tor said, I am not sure whether he said two-thirds.”

Tirmidhi and Nasa’i have similar reports, treating them as of *Hasan Sahih* qualities (Ibn Kathir).

Bukhari and Muslim have another report. It records the Prophet as having said,

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى يَا آدَمُ قَبُولُ لَبَّيْكَ وَسَعْدَيْكَ وَالْخَيْرُ فِي يَدَيْكَ قَبُولُ أُخْرِجُ بَعَثَ النَّارِ قَالَ وَمَا بَعَثَ النَّارِ قَالَ مِنْ كُلِّ أَلْفٍ تِسْعَ مِائَةٍ وَتِسْعَةَ وَتِسْعِينَ فَعِنْدَهُ يَشِيبُ الصَّغِيرُ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَأَيُّنَا ذَلِكَ الْوَاحِدُ قَالَ أَبْشُرُوا فَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلًا وَمِنْ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ أَلْفًا

“Allah will say on the Day of Judgment, ‘O Adam!’ He will reply, ‘Here I am O our Lord, Exalted be Thou.’ It will be said in a loud voice, ‘Allah commands you to bring out from your offspring those of the Fire.’ He will say, ‘My Lord! Who are “those of the Fire”’ He will say, ‘From every thousand’ – I think he said – ‘nine hundred, ninety nine.’? It is then that the pregnant will abort and children will turn old. (Then he recited): “And you will see people (as if) drunk, but they will not be drunk, but rather Allah’s chastisement will be great.”

[5] People! If you are in doubt about the resurrection, then (consider): We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, then from (what resembles) chewed flesh⁶ - formed and unformed⁷ - so that We might make manifest to you (Our power). And We settle in the womb what We will until an appointed term.⁸ Then We bring you out as infants, then (nurture you on) so that you might reach your full strength. Then, there are some of you who are caused to die (when old) while there are others who are returned to the most decrepit age so that he knows nothing after his knowledge.⁹ And you see the earth in ruin; then, when We send down upon it water, it quivers and swells, and puts forth every kind of beautiful (plant).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِنَبْلُغُنَّ أَشُدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَمُوتُ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُرْدُّ إِلَىٰ أَوَّلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ ﴿٥﴾

The people asked, “Which one of us would be that person?” He answered, “Be of good cheer for, for every one of you there will be a thousand of the *Ya’juj* and *Ma’juj*” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

6. The textual “*mudgha*” is explained by the linguist Zamakhshari as a piece of flesh of chewable size.

7. Mujahid and Abu al-`Aliyyah have said that this refers to still-born fetus which may take form (in the womb) or may not. However, Ibn Jarir believes that by “formed” the allusion is to what remains in the womb, acquiring its final shape while by “unformed” the allusion is

to what is aborted and thrown out of the womb.

On the same subject, Ibn Mas`ud has reported the Prophet (the *hadith* is in the *Sahihyan*: Ibn Kathir),

إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْفُهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ عَلَقَةً مِّثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَكُونُ مُضْغَةً مِّثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَلَكًا فَيُؤَمِّرُ بِأَرْبَعِ كَلِمَاتٍ وَيَقَالُ لَهُ اكْتُبْ عَمَلَهُ وَرِزْقَهُ وَأَجَلَهُ وَشَقِيًّا أَوْ سَعِيدًا ثُمَّ يُنْفَخُ فِيهِ الرُّوحُ

“That which is to be created of you is collected together in his mother’s womb for forty days. Then it takes similar number of days to become a clinging clot, then like a chewed flesh in similar number of days, then Allah

sends down an angel to write four things. He is ordered to write: his deeds, his sustenance, life-span, and whether he will be the lucky one or the wretched. Thereafter he blows the soul into him. Then the spirit is blown (Ibn Jarir).

8. Others are aborted (Ibn Jarir).

9. The Prophet used to seek Allah's refuge from extreme old age. His words were:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَالْجُبْنِ وَالْهَرَمِ
وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ فَتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ
عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

“O Allah I seek Your refuge from powerlessness, indolence, cowardliness, and extreme old age and I seek Your refuge from the trials of life and death, and of the grave” (Qurtubi).

The above report is found in several collections, with varying words, including Bukhari (Au.).

The Qur'ānic verse under discussion, and a few others are amazing description of the developments in the womb. A few details could be presented at this point. The following verses of *Surah al-Mu'minun* may also be kept in mind through and through the discussion (23: 12-14):

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سَلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ (١٢) ثُمَّ
جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ (١٣) ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ
عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا
فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ
اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ [المؤمنون : ١٢ - ١٤]

“Surely, We created man from the quintessence of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm drop in a safe lodging. Then We fashioned the sperm drop into a leech like structure, then of that leech-like structure We made a chewed like substance. Then out of the chewed like substance We created the bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We developed him into a new creation. So, blessed is Allah, the Best of creators.”

Embryonic Development

Until the development of powerful lenses, a couple of centuries ago, the common notion, in ancient Greece, as well as modern Europe was that the male sperm carries a little child, which, when deposited into the womb develops into an adult. Women were thought to play no other role. A woman-Companion of the Prophet was surprised, therefore, when he told her that they too (that is, women) discharged other than the periodical blood. Prophetic sayings also confirm that both the discharges, male and female, play their roles

in conception and creation of a new being. Probably, the Rabbis knew this prior to the Prophetic statement, for, it was they who had inquired how different sexes emerged. When the Prophet explained that women also discharged as men did, the Rabbis acknowledged that his answer was correct.

According to another report, a Jew asked the Prophet:

يَا مُحَمَّدُ مِمَّ يُخْلَقُ الْإِنْسَانُ؟

“(Answer me) O Muhammad, what is man created from?”

قَالَ يَا يَهُودِي مِنْ كُلِّ يُخْلَقُ مِنْ نُطْفَةِ الرَّجُلِ وَمِنْ نُطْفَةِ الْمَرْأَةِ.

He answered, “O Jew! He is created from every drop: from man’s drop as well as woman’s” (*Musnad Ahmad*).

The Qur’ān of course was clear and unambiguous about it. It said (*Al-Insan*, 2),

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ

“Verily, We created Man from a mixture of germinal drop..”

Science however, had to wait for the modern age to admit women’s role in conception.

Every human female is born with enough fully developed eggs (ovum)

already deposited in the ovary before birth. When puberty is attained, one ovum is discharged every month, at about the middle of each menstrual period. (Surprisingly, menstrual periods follow the moon cycle and not the solar cycle). The ovum waits for about two days in the oviduct (the Fallopian tube, outside the womb) for the sperm to arrive, and then withers off. Male ejaculation consists of 200 to 500 millions of spermatozoa. [A female egg is thousands of times larger than a sperm]. As against the egg, the male sperm is highly mobile and after discharge begins to swim inward. However, its own motility is not enough for its movement. Several kinds of vaginal fluid help it through, and in fact pull it up. It is possible that the Prophet was referring to this role of the female’s fluids when he said that women’s secretions, in addition to man’s ejaculation, play their roles in the creation and formation of a new human being. Or maybe he was referring to the role played by the female discharges, which activate processes that the embryologists refer to as “capacitation” – a process that takes about 7 hours. Without this process the sperm is incapable of penetrating the ovum wall.

The process of human conception and later development is highly complex and it is difficult to say for certain what the language of religion is alluding to, from among a host of processes taking place at any time during, before, and after conception.

In any case, the sperms swim through with the help of vaginal and other fluids to advance towards the waiting ovum. Only some make it to it and only one of them succeeds in penetrating through the ovum's outer wall. Hence the Prophetic statement:

مَا مِنْ كَلِّ الْمَاءِ يَكُونُ الْوَلَدُ. (مسلم)

“Not from all the fluid is the offspring created.” (Muslim).

The fertilized ovum is closed for any other sperm, and begins to divide (replicate) while, at the same time, it starts moving backward. The first division into mother and daughter cells takes place in about 30 hours after the fertilization. The inward moving fertilized ovum (now referred to as a Zygote) leaves the Fallopian tube and enters into the womb (uterus) in about 5 days time. Once in, it clings to the wall of the uterus continuing to divide itself. All this goes on while the woman herself is unaware of what's going on in her lower abdomen. It takes another week or so after the entry of the fertilized ovum

into the womb to determine through tests a woman's pregnancy, that is, roughly two weeks after fertilization. Until then, nobody - not even the woman herself - can know by any means whether she is pregnant. Hence the Qur'anic statement (31: 34):

وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ

He (alone) knows what is in the wombs.”

With the entry of the fertilized egg the mouth of the uterus closes off tightly. The developing human is now in a safe haven about which the Qur'an said (23: 13)

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ

“Then We made him a drop in a place of settlement firmly fixed.”

The newly fertilized fast developing Zygote lies protected behind three walls: (a) the abdominal wall, (b) uterine wall, and (c) the placenta. The Qur'an said about this (*Al-Zumar*, 6):

فَيَخْلُقْكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ

“He creates you in the wombs of your mothers from one stage to another and all along within three veils of darkness.”

The major sex-determining factor takes place right at the moment of fertilization. Every human cell contains in the nucleus 46 chemical strands known as chromosome. They carry in coded form the data for construction of the entire human body. Before any cell of the body divides, it first doubles up its number of chromosomes to 46 and then divides up with each daughter cell containing exact replicates of 46 chromosomes. In theory therefore, it should be possible for a complete human to develop out of any given cell. However, there is an exception. It is in the reproductive cells. Both the male sperm and female ovum, which combine at fertilization, contain in their nucleus only 23 chromosome each. Both these cells are insufficient to build a human being. So, each contributes 23 chromosomes and fertilization results in completing the number to 46, and the progeny inherits traits of both parents.

Now, the male sperm consists of two types of sex chromosomes. They are known as X and Y chromosome, while the female ovum carries only X type of sex chromosome. Now, if X chromosome sperm penetrates into the ovum and combines with the X chromosome present in it, the result is XX sex chromosome. The embryo

will normally be a female. But if a sperm containing a Y chromosome fertilizes with the ovum, it combines with its X chromosome resulting in a Zygote containing in its nucleus XY chromosome. The embryo will normally be a male. Perhaps the *hadith* that speaks of sex determination alludes to this process. It says that the Prophet was asked about how sex was determined. He answered that if man's fluid overcame woman's, it will be male. But if woman's fluid overcame man's, the child will be female.

Although the presence of X or Y chromosome in the sperm accepted by the female ovum is the primary factor in the determination of future sex of the fetus, it is in the seventh week that the Gonads lose their 'indefinite' character and begin to develop either into male testes or female ovaries depending on whether the combination is XX or XY. XX sex chromosome means the indifferent Gonad will, from the seventh week onwards develop into ovaries, and an XY into testis. Perhaps it is to this seventh week development that another *hadith* is referring to which says (Muslim),

إِنَّ مَاءَ الرَّجُلِ غَلِيظٌ أَبْيَضٌ. وماء المرأة رقيقٌ أصفرُ.
فَمِنْ أَيُّهُمَا عَلَا، أَوْ سَبَقَ، يَكُونُ مِنْهُ النَّثْبَةُ

“Man’s liquid is thick, white while woman’s is thin, yellowish. So whichever overcomes the other, or outpaced, will be like it.” (That is, perhaps in external features).

It is from this point onward that any defect in sex determination will start revealing itself. For, as said above, an XX means a female, and XY a male. But, in a few cases it can be XXY. This will result in certain sexual disorders. Or it may be XXXX. This too results in sexual disorder. Or, all being correct, that is, the sex chromosome could be plain XX or XY, but hormonal effects before the seventh week can cause the appearance of hermaphrodites. One such condition is known as female pseudohermaphroditism, another as hypospadias, and another as epispadias. In these cases, the person fails to develop into either fully functional male, or fully functional female. The *hadith* then, about the determination of sex when the fetus is 42 (or 40) days old could be referring to the post-Gonad developments. For, whatever the combination, even if is normal XX or XY, any defect could appear at the post-Gonadal stage. The *hadith* says,

إِذَا مَرَّ بِالنُّطْفَةِ ثِنْتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا
مَلَكًا فَصَوَّرَهَا وَخَلَقَ سَمْعَهَا وَبَصَرَهَا وَجِلْدَهَا وَحَمَهَا

وَعِظَامَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَدْكَرُ أَمْ أُنْثَى؟ فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ
مَا شَاءَ وَ يَكْتُبُ الْمَلِكُ. (مسلم)

“When forty-two nights have passed over the mixed drop, Allah sends an angel to it who shapes it and makes its ears, eyes, skin, flesh and bones. The he asks, ‘O Lord! Should it be male or female?’ And your Lord decides what He wishes and the angel records it” (Muslim).

(The development however, of the male or female external genitalia [the phallus or vagina] takes place later. That also happens in two stages. First distinguishing sexual characteristics begin to appear during the ninth week, and then, fully formed genital organs appear by the twelfth week).

Anyway, to go back to the trail of fetus development, the Zygote travels back to enter into the womb. However, at least 15% of Zygotes are lost during this first week of development commonly as a result of chromosomal abnormalities. The Qur’an could be referring to this when it said (*Al-Ra’d*, 8),

اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ
(الرعد: ٨)

Allah knows what every female bears and what the wombs lose (tagheedh).”

That is, the allusion could be to successful pregnancy, but the loss of Zygotes due to chromosomal abnormality. Neither the female involved, nor any one ever comes to know of the fertilization or failure of conception. Every fertilization does not result in conception.

A *hadith* says:

وَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَا تَعْبِضُ الْأَرْحَامُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“No one knows what the wombs lose but Allah” (Bukhari).

To continue, having entered into the safety of the womb, the Zygote clings to its wall. At this stage – in its second and third week - it looks like a leech and acts like a leech, for it begins to draw blood from the wall it attaches itself to. With this it begins to make the first muscles for itself and the cardiovascular system begins to appear. If abortion takes place at this stage, the aborted embryo will look like a blood clot. Hence the Qur’ānic verse (*Al-‘Alaq*, 1-2):

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ [العلق : ١ ، ٢]

“Read in the name of thy Lord who created: created man out of a leech like (blood clot).”

And (*Al-Mu’minun*, 14),

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النَّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً [المؤمنون : ١٤]

“Thereafter We made the semen drop into a leech-like (thing).”

In fact, in Arabic, *‘alaqah* is used for “the thing that clings”, as also for a “leech” since it clings and thrives on blood sucking.

Within about 3-4 weeks, the embryo looks like a little lump of chewed flesh. A few body parts start taking shape while others are yet to form. Perhaps it is to this that the Qur’ān alluded when it said in the present verse (5 of *Surah al-Hajj*), “then from (what resembles) chewed flesh, formed and unformed.”

By the fourth week, and although less than a centimeter long, rudiments of the heart are already in place in the embryo. Soon the newly developed heart begins to beat. By the seventh week, various developing organs are clearly visible: head, eye, hand and foot plates, nasal and oral cavities, fingers and even lips. Distinguishable sexual characteristics appear in the ninth week, although, the male fetus is distinguishable from the female (the external genitalia, visible to the naked eye - only by the 12th week). By the 7th week the embryo is a little less than a centimeter and a half. A *hadith* refers to these stages in words of Muslim,

إِذَا مَرَّ بِالنُّطْفَةِ ثِنْتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا
مَلَكًا فَصَوَّرَهَا وَخَلَقَ سَمْعَهَا وَبَصَرَهَا وَجِلْدَهَا وَحَمَهَا
وَعِظَامَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَدْكُرْ أَمْ أُنْثَى؟ فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ
مَا شَاءَ وَ يَكْتُبُ الْمَلِكُ. (مسلم)

“When forty-two nights have passed over the drop, Allah sends an angel to it. He shapes it and makes its ears, eyes, skin, flesh and bones. Then he asks, ‘O Lord! Should it be male or female?’ Your Lord decides and the angel records it.”

There is another *hadith*, also in Muslim, which apparently speaks of changes taking place every forty days. It is as follows:

إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْفَهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا. ثُمَّ
يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ عِلْقَةً مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ. ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ
مُضْغَةً مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ

“The creation of one of you is collected together in his mother’s womb for forty days. Then it will be like a clinging leech for a like number of days. Then it will be like a chewed flesh for a like number of days.”

The terms of this report are, however, unclear. Therefore, following the rules set up by the *Fiqh* scholars, it has to be interpreted in terms of the clear *hadith* stated earlier. That is, the primary “formation” is complete by the end of 42 days, including the

“final” decision about the sex: male, female, hermaphrodite, or one suffering from some sex disorder rendering it neither a successful male, nor a successful female. Zindani has pointed out that as early as 651 A.H. this is how a Muslim scientist Ibn Az-Zamlakani had understood the above two reports.

In any case, it is the eighth week, (when the structure is there, the muscles has taken shape and the skin has appeared) when the embryo enters into a new and markedly different phase of development. In fact, by the end of the eighth week embryologists stop referring to it as an embryo, replacing the term with a new one: a fetus. The Qur’an said (*Al-Mu’minun*, 14):

فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ
اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“Then We clothed the bones and flesh; then We developed out of him another creature. So, blessed be Allah, the best of the Creators.”

Note the use of the word “another creature” in the above verse. That is, the allusion could be to the fetus.

By the 25th week, the fetus acquires full human form although it has a very lean body, wrinkled skin (for

want of fat), and eyes just beginning to open. A fetus of this stage might survive if born prematurely, hence it is referred to as “a viable fetus.” The Qur’ān confirms that successful birth and survival can take place in the sixth month. It said (*Al-Ahqaf*, 15),

وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا

“The duration of pregnancy and weaning is thirty months.”

At another place it said (*Luqman*, 14),

وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ

“His weaning is at the end of two years.”

Thus, thirty months minus twenty-four of breast-feeding is six months of productive pregnancy.

Birth is of course a miracle. When a child is born, on a particular day, at a particular time, the doctors do not know why it emerged at that moment. It could have been earlier or later. There is no explanation to the sudden contractions of the abdominal muscles, accompanied by the burst of several bags of fluids that lubricate the passage. The passage in fact is so constricted that normally one would think it impossible for the child to emerge. Of course, for

the mother it is extremely painful – for a few it can be a matter of life and death – but it happens, and to millions every day. Allah referred to the otherwise impossible emergence through this tight passage (*‘Abasa*, 20),

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ

“Then He made the passage (through the birth canal) easy.”

The above details are by now common knowledge but it was first comprehensively presented (though not exactly as we have presented) along with Qur’ān and *hadīth* quotations in a medical book called “*The Developing Human*” by Keith Moore with “*Islamic Additions*” by Abdul-Majeed A. Azzindani (Dar al-Qiblah publications, 1983). The Qur’ānic verse inspired the above mentioned embryologist to say in his Foreword to the book “At first I was astonished by the accuracy of the statements that were recorded in the 7th century AD, before the science of embryology was established.”

Another scientist expressed similar sentiments. Dr. T.V. Persaud, Professor of Anatomy, Obstetrics, Pediatrics, and Child Health and Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the University of Manitoba,

[6] That (happens) because Allah, He is the Truth, and that it is He who gives life to the dead, and that He has power over all things.¹⁰

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى
وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦﴾

[7] And that the Hour is coming – no doubt about it; and that Allah will raise up those in the graves.

وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٧﴾

[8] Yet among the people is such a one who disputes about Allah without knowledge, or guidance, or an illuminating Book.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ ﴿٨﴾

[9] (Disdainfully) twisting his neck,¹¹ so that he might mislead away from Allah's path. For him there is disgrace in this world, and on the Day of Judgment We shall make him taste the chastisement of burning.

ثَأْنِي عَطْفِهِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُ فِي
الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَنُذِيقُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَذَابَ
الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٩﴾

[10] 'This because of what your hands forwarded, for Allah is not unjust to (His) servants.'

ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْت يَدَاكَ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ
بِظَالِمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿١٠﴾

Canada said, “.. It seems to me that Muhammad is a very ordinary man. He could not read, did not know [how] to write... And we are talking about fourteen hundred years ago. You have someone .. making profound pronouncements and statements that are amazingly accurate about scientific nature. I personally cannot see how this could be a mere chance.”

10. Yusuf Ali paraphrases this verse: “If they really have doubts in their minds about the life after death, they have only to turn their attention either to their own nature, or to the nature around. How wonderful is

their own physical growth, from lifeless matter, to seed, fertilized ovum, foetus child, youth, age, and death! How can they doubt that the Author of all these wonderful stages in their life here can also give them another kind of life after the end of this life? Or, if they look at external nature, they see the earth dead and barren and Allah's fertilizing showers bring it to life, growth and beauty in various forms. The Creator of this pageant Beauty can create yet another and a newer world.”

11. According to the *Salaf*, the term “*thaaniya `itfih*” alludes to a proud gesture. It draws the image of a man

[11] And, among the people is such a one who serves Allah on an edge.¹² If good touches him, he is satisfied therewith. But if a trial touches him,¹³ he turns on his face.¹⁴ He loses this world as well as the Hereafter. That indeed is an evident loss.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١١﴾

[12] He invokes one - apart from Allah - which can neither harm him nor benefit him. That indeed is the extreme error.

يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٢﴾

turning away in disdain, not ready to listen to anything. Ibn `Abbas said in explanation, “the man is too proud to follow the truth” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

12. The term “edge” has been used to indicate that the man stands at the end, and not in the middle of the religion. He is like someone in an army right in the last row. If the army is victorious, he is with it in loot and booty. But if it experiences defeat, he is at the right spot to bolt away (Zamakhshari).

13. Reports from Ibn `Abbas, Dahhak and others (one is in Bukhari: Ibn Kathir) say that this verse alludes to some of the outlying Arabs who emigrated to Madinah. Now, if the weather and water suited to one of them, his mare brought a foal, his woman gave birth to a son, he felt comfortable with Islam and said to himself, “I have not experienced any-

thing but good since I embraced this religion.” But, if the weather and water did not suit him, or his wife gave birth to a girl, or he did not receive anything by way of charity, Satan went up and whispered to him, ‘By God! Since the day you embraced Islam, you have not encountered anything good.’”

There is yet another report on this topic, (in Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Marduwayh with trustworthy chain of narrators: Shawkani) which says, “Bedouins from the outlying areas would come to the Prophet and embrace Islam. As they returned to their dwellings, if they found it a rainy year of plenty and birth of good number of children, they would say, ‘This is a good religion. Hold on to it.’ But if they found it a dry year, unproductive, and births of their disapproval (i.e., girls), they would remark, ‘There is no good in this new religion.’ So Allah revealed,

[13] He invokes him whose harm is nearer than his benefit.¹⁵ Evil indeed is the patron and evil indeed the companion.¹⁶

يَدْعُو لِمَنْ ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِ لَيْسَ
الْمَوْلَىٰ وَلَيْسَ الْعَشِيرُ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] Verily, Allah will admit those who believed and worked righteous deeds into gardens beneath which rivers flow. Surely, Allah does what He will.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٤﴾

“And, among the people is such a one who serves Allah on an edge..”

Others have said that the verse refers to hypocrites. They interpret the term “*harf*” as meaning, “(in) doubt.”

14. That is, he abandons Islam.

15. “They are men whose minds are not firm: they will have faith, if all goes well with them. But as soon as they are tried, they are found wanting. They are a different kind from hypocrites. It is not fraud or double meaning that is their sin: it is a weak mind, petty standards of judging right by success, a selfishness that gives nothing but asks for all.. (Yusuf Ali).

Sayyid comments: “In the life of a true believer, faith is well grounded in his heart. The world around him shakes and convulses, but he remains unshaken, tenaciously holding on to the rock of faith. This then is the reward of faith. He should, accordingly, seek its support, fall back on

it and hold on to it in times of difficulties, and not seek rewards for it, for, such a faith is a reward by itself. A believer realizes its worth when he sees puzzled men and women around him, those who are unsure of what’s happening, why it’s happening, and so on. They are blown about by every wind of change resulting in worries and tension, while the believer goes about undisturbed, contented of heart, firm of feet, of unruffled carriage, aware of the Presence of Allah, and satisfied with the connection. He does not experiment with his Lord. But rather, he is ready to face all that comes his way, submitted from the beginning to what the life will unfold of its events for him, good or bad. His faith is in a Being who owns the Command, Who is the origin of all that is and will be.

“In contrast, the other one, the one on the edge, makes his faith a commodity in the market of commodities. He is, in his devotion, on the edge. A mild push results in his fall.

[15] Let him who imagines that Allah will not help him in this world and the Hereafter, extend a rope toward the heaven, then cut off,¹⁷ and let him see, does his guile remove that which enrages (him)?¹⁸

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ
لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدَهُ مَا يَغِيظُ
﴿١٥﴾

[16] And that is how We have sent it down (as) manifest signs; and that Allah guides whom He will.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
يَهْدِي مَنْ يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾

He is the grand loser. Apart from the loss of a dear one, or of wealth or health, he also loses peace of heart, quiet submission to his fate, in addition to his loss of the rewards in the Hereafter. And, what happens to him after the fall? Where does he go next? Whom does he apply for help? He 'calls to one - apart from Allah - who can neither harm him nor benefit him.' He calls upon deities, idols, devils, or imaginary gods of the pagans. Or he might apply to humans like himself, or appeal to authorities: in the manner of the *Jahiliyyah* of all times whose harm is closer than the benefit. The harm consists in the split of loyalties causing a split in the heart leading to a split personality. His response results in further uncertainties and, above all, a degradation, loss of respect for one's own self, in one's own eyes: 'That indeed is the extreme error.'

16. Experience with the pagans tells us that Yusuf Ali's commentary is

quite appropriate. He writes: "Such false worship is not always neutral, bringing neither harm nor good. Perhaps the harm comes first, and there is no help from Allah. Such minds are themselves demoralized, and render themselves unfit for help.

17. Another interpretation of the term "*fal-yaqta*" could be, "let him traverse" (the distance: with the root "*qata'a*": meaning to traverse) – Razi, Asad. "Cut off" (the help) is another possibility (Razi).

18. Great many of the classical commentators are of opinion that the pronoun in "*yansurahu*" refers to the Prophet. Accordingly, Ibn `Abbas has said in explanation of this verse, "Whoever thinks that Allah will not help Muhammad in this world and the Next, might extend a rope to the roof (of his house, which is his "*samaa*"), and strangle himself thereby to see if his rage is cured." This was also the opinion of Mujahid, `Ikrimah, `Ata, Abu al-`Aliyyah

[17] Those who believed (in earlier Messages), those who turned Jewish, the Sabians,¹⁹ the Christians, the Magians, and the polytheists: surely, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection; indeed Allah is over all things Witness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ
وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١٧﴾

and others (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). In short, he might commit suicide to cool his rage. There is little else he can do about it (Au.).

Another and parallel interpretation of the *Salaf* has been paraphrased by Yusuf Ali in the following manner: “If the enemies of Allah are enraged at the help he (Muhammad) gets from heavens, let them stretch a rope to heavens, and see if they can intercept Allah’s help by their petty devices.”

Some others have conjectured that the personal pronoun “hu” in “*yansurahu*” alludes to the one who thinks that he (himself) will not be helped in this world and the Hereafter (may commit suicide). But, unless there is a hidden meaning to it, it doesn’t seem to be easy to accept since no believer in Allah thinks that he will be neither helped in this world nor in the Hereafter (Au.).

And, although Qatadah also figures in the above opinion, he viewed the verse slightly differently. According

to him, whoever thought that Allah was not going to help the Prophet, His Book and His religion, might stretch a rope to the heaven and try and get the connection severed (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Razi).

19. Qatadah’s opinion, as in `Abdul Razzaq, `Abd b. Humayd, and Ibn Abi Hatim is that Sabians were a people who oriented themselves to the *Qiblah*, worshipped angels, and recited the *Zabur* (Shawkani).

The Qamus says that they claimed to be on the religion of Nuh and faced North in their Prayers (Alusi). Perhaps they were many sects and hence the definition has varied (Au.).

Mawdudi adds, although without quoting his sources: “In the olden days, two communities were known as Sabians – the followers of the Prophet John (peace be upon him) who inhabited, in large numbers, the upper region of Iraq called al-Jazirah. They practiced baptism according to the way of the Prophet John. The other community bearing this name



[18] Do you not see that to Allah prostrate themselves all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth,²⁰ the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees²¹ and the animals,²² and a great many of the people? – and many there are who merit chastisement.²³ And he whom Allah abases, will have none to honor him. Surely, Allah does what He will.²⁴

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ
مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقٌّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ وَمَنْ
يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ
مَا يَشَاءُ * ﴿١٨﴾

consisted of star-worshippers who claimed to follow the religion of the Prophet Shith and Idris (peace be upon them). They believed that the planets held ascendancy over the elements, and that the angels had ascendancy over the planets. Based in Harran, they were scattered over different parts of Iraq. This second group is also known for its mastery of philosophy, science and medicine.” Also see n. 158 & 159 of *Al-Baqarah* and n. 192 of *Al-Nahl* of this work.

20. A *hadith* of Muslim says

إِذَا قَرَأَ ابْنُ آدَمَ السُّجْدَةَ فَسَجَدَ اعْتَرَلَ الشَّيْطَانُ
بَيْنَكَ يَمْشِي يَا وَيْلَهُ - وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ أَبِي كُرَيْبٍ يَا وَيْلَى
- أَمَرَ ابْنُ آدَمَ بِالسُّجُودِ فَسَجَدَ فَكَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ وَأَمَرَتْ
بِالسُّجُودِ فَأَبَيْتُ فَلِيَ النَّارُ

“When a son of Adam prostrates himself (to Allah), *Shaytan* departs weeping. He says,

‘Woe. Adam’s son was ordered to prostrate himself. He did and will enter Paradise. I too was asked to

prostrate myself. I refused and will enter the Fire (Ibn Kathir).

21. Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hibban (in his *Sahih*) have recorded Ibn `Abbas as saying that once a man came to the Prophet and said, “I saw in a dream that I am praying behind a tree. I prostrated and the tree fell in prostration with me and I heard it saying:

اللَّهُمَّ اكْتُبْ لِي بِهَا عِنْدَكَ أَجْرًا، وَضَعْ عَنِّي بِهَا وَزْرًا
وَاجْعَلْهَا لِي عِنْدَكَ دُخْرًا، وَتَقَبَّلْهَا مِنِّي كَمَا تَقَبَّلْتَهَا
مِنْ عَبْدِكَ دَاوُدَ

‘O Allah, write it down for me thereby a reward with You, remove from me a sin thereby, store it for me as a treasure with you, and accept it from me as you accepted from Your slave Da’ud.’ After some time the Prophet happened to recite a prostration verse. He prostrated himself and I heard him repeat the same words in his prostration” (Ibn Kathir).

22. Accordingly, we have a report from the Prophet preserved by Ahmad. It says,

اَزْكَبُوهَا سَالِمَةً وَدَعُوهَا سَالِمَةً وَلَا تَسْخُدُوهَا كَرَّاسِي
لِأَحَادِيثِكُمْ فِي الطُّرُقِ وَالْأَسْوَاقِ فَزَبَّ مَرْكُوبَةٍ خَيْرٌ
مِنْ رَاكِبِهَا هِيَ أَكْثَرُ ذِكْرًا لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْهُ

“(The Prophet said), Ride them safely and leave them safe and sound. Do not use them as chairs for chat sessions on the road or in the markets. Sometimes the one ridden is better than the rider. It is more remembering of Allah the Exalted than him” (Ibn Kathir).

The above report was declared weak by Shu`ayb Arna`ut (Au.).

Alusi writes that various Arab tribes worshipped various objects. The Himyar tribe worshipped the Sun, the Kinanah the moon, the Tamim the Hyades (a constellation of five stars: Au.), Lakhm and Quraysh Sirius, Tayy the Pleiades, Asad the Mercury, Rabi`a one of the Orion stars, Ghatafan the `Uzza (which was a dry samurrah tree, while a few others worshipped the cow. Over and above these, most of the Arabs also worshipped stones and idols that they carved from the mountains. The Qur`an told them that those you worship are themselves devoted to Allah.

23. Mujahid’s opinion was that there are many who believe in Allah and prostrate themselves to Him, while there are many who prostrate themselves but do not believe in Him and hence deserve to be punished. Ibn Jarir however disagrees with this meaning, and opts for the apparent meaning, viz., some have believed and so prostrate themselves, while there are others who do not believe and do not prostrate themselves, and so deserve to be punished.

24. Ibn Kathir comments on Allah’s will. It is said that someone told `Ali, “This man disputes over predestination and Divine decree.” `Ali asked him, “O Allah’s slave. Did Allah create you in form and shape following His own will or yours?” He answered, “Rather, as He wished.” He asked, “He makes you fall sick when He wills or when you will?” He answered, “Rather, when He wills.” He asked, “He restores your health when He wills or when you will?” He answered, “Rather, when He wills.” He asked, “Will He then admit you (into Paradise by the gate of) His choice or yours?” He answered, “Rather, by His wish.” At that `Ali said, “By Allah, had you answered differently, I would have struck you with a sword in the area that carries your two eyes.”

[19] These two are two disputants who disputed concerning their Lord.²⁵ Those who disbelieved will have garments cut out for them of Fire. Boiling water will be poured over their heads.

هَذَانِ حَصْمَانِ احْتَصَمُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا قُطِعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ يُصَبُّ
مِنْ فَوْقٍ رُّؤُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] Whereby, that which is in their bellies will be melted, and the skins (too).²⁶

يُصَهَّرُ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ ﴿٢٠﴾

25. Apparently, the allusion is to the two groups mentioned in verse 17 above: the believers of all times on one side and the unbelievers of all times on another (Au.). However, Abu Dharr's sworn opinion is that the immediate reference was to the six of the Quraysh: Hamza b. `Abd al-Muttallib, `Ali b. Abi Talib and `Ubaydah b. al-Harith on the one side, and `Utbah b. Rabi`ah, Shaybah b. Rabi`ah and Walid b. `Utbah, on the other side. They met in duels at Badr.

إِنَّ الْحَمِيمَ لَيُصَبُّ عَلَى رُؤُوسِهِمْ، فَيَنْتَفِذُ الْجُمُجَمَةَ
حَتَّى يَخْلُصَ إِلَى جَوْفِهِ، فَيَسْلُتُ مَا فِي جَوْفِهِ حَتَّى
يَبْلُغَ قَدَمَيْهِ، وَهِيَ الصَّهْرُ، ثُمَّ يُعَادُ كَمَا كَانَ

“Boiling water will be poured over their heads. It will penetrate their skulls to reach its inner end. It will eat off all that is therein and leak down to reach his feet. That is the melting. Thereafter the man will be restored to the former state once again” (Ibn Jarir).

Another opinion, and the prevalent one, says Ibn Jarir, is that the allusion is to the monotheists and pagans of all time. This of course does not deny the credibility of Abu Dharr's explanation (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The report is also in Tirmidhi who rated it *Hasan Sahih* (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Abu Dharr's report is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir), and his opinion seems to be the correct one (Qurtubi).

Ibn Abi Hatim has another report. It records `Abdullah b. Sirri as having said,

يَأْتِيهِ الْمَلَكُ يَحْمِلُ الْإِنَاءَ بِكَلْبَتَيْنِ مِنْ حَرَارَتِهِ، فَإِذَا
أَدْنَاهُ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ تَكَرَّهَهُ، قَالَ: فَيَرْفَعُ مِقْمَعَةً مَعَهُ
فِيضْرِبُ بِهَا رَأْسَهُ، فَيُفْرِغُ دِمَاغَهُ، ثُمَّ يَفْرِغُ الْإِنَاءَ مِنْ
دِمَاغِهِ، فَيَصِلُ إِلَى جَوْفِهِ مِنْ دِمَاغِهِ

26. Abu Hurayrah has reported the Prophet as having said:

“An angel will come to him with a vessel held by means of two

[21] And for them are hooked iron rods.²⁷

وَلَهُمْ مَقَامِعٌ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] Every time they wish to get out of it – from anguish – they will be returned to it.²⁸ And (it will be said), ‘Taste the chastisement of burning.’

كَلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Surely, Allah will admit those who believed and worked righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold²⁹ and pearls,³⁰ and their attires therein will be of silk.³¹

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُجْلُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

hooks because of its heat. When he brings it close to the man’s face he will try to avert it. The angel will hit him with a hooked rod that will open his head. He will empty the vessel in his brain. The liquid will go down from there to reach his stomach. It is in reference to this that Allah said, ‘(Boiling water will be poured over their heads) by which will be melted that within their stomachs, as also the skins’ (Ibn Kathir).

According to another *hadith*, also in Ahmad,

لو ضرب الجبل بمِثْمَعٍ من حديد، لتفتت ثم عاد كما كان، ولو أن دلوا من عَسَاقٍ يُهْرَاقُ في الدنيا لأنتن أهل الدنيا

“If the hooked rod was used to strike a mountain, it would render it to dust. And, if a bucket of pus was poured on earth, the whole world would stink (Ibn Kathir, shortened).

27. A *hadith* in Ahmad reports the Prophet,

لو أن مِثْمَعًا من حديد وُضِعَ في الأرض، فاجتمع له الثقلان ما أَقْلُوهُ من الأرض

“Were the hooked rod brought to the earth and mankind and jinn asked to lift it, they wouldn’t be able to.”

However, Albani’s opinion is that the report is weak (S. Ibrahim).

28. That is, whenever they find the door opened for some purpose, they will try to escape through it; but the Keepers of Hell will drag them back with the help of hooked iron rods (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others).

29. The Prophet has said in a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn*, “A believer’s jewelry

will end where his ablution ends” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

30. Some have understood the verse as, “They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and (with) pearls,” and not as “adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls.” But it sounds more correct to render it as, “They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and silver” (Qurtubi).

31. It might be recalled that, according to report in Nasa’i, the Prophet said,

من لبس الحرير في الدنيا لم يلبسه في الآخرة و من شرب الخمر في الدنيا لم يشربه في الآخرة و من شرب في آنية الذهب و الفضة في الدنيا لم يشرب بها في الآخرة ثم قال : لباس أهل الجنة و شراب أهل الجنة و آنية أهل الجنة

“Whoever wore silk in this world, will not wear it in the Hereafter. Whoever drank wine in this world will not drink it in the Hereafter. And whoever drank out of gold and silver ware in this world will not drink out of them in the Hereafter.” Then he added, “(These are) the attires of the people of Paradise, drinks of

the people of Paradise and vessels of the people of Paradise.”

The report is in Mustadrak of Hakim which Dhahabi declared trustworthy (Au.).

However, some scholars have thought that the prohibition will remain until a man has been through the punishment and until he has entered Paradise. Once in there, the ban will be removed. But, the apparent words do not lend support to such a meaning. What they convey, rather, is that even if they entered Paradise, they will be denied these things. Indeed, this is confirmed by another sound report coming through Abu Sa’id al-Khudri. The Prophet said,

من لبس الحرير في الدنيا لم يلبسه في الآخرة و إن دخل الجنة لبسه أهل الجنة و لم يلبسه

“He who wore silk in this world, will not wear it in the Hereafter even if he entered Paradise. Others in Paradise will wear it, but not he” (Qurtubi).

The above report is also from Hakim’s Mustadrak and declared trustworthy by Dhahabi (Au.).

[24] They were guided³² to the Good Word, and they were guided to the path of the Praiseworthy.³³

وَهُدُّوا إِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَهُدُّوا إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] Surely, those who have disbelieved and avert (people) from Allah's path, and from the Inviolable House of Worship,³⁴ which We have made equally (open) to (all) men, whether resident therein or one from outside³⁵ - and whosoever intended therein a profanation in wrong, We shall give him a taste of a painful chastisement.³⁶

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ وَمَن يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِالْحَادِ بِظُلْمٍ نُدِقْهُ مِن عَذَابِ آلِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

32. Ibn `Abbas interpreted the term “*hudu*” as “they were inspired” (Ibn Jarir).

“They will be inspired with praises and hymns, as one is inspired with the breathing action (Ibn Kathir).

33. Referring to the words, “They were guided to the Good Word, Tabari reports Ibn Zayd as having said that the following is the Good Word:

The above is part of a *hadith* in Muslim (Au.).

لا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر، والحمد لله

Some others have said that the allusion is to the Qur`ān, yet others that it is words of supplication that are meant. Ibn `Abbas said that the allusion is to the testimony (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

34. There have been differences in the understanding of the textual term *al-Masjid al-Haram*, whether it refers to the Holy Mosque alone or to the entire area surrounding it?

The area surrounding the Ka`bah is, at present, about 22 acres in size (Au.).

As regards the words, “They were guided to the path of the Praiseworthy,” the allusion is the guidance to the place where, as a trustworthy *hadith* says,

Most commentators believe it applies to the entire *Haram*. Mawdudi expands it to include the entire “hill”. He writes “Now, it is quite evident that the performance of *Hajj* rites is not confined to the Holy Mosque. Instead, its rituals are performed at several places, such as, Safa, Marwah, Muzdalifah and `Arafat.”

يُتْلَهُمُونَ التَّسْبِيحَ وَالتَّحْمِيدَ كَمَا يُتْلَهُمُونَ النَّفْسَ

However, *Sufi* Thanwi, who was also a Mufti of the Hanafiyy order, brings the *Fuqaha's* brilliance to fore. He writes that the subsequent passage, "which We have made equally (open) to (all) men, whether resident therein or visitor" offers the evidence that the whole of the *Haram* is included in the term "*Masjid al-Haram*." Allah said in this passage, "whether resident therein.." Obviously, the residents do not live inside the Holy Mosque.

35. Our translation of "baad" as "visitor" is based on the explanations offered by Mujahid, Qatadah, Ibn Zayd and others as in Ibn Jarir.

What exactly is the implication of the passage, "Which We have made equally (open) to (all) men, whether resident therein or visitor?" Ibn `Abbas said that it means that everyone, whether a Makkan or non-Makkan, should have equal access to the Holy House and have the right of residence in the town. This was also the opinion of Mujahid, Abu Salih, Zayd b. Aslam and a few others. The unanimous opinion is that the entire *Haram* area is a "waqf property" for Muslims of all parts of the world. In fact, in earlier times, quarters in Makkah (not houses within the quarters) did not have doors to them; nor

individual houses had doors to their courtyards. In `Umar's time someone installed a door because of increased theft. `Umar objected to it. The person involved said that he wished to secure people's property. So `Umar kept quiet and other people began to add doors to their houses. However, `Umar had ordered that doors leading to every courtyard (or quarters) should be left open during the *Hajj* season in order to allow the Pilgrims alight wherever they wished. Imām Malik nevertheless ruled that the rule was applicable to the Grand Mosque alone, whereas the Makkan residents had the right to close the doors of their houses. Most scholars have accepted this and this is the practice till today (Qurtubi).

(Indeed, some have thought that properties in Makkah cannot be bought, sold, or rented out). In fact, Imām Shafe'i and Is-haq b. Rahwayh differed over this issue while they were in the *Masjid al-Khayf* (in Mina). Ibn Hanbal also happened to be there. Imām Shafe'i's opinion was that Makkan property could be bought, sold, inherited, and rented out. In evidence he presented the *hadith* of the *Sahihayn* according to which Usama b. Zayd asked the Prophet, "Messenger of Allah. Shall we alight in your quarters in

Makkah tomorrow?” He answered, “Has `Aqeel left us any property in Makkah?” (Aqeel had sold out his house in his absence). It is also reported that `Umar ibn al-Khattab had bought out Safwan b. Umayyah’s quarters in Makkah for 4000 Dirhams to convert it into a prison. However, Is-haq b. Rahwayh was of the opinion that Makkan property could not be inherited and could not be rented out. He presented a *hadith* in evidence (now in Ibn Majah) which says, “The Prophet, Abu Bakr and `Umar died, but no one claimed the Makkan properties except the (roaming) cattle. Whoever wished, settled in Makkah, and whoever did not, allow others do it. This happens to be the opinion of quite a few of the *Salaf*, Mujahid, and `Ata’ being noteworthy. `Abdullah ibn `Amr would not allow the sale of Makkan property or its renting. He reported, “Whoso devoured rents from Makkan property, devoured Fire.” Indeed, `Umar ibn al-Khattab had prohibited that the Makkan residential quarters be closed off with doors, preventing Pilgrims from alighting in any quarter. Imām Ahmad seemed to have taken the middle road when he said that the Makkan property maybe owned, inherited, but could not be rented out” (Ibn Kathir).

The Hanafiyy position however is that it is undesirable (*makruh*) to charge rent on the Makkan houses during the pilgrimage season. Otherwise, its property might be bought, sold, leased, inherited, and rented out (Alusi).

36. What is “ilhaad” therein? Literally, “ilhaad” is deviation from the right course. Mujahid said that the allusion is to declaring associates to Allah, in short, *shirk*. But Ibn `Abbas thought the reference is to treating Allah’s unlawful as lawful therein, such as, taking life without right. A few others – such as `Abdullah Ibn `Amr - have included all sins. Dahhak b. Muzahim in fact went a step further to say that whoever was not in Makkah, but wished to commit a sin therein (along with any other), would be counted a sinner even if he played no role in the sin committed (Ibn Jarir).

In other words, if one willed a sin but did not commit it, normally he will not have it written down against him in his Book of Deeds. But the rule is different in reference to Makkah, where, even if someone merely willed, although he did not execute his will, he will be sinning (Qurtubi).

Sa`id b. Jubayr in fact included such small matters as abusing one's servant as violation of Makka's sanctity. In a *hadith* preserved by Ibn Abi Hatim, the Prophet counted

اِخْتِكَارُ الطَّعَامِ بِمَكَّةَ الْخَادِّ

“hoarding of grain in Makkah”
as “disbelief.”

Haythami pointed out that one of the narrators have been treated trustworthy by Ibn Hibban, while others distrusted him (Au.).

There is another report in which the Prophet said,

يَعْزُو جَيْشُ الْكَعْبَةِ فَإِذَا كَانُوا بَيْدَاءَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
حُسِفَ بِأَوْهَمِمْ وَأَخْرِهِمْ

“An army will head towards Makkah (to subdue it). But when they are in the middle of the desert, the first and the last will be swallowed in. (Some scholars have said that the army will be after the newly appeared Mahdi: Au.).

Similar versions appear in several collections, one of which Albani treated as *Sahih*.

Accordingly, (when Ibn Zubayr had been besieged in Makkah by Hajjaj b. Yusuf's troops), `Abdullah ibn `Umar went up to him and said, “I have heard the Prophet say,

إِنَّهُ سَيُلْحَدُ فِيهِ رَجُلٌ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ لَوْ وُزِنَتْ ذُنُوبُهُ
بِذُنُوبِ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَرَجَحَتْ قَالَ فَاَنْظُرْ لَا تَكُونُ

‘A man from the Quraysh will make it lawful. If his sins are weighed against the sins of the two (Jinn and mankind), they will outweigh. So, see to it that you do not happen to be that person” (Ibn Kathir).

Haythami treated the above report as trustworthy (Au.).

In fact, `Abdullah ibn `Amr b. al-`Aas was so careful about not committing the slightest of sins in the *Haram* that he had two quarters in Makkah: one within the *Haram* area and another outside it, in the Hill area. He only reproached his family members or shouted at them in the Hill house but never in the *Haram* house (Qurtubi).

[26] And (recall) when We assigned to Ibrahim the site of the House,³⁷ (saying), 'Associate not aught with Me, and cleanse My House for those circumambulating (it), standing (in prayer) and those bowing and prostrating.

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] And proclaim among the people the Pilgrimage,³⁸ they will come to you³⁹ on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every distant ravine.'

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

37. Suddi has said that when Ibrahim and Isma'il arrived at Makkah, they did not know where to build the House of God. Then came a wind that curled around – snake like - forming a small dune indicating the spot for construction. (Bayt Allah in fact, is not the name of the building, but rather, the spot over which the building stands: Shafi'). The reference by "bawwanaa" is to this pointing (Ibn Jarir). This is one meaning of the term. Another is to settle or establish (Qurtubi).

Abu Dharr's following report is preserved in the *Sahihayn*. He inquired,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ مَسْجِدٍ وُضِعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْلَى؟ قَالَ: « الْمَسْجِدُ الْحَرَامُ ». قَالَ قُلْتُ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: « ثُمَّ الْمَسْجِدُ الْأَقْصَى ». قَالَ قُلْتُ: كَمْ بَيْنَهُمَا؟ قَالَ: « أَرْبَعُونَ سَنَةً، فَأَيُّمَا أَدْرَكْتَا الصَّلَاةَ فَصَلِّ فَهُوَ مَسْجِدٌ »

"Messenger of Allah. Which mosque was first to be built?"

The Prophet replied, "The Sacred Mosque (at Makkah)." He asked, "Which one next?" He replied, "That at Jerusalem." He asked, "How long was it between them?" He replied, "Forty years. At all events, when ever Salah catches on you, pray right there, that is the masjid" (Ibn Kathir).

This means the Mosque at Jerusalem was not built by Prophet Sulayman, as the Jews claim. It was built earlier and perhaps destroyed and rebuilt by Sulayman (Au.).

38. Ibn `Abbas has said that when Ibrahim had finished the construction, he was told to proclaim the pilgrimage. He said, "My Lord. How far will my voice go?" He was told, "Proclaim. Upon me is the conveyance." So Ibrahim proclaimed, "People! Pilgrimage to the *Bayt al-`Ateeq* has been written on you, so come down in pilgrimage." His words were heard

[28] That they may witness (its) benefits for them⁴⁰ and mention the name of Allah through the appointed days⁴¹ over what He provided them of the beastly cattle.⁴² So eat thereof and feed the distressed ones in want.⁴³

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي
 أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ
 الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا الْبَائِسَ
 الْفَقِيرَ ﴿٢٨﴾

in the heavens and the earth. And none of the mankind, the jinnkind, trees, animals and mountains heard him but responded, “Here we are, O Allah. “Don’t you see”, Ibn `Abbas added, “how people come to it from far off places? However, Ibn `Abbas seemed to have had the Muslims in mind (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). This is how Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Ibn Jubayr and many of the *Salaf* explained the verse (Ibn Kathir).

Majid adds: “And it is to this proclamation made by Abraham thousands of years ago – before the era of press, the post, the telegraph, the wireless, the radio and other such paraphernalia of modern publicity and propaganda – that mankind has been responding during all these centuries, by performing “the pilgrimage in their tens and hundreds of thousands every year.”

39. Note that Allah did not say, “They will come”, but rather, “They will come to you.” That is, whoever came after that would be considered

as having responded to Ibrahim’s call (Qurtubi).

40. Ibn `Abbas, Abu Razin and Sa`id b. Jubayr have said that the allusion is to the benefits accruing from the trade fairs held during the *Hajj* season. Others have thought that the allusion is to spiritual benefits, and both could be correct (Ibn Jarir). In fact, according to other reports, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others have also said that the allusion is both to the benefits of this world as well as the Next (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

In Asad’s words, “.. i.e., increased consciousness of God through facing the first temple ever dedicated to Him, as well as the consciousness of being part of a brotherhood embracing all believers. Apart from these spiritual benefits, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca provides opportunity for believers from all parts of the world to become acquainted with the many social and political problems that confront the various geographically separated sectors of the community.”

It is miraculous, adds Mufti Shafi', that although people so often go broke after such ceremonies as marriage, house construction, etc., it is common observation that a man of small means spends off the savings of his life-time on *Hajj*, but does not go broke for that reason.

41. That is, the days of tashriq (Ibn Jarir from Ibn `Abbas and Dahhak. (See *Surah Al-Baqarah* verse 203 for notes).

Ibn `Abbas thought that they were the day of Sacrifice, plus three following days (i.e., 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th of *Dhu al-Hijjah*). This also happens to be the opinion of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Ibrahim Nakha`i, (in their second opinion), as also that of Ibn `Umar (Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir writes: But others, such as Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, Mujahid, Qatadah, `Ataa', Sa'id b. Jubayr, Hasan, Dahhak, `Ata' al-Khurasani, Ibrahim Nakha`i, and including Ibn `Abbas, the allusion is to the first ten days of *Dhu al-Hijjah*. Imām Shafe`i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal were of the same opinion. These are also the most important of days in Islam. The Prophet has said in a narrative preserved by Bukhari:

مَا الْعَمَلُ فِي أَيَّامٍ أَفْضَلَ مِنْهَا فِي هَذِهِ قَالُوا وَلَا الْجِهَادُ
قَالَ وَلَا الْجِهَادُ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ خَرَجَ يُخَاطِرُ بِنَفْسِهِ وَمَالِهِ
فَلَمْ يَرْجِعْ بِشَيْءٍ

“There is no deed of other days better than those performed in these days.” He was asked, “Not even *Jihad* in the way of Allah?” He replied, “Not even *Jihad* in the way of Allah, except that a man should go out with his body and his wealth, and return with nothing on.”

Another *hadith* encourages that *Tahlil*, *Takbir* and *Tahmid* be said often in these days. Hence, Bukhari reports, Ibn `Umar and Abu Hurayrah would go out into the markets during these ten days and say aloud the *Takbir*. The people would join them in saying the words.

Hence, Ibn Kathir continues, some have thought that these ten days are of greater importance than those of the last ten days of *Ramadan*, although some have said that those of *Ramadan* are of greater importance since the Night of Power falls in them. A third opinion is that the first ten days of *Dhu al-Hijjah* are the greatest, while the nights of the last ten of *Ramadan* are the greatest.

Another opinion about the days in question is that of Ibn `Umar, Suddi

and Imām Malik. Ibn `Umar said that the *ayyam al-ma`lumaat* and *ayyam al-ma`dudaat* put together covered only four days. Of them, the day of Sacrifice and the next two days (10th-12th of *Dhu al-Hijjah*) are the *ayyam al-ma`lumat*, while the last three days after the day of Sacrifice (11th-13th) are the *ayyam al-ma`dudat*.

Majid quotes and comments on other aspects: “No fetch of religious genius could have conceived a better expedient for impressing upon the minds of the faithful a sense of their common life and of their brotherhood in the bounds of faith. Here is a supreme act of common worship, the Negro of the west coast of Africa meets with the Chinaman from the distant east; the courtly and polished Ottomon recognizes his brother Muslim in the wild islander from the farthest end of the Malayan Sea.’ (Arnold, Preaching of Islam, p. 415) ‘The institution of Hadj does not represent for the Moslems merely a sacred institution but also a League of Nations, an International Academy of Art and Science, and an International Chamber of Commerce all in one. Professor Snouk Hurgronje says: The idea of a league of human races has indeed been approached by Islam more nearly than by any other;

for the League of Nations founded on the basis of Muhammad’s religion takes the principle of the equality of all human races so seriously as to put other communities to shame.’ (Lady Cabbold, Intro, pp. XVII-XVIII).”

Fiqh Points

1. A city dweller may not slaughter his sacrificial animal before the `Eid Prayers; a countryside dweller could.
2. According to Imām Shafe`i and the Hanafiyy school, days of sacrifice are four: 10th-13th.
3. Most scholars say that the slaughtering should be carried out during the days of these dates and not nights. Although Imām Abu Hanifah has allowed it during the nights also. (But of course, on 13th the time ends with Maghrib: Au.).
4. It is not *wajib*, but only preferable that he who sacrifices partakes of the meat of his sacrificed animal. Here, the words ‘eat of it’ have been added because in pre-Islamic days some of the pagans would not eat out of their sacrificed animals.
5. But one may not eat out of what he sacrifices as expiation or against vows.
6. The sacrificed meat cannot be sold off either, nor its skin, or any other part.

7. The division into parts for oneself, friends, and for the poor, is not obligatory, although it has been the practice of some of the *Salaf*.

8. Imām Abu Haneefah and Nakha`i have disagreed with other Imāms and have said that sacrifice is not obligatory on a traveler. Abu Bakr, `Umar and some of the *Salaf* were also of the same opinion, i.e., sacrifice is not obligatory on a traveler (Qurtubi and others).

42. Asad quotes Pickthall: “The repeated Qur’ānic insistence on pronouncing the name of God whenever one slaughters an animal is meant to make the believers ‘realize the awfulness of taking a life, and the solemn nature of the trust which God has conferred upon them in the permission to eat the flesh of animals’ (Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’ān*).”

43. Asad comments, “.. they (the sacrifices) are meant to commemorate Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his first-born son after he dreamt that God demanded of him this supreme sacrifice..; furthermore, they are a reminder that God is the Provider of all sustenance and the One who gives life and deals death, and

that all must return to him; and, lastly (as stressed by Razi), they are to be the symbols of each believer’s readiness to sacrifice himself in the cause of truth.”

On the practical side, Mufti Shafi` has the following to add: Of the animals slaughtered, there are several kinds. For example, one offered in expiation against an animal hunted down in the *Haram*, (or in *Ihram*), in expiation of certain acts committed while in the state of *Ihram*, which might sometimes require a camel, a cow, or maybe just a sheep; etc. Now, it might be noted that out of the animals slaughtered in expiation of the second kind mentioned above, their meat is prohibited to the one who is supposed to expiate his sin through slaughter. There is no disagreement between the four *Fuqaha`* over this issue. Such meat is entirely for the poor. In fact, a rich person cannot be gifted thereof either. As regards other kinds of slaughtered animals, such as those of *Hajj*, their meat may be consumed by the one who offers the sacrifice. To divide into three parts: one for self, one for relatives and friends, and a third for the poor, is only desirable (*mustahab*).

[29] Then let them accomplish their cleansing,⁴⁴ fulfill their oaths⁴⁵ and circumambulate⁴⁶ the Ancient House.⁴⁷

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ
وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

44. The textual “tafath” is for impurity, filth or dirt. But authorities have explained it here as meaning *Hajj* rituals. Ibn `Umar, Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah and others have said in reference to the words “li-yaqdu tafatha-hum” means, ‘complete the rest of the rituals’ such as, shaving off the head, trimming the moustache, throwing the pebbles, circumambulation of the House, and rest of the *Hajj* rites. However, another opinion has it that the allusion is to cleanliness by way of shaving off the head, trimming of moustaches, removal of arm-pit hair etc. (Ibn Jarir).

`Ata’, Mujahid, `Ikrimah and others were also of the opinion, writes Ibn Kathir, that the allusion by “tafath” is to the shaving of the head, removal of pubic hair, clipping the nails, and removal of the *Ihraam* (pilgrim garb).

Relying on the linguists, Qurtubi agrees with the above meaning.

45. Some of the ancient scholars, such as Mujahid and `Ikramah have thought that the textual “*nadhhr*” here, at this point, is in the sense of intention. Therefore this part of the

text may be understood as, “let them fulfill their intention,” meaning, “let them now complete the rest of the rites of *Hajj*.” Sufyan and Imām Malik were also of the same opinion (Ibn Kathir).

At all events, it might be remembered, adds Shafi`, that *nadhhr* is proper *nadhhr* if a person vows to do something good, such as, that he will offer so many supererogatory prayers, or will expend so much money etc., if such and such a good thing happens. If that thing happens, then, fulfilling the vow is obligatory (*wajib*). However, if it was an evil deed that was vowed, (e.g., he would do something prohibited in Islam, if such and such a things happened), then, technically it is not binding to fulfill the vow. In fact, it must be avoided and forgiveness sought through expiation which is now binding on him for breaking an oath. Further, one might also remember that a vow is not a vow proper with merely the intention in the heart. It has to be vocalized in words to become a vow proper, entailing expiation, if not fulfilled. Also see n. 574 of *Al-Baqarah*

46. There is no difference in opinion that the allusion is to the Tawaf al-Ziyarah, the obligatory circumambulation of *Hajj* (Tabari, Qurtubi).

47. The translation of “`ateeq” as ancient reflects the literal meaning. (Although the *hadith* in Tirmidhi to this effect is not sound: Ibn Kathir). Another is that it is in the sense of “freed” since Allah has freed the House of all tyrants. As for its destruction at Hajjaj’s hands, he was actually after `Abdullah ibn Zubayr and not the House which received incidental damage (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others). In fact, there is a *hadith* to this effect in Tirmidhi who rated it *Hasan Sahih* (Ibn Kathir and others).

Hajj commandments have appeared at two places in the Qur’an: earlier in *Surah Al-Baqarah*, verses 196-203, and here at this point. A cursory glance reveals that a certain order has been followed. In *Surah Al-Baqarah* they were: Standing at `Arafaat, night-stay in Muzdalifah,

followed by three days stay at Mina. And, at this point: sacrifice, cleansing (removal of hair etc.), and then the Final *Tawaf al-Ifadah* (Au.).

Mufti Shafi` points out that according to the Hanafiyyah and Malikiyyah, it is obligatory (*wajib*) to follow this sequence, since this is the Qur’anic sequence. Imām Malik declared it *Sunnah*, not following which entails a decrease in rewards, but expiation is not necessary. Ibn `Abbas has however narrated, “whoever changed the sequence must expiate with a sheep in sacrifice.” This report is in Ibn Abi Shaybah, and, following *hadith* Principles, although Ibn `Abbas does not attribute it to the Prophet, it has to be considered as being in fact a statement of the Prophet. (For details see Tafsir Mazhari). Imām Tahawi has narrated this report through different chains. This also happens to be the opinion of Sa`id b. Jubayr, Qatadah, Nakha`i and Hasan al-Busri. Other scholars however, hold different opinions.

[30] That, and whosoever honors the sacred rites of Allah,⁴⁸ then, that is better for him in the sight of his Lord. And, declared lawful unto you are the cattle save for what is being recited to you (as unlawful).⁴⁹ Shun therefore the abomination of the idols⁵⁰ and shun the false word.⁵¹

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمَ حُرْمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ﴿٣٠﴾

48. The allusion is not only to the sacred sites, but also to the rites of *Hajj*, as well as to all that is prohibited by Allah (Ibn Jarir).

49. Such as those stated elsewhere in the Qur'an (5: 33):

{ حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالِدَمُّ وَالْحُنْزِيرُ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَبِتَةُ وَالْمَوْفُودَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّبَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ } [المائدة: ٣]

“Forbidden unto you are carrion, blood, swine’s flesh, what has been consecrated to other than Allah, a (beast) strangled (to death), or (died) by a violent blow, or by a fall from a height, or one gored with the horns (to death), and (that killed and) devoured by the wild beasts - unless you have sacrificed them duly - and what is slaughtered on the altars, (or) that you seek the shares (in disputed divisions) by the divining arrows” (Ibn Kathir).

50. The textual word “*wathan*” is applicable to anything that is carved out, whether from wood, stone or

metal. Arabs used to fix them up at some prominent place and worship them. The Cross that the Christians carve out is also a “*wathan*.” When `Adiyy b. Hatim presented himself to the Prophet, with the Cross hanging by his neck, he told him, “Throw that *wathan* away (Qurtubi).

51. The Prophet is reported to have said,

« عُدِلَتْ شَهَادَةُ الزُّورِ بِالْإِشْرَاقِ بِاللَّهِ ». ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ (فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ)

“False oath has been declared equal to association with Allah.” He said that three times, and then added, “Recite if you will, ‘Shun then, the abomination of the idols and shun the false word’” (Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* is in Tirmidhi, about one version of which he said that it is more trustworthy than others of its kind (Au.).

[31] Remaining ever inclined to Allah, associating not (ought) with Him.⁵² And, whoso associated with Allah is like someone who fell from the heavens so that the birds snatch him up, or the winds sweep him off to a distant place.⁵³

حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ
بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا حَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَحَطَّطَتْهُ
الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ
سَحِيقٍ ﴿٣١﴾

However, there is another in Ahmad of similar meaning. Moreover, we have one in the *Sahihayn* which says,

أَلَا أُتَبِّحُكُمْ بِأَكْبَرِ الْكِبَائِرِ ثَلَاثًا قَالُوا بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ قَالَ الْإِشْرَاقُ بِاللَّهِ وَعُقُوفُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَجَلَسَ وَكَانَ
مُتَّكِنًا فَقَالَ أَلَا وَقَوْلُ الرَّؤُورِ

“Should I not tell you about the greatest of the great sins?” (He said that three times). We said, “Sure, do it, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Declaring partners unto Allah and abusing the parents.” Then he straightened up from his reclining position and said, “and false oaths.” He kept repeating until we wished he would cease (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi adds: “According to Islamic Law, false testimony is a cognizable offence. Abu Yusuf and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (two of Abu Hanifa’s disciples: au.) are of the opinion that if anyone is convicted of false testimony by a

court, this should be made public and the person so convicted should be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab also held this opinion and applied it. According to Mak-hul, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said, ‘He [i.e., the culprit] should be flogged, his head should be shaved, his face should be blackened, and he should be subjected to long-term imprisonment.’ (See Jassas, Bab Shahadat al-Zur, vol. 3, p. 241).”

52. Associating partners with Allah has been specifically mentioned here because the pagans used to specifically mention “other than Him” during *Hajj* by saying, “There is no partner unto You, save the ones we suggest” (Thanwi).

53. The allusion is to the mind and thoughts of an unbeliever. He is unsure, unsettled, blown about unanchored to any point of reference (with a point from Alusi).

[32] That, and whoso holds in honor Allah's Symbols,⁵⁴ then, that is a source of piety for the hearts.

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعِظِمَ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] In them⁵⁵ you have benefits for an appointed term.⁵⁶ Then their sanctioned place of sacrifice is at the Ancient House.⁵⁷

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحَلُّهَا إِلَىٰ الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

54. “*Sha`a’ir*” could also be rendered as rites, rituals, as well as sacred sites but at this point, more appropriate seems to be what Mujahid and others have suggested as alluding to the animals of sacrifice. They must be fed and treated well. This opinion is strengthened by the verse that follows (Ibn Jarir). Bukhari in fact recorded the words of Umamah b. Sahl,

كُنَّا نُسَمِّنُ الْأُصْحِيَّةَ بِالْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ يُسَمِّنُونَ

“We – and the Muslims in general – used to fatten our sacrificial animal at Madinah.”

Several other reports tell us that the animals should not suffer from any bodily defect such as, broken horns, severed earlobes, lame, or seriously sick. Also, one marked for sacrifice may not be sold out to another for slaughter or for any other purpose. According to a *hadith* in Tirmidhi who rated it *Sahih*, as well as in others, the Prophet said,

أَرْبَعٌ لَا يَجْزِينَ فِي الْأَصْحَابِيِّ : الْعَوْرَاءُ الْبَيْتُ عَوْرُهَا ،
وَالْمَرِيضَةُ الْبَيْتُ مَرَضُهَا ، وَالْعَرْجَاءُ الْبَيْتُ عَرْجُهَا ،
وَالْكَسِيرَةُ الَّتِي لَا تُثْقِي

“Four kinds (of animals) are disqualified for ritual sacrifice: those that are obviously one-eyed, obviously sick, obviously lame, and those that which is broken down out of weakness.”

It seems that by the addition of the adjective “obvious” the allusion is to major defects. That is, although one whole and healthy is preferable, one with minor defects would do. According to Abu Da’ud and Ibn Majah, the Prophet sacrificed two castrated, fat, horned rams. It has been conjectured however that the rams must have been castrated without the removal of testicles (Ibn Kathir).

55. That is, in the animals of sacrifice.

56. That is, you can draw benefits of ride, milk, wool, etc., so long as they are not marked off as animals for

[34] And to every people We appointed rites (of sacrifice)⁵⁸ that they might celebrate Allah's Name over such beasts of flocks as He provided them.⁵⁹ Your Lord is one God. Therefore, to Him surrender,⁶⁰ and give glad tidings to the humble.⁶¹

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَإِنَّكُمْ إِلَهُهُمُ وَإِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

sacrifice. Once you have done that, these benefits are lost. Hence the words, "In them you have benefits for an appointed term." This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others (Ibn Jarir).

"*Had-yu*" is that animal that a pilgrim carries with him at *Hajj* or `Umrah to the *Haram* for sacrifice in the *Haram* area (Shafi`).

However, riding the beast (if there is no other beast available for ride: Shafi`) seems to be allowed. According to a report in Bukhari,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ : أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- رَأَى رَجُلًا يَسُوقُ بَدَنَةً قَالَ : « اِرْكَبْهَا ». قَالَ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا بَدَنَةٌ. قَالَ : « اِرْكَبْهَا وَبَلِّغْ »

The Prophet saw a man leading a camel. He told him, "Mount her." The man said, "It is for sacrifice." The Prophet said somewhat impatiently, "Woe unto you, mount her" (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Asad gives the last touch: "This stress on the symbolic character of all the

rites connected with the pilgrimage is meant to draw the believer's attention to the spiritual meaning of those rites, and thus to warn him against making, unthinkingly, a sort of fetish of them."

57. The allusion by "*Bayt al-`Ateeq*" at this point is to the *Haram* (and not the House). It is within the boundaries of the *Haram* alone that ritual animals are to be sacrificed (Thanwi).

Qurtubi, however, states that the pronoun in "mahillu-ha" refers to the *sha`aair* (rites, sing. sha`eer) of *Hajj*. And the meaning of the verse then is, "Then the termination of the rituals (*sha`aair*) should be at the Sacred Mosque." That is, the *Hajj* rites should end with the Final Tawaf (*Tawaf al-Ifadah*). This is how Imām Malik understood it, while the understanding as in the translation was that of (the Hanafiyyah: Shafi`) and Imām Shafe`i.

58. Although, as Ibn `Abbas has said, generally "*mansak*" (pl. *manaasik*) is for religious rites, here the particu-

lar reference seems to be to sacrificial rites. Zayd b. Aslam thought however that the allusion was to Makkah (Ibn Kathir).

Actually, in its root the word *mansak* is for worship. With the passage of time it came to be used for a special kind of worship, and for *Hajj*, which is one of the methods of worship. The word is also used in the sense of sacrifice. (The Qur'an used the word at various places in any of the three senses: Shafi'). Nevertheless, Mujahid seems to be closer to truth who remarked that Allah had allowed followers of every religion to slaughter animals as a means of achieving closeness to Him - a practice he sanctioned to all and not to some alone: "And to every people We appointed rites (of sacrifice)" (Alusi).

59. According to a narration in Ahmad, the Prophet was asked either by Zayd b. Arqam or someone else,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا هَذِهِ الْأَصْحَابُ؟ قَالَ: «سُنَّةُ أَبِيكُمْ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ». قَالَ قُلْنَا: فَمَا لَنَا فِيهَا؟ قَالَ
: «بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ حَسَنَةً». قَالَ قُلْنَا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
فَالصُّوفُ قَالَ: «بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ مِنَ الصُّوفِ حَسَنَةً»

"Messenger of Allah what exactly (is the meaning behind) these sacrifices?" He replied, "A *Sunnah* of your father Ibrahim." He was asked, "And what is our share in it?" He replied, "For ev-

ery hair a good deed." He was asked, "What about wool?" He answered, "For every hair out of the wool, a good deed" (Ibn Kathir).

Asad points to another aspect: "(The sacrifice is to be made) as a conscious, selfless offering in His name of something that one cherishes as necessary and valuable, and not as an attempt to 'propitiate' Him who is far above anything that resembles human emotion."

60. That is, even though the Laws of the Prophets may vary and may abrogate one another, all Prophets called mankind to the worship of one God, hence to Him must all surrender (Ibn Kathir).

Another possible meaning is, although Allah has sanctioned that animals be sacrificed in His name, true virtue lies not in sacrifices, but belief in His Oneness (Au.).

61. "Humble" is one acceptable translation of "*mukhbiteen*" (which has its root in "*khabt*" which is used in Arabic for a low ground: Shafi'). Mujahid stated however that at this point it means "the contented" or "those who are satisfied" as against being in doubts (Ibn Jarir). But, as Raghīb has pointed out, it could mean "striving – or working - hard"

[35] Those, whose hearts are filled with fear when Allah is mentioned, those who show patience over what strikes them,⁶² those who (assiduously) perform the Prayers, and those who expend (in charity) out of what We have provided them.⁶³

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ وَالْمُقِيمِي
الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] And the sacrificial beast:⁶⁴ We have appointed them for you as among Allah's symbols. In them are benefits for you.⁶⁵ Therefore, pronounce Allah's Name over them as they line up (for sacrifice).⁶⁶ Then, when they collapse on their sides,⁶⁷ eat thereof and feed the contented as well as the expectant.⁶⁸ Thus We have subjected them to you haply you will give thanks.⁶⁹

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ
لَكُمْ فِيهَا حَيْرٌ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا
صَوَافٍ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا
وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا
لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

which, in the light of the demanding situations of *Hajj*, seems to be the most fitting meaning (Alusi).

Alusi and Thanwi also use the opportunity to point out that the sanction to different approaches and methods adopted by the people of *suluk*, is by implication hidden in this verse. They are accommodative of each other under a single plan, whose prime objective is Allah's remembrance.

62. Of afflictions, writes Imām Razi, there are two kinds: those coming from Allah, and those caused by the people. As regards ones coming from Allah, to bear them out with patience is a religious obligation. As

for those coming from the people, bearing them with resignation is not obligatory. One might seek redress. In fact, (if it is from the unbelievers) one might even fight it out.

63. That is, sincere and pure belief in Allah's oneness is such a thing that it inculcates as its reward several qualities of the body and spirit: fear in the heart, patience, establishment of Prayers, expending in the way of Allah, etc. (based on Thanwi).

64. "*Budna*" (sing.: "*badanah*") is primarily for camels. But subsequently, as in a *hadith*, cows were also included in the definition because of their large size (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi).

Yusuf Ali looks deeper into the reason why camels alone were mentioned here. He writes, “What was expressed in general terms (above) is applied here more particularly to camels, the most precious and useful of animals of Arabia, whose mode of slaughter for sacrifice is different from that of smaller animals: the special word for such sacrifice is *Nahr* (cviii: 2).”

65. Accordingly, some of the *Salaf* would do some trading – however small - in camels during *Hajj*, citing this verse, which spoke of benefits therein (Zamakhshari).

66. Some scholars have read the word “*swawaaf*” in the sense of “*saa-finah*” meaning, the state of being a foot (folded and) tied to itself, which forces the camel to stand on three of its legs. It is slaughtered in that position, so that with loss of blood it collapses on its side. But other scholars have understood “*sawaaf*” as meaning, “*khaalis*” i.e., purely, sincerely (for Allah) – Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others.

We have a report from Jabir b. `Abdullah in Abu Da`ud and Tirmidhi. He said, “I did my `Eid Prayers with the Prophet. A ram was brought to him, which he slaughtered. He did it by saying,

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُمَّ هَذَا عَنِّي وَعَمَّنْ لَمْ يُضَحِّ
مِنْ أُمَّتِي

‘In the name of Allah. Allah is Great. O Allah, this is from me and from those of my *Ummah* who did not sacrifice.’”

Note that the Prophet acted upon two verses (in the same order) when he said before slaughtering:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Those two verses are number 36 and 37. In no. 36 Allah commanded, “Therefore, pronounce Allah’s Name over them ..” And in no. 37 He said, “That is how He has subjected them to you so that you might chant the greatness of Allah” (Qurtubi).

According to another report (also in Abu Da`ud), Jabir said, the Prophet slaughtered two rams on an `Eid day saying,

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي
وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ
اللَّهُمَّ مِنْكَ وَلَكَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأُمَّتِهِ

“I have indeed turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth – having surrendered myself to him alone – and I am not of the pagans. Surely, my living and my death is

for the Lord of the worlds. He has no partners and that is what I have been ordered, and first of those who submit. In the name of Allah. Allah is great. O Allah, from You, for You, on behalf of Muhammad and his followers.”

He also said, as in the *Sahihayn*,

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا تَبَدَّأُ بِهِ يَوْمَنَا هَذَا أَنْ نُصَلِّيَ ، ثُمَّ تَرْجِعَ
فَتَنْحَرُ ، فَمَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا فَقَدْ أَصَابَ سُئْمَنَا ، وَمَنْ نَحَرَ
فَإِنَّمَا هُوَ حَمٌ قَدَّمَهُ لِأَهْلِهِ لَيْسَ مِنَ التُّسْلِكِ فِي شَيْءٍ

“The first thing we do on this our day is to Pray (the `Eid Prayers), then we shall return and sacrifice. Whoever did that, found our *Sunnah*. But, whoever slaughtered before the Prayers, then that is some meat that he offered to his family. It has nothing of the sacrifice (required of him).”

Finally, a report in Tirmidhi says that the Prophet lived in Madinah for ten years. Every year he offered a sacrifice on the occasion of `Eid al-Adha. And Muslim has a report which says that the Prophet slaughtered sixty-three camels (perhaps one corresponding to each year of his life: Au.) when he performed his *Hajj* (Ibn Kathir).

67. The translation at this point has the backing of the understanding of Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid. (Linguisti-

cally, *wajaba* is a synonym of *saqata*, meaning, to fall: Zamakhshari). This is because, adds Qurtubi, camels are slaughtered while they stand on three legs, and so fall on their sides with loss of blood. Another meaning however, that of Zayd b. Aslam is, “when it is dead.” Of course this reflects the meaning of Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid for, an animal is not lawful until it is completely lifeless (which happens after the collapse). A report in Tirmidhi, Abu Da`ud and Ahmad states it clearly (in a *Sahih* report: Au.):

مَا قُطِعَ مِنَ الْبَيْمَةِ وَهِيَ حَيَّةٌ فَهُوَ مَيْتَةٌ

“Whatever is sliced off an animal, while it is alive, is carrion” (Ibn Kathir).

68. The rendering of “*qani*” and “*mu`tar*” is following the understanding of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Qurazi. But there have been other explanations also (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari). Ibn Jarir prefers the reverse meaning. However, since the words are of the “*azdaad*” type (those that afford opposite meanings), either way it would mean: ‘give those who ask and those who do not’ (Au.). This verse is the basis of the scholars’ suggestion that the sacrificial meat should be divided into three parts. One for oneself, another for friends,

[37] Neither their meat nor their blood reaches Allah,⁷⁰ but rather it is your piety that reaches Him.⁷¹ That is how He has subjected them to you so that you might chant the greatness of Allah for that He guided you.⁷² And give glad tidings to those who excell.

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ
يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا
لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

and a third for the poor since Allah said, “eat thereof and feed the contented as well as the expectant” (Ibn Kathir).

69. That is, that is how the beasts have been tamed and humbled for mankind, ready for ride, milk, or slaughter (Ibn Kathir), while, much smaller animals of the forest are impossible for humans to control (Alusi).

Majid adds, “Sacrifice in Islam is nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than a natural, visible, expression of homage and gratitude to the Creator. Yusuf Ali gives the rationale: “He (Allah) has given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but only if we pronounce His name at the solemn act of taking life, for without this solemn invocation, we are apt to forget the sacredness of life.”

70. The pagans used to splatter blood of the slaughtered animals on their idols and around the Holy House. So Allah revealed, “Neither their

meat nor their blood reaches Allah..” (Zamakhshari). It is piety that reaches Him, in the manner of a sound report (in Muslim and others: Au.), from the Prophet which says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

“Allah does not look at your faces, nor at your colors. He looks at your hearts and deeds” (Ibn Kathir).

Majid writes, “(.. sacrifice is not a sort of meal served before God). Such truth, looking self-evident to the Muslim reader, needed a clear and emphatic enunciation in view of the horrible misconceptions and superstitions prevalent among many nations, not excluding Jews and Christians. For we read in the OT:- ‘It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.’(Le. 17: 11). And in the NT:- ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ (He. 9: 22) Among the Babylonians, ‘the gods feed in heaven ... they eat the offer-

ing ... the gods scent the savour, and gods scent the sweet savour: like flies do they gather themselves together about the offerer.' (EBr. C. 4119). 'Throughout the Semitic field the fundamental idea of sacrifice' was that 'of communion between the god and his worshippers by joint participation in the living flesh and blood of a sacred victim.' (Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 345)."

71. Although the word is in the general sense, here in particular "*Taqwa*" implies the intention to please Allah by the sacrifice (Ibn Jarir).

Majid comments: "It is the spirit of willing devotion and ready obedience underlying sacrifice and offering that is accepted by God who is the God of righteousness, the very same acme of morality. It is only piety of heart or righteousness of conduct, and not anything in lieu of it, that is acceptable to Him. Sacrifice, in Islam, is neither honorific nor peculiar, much less a magical sacrament. It is essentially symbolic – an external symbol of an internal dedication and voluntary submission to the will of the Almighty. The Divine itself is absolutely without needs, and all acts of sacrifice and worship are for our own benefits. The grace of God reaches

everyone and everywhere and needs only some piety for its reception.

Fiqh Points

1. Sacrifice of an animal through slaughter is not a requirement on pilgrims alone. It is upon all those who can afford it.

2. However a year need not pass on a man's *Zakath*-due wealth for sacrifice to become *wajib*, if a man has the amount on the day of sacrifice, it is *wajib* on him.

3. According to the Hanafiyya, sacrifice on the occasion of `Eid al-Ad-ha is *wajib* on those who are bound to Pay the *Zakah*. Others have said that it is *Sunnah* Mu'akkadah, (a confirmed *Sunnah*, lower in status than *wajib*) – Au.

4. One sacrifice is enough for the whole household.

5. However, if a man's wife pays *Zakah*, she must also offer a sacrifice.

6. Imām Abu Hanifah has ruled that village dwellers could slaughter immediately after sunrise since they are not required to offer the `Eid Prayers.

7. Most scholars have allowed that one might say at the time of slaughter: "O Allah! Accept (it) from me." In fact, Imām Shafe`i has even allowed that one might add the peace

[38] Surely, Allah defends those who have believed;⁷³ verily, Allah does not approve of any dishonest, ungrateful (person).⁷⁴

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] Leave is granted (hereby) to those against whom war is made⁷⁵ - because they have been wronged. And, surely, Allah is capable of their help.⁷⁶

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

formula on the Prophet, but most others did not agree with him. But Imām Abu Hanifah thought adding anything else was undesirable.

8. All of the days of tashriq are days of sacrifice. That is, according to the Hanafiyyah, 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th (until 'Asr time) of *Dhu al-Hijjah*.

9. It is allowed but not the best time to sacrifice at night.

10. Generally speaking, the animal has to be a mature one. And, roughly speaking, a sheep, ram, etc., have to be at least one year old. While a cow has to be two years old or above, and a camel five or above.

11. Seven persons can share a sacrifice of a cow or a camel.

72. That is, it is by Allah's guidance that you sacrifice for Him. Had he not guided you, you might have either seen no spiritual benefit in it, and thus would have refused to

slaughter altogether, or you might have slaughtered to other than Allah (Thanwi).

73. The textual word for "defend" is not "yadfa`u" but rather "yudafi`u" which has the additional implication of a foreseen or actual attack on the person being defended.

74. It is high degree of dishonesty and willful denial that leads a person to disbelieve in Allah's oneness, or to blindness to the truth of Islam and hence to antagonism against the Muslims (Au.).

75. Generally, one feels impressed by A.J. Arberry's translation that tries to remain as close as possible to the understanding of the majority. But not at this point. A plain verse, that does not demand a research to find out how an insignificant minority understood it in the past is translated by him as: "Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged .."

76. Ibn Jarir notes and shows his own preference to the recitation of the Kufans, as well as of some Makkan (authorities) who have read the text slightly differently - in a manner it would render the meaning as, "(Allah) has allowed those who fight (to retaliate) against those Allah does not approve of .." However, the great majority of the *Ummah* has recited in the manner now in the Qur'anic texts.

In any case, Ibn 'Abbas reported, "When the Prophet left Makkah, Abu Bakr said, 'They have expelled their Prophet, to Allah we belong and to Him we return: they will be destroyed.'"

Ibn 'Abbas added, "When Allah revealed, 'Leave is given to those against whom war is made - because they have been wronged,' Abu Bakr remarked, 'I knew there would be fighting.'"

The report is somewhat weak (Qur-tubi). But Albani treated it as *Sahih* while editing Tirmidhi and Nasa'i, in both of which it is found (Shawkani, S. Ibrahim).

And Ibn Zayd said, "They were allowed to retaliate after ten years of wrongs." Qatadah added, "This is the first ever verse revealed concerning *Jihad*" (Ibn Jarir).

That being the case, it is thought that the verse is Madinan. Allah said in other places (47: 31),

{وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَتَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ} {محمد: ٣١}

"Surely, We shall try you until We know the patient fighters among you and (thus) We shall test your affairs."

He also said (9: 16),

{أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ} [التوبة: ١٦]

"Have you imagined that you will be spared when Allah has not yet known those who fought from among you and did not take friends apart from Allah, His Messenger or the believers. And Allah is Aware of what you do."

He also said (3: 142),

{أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ} [آل عمران: ١٤٢]

"Or, do you think you will enter Paradise while Allah has not yet known those who fought from among you, and known those who showed patience."

Ibn 'Abbas has said, "Allah decreed *Jihad* at the right time. At Makkah the pagans were in large numbers. If He had asked them to fight back

[40] Those that were expelled from their homes without right except that they said, 'Our Lord is Allah.' And, were it not for Allah to check one set of people by means of another,⁷⁷ surely, (many) monasteries, churches,⁷⁸ synagogues, and mosques⁷⁹ - in which Allah's name is much pronounced⁸⁰ - would have been pulled down.⁸¹ Assuredly, Allah will help those who help Him, surely, Allah is Powerful, Mighty.⁸²

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الْغَنَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكَنُورٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

when they were less than ten percent of the population, surely, it would have been tough on them. Thus, although when eighty or so of the Yethribites pledged their hands of support to the Prophet at 'Aqabah, when they asked, 'Messenger of Allah. Should we not fall upon these pagans here at Mina?' He replied, 'But rather, I have not been ordered to do that?' But when they were driven out of Makkah, some going to Abyssinia, others to Madinah, and Allah provided them a shelter at Madinah, where they were able to establish their rule over a piece of land, Allah decreed *Jihad* by this verse, "Permitted are those (to retaliate) who are fought against.." (Ibn Kathir).

And the beauty of this first verse allowing the Muslims to fight back, when fought against, is that the word "fight" has not been used. This shows Islam's distaste for matters settled

with the help of wars, but its readiness to retaliate if attacked (Au.).

77. It is said that twenty-seven of 'Ali's followers reported him as saying that the meaning is, "If not for Allah shielding the Followers (taabe'iyyun) by means of the Companions, surely, (many) monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much pronounced, would have been pulled down." However, the great majority have accepted the apparent meaning, viz., "If Allah had not checked the evil of some people by means of the good of others, (many) monasteries, .." (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). Perhaps 'Ali was leading to another possible shade of meaning (Au.).

However, another aspect of the meaning is touched upon by Qurtubi. He explains Allah's words, "were it not for Allah to check one set of people by means of another.." as

meaning, “Had not Allah legalized wars unto the Prophets and believers, the unbelievers would have suppressed the believers and caused the desertion of their places of devotion to one God. But rather, He defended them, legislated fighting, so that, ultimately, they could be free to worship their Lord.

78. The following is a surprised addition by a *Sufi* commentator Thanwi: Two places of Christian worship and devotion have been named (as against one of every other community) perhaps because they ran a parallel religion in monasteries.

79. “Masajid” (sing. “masjid”), lit. a place where prostration is made, is perhaps so called because prostration is the best part of the Islamic Prayer (Alusi), the most distinctly different and hence noteworthy to others (Au.).

80. Scholars have differed over whether the qualifying sentence “in which Allah’s name is much pronounced” is applicable to all places of worship or to Masajid alone. In our times however, it shouldn’t be difficult to attribute the statement to Masajid in particular, since, it is within them alone that Allah’s name is mentioned much. Most other houses of worship have either been abandoned, or have

been converted to dance and music halls for the faithful (Au.).

81. Why did Allah mention together the various houses of worship? Is it to approve what goes on within them? Are they of the same status as mosques? Imām Razi answers that such is not the case. But rather, they had Allah’s approval at the time of their Prophets but not later when a new Prophet came and the disbelieved in him. He canceled the old. In other words, what the verse is saying, had not Allah defended the Synagogues during the Mosaic and later Jewish times, they would have been destroyed; had not Allah defended the Christian Churches during the times when the Final Messenger had not yet appeared.. - they would have been destroyed.

It might also be noted, writes Qurtubi, that neither the pagan nor the Magian temples have been mentioned. That is because One God is not mentioned at all in those places of worship.

82. The rendering of ‘Aziz as “Mighty” is inadequate. It stands for, as Yusuf Ali puts it, “Exalted in power, rank, dignity; Incomparable; Full of might and majesty; Able to enforce His will.”

[41] Those, whom, if We established in the earth, they would establish the Prayer, expend in charity, enjoin the good and forbid the wrong.⁸³ And with Allah rests the end of (all) affairs.

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ
﴿٤١﴾

[42] But, if they give you the lie then (no wonder), before them the people of Nuh, `Aad and Thamud also gave the lie.

وَإِنْ يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ
نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And (so did) the people of Ibrahim and Lut.

﴿٤٣﴾ وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمِ لُوطٍ

[44] And the inhabitants of Madyan.⁸⁴ And, Musa was (also) given the lie.⁸⁵ But I granted respite to the unbelievers (for a while) and then seized them. How then was My repudiation?⁸⁶

وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ وَكُذِّبَ مُوسَىٰ فَأَمَلَيْتُ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتَهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ
﴿٤٤﴾

83. So, that's the condition for securing Allah's help: *Jihad* should be conducted to establish Allah's religion (Thanwi).

Allah's oneness and forbid the worship of idols, actually invited to the good and forbid the evil (in the highest sense) - Ibn Jarir.

And, by the words "those who, if established in the land ..." the allusion is to the Companions. (Because, it is during their reign that the four primary spiritual functions of a government were fulfilled in the highest sense, although, the room is open for others who will follow them unto the Last Hour: Au.).

84. That is, the nation of Shu'ayb (Ibn Jarir).

Abu al-Aaliyyah has said: (Although the mention here is in general terms), the specific meaning of bidding the good and forbidding evil is that they invite to Allah's oneness and forbid idol worship. For, whoever invited to

85. One might appreciate the accuracy of the Qur'an that while it said about other Prophets that their people cried lies to them, about Musa it did not say that he was cried lies to, for, his people did not lay lies on him (Ibn Jarir, Razi). But Yusuf Ali has a deeper meaning to offer. He writes: "The case of Moses is mentioned apart, as his people survived to the time of our Prophet and survive to the present, and they frequently rebelled against Moses (ii, 49-61)."

[45] So, how many a township We destroyed which was given to wrongdoing! So (there) it is fallen on its roofs,⁸⁷ and wells lying idle,⁸⁸ and castles well-built.⁸⁹

فَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ
فَهِجَىٰ حَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ
وَقَصْرِ مَشِيدٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] Do they not journey through the land, so that they might have hearts that they think thereby,⁹⁰ or ears they hear thereby, for, it is not sights that go blind, but rather, hearts that are in the breasts that go blind.

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ
قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا
فَأِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى
الْقُلُوبَ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٦﴾

86. The word “*inkaar*” means to repudiate, reproach, reject, disavowal, etc. The meaning here is, “See how was my repudiation of your continued denial” (Ibn Kathir, Baghawi and others).

Some of the ancient scholars have said that the time gap between Fir`awn’s words, ‘I am your highest Lord,’ and his destruction was forty years. (Thus long did Allah grant him respite). And a report in the *Sahihayn* says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيُعْلِي لِلظَّالِمِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَهُ لَمْ يَفْلِتْهُ

“Allah extends respite to a wrongdoer. But when He seizes him, He does not let go” (Ibn Kathir).

The textual word “*nakeer*” has at least two strong connotations. In the words of Mawdudi, “(1) strong disapproval of someone’s evil ways; (2) the infliction of a severe punishment on him.”

87. “The roof fell in first, and the whole structure, walls and all, came tumbling after, as happens in ruins. The place was turned upside down (Yusuf Ali).

88. Wells were always a place most frequented in older times. You knew the strength of a village, from the strength of people turning up at the wells (Au.).

89. The understanding of Mujahid, `Ikrimah, `Ataa’, and others is reflected in the translation. They said it means “plastered.” That is, well built. But Qatadah and Dahhak said that it meant “lofty” (Ibn Jarir).

90. Qurtubi has attributed to Abu Hanifah, although he seems to doubt the authenticity, that the mind is the main reasoning organ. Obviously, he was right, but how did he arrive at that conclusion is not easy to answer.

As if Abu Haneefa's opinion is not enough of a surprise, at a time when there were no electrodes to be attached to the brain in the laboratories to measure the activities of the brain, Shawkani's conjectures is all the more surprising. He says that even if the actual process of reasoning takes place in the brain, the signals could be going from the heart – just as the signals go from the ear, but actual hearing is done by the brain.

Latest scientific findings have vindicated Shawkani's conjecture made at a time when the scientists were unanimous that brain is the only organ that thinks.

The Heart is also a Brain:

The surprise finding of this century is that heart has its own brain, complete with neurons, dendrites, axons, memory, thought processes, data handlers, and rest of the neuron paraphernalia.

Back in 60s neurophysiologists had discovered a neural pathway and mechanism whereby input from the heart to the brain could 'inhibit' or 'facilitate' the brain's electrical activity. Soon it was discovered that the heart is the most powerful generator of rhythmic information patterns in

the human body. The conclusion was that as a critical nodal point in many of the body's interacting systems, the heart is uniquely positioned as a powerful entry point into the communication network that connects body, mind, emotions, and spirit.

Amazingly, the neurons of the nervous system of the heart, numbering some 40,000, group together to form what could be called the 'brains' of the heart. They regulate and control cardiac functions of the heart, while they are responsible for functions like learning, memory (both short and long-term) and even 'feel' and 'sense.'

Indeed, in some respects, the heart seems to be more powerful than the brain. Its electrical field is 60 times greater in amplitude than the electrical activity generated by the brain, and the magnetic field produced by the heart is more than 5,000 times greater in strength than the field generated by the brain. It is so strong that it can be detected with the help of magnetometers from the distance of a few meters from the body. This opens up the possibility of heart-to-heart transfer of information through heart-brain synchronization of two people when they interact.

[47] And they ask you to hasten the chastisement, while Allah will never fail in His promise.⁹¹ Verily, a day with your Lord is like a thousand years by your count.⁹²

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] And to how many a township I gave respite which was given to wrong-doing? Then I seized it, and to Me is the (final) destination.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَمَلَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا وَإِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Say, 'O people! I am unto you a plain warner.'

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

After two decades of research, it is now firmly established that the brain in the head is not the only brain in the body. There are at least two others, one in the heart and another in the gut. In fact, the gut has many more neurons (about 100 million) but the brain in the heart seems to control higher human senses, perceptions, emotions and feelings. It can also 'remember' feelings associated with other people and alter the heart rhythm when people meet with each other. Thus, feelings such as of love, hatred, etc. reside precisely in the heart.

By 1991 research had advanced and for the first time the idea of "heart brain" was introduced by the scientists. By now it is firmly established that the heart has its own intrinsic nervous system that operates and processes information independently of the brain or the nervous system.

The specialists of this newest scientific discipline are called Neurocardiologists. They have discovered a profound communication link between the heart and the brain. And, what is surprising, they have discovered that although communications take place from both directions, more information is sent across by the heart to the brain than the other way round. The messages from the heart are sent to the brain through several pathways to an area called the 'medulla,' located in the stem of the brain.

This relatively new area on ongoing research is releasing study results almost weekly. The Institute of Heart Math has now published photographs of neurons in the heart--some taken with a confocal microscope. Researchers call these neurons "the little brain in the heart" (Au.).

91. Muslims – who wish things to hasten up - will do well to un-

[50] Therefore, those who believed and worked righteous deeds, for them is forgiveness and a provision honorable.⁹³

فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ هُمْ
مَعْفُورَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

derstand this verse. In Mawdudi's words: "This refers to the ludicrous statement repeatedly made by the Makkan unbelievers to the effect that if Muhammad (peace be upon him) was indeed a Prophet sent by God, then why had his detractors not been visited by the scourge that ought to afflict those who deny a true Prophet?"

Further down he writes, "It is preposterous to think that the consequences of obeying or disobeying God's injunctions can be observed instantly. If a nation is warned that a certain pattern of behavior it follows will prove catastrophic, it is absurd for them to retort that they have taken that course for the last ten, twenty, or fifty years, and still no calamity has befallen them. For it often takes not days, months or years, but centuries for the consequences of a people's behavior to become fully evident.

92. One might put forth here the *Salaf's* understanding reflected in Asad's words, "I.e., what men conceive of as 'time' has no meaning with reference to God, because He is timeless, without beginning and

without end, so that 'in relation to Him, one day and a thousand years are alike' (Razi). Cf. 70: 4, where in the same sense, a 'day' is said to be equal to 'fifty thousand years', or the well-authenticated saying of the Prophet, 'God says, "I am Time Absolute (Ad-Dahr)".'

Accordingly, Ibn Kathir adds, Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas is recorded in Abu Da'ud that the Prophet said, "I hope that my *Ummah* will not be so insignificant with its Lord as to be denied an extra half a day. Sa'd was asked, "And what is half a day?" He replied, "Five hundred years."

That is, Sa'd conjectured that the life of this *Ummah* is one day, where one day is equal to a thousand years. Further, its life-span has been extended by half a day, i.e. five hundred years. All in all it works out to 1500 years. However, that was Sa'd's own opinion. Interestingly, while we are in 1432, the unbelievers are saying – going by several factors – that this is perhaps the last century (Au.).

93. That is, I am, O unbelievers, only a warner. It is not in my power to bring forward or push back the

[51] As for those who strive against Our revelations, seeking to frustrate (Our plan), they indeed are the companions of the blazing Fire.⁹⁴

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ
أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] And We did not send before you any Messenger or Prophet,⁹⁵ but when he recited, Shaytan cast (his own suggestion) into his recitation.⁹⁶ But Allah cancels out what Shaytan casts. Thus Allah establishes His revelations;⁹⁷ and Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.⁹⁸

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا
نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ
فَيَنْسُخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكُمُ
اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] In order that He may make what Shaytan casts a test for those in whose hearts is a disease, and those (who have) hardened their hearts. And, surely, the wrongdoers are in a far-fetched contention.

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ
فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ
الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

punishment, if you are destined to receive it (Tabari).

In Yusuf Ali's words, "It is the Messenger's duty to convey the warning in the clearest terms to the wicked. It is no part of his duty to coerce them or judge them, or bring on the Punishment for them. That only rests with Allah. But the warning itself is full of Mercy; for it gives the highest hope to the repentant sinner who turns and comes to Allah.

He also writes, "The sustenance must be construed in the widest sense, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical. The reward of righteousness is far more generous than any merit there may be in the creature following the Will of his Creator."

94. Yusuf Ali comments, "It will not be in their power to frustrate Allah's Plan; all they will do is to go further and further down in their spiritual state, deeper and deeper in their Hell."

95. The definition of a rasool is clear, but there doesn't seem to be a clear way to distinguish between a rasul and a *Nabiyy*. There are several definitions, but one which draws the approval of most is that a rasool is a raised one, sent specifically to a people, who, therefore, is given a new *Shari`ah* and hence a Book. In contrast, although a *Nabiyy* is also a raised one but he follows the *Shari`ah* of a previous rasool, although he may on his own receive a Book or might not. Hence every rasool is a *Nabiyy*

also, but every *Nabiyy* need not be a rasool.

The two functions can also be guessed from the root of the two words. Rasool is from *rasala*, which in the transitive form means to send. It is implied that he has a message. In contrast *Nabiyy* has its root in *naba'* which in the transitive means to inform, to let know, to prophesize. A *Nabiyy* then prophesizes the next *Nabiyy* or Rasool, and, in addition, gives news of the events to follow, here in this world, or in the Next. Hence we have the Prophet's words, "There hasn't been a *Nabiyy* before me but who warned (prophesized) Dajjal." Also see *Surah Al-Kahaf*, note 120 for more details (Au.).

96. As Allah said elsewhere (6: 112),

{وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ
وَالْحَيِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا
[الأنعام: ١١٢]}

"That is how We have made for every Prophet enemies out of the Satans of Men and Jinn, some of whom inspire the others with decorative false words." (Thanwi).

This verse and others of its kind are the key to understanding the creativity of those who are at false propaganda against Islam. They always come up with a new idea, or give

an old one an entirely new dressing. They are inspired by the Devils. Allah said (2: 257),

{اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ} [البقرة: ٢٥٧]
[٢٥٨]

"Allah is the Protector of the believers. He brings them out of darkneses into Light. As for those who have disbelieved, Devils are their friends.." (Au.).

The translation of this verse, however, follows the understanding and interpretation of Ibn `Abbas (as in Bukahri: Qurtubi), Mujahid and Dahhak. The literal meaning, of the word "*umniyyatihi*" as well as "*tamanna*" would be, "his desire." Thus the first half could be paraphrased as, "And We did not send before you any Messenger or Prophet, but when he framed a desire, *Shaytan* cast (his own suggestion) into his desire."

97. Two meanings are affordable and could even be combined. One, as Thanwi has pointed out, although the revelations are well established by themselves, Allah re-confirms them by canceling out whatever Satan tries to interject. Second, that is how Allah establishes His revelations in the heart of the believers. And, once again, with reference to Devilish inspirations into the heart of the

unbelievers, whenever that happens, Allah re-establishes the Truth by inspiring the right answers in the heart of the believers, or by canceling the effect of the propaganda through its own self-contradictions (Au.).

98. The second generation commentators have provided the following as the background story and context of revelation: Ibn Ka`b al-Qurazi, Ibn Qays, Abu al-`Aliyyah, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Dahhak and even Ibn `Abbas (although through an unreliable chain of narrators: Au.), say that once the Prophet was reciting chapter *Al-Najm* in the Holy Mosque. When he reached, "Have you considered the Laat and `Uzza and the third the Manaat?" - *Shaytan* interjected the following words,

تِلْكَ الْعُرَائِقُ الْعُلَىٰ وَشَفَاعَتُهُنَّ لَتُرْجَىٰ

"These lofty swans, surely their intercession is a thing coveted."

It is alleged that the Prophet recited the interjected lines and continued thereon with the rest of the chapter. At the end of it he prostrated himself. The Qurayshis present there felt pleased that at last the Prophet had softened towards their deities. Therefore, they also prostrated themselves, except for Walid b. al-Mughira, who was too old to bend down and so

took some dust and rubbed it on his forehead.

In his usual fashion, Ibn Jarir faithfully reports all the versions with all their variations. However, he does not, following his usual habit, pass his judgment about any of them except to note that perhaps while the Prophet was reciting the chapter, *Shaytan* interjected the swan verse, which the pagans thought were uttered by the Prophet. (I.e., recitation by the Prophet of the interjected lines might not be true, but Satan's interjection could be so: Au.). Ibn Kathir notes that Baghawi has also expressed the same opinion, which happens to be the opinion of Ibn `Abbas as in Bukhari.

Also, although the main story (concerning recitation, prostration, etc.) is in Bukhari and other books, it is without the part about interjection of the words "These lofty swans, surely their intercession is a thing coveted" (Ibn Kathir, Qurtubi and others).

Qurtubi declares all the reports on this subject as untrustworthy. Ibn Kathir is with him. He writes, "Although many commentators of the Qur`an have mentioned this story, all of them have the name of the Companion-narrator at the top missing. I

have not come across a single narration complete of chain.”

Imām Razi adds: Qur’ānic injunctions do not allow us to accept that the Prophet could add anything to revelation. It said (69: 44-46),

{وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ (٤٤) لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ (٤٥) ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ} [الحاقة: ٤٤ - ٤٦]

“If he were to fasten upon Us any of the sayings, We shall seize him by the right hand, then We shall sever off his jugular vein.”

Again (10: 15),

{مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تَلْقَائِ نَفْسِي} [يونس: ١٥]

“It is not for me to change it by myself. I only follow that which is revealed unto me.”

Thirdly (53: 3-4),

{وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ (٣) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ} [النجم: ٣، ٤]

“He does not speak by his desire. It is nothing but revelation that is revealed to him.”

Fourthly (17: 73),

{وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَاكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ وَإِذَا لَا تَأْخُذُوكَ حَلِيلًا} [الإسراء: ٧٣]

“They were close to tempting you away from that which We have revealed to you so that you might fasten upon Us something else.

And, in that case, they would have taken you a friend.”

Fifthly, (15: 42),

{إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ} [الحجر: ٤٢]

“Verily, you (Satan) shall have no power over My slaves except such of the rebellious ones who follow you.”

In view of these verses, it is impossible that the Prophet should have recited the interjected lines.

Further, continues Imām Razi, although it is true that *Sahih* books (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da’ud, Nasa’i: Alusi), carry reports of the Prophet reciting *Surah Al-Najm*, and men and Jinn prostrating themselves at the end of its recitation, but there is not a word in them about the swan-story. Accordingly, Ibn Khuzaymah conducted some research and demonstrated that that part of the story, which speaks of the Prophet uttering the Satanic suggestions, is a fabrication. So was Bayhaqi’s conclusion. Common sense also rejects it. Firstly, how could a Prophet who spent years criticizing and condemning idols speak in favor of them? Secondly, how could a single verse please the pagans so much that they did not even wait to find out whether he had truly made a compromising remark, before prostrating themselves?

In addition to the above, what Alusi has to say is as follows: It is said that Ibn Is-haq, the famous biographer of the Prophet was asked about the swan story. He said that it was a fabrication, and proceeded to write a short treatise on it. Maaturudi has in fact said that the whole swan story is exactly what Allah described as Satan's cast into the ears of the unbelievers. How could the Prophet ever accept the interjection when Allah said, "Falsehood cannot come to it from in front of it nor from its rear?" And, continues Alusi, how can such a thing happen when the consensus of opinion is that on the one hand the Prophet was protected against Satan, and on the other, the Qur'an is protected (by Allah)? Ibn Abi Hatim reports through a trustworthy chain of narrators Sa'id b. Jubayr as saying, "Never did Jibril come down to the Prophet with a Qur'anic revelation but he had four guardian angels with him." Ibn Hajr has quite thoroughly dealt with the narrations and shown that all are weak except perhaps two that come to us through strong chains of narration (though not reaching up to the Prophet himself: Au.). Ibn Hajr has nevertheless concluded that something must have happened for so many people to report through several chains of narration.

What that something is, we do not know for sure, but the swan-episode is pretty hard to believe (Au.).

Dr. Mahdi Rizq-Allah has offered a detailed discussion in his "*Seerah al-Nabawiyah*." He writes: "Qadi 'Ayad seems to have several sources before him. But his remarks are as follows, "None of the six canonical collections have mentioned this story and no trustworthy narrator has narrated it through an unbroken chain. There are many broken chains of narration that carry different versions of the story, some of which contradict each other."

"Thus, what weakens the story are the contradictions between its various versions. One version says the incident took place after a Prayer. Another that it happened during a Prayer. A third says that the Prophet spoke to himself by error. A fourth that Satan spoke out by his tongue. A fifth says the Prophet said those words from an extreme state of fatigue. A sixth says Satan made the most of a short spell of silence during which he recited it in the Prophet's accent.

"Sheikh Abu Shahba has brought to our notice Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh's opinion who discredits the story for language reasons. Firstly, pagan

deities have never been alluded to as swans elsewhere in the Arabic literature: neither prose nor poetry. Further, no one has stated that the word was commonly used in that sense, except that “*Mu`jam al-Buldaan*” has referred to it, but through unknown narrators. The term ghurnooq, ghirnooq, ghurneeq, and ghirneeq are used for black and white water birds. One of its variant meanings is “a handsome young man.” It has other uses. But, in a good quality speech that the rhetoricians would approve, it is never used in the sense of deities or goddesses.

“Another reason for rejection of the story is the completely variant language style of the two: the Qur’anic verses and the words of the pagans that were supposed to fall in between. The first set of verses say (*Al-Najm*, 19-20),

{ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ (١٩) وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ }
[النجم: ١٩، ٢٠]

“Have you considered the Laat and `Uzza? And Manaat the third of the three?” This passage was supposed to have been followed by the “swan line”, viz.,

تِلْكَ الْعُرَانِيقُ الْعُلَىٰ وَشَفَاعَتُهُنَّ لِنَرْجَىٰ

“These lofty swans, surely their intercession is a thing coveted.”

And the Qur’anic verses that come after it say,

{ أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَىٰ (٢١) تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ
ضِيزَىٰ } [النجم: ٢١، ٢٢]

“Should there be males for you and for Him females? This then is a perverse division.”

“It can be easily seen that the “swan verses’ do not fit into the lines either contextually or linguistically. In fact, the statements are contradictory. Far from rhetoricians and literary masters, even an ordinary Arabic-knowing person will declare the passage with the interpolation as grotesque.

“What Dr. Shami had to point out about the period of revelation further destroys the credibility of the story. He shows that if the verses of the chapter *Al-Hajj* that talk of “tamanni” are not of the Madani period altogether, then, at least they were revealed between Makkah and Madinah journey; whereas the reported incident of the “swan story” is of the Makkan period. Can such a long stretch of time be imagined between the incident (of the “swan story”) and the verses (of ch. *Hajj*) that commented on the incident?

“Further, a few verses of the Qur’an reject this story as false. (Apart from those quoted above), there is a verse

according to which Iblis himself acknowledged that he will have no power over Allah's true slaves. It says (38: 82, 83),

{ قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لأَعْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ } [ص: ٨٢، ٨٣]

"He said, `By Your might, I shall misguide everyone of them except Your true slaves.'"

Indeed, Satan has no power at all over those who believe in Allah and have trust in Him. The Qur'an said (16: 99),

{ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ } [النحل: ٩٩]

"Surely, he has no power over those who believe in Him and in Him they place their trust."

"As regards the reasons of pagan prostration, what is definitely proven, as in Bukhari, is that the Prophet recited chapter *Al-Najm* among a mixed gathering of Muslims and pagans. The ending passage of this chapter being what it is - a hammer blow to the heart - when the Prophet recited them, his voice began to tremble for the threat they hold. When he reached the words (53: 53-61),

{ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَى (٥٣) فَغَشَّاهَا مَا عَشَى (٥٤) فَيَأْتِي آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى (٥٥) هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِنَ النُّذُرِ الْأُولَى (٥٦) أَرَأَيْتَ الْأَرْفَةَ (٥٧) لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ (٥٨) أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ (٥٩)

{ وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ (٦٠) وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ } [النجم: ٥٣ - ٦١]

"And the overthrown (townships) that were hurtled; and He covered them with what He covered; which of the favors then will you doubt? This is one of the warnings of the (same kind as the) early warnings. The approaching day has come close. There is none besides Allah who can make it appear. Are you surprised then with this discourse? You laugh and do not cry? And you are proudly sporting?"

At that point the awesomeness of the text melted the heart of the proud listeners. They lost control of themselves and involuntarily fell into prostration along with the believers.

"However, when they turned back from the assembly and felt that the awe-inspiring threats had momentarily got the better of them, they regretted and wished to find an excuse for what had issued of them involuntarily. So they invented the fib that the Prophet had spoken well of their deities and quoted the swan-verse that they themselves fabricated."

Quote from Mahdi Rizq-Allah ends here.

The conjecture that the Prophet's recitation got better of the pagans is not a far-fetched one, writes Alusi.

The Qur'an is, in general, and verses of *Surah Al-Najm* in particular, so powerful that they would similarly move anyone who hears them for the first time. We have other examples. When the Prophet recited (41: 13),

{ فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ } [فصلت: ١٣]

“But if they turn away then say, ‘I have warned you of the thunder-cry like the thunder-cry of `Aad and Thamud ..’”, before Walid b. `Uqbah who had gone to the Prophet to restrain him in his mission, he placed his hand on the Prophet's mouth to prevent him from reciting any further. He was being so overtaken by the threat of punishment. When asked to explain he said later, “Well, you know, when Muhammad promises something, it happens.”

In short, adds Thanwi, far from offering a proper explanation to the verse in question, the narrations quoted in this regard themselves need explanations and interpretations.

To sum up, Uthmani presents the following as a simple but reasonable explanation to the verse in question: Whenever a Messenger presented a recitation, Satan made his own interjections to corrupt the meaning and plant doubts in the hearts of the weak believers. For example, when

a verse prohibiting the carrion was revealed Satan injected the doubt, “How come those we kill are allowable while those that God kills are disallowed?” Or, when the Messenger recited (21: 98),

{ إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ } [الأنبياء: ٩٨]

Indeed, you and what you worship other than Allah are fuel of Fire”, Satan asked, “How about Jesus, the son of Mary? Wasn't he worshipped too?”

Or, when it was recited (4: 171),

{ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ } [النساء: ١٧١]

“(Jesus) was a Messenger of Allah, and His Word from Him that He cast into Maryam, and a Spirit from Him,” Satan planted the doubt that the words lend credence to the unbelievers that he could have had a share in divinity. In all such situations, Allah removes the doubts and reestablishes His revelations. In other words, doubts that the “*mutashaabihat*” lend, are removed by the “*muhkamaat*.” As to the question why all this happens at all, or allowed to happen, the answer is: It is to test the people. So that, those are led away from the path of guidance in whose heart is sickness while it strengthens the faith of the faithful who are endowed with

[54] And in order that those who were given knowledge know that the truth is from your Lord, and believe therein; so that their hearts may submit thereto;⁹⁹ and surely, Allah is the Guide of those who believe unto a Straight Path.¹⁰⁰

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] But the unbelievers will never cease to be in doubt thereof¹⁰¹ until the Hour comes upon them on a sudden, or there comes upon them the torment of a barren Day.¹⁰²

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِنْهُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ عَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

knowledge. They thus benefit and are rewarded with Paradise, while the doubters remain in doubt, until the time they will end up in Hell-fire.

99. That is, for the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

100. Mawdudi comments: "That is, God made Satan's evil designs a means of testing people so that those who are righteous may be distinguished from those who are evil. It is in the nature of things that those whose minds have been corrupted derive wrong conclusions. As for those whose minds are straight, those very things lead them to confirm the truthfulness of God's Prophets and His Books. The result is that these people are led to believe that all these are no more than Satan's mischief."

Yusuf Ali has another aspect in mind. He writes: "If any suggestion comes to the human mind that is not

in accordance with Allah's Will and Plan, it has two opposite effects: to evil minds it is a trial and temptation from the Satan, but to the mind well-instructed in Faith, it stands self-condemned at once, and becomes a means of strengthening the Faith and stimulating redoubled efforts to conform to the Will of Allah.

101. The allusion is to the Qur'an. That is, they will always remain in doubt about the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

102. To what day is the allusion? Mujahid, Sa'id b. Jubayr and Qatadah thought it was the day of Badr that left the Quraysh barren, (unable to produce any more unbelieving offspring). But 'Ikrimah thought the allusion is to the Day of Judgment which will not give birth to a night, hence barren (Ibn Jarir). This is the prevalent opinion (Ibn Kathir).

[56] The sovereignty that Day shall be for Allah (alone),¹⁰³ and He shall judge between them. Then those who believed and worked righteous deeds will be in Gardens of Delight.

الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] As for those who disbelieved and cried lies to Our revelations, they, for them will be a humiliating chastisement.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] As for those who emigrated in Allah's way, and got killed, or died (a natural death), Allah will provide for them a goodly provision.¹⁰⁴ And surely, Allah is the best of the providers.

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَكَنُ حَيِّرَ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] He shall surely admit them into a place¹⁰⁵ with which they will be pleased. Verily, Allah is All-knowing, All-clement.

لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُدْخَلًا يَرْضَوْنَهُ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾

103. That is, all the Allah-granted sovereignty of this earth will come to an end and the only power left will be that of the true Sovereign (Uthmani).

ally, I don't care from which grave I am resurrected" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim also (Ibn Kathir). What Fudalah meant perhaps is that once a man is in the way of Allah, then, whether he gets killed or dies a natural death, it is all the same: after all, in either case he dies in Allah's cause (Razi, Alusi).

104. Some scholars of the past have treated the one killed in the way of Allah, and another who died a natural death as of the same status. For instance, when two such dead were brought for burial (during a campaign), and Fudala b. `Ubayd noticed that greater number of people were with the man killed in the battle-field he remarked, "Person-

105. Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and many others understood the term "mudkhal" as Paradise, since "mudkhal" is the 'noun of place' (Shawkani).

[60] That, and he who retaliated in a measure he was injured, yet again is oppressed, surely Allah will help him,¹⁰⁶ Surely, Allah is the Pardoner, the Forgiving.

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبَ بِهِ
ثُمَّ بُعِيَ عَلَيْهِ لِيَنْصُرْتَهُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُورٌ
عَفُورٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] That, because Allah makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night,¹⁰⁷ and that Allah is All-hearing, All-seeing.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ
وَيُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ
بَصِيرٌ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] That because Allah – He is the Truth, and that what they invoke besides Him, that is the falsehood, and that Allah is Most High, Most Great.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ
مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ
الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] Do you not see that Allah sends down from the heaven water, and forthwith the earth becomes clothed with green.¹⁰⁸ Surely, Allah is All-subtle,¹⁰⁹ All-aware.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ
خَبِيرٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

106. It is reported that the Muslims encountered a Makkan sortie in the month of *Muharram*. They urged the pagans not to fight in the Sacred month. But they would not desist. So a fight ensued in which they suffered defeat, and Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Another possible meaning is that after a believer has been wronged and he has avenged himself, he is attacked once again, then, it can be because his enemy sees him vulnerable. If that happens to be the situation, Allah's intervention would be necessary to break the cycle of violence (Au.).

107. What this verse has to do with the previous one? The answer is, says Razi, when Allah said in the previous verse that He has the power to help the oppressed, to substantiation this He said that He has power over more difficult things, such as, making the night enter into the day and the day into the night.

Shabbir adds, "That is how Allah will make the day of Islam enter into the night of pagandom."

108. The verse is not contrasting the situation of drought when the trees are barren, the plants dead and then, with the rain, the earth becomes green. That does not happen.

[64] To Him belongs all that is in the heaven and in the earth. And surely, Allah – He is the Self-sufficient, the Praiseworthy.¹¹⁰

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٦٤﴾

It takes a couple of days for the earth to become green. But rather, the allusion is to the beauty that engulfs the world of plants after a goodly rain comes down after a spell of dry weather. Within hours the earth turns lush green offering a most refreshing sight (Au.).

Shabbir again, “That is how Allah will soon render the barren lands of pagandom into green lands of Islam.”

109. “*Lateef* is both ‘gentle and benignant’ and ‘knower of subtleties and niceties’, and is used here in both senses” (Majid).

Yusuf Ali further explains the term, “*Latif*, as a name of Allah, is as difficult to define in words as the idea it seeks to represent is difficult to grasp in our minds. It implies (1) fine, subtle (the basic meaning); (2) so fine and subtle as to be imperceptible to human sight; (3) so pure as to be incomprehensible; (4) with sight so perfect as to see and understand the finest subtleties and mysteries; (5) so kind and gracious as to bestow gifts

to the most refined kind; extraordinarily gracious and understanding. No. 4 is the predominant meaning here and in xii. 100; Nos. 2 and 3 in vi. 103; and No. 5 in xiii. 19; but every shade of meaning must be borne in mind in each case, as a subsidiary factor in the spiritual melody.”

110. Yusuf Ali once again presents to us a deeper meaning. He writes: Each of the verses xxii. 61-63 mentioned two attributes of Allah with reference to the contents of that verse. This verse now sums up the whole argument, and the two attributes with which it closes sum up the idea by which we can understand Allah’s goodness. Allah’s loving kindness and mercies are not like those of human creatures who all depend upon one another, and often expect some kindness or recognition in return. Allah is above all wants and depends in no way whatever on His creatures. His mercies have therefore a special quality, which we cannot describe except by gratefully singing the praises of Allah.”

[65] Have you not seen that Allah has subjected to you all that is in the earth,¹¹¹ and the ships that sail through the sea by His command? And He holds back the heaven lest it should fall upon the earth, except by His leave.¹¹² Verily, Allah is All-gentle to man and All-merciful.¹¹³

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَأَلْفَلْكَ بَحْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَمُنْسِلُكُمُ
السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] It is He who gave you life; then He shall deal you death, then He shall (again) give you life. Truly, man is most ungrateful.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ
إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

111. That is, Asad writes, “(He) has enabled you to benefit from all..”

112. Another meaning of *samaa'* is rains (Majid). But most commentators of old have treated it as heaven. However, which *samaa'* is this that Allah holds lest it should fall on the earth? Is it the atmospheric layer around the earth, the cosmos above, or something else? Most have believed that, in the words of Asad, “the sky” – used here as a metonym for the stars and planets, which are held on their courses by the God-willed laws of cosmic movement.” Hence his next note, “(the leave will be given) at the Last Hour, which – as the Qur’an so often states – will manifest itself in a universal cosmic catastrophe.”

Sayyid Qutb writes: “It is Allah who created the laws that allow for the ships to sail through the seas and

who taught man how to make use of those laws for his own benefits and purposes. And it is He who created the cosmos following a certain system chosen for it; and the set of laws that allow for the distantly placed stars and planets to remain in their orbits without crashing on into each other. Every cosmological theory that is offered to explain how the system works does no more than explain the powers of the One who brought them into being and sustains them. But some of the people forget this basic fact and attempt at explaining the working as if there is no such hidden hand handling it. This is strange of the theorists. For, every explanation, its correctness taken for granted, does no more than reflect the main fact of Divine control behind the apparent while the explanation itself - that might sound true today but could be rejected to-

[67] To every people have We appointed rites¹¹⁴ which they observe. Let them not, therefore, dispute with you on the matter;¹¹⁵ but (on your part) invite to your Lord. Surely, you are on a straight guidance.¹¹⁶

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُنَازِعُونَكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَى رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] But if they should contend with you, say, 'Allah knows well what you are doing.'

وَإِنْ جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

morrow - cannot deny the existence of laws that help the cosmos function the way it does.”

Alusi however points out that the *Salaf* were of the common opinion that the (Qur’ānic) *samaa’* is different from the cosmic material we see above us. It is the *samaa’* that creaks as mentioned in a Prophetic statement:

إِنِّي لَأَسْمَعُ أَطْبِطَ السَّمَاءِ ، وَمَا ثَلَاثُ أَنْ تَبْطَأَ ، وَمَا فِيهَا مَوْضِعٌ شِبْرٍ إِلَّا وَعَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ سَاجِدٌ أَوْ قَائِمٌ

“I hear the ‘*samaa’* creaks and it is right of it that it should creak for there is not a hand-space but upon which is an angel either standing or in prostration.”

Haythamiyy declared the above report weak (Au.).

That said, we cannot be too sure about what the allusion is to, by the word *samaa’*: whether it is to the cosmic heaven, or that of the *hadīth*. It could well be both (Au.).

113. What’s the difference between *Ra’fah* and *rahmah*? Alusi presents a short discussion. *Ra’fah* demands prevention of harm while *rahmah* demands bestowal of blessings. Some others have said that *Ra’fah* is deeper of meaning. The great majority have believed that *rahmah* is more general in nature.

Also see *Surah al-Tawbah*, note 245.

114. Literally, *mansak*, or *mansik*, applies to a place to which one returns often: whether for good or bad purposes. Hence *manasik al-Hajj*, that is, places to which people return year after year. (That led to its application to acts that are repeated: Au.). Hence Ibn ‘Abbas said that here it applies to the day of ‘Eid which reappears year after year. Mujahid however said that the specific allusion here is to sacrifice. Qatadah extended it to include *Hajj* rites (Ibn Jarir).

[69] Allah will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning that over which you were differing.¹¹⁷

اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Alusi adds: The differences between rituals in various religions have been of the order of differences between, so to say, various kinds of cloth. Say one gives one of his daughters a red shroud as a gift, to another blue, to a third green, and so on. One would then say, "I gave my first daughter what I did not give to my second," etc. In the like manner, every nation was given rituals of worship different from another although, in sum, substance, and spirit, they all amounted to the same. Therefore, Allah followed up the statement with the directive, Let them not, therefore, dispute with you over the matter." That is, every nation was given a different *Shari`ah*, which now stands cancelled except for the current one, viz., that of Islam. There need be no argument over this.

115. "For," writes Sayyid, "disputation helps against people who seek after the truth and accept the evidences but not such hearts and minds that insist on error and turn a blind eye to facts spread all over around them in the earth and in the cosmos. Allah alone will judge them."

116. Yusuf Ali's practical philosophy comes in handy. He writes: "Rites and ceremonies may appear to be an unimportant matter compared with 'weightier matters of the Law' and with the higher needs of man's spiritual nature. But they are necessary for social and religious organization, and their effect on the individual himself is not to be despised. In any case, as they are visible external symbols, they give rise to the most heated controversies. Such controversies are to be deprecated. That does not mean that our rites and ceremonies are to be made light of. Those in Islam rest on the highest social and religious needs of man, and if we are convinced that we are on the Right Way, we should invite all to join us, without entering into controversies about such matters."

117. Yusuf Ali once again comments, and in keeping with his own subtle style, without naming those addressed: You are only wrangling about matters about which you have no knowledge nor any deep religious feeling. The springs of your conduct are all open before Allah, and He will judge you."

[70] Do you not know that Allah knows whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth? Indeed, that is in a Record.¹¹⁸ Indeed, that is easy for Allah.¹¹⁹

أَمْ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ
عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

118. At this point Yusuf Ali hits hard with soft words: “You not only find fault with the very few and simple rites and ceremonies in Islam: you, outside Islam, have no rites and ceremonies which you are yourselves agreed upon, either as Christians or as Jews, or one compared with the other.”

To paraphrase verses 67-69: To every people Allah appointed rites which they observe. So, why should they dispute with you over the issues, say of sacrifice of animals? But if they persist, then, to defeat their polemical purposes, invite them, O Muhammad, to your Lord. However, if they should refuse and insist on contentions, then tell them, “Allah knows well what you are doing. He will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning that over which you were differing.” (Based on Thanwi).

119. By *Kitab*, the allusion is to the *Umm al-Kitab*. Ka`b al-Ahbaar is reported to have said when asked about the Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitab*), “Allah knew what He was going to create and how His creation was going to be. So, He said to His Knowledge, ‘Be a Book’” (Ibn Jarir).

There are a few *ahadith* on this topic. One is in Abu Da’ud, Tirmidhi and others. The Prophet said, “First thing that Allah created was the Pen. Then He commanded it, ‘Write.’ It asked, ‘What shall I write?’ He said, ‘Write all that is going to be.’ So, it moved, recording all that was to be until the Day of Judgment. And that happened ages before. A *hadith* of Muslim says, “Allah determined the proportions of the creations before the creation of the heavens and the earth, by fifty thousand years, while His *‘Arsh* was on water” (Ibn Kathir).

120. While some have thought that

[71] And they worship apart from Allah that for which He has sent down no authority, and that of which they have no knowledge.¹²⁰ The transgressors shall have no helper.¹²¹

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] When Our revelations are recited to them as clear evidences, you will notice denial in the faces of the unbelievers.¹²² They would almost pounce upon those who recite Our revelations to them.¹²³ Say, 'Shall I then tell you of something worse than that? (It is) the Fire - Allah has promised it to the unbelievers - an evil destination.'

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا قُلْ أَفَأَبْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ دَلِكُمْ النَّارُ وَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَبَغْسَ الْمَصِيرِ ﴿٧٢﴾

the words, "That is easy for Allah" are in reference to the writing in the Record, the preferred opinion is that the reference is to the statement in the previous verse, viz., "Allah will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning that over which you were differing." It is another of way of saying, judging between the people is easy for Allah (Ibn Jarir).

121. In other words, writes Alusi, they have neither a revelational support for what they worship ('they worship apart from Allah that for which He has sent down no authority'), nor have a good rational reason for doing so ('that of which they have no knowledge'). And the inference that can be drawn from the order of placement of the two arguments against their action is that rev-

elational support is weightier than rational if the matter pertains to the *Shari`ah*. As for intellectual matters, the order is reversed. This was the position maintained by Ibn al-`Arabiyy also.

122. Yusuf Ali once again: "When plain common-sense shows the absurdity of false worship, behind which there is neither knowledge, intelligence, nor authority (quite the contrary), who or what can help the false misguided creatures who dishonor Allah by false worship?"

123. *Sufi* commentator Thanwi writes: The *ayah* is also applicable to the so-called *Sufis*, who, when Allah's verses are read out to them (in face of some of their deviations), you notice a dislike in their faces.

124. Although literally *yastuuna*

[73] O people! A similitude is struck, so listen to it carefully. Surely, those you call upon other than Allah shall never create a fly,¹²⁴ even if they were to join forces to that end.¹²⁵ And, if the fly should t away something from them, they will never be able to retrieve it from it. Feeble indeed: the seeker and the sought (after).¹²⁶

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَفِيدُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعْفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ ﴿٧٣﴾

means to attack or seize hard, the translation as “strike” or, alternatively, “seize by the hand” reflects the understanding of the first few generation scholars as in Ibn Jarir.

Why do the unbelievers behave in this manner? Sayyid asks. It is because they lack proofs and evidences for what they are doing. So, they must meet the truthful statements with physical force to annihilate it.

125. The fly has been chosen for this example, for four reasons: its worthlessness, its weakness, its repugnance, and its abundance (Qurtubi).

The beauty of the similitude apart, the Qur’anic statement throws a challenge that can never be answered.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, the *Bible* of the Western world, offers four definitions for life. This should tell us something about the confusion among the scientists over the issue. The problem is that life is not some-

thing that can be isolated: say in a test tube. It can only be seen in action, operating from behind living systems. What is it in reality, whether of the higher type as in humans, or of the lower type as in other biological organisms – after the soul has been denied existence – is something no scientist knows and will never know.

The central character of life is that it continues, or in the language of the biologists, replicates. But why, no one has any clue. Atoms, after all, which are life’s basic constituents, do not replicate (i.e., reproduce itself) under any circumstance. But cells replicate: from one to two, two to four, four to eight, and so on. In so doing they defy the law of conservation. Living systems defy another law of nature: that of entropy. This law demands greater and greater disorder with the passage of time. But, in complete contrast, and against all odds, living systems get better orga-

nized with time.

For the biologists, the clue to life is in the arrangement of atoms within the cells. They arrange themselves in a certain order within it, all by themselves, to continue with their functions and to replicate themselves, that is, produce a true copy of themselves. And that arrangement is extremely complicated. But, outside of a living organism, the same atoms, placed in a test tube, in same proportions, do not arrange themselves in the same order. Why not? Because, as the biologists would say, the command is missing. So where is the command centre? The search for an answer has put the scientists on a trail that gives no sign of termination. Indeed, so many pathways are opening up that all men on earth might have to turn biologists, to follow all the pathways to find out what, if anything is there, at the end of the trail. As a scientist points out, "Where one gene carried out a particular function ten years ago, now there are a hundred. Where once, not so long ago, there was one cell type in the retina, now there are fifty. Where there was once one neurotransmitter in the brain, now there are hundreds. Biology is caught up in an ongoing complexity revolution, which is surely one of the most extraordinary events in the history

of modern science. The phenomenal nature of the complexity revolution that currently pervades every field of biology is an increasing source of comment among researchers in various fields. The general reaction is one of amazement at the ever-greater depths of complexity revealed as biological knowledge advances." (Michael J. Denton, *Nature's Destiny*, The Free Press, New York, 1998, p. 343).

Another unresolved question is, how did life begin? A chicken is out of an egg (a pack of living cells). The egg was from a chicken. That chicken was from an egg. It goes on backward for ever. A tree is from a seed (a pack of living cells). The seed was from a tree. And that tree was from a seed. It goes on backward endlessly. How did it begin? If, it began by chance, then, the question is, why does it not come into existence again? Why is it now only replication of a previously existing life? Why do we not observe a spontaneous generation of life anywhere on the planet anymore? There are no answers. A recent book (A.G. Cairns-Smith, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998) which deals with this question is titled, "*Seven Clues to the Origin of Life*." Needless to mention that none of the seven clues gives any clue about how life started. Another scientific work on the topic (Paul

Davies, Touchstone pub. 1999) clearly admits the miraculous nature of life by calling his book “*The 5th Miracle – the Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life.*” Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, leading scientist of the twentieth century, speculated, and provided plentiful evidences, though not conclusive, that life could not have originated on the earth at all. They argued that the first living organism must have arrived from deep space! (*Our Place in the Cosmos*, Phoenix, 1993).

But most scientists are not looking deep into space for clues to the origin of life. They are looking at biological organism right here on the earth. From the external organs, they went into the internal, e.g., heart, brain, kidneys and so forth. They found that they consisted of the primary unit, the cell. When the cell was opened up under the microscopes it was found to be an industry, that would spread over several miles on earth, if the same functions were required to be performed by the kinds of machinery that man uses. From the cell they went into the nucleus because the machinery seemed to be working automatically, independent of the brain. Now, since automatic work by molecules is unimaginable, the command must be coming from

some place. Perhaps the nucleus. So the nucleus was opened up to discover that it was the DNA strands that issued the commands, if not for all cell activity, then at least for the manufacture of proteins. Subsequently it was found that the DNA consisted of tiny molecules called nucleotides (3 to 4 billions of them). They assembled themselves following a certain pattern, and which made up the DNA. However, neither the DNA nor the nucleotides issued the commands for the construction of the large biological body. That was done by genes which were few nucleotides here, few there, spread all over the DNA strand, that somehow coordinated between themselves to issue the commands. What are nucleotides, the basic unit of the genes, made up of? They are averagely some thirty atoms of different elements grouped in a certain way. So, now the scientists stare at the life-less atoms dancing before them, and do not know where to go next. Meanwhile, life goes on, without a definition.

Let alone a fly, which is made up of hundreds of millions of cells, man cannot create even a single cell. Indeed, the project cannot take off. Why? Because, man will need to isolate atoms before he can assemble them. But ordinarily, atoms cannot

be isolated. So there ends the matter. How pertinent therefore, the following *hadith* of the *Sahihayn* (as noted by Ibn Kathir) which says,

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذَهَبَ بِمَخْلُوقِ كَخَلْقِي
فَلِيَخْلُقُوا ذَرَّةً أَوْ لِيَخْلُقُوا حَبَّةً أَوْ شَعِيرَةً

“Allah said, ‘Who can do greater wrong than one attempting to create like My creation. So, let them then create an atom, or a grain, or a grain of barley’ (Au.).

126. Ibn `Abbas has said that the allusion by the seeker is to the idols and the sought after is the fly, which if it snatches away something from the idols, they cannot retrieve it. Others have thought that the allusion is to worshippers of idols and the idols themselves respectively (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The Fly

The fly’s mention in the Qur’ān in this context is simply amazing. For, although the plain meaning was always there, namely, if a fly takes away something, it is almost impossible to identify and seize it to regain what it took away; but modern science adds to our amazement that a fly does not take away anything whole. When it sits on a food particle, it first drops its saliva on to the material to be consumed, dissolves it with its enzymes,

and then sucks up the liquid through the long trunk-like proboscis into its abdomen. Thus, there is no way anyone can retrieve, even in laboratory conditions, what a fly takes away.

Our amazement is however doubled when we learn that fly is the pet animal of the biologists. For a hundred years they have depended on it to conduct genetic research. In fact, no biology book in general, and a genetic book in particular, can go without the mention of the fruit fly. Biologically known as *Drosophila*, it is as ubiquitous in biology books as it is in the gardens. More is known about the fruit fly than is known about any other animal. At the genetic level, humans know more about the fly than about the humans, because of the research conducted at hundreds of research centers over the globe. Scientists have received prizes and awards for working on the fly. In 1993, Thomas Hunt Morgan, American biologist and geneticist, was awarded the Nobel Prize for his discovery of “hereditary transmission mechanisms in *Drosophila*”. Again, in 1995 Edward B. Lewis of the California Institute of Technology, Eric F. Wieschaus of Princeton University, and Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard of the Max Planck Institute in Tübingen, Germany, shared the No-

bel Prize for research into the genetic basis of embryonic development in the fruit fly. The results, according to the Nobel committee, “achieved a breakthrough that will help explain congenital malformations in man.”

There are several reasons why the fruit fly has been so popular with the biologists. These are ubiquitous insects that collect together in large numbers on the fruits. There are some 90,000 species of them. They breed very rapidly. Another advantage with them is that for some unknown reason they have giant-sized and, therefore, readily visible chromosome (DNA) making it easy to examine their structure during cell division. A biologist writes:

“This insect turned out to be ideal for many genetic studies and has been widely used in laboratories all over the world throughout the twentieth century.. The first reason they were chosen for study is that they are easy to keep and breed. Each fly is only an eighth of an inch long (3mm), and they produce a new generation in two weeks, each female laying hundreds of eggs at a time. A colony of *Drosophila* can be kept alive and well in almost any old glass container” (John Gribbin, *In Search of the*

Double Helix, Penguin books, 1995, p.57-58).

Another factor that favored the fly was that it has only four Chromosome strands (as against 23 for human), which rendered research studies much easier to conduct. Two of these DNA strands are truly massive, with no similar example from any other biological organism. Its sperms are 6 cm/2.4 inch long (1,200 times longer than human sperm and 4 times its total body length). Its testes take up 50% of its abdominal cavity and it produces fewer than 20 sperm cells at a time. Without this amazing characteristic, the fly would never have been chosen for research. This is the reason why the entire genome sequence for the fly was produced before it could be produced for any other animal. Accordingly,

“More data have been collected concerning the genetics of the vinegar fly than have been obtained for any other animal. *Drosophila* chromosomes, especially the giant ones in the salivary glands of mature larvae, are used in studies involving heritable characteristics and are the basis for gene action” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, art., *Vinegar Fly*).

In short, a challenge flies directly

[74] They esteem not Allah with the estimation that is His due. Surely, Allah is All-powerful, All-mighty.¹²⁷

مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ
عَزِيزٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] Allah chooses messengers from among the angels, and from among men;¹²⁸ surely, Allah is All-hearing, All-seeing.

اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ
النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

into the faces of the modern scientist: "Here is something you have been working on for a hundred years, and which you understand scientifically better than any other living body. How about producing something similar to what you know so well, and, especially at the genetic level, which happens to be the key to life and activity?"

They could also consider: is it simply coincidence that the fly was chosen for the challenge. Could Prophet Muhammad have written these Qur'anic lines? (Au.)

127. What Hasan and Farra' have said about this *ayah* can be put paraphrased in the following words: The worshippers of false gods did not give Allah, their Creator His due in terms of honor, respect, obedience, and attribution to Him what He should alone be attributed to. Akh-fash has said however that it means that the people have not known Him

in the manner He should be known. Alusi then discusses the issue of humans trying to know, understand and comprehend Allah's existence, Essence and Attributes, and states at the beginning 'Ali's opinion that to make an attempt of this sort is *Ishraak* (to be suggesting gods other than Allah). Indeed, Imām Ghazali, Juwayni, the *Sufis* and philosophers have all agreed that it is impossible for humans to know Allah. Alusi then follows up with a long discourse too complicated to be presented here and maybe out of place in a simple work of this nature. We register this for the specialists.

128. That is, Allah chooses of the men and angels for conveyance of His messages whom He will; as He said elsewhere (6: 124),

{ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ } [الأَنْعَامُ: ١٢٤]

"Allah knows where to place His Messages" (Ibn Kathir).

129. To paraphrase *ayah* 75 and 76:

[76] He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And to Allah return the affairs.¹²⁹

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] Believers! Bow down, prostrate yourselves, worship your Lord,¹³⁰ and do good (deeds), haply you will prosper.¹³¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ * ﴿٧٧﴾

To the objection raised about choosing Muhammad for delivering the Message, the answer is, it is Allah who chooses messengers from among the angels, as well as from among men. He is All-hearing, All-seeing, who knows all about them and all about His creations including the chosen Messengers, through His Powers and Attributes. In fact, He knows what went before the rejecters as well as what is to follow. Further, it is to Allah that the affairs are returned for decision, judgment, and issue of new commands (based on Thanwi).

130. That is, worship Allah, and none other than Him (Razi).

131. Difference in opinion has prevailed over a second *Sajdah* at this point. A *hadith* – in Abu Da’ud and Tirmidhi - has been in fact reported. It says, *Surah al-Hajj* has been given preference over (others) with two

prostrations. So, whoever did not offer two prostrations, might not recite the two.” However, Tirmidhi has rated the *hadith* as unsound, although there doesn’t seem to be a strong reason for treating it so (Ibn Kathir).

The Hanafiyyah however do not see a *Sajdah* at this point. That is because (apart from the weakness of the *hadith*: Au.), their point is, whenever Allah mentioned *ruku`* and *sujud* together, then the *Sajdah* is *Sajdah* of *Salah* and not *Sajdah* of *Tilawah* (recitation) - Zamakhshari. An example is the *ayah* (3: 43) which says,

{ يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ }
[آل عمران: ٤٣]

“O Maryam. Stand (in Prayers), prostrate yourself, and bow down with those who bow down” where too no *Sajdah Tilawah* is required (Shafi’).

132. This includes all kinds of *jihad*:

[78] And strive in Allah,¹³² with a striving due to Him.¹³³ He chose you.¹³⁴ And He has not placed in the religion¹³⁵ any constriction¹³⁶; the faith¹³⁷ of your (fore-)father Ibrahim.¹³⁸ He¹³⁹ named you Muslims earlier,¹⁴⁰ and in this (Qur'ān also); so that the Messenger might be a witness over you and you witnesses over mankind.¹⁴¹ Therefore, observe the Prayer (assiduously), Pay the Zakah and hold fast to Allah.¹⁴² He is your Guardian, an excellent Guardian and an excellent Helper.¹⁴³

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ
اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِثْلَ مِثْلَةِ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمْ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ
عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فِئْتِمَ الْمَوْلَى
وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٧٨﴾

Jihad with one's self, with one's possessions, with the pen, *jihad* against one's own base self, *jihad* against Satan, *jihad* against the unbelievers, *jihad* against the rebels, and *jihad* against the deviants (Shabbir).

Mawdudi comments: "*Jihad* does not simply mean fighting and war. The word denotes: 'to strive, to exert to the utmost.' The words *jihad* and *mujahid* imply the existence of forces of resistance against whom it is necessary to wage a struggle. Moreover, the stipulation that *jihad* should be *fi sabil Allah* (in the way of God) makes it clear that there are forces of resistance which obstruct people from serving God and pursuing His good pleasure, and that it is necessary to engage in strife and struggle to overcome them.

"As for the purpose of *jihad*, it is to

remove the forces obstructing man from following the Way of God so that one may be able to serve God in an adequate manner, exalt His Word, and subdue unbelief and rebellion against Him. The first and foremost target of this struggle should be one's own self which always prompts one to rebel against God's commands and distracts one from belief and obedience. Unless one conquers one's own self within, one cannot fight against the forces without."

133. Ibn `Abbas has said that battling in Allah's cause without fear of the critic is to be striving in His cause in the manner required (Ibn Jarir). Others have said that to fight the enemies of Islam in the manner the first generation Muslims fought, is to be striving in the manner required.

In other words, strive to the best of

your strength and ability: the exact amount depending upon every man's abilities, knowledge, propensities, etc. Hence Allah said in the following *ayah*, "He has not placed any constriction in the religion (Ibn al-Qayyim in *Badaai' al-Tafsir*).

134. That is, Allah chose you for His religion, in order that you help Him (in its establishment on the earth) – Zamakhshari. In the words of Majid, "(He chose you) as the testifiers, promulgators and standard-bearers of the Divine message."

135. "Religion" has been used here in its widest Islamic sense. Majid quotes from one of Asad's books: "Whereas all other religions failed in becoming cultures and became cults instead, Islam succeeded, because it did not content itself with defining the relations between man and the unseen but boldly stepped into the sphere of practical life and its everyday problems, - of bread and sexual relations, of politics and trade and finance – and thus removed the barriers between Caesar's and God's domain."

136. The translation of the word *haraj* as "constriction" has the authority of Ibn 'Abbas as in Ibn Jarir.

What it means is that the religion of Islam has been made easy. For example, Prayers have been shortened in journeys, or at times of fear, or allowed without facing the *Qiblah* when on a vehicle, or offering from a sitting posture when overtaken by illness, etc. Hence the Prophet's words to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and Mu'adh ibn *Jabal* while sending them to Yemen,

بَشِّرًا وَيَسِّرًا وَعَلِّمًا وَلَا تُنْفِرًا

"Give good news and make it easy; teach and do not repel."

He also said,

بُعِثْتُ بِالْحَنِيفِيَّةِ السَّمْحَةِ

"I have been sent with the easy monotheistic way" (Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi adds: "This proclaims that the believers are free from all the unjust shackles forged by the theologians, priests, and lawyers of previous religious communities. It is declared here that no longer are there any restrictions that obstruct intellectual progress, nor any restraint in the practical affairs of man's life which impede the growth of culture and civilization. This because they have been provided with a body of practicable laws. While adhering to this one may make as much progress as one wants."

Asad also has a useful note to offer: “The absence of any ‘hardship’ in the religion of Islam is due to several factors: (1) it is free of any dogma or mystical proposition that might make the Qur’anic doctrine difficult to understand or might even conflict with man’s innate reason; (2) it avoids all complicated rituals or system of taboos which would impose undue restrictions on man’s everyday life; (3) it rejects all self-mortification and exaggerated asceticism, which must unavoidably conflict with man’s true nature .. ; and (4) it takes fully into account the fact that ‘man has been created weak.’”

We can end with Yusuf Ali’s remark: “The Jews were hampered by many restrictions, and their religion was racial. Christianity, as originally preached, was a hermit religion: ‘sell whatsoever thou hast’ (Mark x. 21), ‘take no thought for the morrow’ (Matt. Vi. 34). Islam, as originally preached, gives freedom and full play to man’s faculties of every kind.”

In the above statement we might note the words, “Islam, as originally preached..” (Au.).

137. The *Fat-ha* on millah gives rise to two possible meanings in conjunction with the previous verses. (1) “(He has not placed any con-

tion in your religion), but rather, has placed ease and comfort just as it was in Ibrahim’s faith.” (2) “(Bow down, prostrate yourselves .. and) hold fast unto Ibrahim’s faith” (Ibn Jarir).

138. According to Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid and Dahhak, as in Ibn Jarir, and with his backing, the pronoun “huwa” is for Allah. That is, “Allah named you Muslims.”

The above is supported by a *hadith* in Nasa’i. The Prophet said,

من دعا بدعوى الجاهلية فإنه من جثا جهنم قال
رجل يا رسول الله وإن صام وصلى قال نعم وإن
صام وصلى فادعوا بدعوى الله التي سماكم الله بها
المسلمين المؤمنين عباد الله

“Whoever invited by appealing to pre-Islamic era, will be a crawler on his knees in Hellfire.” A man asked, “Even if he prayed and fasted?” He replied, “Yes, even if he prayed and fasted. Therefore, call by Allah’s Call who named you in this as Muslims: believers, Allah’s slaves” (Ibn Kathir).

The report about the crawler is in Tirmidhi, who rated it sound, as well as in Ibn Hibban, Tabarani, Hakim, Ibn Khuzaymah and others (Shawkani).

An off chance exists that the pronoun “he” is for Ibrahim. He had prayed to Allah at the time of the

construction of the Ka`bah that He create out of his progeny “a nation, *muslimah* (surrendered) unto Him” (2: 128) - Shabbir and others.

139. It might be noted, Thanwi writes, that although followers of other Prophets were also on the religion of Islam, no other but the followers of Prophet Muhammad have been called as Muslims in the Qur`ān. Others were referred to as Jews, Christians, nation of Nuh, nation of Saleh, etc.

140. Mujahid said that the word “earlier” alludes to earlier Scriptures (Ibn Jarir).

141. The allusion is to the Muslims bearing witness on the Day of Judgment against the previous peoples, to the fact that Prophets and Messengers were sent to them, and Prophet Muhammad then testifying that he delivered his own message to them, i.e., the Muslims (Ibn Jarir).

One might look for more details at verse 143 of *Surah Al-Baqarah* (Au.).

Sayyid comments: “So long as this *Ummah* adhered to these principles and applied them to its life, it remained an example to the rest of the world. But when it deviated and rejected the principles, it lost the position of leadership. Allah pushed it back to become a tail-follower of the caravan of nations where it will remain until it returns to the role that Allah chose for it.”

142. That is, when Allah blessed you with such blessings as above, you should in response observe the Prayer assiduously, Pay the *Zakah* and hold fast to Allah (Thanwi).

143. That is, whenever you hold fast unto Him, He will help you against yourself and against Satan, the two enemies that never depart from a person, -whose enmity is more harmful than that of external enemies (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badaai` al-Tafsir*). ﴿تَت﴾

Surah 23

Al-Mu'minūn¹

(The Believers)

Makkan²

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Succeeded indeed the believers.³

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾

1. Merits of the Surah

Several commentators have quoted 'Umar's words in Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Hakim (who said it is *Sahih*: Alusi) that he said, "When revelation came down to the Prophet we could hear a humming sound like that of the bees. One day it started to come down, so we waited for a while. When he became his self, he faced the *Qiblah*, raised his hands and supplicated in words,

اللَّهُمَّ زِدْنَا وَلَا تُقْصِنَا وَأَكْرِمْنَا وَلَا تُخْجِنَا وَأَعْظِنَا وَلَا تَحْرِمْنَا وَأَثِرْنَا وَلَا تُؤْتِرْ عَلَيْنَا وَأَرْضِنَا وَأَرْضِ عَنَّا.

'O Allah, grant us increase and do not decrease, honor us and do not dishonor us, give us and do not hold back, give us preference and do not prefer over us, grant us satisfaction (and be satisfied

with us)' - then he said, "Today ten verses have been revealed to me, that whoever took good care of, entered Paradise;" and recited the first ten verses of this chapter."

2. Except for a few verses, the *Surah* is Makkan, and most probably belongs to the end of the period, if not the last ones to be revealed there.

3. The textual "*qad*" (translated as "indeed") also gives the sense of an event already taken place. Taking cue from this, Zamakhshari points out that the verse carried good news for the believers who were expecting such an assurance to come from Allah. He also points out that to say "*afलाha*" is to mean, "he entered into success" ("and will remain there") - Razi.

[2] Those who are humble and tranquil⁴ in their Prayers.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾

'Now,' adds Shafi', 'since "*falaah*" signifies achieving total bliss, one which is not punctured by any inconvenience of any sort, physical, mental, moral or spiritual, it is unattainable in this world. Whether it is ordinary men, or Prophets and Messengers, they will all attain "*falaah*" in the next world alone.'

While Tabari reports Qatadah, Mujahid and Maysarah as their own statement, Ibn Kathir traces a few reports in Tabarani and Bazaar that attribute the following to the Prophet: "When Allah had created Paradise, one silver brick upon a gold brick cemented with musk, He asked it to speak. It said, 'Successful indeed are the believers.'" Ibn Kathir however remarks that all the reports of this nature happen to be weak.

4. The textual root "*khasha`a*" literally means to humble, and lower oneself. Since that mental state in the Prayers leads to tranquility and immobility of the body, "*khushu`*" has been widely defined as the motionless state when the head is bent forward, eyes look downward, and concentration is kept high (Au.).

Mujahid, Zuhri and others defined "*khushu`*" in Prayers as motionlessness. `Ali said, "Do not pay attention to anything else during your Prayers." Hasan and Ibrahim said that "*khushu`*" is a state of the heart, while that of the body is to be motionless. `Ataa' in fact, as well as a few others, report that the Prophet used to look sideways and towards the front until this verse was revealed, after which he was never seen in Prayers but his gaze fixed downward (Ibn Jarir).

One might be reminded however, that the above report about the Prophet is a truncated one (Ibn Kathir).

In fact, Ibn Seereen said that they used to say, "Let not the sight travel beyond the prayer mat. If it habitually goes beyond that, then one might close the eyes" (Ibn Kathir from Ibn Abi Hatim).

Nevertheless, Ibn `Abbas, Hasan and others have interpreted the term as that "fear of heart" which leads to the neglect of everything else besides the Prayers (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi writes: Scholars have differed over *khushu`*, whether it is obligatory or an additional adornment. `Abdul Wahid b. Zayd, as in Nisapuri's commentary, claimed that there is consensus over its obligatory nature.

To substantiate the view that *khushu`* is obligatory, Razi presents the following verses of the Qur'an: First

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ [محمد : ٢٤]

"Do they not ponder over the Qur'an?" (Muhammad: 24).

Now pondering cannot be obtained without realizing the meaning of what is recited.

Second,

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي [طه : ١٤]

"Establish the Prayers for My remembrance," (Taa-haa: 14).

Absent mindedness is the opposite of remembrance.

Third,

حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ [النساء : ٤٣]

"Until you know what you are saying," (Al-Nisaa': 43).

Imām Ghazali has argued, adds Razi, that the Prayers have been referred to one's private whispering with Allah. And a talk in which one's mind is not present is no talk at all. Further,

he writes, if we removed "*khushu`*" from Prayers, we remove the reason why it tops the list of rituals and is a mark of distinction between a believer and an unbeliever.

In any case, "*khushu`*" has to show itself in a man's manner of conducting the Prayers. Not to dress up properly, to play with one's clothes during the Prayers, to think of something else other than the Prayer, to yawn etc., are all indicative of the lack of "*khushu`*". It is reported of the Prophet that he saw a man fiddling with his beard during the Prayers. He remarked,

لَوْ حَشَعَتْ قَلْبُ هَذَا حَشَعَتْ جَوَارِحُهُ.

"Had this man's heart been in '*khushu`*', his limbs would have also been in '*khushu`*'" (Zamakhshari). But the report is weak (Alusi).

The actual report comes as a statement of Sa'id b. al-Musayyib found in Tabarani as follows (Au.):

وَرَوَيْنَا عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيْبِ : أَنَّهُ رَأَى رَجُلًا يَعْثُ بِالْحَصَى فَقَالَ : لَوْ حَشَعَتْ قَلْبُ هَذَا حَشَعَتْ جَوَارِحُهُ.

However, Alusi adds that we have another report in Bukhari, Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i, which says that the Prophet was asked by `A'isha about diversion of attention away

[3] Those who shun the vain.⁵

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] Those who are active at almsgiving.⁶

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[5] And those who guard their private parts.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] Except with their wives, or what their right hands own,⁷ for they are the unblameworthy.⁸

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ
فَأَيُّهُمْ غَيْرٌ مُلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾

during the Prayers. He answered, “That is a seizure that Satan snatches off from the Prayer of a believer.” We also have a report in Ibn Abi Shaybah, in Ahmad’s *Kitab al-Zuhd*, and in Hakim who termed it *Sahih* that Abu Hudhayfah said, “The first thing you will miss in your religion is ‘*khushu*’ and the last thing the Prayers” (shortened).

5. ‘Sin,’ ‘unreal things,’ and ‘falsehood’ are some of the meanings that have come down from Ibn `Abbas and Hasan as the explanation of the textual word “*laghw*” (Ibn Jarir). Commonly, it is applied to anything, whether a word of mouth, or an action, that is of no profit in this world or the hereafter (Au.), and includes indulgence in anything that is against “*murubah*” (a combination of qualities [in the humans] that includes nobility, magnanimity, courage and generosity) - Zamakhshari.

6. We could end with Thanwi’s observation: Since this *Surah* is Makkan, the verse maybe interpreted as allud-

ing to common charity, which was declared obligatory in Makkah itself. But a specified amount (or percentage), over a certain amount of wealth, after a specified period, was instituted in Madinah alone. In fact, the *Ayah* (6: 141), “And pay off its due on the day of its harvest,” is also Makkan (Ibn Kathir).

A second meaning of “*Zakah*” has also been considered as possible by many commentators, viz., purification. That is, those who are active at purifying themselves.

Mawdudi further elaborates: “(The .. expression used here, *li al-zakati fa'ilun* (indicates that) the matter does not end with their giving away a part of their wealth, rather it embraces a whole range of acts including purification of one’s self, purification of one’s morality, purification of one’s wealth; in sum, the purification of virtually everything.”

7. That is, (legal) slave-girls (Ibn Jarir), who can only be taken in bat-

tle-fields, it being part of an institution discouraged by Islam, and now abolished by consensus of mankind (Au.).

Sayyid writes: "Islam came at a time when slavery was an institution that was prevalent all over the world. Enslavement of the prisoners of war was common and universally recognized. It was not possible for Islam, which was engaged in a death struggle against powers that stood in its way, to abolish the system unilaterally. Had it attempted that, Muslim prisoners would have remained slaves in enemy lands while the enemy prisoners would have had to be set free. Therefore, (as an immediate remedy) Islam dried all the sources of slavery – except those taken in war – hoping that one day or the other the institution would be abolished by international consensus. But in those days prisoners of war came as slaves .. and Islam allowed sexual relationship between female slaves and their masters – and masters alone, to the exclusion of all – until the time they could win their freedom for which Islam had opened several ways.

"Perhaps, one of the factors in allowing such relationship was a need of the slave girls themselves. They could, in its absence, find other ways

of gratification of natural instincts creating a moral chaos as it happens in our times, when, slave taking is disallowed (but sexual exploitation is ignored). But Islam cannot approve of unclean practices. So, the situation remained, until freedom was gained. And a woman gained her freedom by several means; e.g., if she gave birth to a child through her master, and he died. Or he freed her either as an act of piety, or in redemption of a wrong he committed, or if she entered into an agreement by which she paid a sum and freed herself, or if the master struck her on the face and she gained her freedom thereby."

8. Most commentators have pointed out that while all the verses of this passage address both men and women, this particular verse addresses only men. That is because it is not allowable for women to have sex with their slaves. (The story of a free woman who had sex with her slave during the time of `Umar, is weak). Similarly, Alusi points out, a woman cannot allow her husband to have sex with one of her own slave-girls. If she so wishes, she might first sell the slave-girl to her husband after which alone she is lawful to him. It is reported that Ibn `Abbas allowed it, and hence the Shi`ah use the ruling,

but it appears the attribution to Ibn 'Abbas is incorrect.

Some contemporary writers have used another verse to prove that a Muslim cannot have sex with a slave girl he owns. The verse of their reference is (4: 25):

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنْ فِتْيَانِكُمُ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ [النساء : ٢٥]

"And he of you who cannot afford to marry free believing women may marry such believing women as whom your right hands possess."

That is, if sex was allowed, there was no need to marry the slave girls. Mawdudi points out that the reference is to the slave-girls owned by others. This is stated further in the same verse as quoted above, but which, somehow, the modern writers fail to quote in full. And the missing part of the above verse (4: 25) is,

فَأَنْكِحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ وَأَتُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
[النساء : ٢٥]

"Marry them, then, with the leave of their guardians and give them their bridal due in fair manner."

(This part makes it clear that the slave-girls in question belong to other than him: Au.).

Majid comments on legality of sex in Islam: "Regular exercise of sexual function on the part of men, like all other natural functions, within lawful bounds and in relation to women whose rights and dues they duly observe, is in Islam absolutely above reproach and wanton abstinence is viewed not as a sign of spirituality but as an aberration. In fact it is the primary purpose of marriage, biologically viewed. Compare and contrast with this the attitude of Christianity which holds that sexual intercourse, even in wedlock, is something of a handicap in the scheme of salvation, and implies that even the permitted sex behaviour is not altogether approved. See Mt. 22: 30, 1 Co. 7: 32-34. 'Christianity,' writes an English student of sociology, 'being an advocate of eternal life, very logically preaches that sex is to be deplored, to be avoided, and, if possible, negated. And the Puritan, who may be regarded as the extreme Christian, is notorious for his implacable loathing of sex.'"

[7] But whoever sought beyond that, they indeed are the transgressors.⁹ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾

9. The allusion is to fornicators and adulterers (Ibn Jarir).

Majid comments: "Thus every form of gratifying sexual passions (out of wedlock) is criminal, and the law of Islam categorically interdicts all forms of extramarital sexual relations, whether of normal or abnormal variety, that have been so rampant both in ancient and modern nations, often even under the cloak of respectability and approval.. In ancient Rome and Greece homosexuality was rampant .. Sodomy, pederasty, and tribalism were all practiced extensively and openly. Similarly in ancient Egypt, Persia, India and China .. The rise of civilization and great extension in the practice and development of sexual vice; .. and likewise the appearance of new forms .. and old vices elaborated and given new names .. These abnormalities have been restricted to no one country and class." (*Forbate, Love, Marriage and Jealousy*, p. 110).

"Note the effects of this teaching on the general conduct of the Muslim society as observed by a much-traveled learned Christian in the eighties of the nineteenth cen-

tury:- 'The Muhammadans have no towers, gaming-houses, or brothels, nor have they any idea of legalizing prostitution; and as regards their general conversation it is infinitely more decent, as a rule, than that of most Europeans. I have seen young Muhammadan fellows at school and college, and their conduct and talk are far better than is the case among English young men; indeed the talk of the latter is often such as would incur punishment in Muhammadan land.' (Dr. G. W. Leitner, ex-Director of Public Instruction, Punjab)."

As regards the absolute sexual chaos now prevalent in the West, it is beyond words and belief to describe. Reports that come in at regular pace, each confirming the credibility of the previous, stretch one's credulity to the limits (Au.).

Imām Shafe`i has used this verse to argue that masturbation is unlawful. A *hadith* is also cited in this connection in which the Prophet declared that Allah will not look at seven (men) on the Day of Judgment, nor purify them, nor let them into the company of the workers (of good

[8] And those who are mindful of their trusts and covenant.¹⁰ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾

deeds). One of the seven counted in this *hadith* is he who masturbates. However, this *hadith* is weak (Ibn Kathir). According to the majority, writes Alusi, it is prohibited. But Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal allowed it saying that the excessive amount of semen is similar to body waste which could be removed at need, like excess blood. (While to the Malikiyyah it is prohibited, some of the Hanafiyyah have allowed it to purge a strong urge. *Fat-h* and *Tuhfah* - Au.). Ibn al-Humam has said that ordinarily it is prohibited, but in situations when one is overcome by sexual desires, it is hoped that the affair will be overlooked.

Another question, can the verse be used as evidence of, or against the practice of *muta`ah*? The answer is, neither can be used for such purposes. *Muta`ah* has been disallowed by *hadith* in unequivocal terms. And, stray opinion of a Companion or two does not outweigh the opinion of the great majority of the *Salaf* and later scholars. For detailed discussions one might see Alusi at this point (Au.).

10. Note that while “*amaanaat*” is in plural, “*ahd*” is in the singular (Ibn Jarir); perhaps because the allusion is to the primordial covenant that each of us has made with Allah to the effect that we shall believe in Him (Au.).

Yusuf Ali remarks: “Trusts may be express or implied. Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by someone to some other whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies. Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; e.g., a king holds his kingdom on trust from Allah for his subjects.. Covenants create obligations, and express implied trusts and covenants taken together cover the whole field of obligations.”

Sayyid adds: “There are several covenants to which mankind is bound, individually and collectively. The first and foremost covenant binding upon every individual is to the effect that they will believe in God as one God and obey Him. This is implanted in man’s very nature. All other covenants follow this principal

[9] And those who (diligently) guard their Prayers.¹¹ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] They indeed, they are the inheritors.¹² أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

covenant. Every other promise that a man enters into, has this first covenant as the overarching principle. Similarly, a Muslim social group is bound by its various covenants, once again with the main covenant between itself and Allah as the guiding principle and which gives rise to several other covenants, bindings and responsibilities.

“Further, fulfilling the covenants is a way of life of a believer who is always conscious of his various bindings. A successful, peaceful, collective life cannot be generated and organized but by those who are mindful of their promises and covenants.”

11. According to Masruq it means to do the Prayers on time. But Ibrahim thought it meant doing them regularly (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Mas`ud, Abu al-Duha, `Alqamah b. Qays, Sa`id b. Jubayr and `Ikrimah also explained the verse as doing the Prayers on time (Ibn Kathir).

But Zamakhshari, taking note of the plural form here (“*salawaat*”) points out that in addition to the above, it

could imply doing all the Prayers, obligatory and non-obligatory, such as, the five daily Prayers, Friday Prayers, `Eid Prayers, Rain Prayers, Eclipse Prayers, etc.

12. This verse is explained by a *hadith* that is reported by Abu Hurayrah. The Prophet said,

مَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا لَهُ مَنْزِلَانِ مَنْزِلٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَمَنْزِلٌ فِي النَّارِ فَإِذَا مَاتَ فَدَخَلَ النَّارَ وَرِثَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ مَنْزِلَهُ فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ

“There is none among you but he has two abodes (reserved for him): an abode in Paradise and an abode in the Fire. When he dies and enters the Fire, the inhabitants of Paradise become heirs of his abode in Paradise. Hence Allah said, “They indeed are the inheritors.” (The report is *Sahih: Qurtubi*).

Abu Hurayrah further explained that those who entered Paradise will inherit their own abodes as well as the abodes of those in the Fire; to which Mujahid added that the believer builds his abode in Paradise and destroys the one in Hellfire, while the

[11] Who will inherit *Firdaws*,¹³ abiding therein forever.



unbeliever destroys his abode in Paradise and builds his in Hellfire (Ibn Jarir).

The report about two abodes is in Ibn Abi Hatim and the verse then can be seen in the same vein as another (19: 63),

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا [مریم : ٦٣]

“That is the Paradise that We shall let those of Our slaves inherit who were god-conscious.”

And a *hadith* in Muslim says,

يَجِيءُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ نَاسٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِذُنُوبٍ
أَمْثَالِ الْجِبَالِ فَيَعْفِرُهَا اللَّهُ لَهُمْ وَيَضَعُهَا عَلَى الْيَهُودِ
وَالنَّصَارَى

“Some of the Muslims will come on the Day of Judgment burdened with sins the size of mountains. Allah will forgive them and place their load of sins on Jews and Christians.”

The words of another report, also in Muslim are,

إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ دَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ
يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ نَصْرَانِيًّا فَيَقُولُ هَذَا فَكَاكُكَ مِنَ النَّارِ

“Allah will, on the Day of Judgment, ransom a Muslim with a

Christian or a Jew. It will be said, “This is your ransom from the Fire.”

‘Umar b. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz made Abu Bardah swear thrice in the name of Allah that his father narrated it in these words from the Prophet himself (Ibn Kathir).

13. Some of the *Salaf* have thought that *Firdaws* is a Roman word for a garden. However, it is a special kind of Garden within the Garden, i.e., Paradise. Qatadah reports that Haritha was killed in the battle of Badr. His mother said (to the Prophet),

يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ .. فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ صَبْرٌ وَإِنْ كَانَ غَيْرُ
ذَلِكَ اجْتَهَدْتُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الْبُكَاءِ قَالَ يَا أُمَّ حَارِثَةَ إِنَّهَا
جَنَانٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ ابْنِكَ أَصَابَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ الْأَعْلَى

“If my son is of the people of Paradise, I shall observe patience. But if it is otherwise, I will weep my heart out.” He answered, “O Haritha’s mother. There are two Gardens in Paradise. Your son has obtained *Al-Firdaws*, the top most (portion) of Paradise” (Ibn Jarir).

[12] Surely, We created man from the quintessence of clay.¹⁴

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سَلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ

﴿١٢﴾

The report is in Tirmidhi who gave it the status of *Hasan Sahih Gharib* (Alusi).

Firdaws in any case is the best part of Paradise. This is confirmed by another *hadith*. The Prophet said (Bukhari),

فَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ فَاسْأَلُوهُ الْفِرْدَوْسَ فَإِنَّهُ أَوْسَطُ الْجَنَّةِ
وَأَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ أَرَاهُ فَوْقَهُ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ

“When you ask, ask for *Firdaws*, for it is the best part of Paradise, the top-most part of Paradise and, as I was shown, above it is *Al-Rahman's`Arsh*.

It has also been said, Ibn Kathir adds, that a garden is not referred to as *Firdaws* without grapevine in it.

Mawdudi lists words for Paradise in other languages: In Sanskrit Pardi-sha, in ancient Chaldian Pardisa, in ancient Persian Pairidaisa, in Hebrew Pardis, in Armenian Pardiz, in Syriac Fardisw, in Greek Paradaisus and in Latin Paradisus.

14. “Extract” is the literal meaning of the textual “*sulaalah*.” However here it means, precisely, (as in Ibn Jarir), an extract that had residuals of all kinds of dust taken from the earth, hence quintessence (Au.).

Hence the Prophet’s words, in various books including Abu Da’ud and Tirmidhi who rated it *Hasan Sahih*,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْضَةٍ قَبْضَهَا مِنْ جَمِيعِ الْأَرْضِ
فَجَاءَ بَنُو آدَمَ عَلَى قَدْرِ الْأَرْضِ جَاءَ مِنْهُمْ الْأَحْمَرُ
وَالْأَبْيَضُ وَالْأَسْوَدُ وَبَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَالسَّهْلُ وَالْحَزْنُ
وَالْحَيِّثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ

“Allah created man from a handful that He took from the whole of the earth. So his progeny came out in accordance with the earth: some red, others white, yet others black, some in between them; and some good, some evil” (Ibn Kathir).

However, “*sulaalah*” could also mean, depending on usage, “semen drop” (Ibn Kathir).

Asad adds: “The frequent Qur’anic reference to man’s being ‘created out of clay,’ .. point to the fact that his body is composed of various organic and inorganic substances existing on or in the earth, as well as to the continuous transmutation of those substances, through the intake of earth-grown food, into reproductive cells (Razi) – thus stressing man’s humble origin, and hence the debt of gratitude which he owes to God for hav-

[13] Then We placed him as a sperm drop in a safe lodging.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] Then We fashioned the sperm drop into a leech-like structure, then of that leech-like structure We made a chewed-like substance. Then out of the chewed-like substance We created the bones.¹⁵ Then We clothed the bones with flesh.¹⁶ Then We developed him into a new creation.¹⁷ So, blessed is Allah, the Best of creators.¹⁸

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

ing endowed him with a conscious soul.”

15. Ibn `Abbas has said that the allusion by “bones” is to the backbone. A *Sahih hadith* says,

كُلُّ ابْنِ آدَمَ يَأْكُلُهُ التُّرَابُ إِلَّا الذَّنْبَ مِنْهُ
خُلِقَ وَفِيهِ يَرْكَبُ

“Every bone of Adam’s son is destroyed except for the tailbone. He is created from it and will be resurrected from it” (Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* is another proof of the Prophet’s authenticity. Today’s embryology confirms that the first bone to develop in the fetus is the tail bone. As for resurrection from the tail bone, other reports from the Prophet specify it as an atom of that bone from which resurrection will take place (Au.).

16. This single verse is enough to prove the authenticity of this revela-

tion. At a time when the general belief was that the mail deposited a tiny baby in the womb, which grew into a child – a belief that remained current until some 200 years ago - there is no way the Prophet could have obtained the information stated herein. It was left to modern science, armed with most modern microscopes and other research equipments, to confirm, after a thousand and two hundred years, that the information is accurate. For details see note 9 of *Surah al-Hajj* (Au.).

17. The *Salaf* such as Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Mujahid, Sha`bi and others are in agreement that the words, “then We developed it into a new creation” allude to the blowing of the spirit. However, a second opinion of more or less the same authorities as above is that the allusion is to subsequent development: infancy, childhood, teenage, youth, etc. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[15] Then, after that, at length you will die.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] Finally, on the Day of Judgment you will be raised again.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] And We have indeed created above you seven paths.¹⁹ And We were not heedless of creation.²⁰

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. Many commentators report that `Abdullah b. Sa`id b. ibn Abi Sarh was one of those whom the Prophet used for writing down the revelation as it came. When Allah revealed,

ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ

Ibn Abi Sarh interjected at this point

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

The Prophet said, “Yes, that is how it is revealed.”

That led Ibn Abi Sarh to believe that if Muhammad received revelation, he too could receive. He apostatized and fled to Makkah. Many scholars say he entered into Islam again at the fall of Makkah, but a few say he died an unbeliever. Most commentators however, discount the story since this chapter is Makkan while revelations were written down only in Madinah. The story therefore, stands discredited.

Asad comments on the term ‘best of creators’: “As Tabari points out, the Arabs apply the designation ‘creator’

to every artisan (*saani`*) – a usage also current in European languages with reference to the ‘creation’ of works of art and imagination.”

19. Ibn Kathir points out that often in the Qur`an when Allah mentions the creation of man, He also mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth.

As for the word “*taraa`iq*”, ‘paths’ is only one of the several possible meanings. Ibn Zayd interpreted it as “heavens.” That is, the seven heavens (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). The linguist Abu `Ubaydah has said: “*taaraqta as-shayy*” means you placed some of a thing over others. The heavens have been called “*tara`iq*” since they are one upon another in layers. But the possibility exists that it is ‘paths’ that is meant (Qurtubi). Zamakhshari is divided between “layers” and “paths.”

An additional implication is that by “*taraa`iq*” the allusion is to the paths of the cosmological objects (Alusi).

[18] And We sent down out of heaven water²¹ (according) to a measure. Then We lodged it in the earth, while We are easily²² capable of taking it away.²³

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنَّاهُ
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهِ
لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

20. That is, He is aware of what goes in or what goes out. The seven layers do not prevent Him from knowing what goes on anywhere within or without them (based on Ibn Kathir).

21. Although he was in the 13th Christian century, Imām Razi knew that water from the seas rises above into the atmosphere (leaving behind the impurities), where, with time, it condenses, and then as it gets weightier is brought down as rain.

From across the continent (Spain) Qurtubi had the same statements to make.

22. The “*laam*” of “*la-qadirun*” is *laam al-ta'keed*. Here it has been expressed with “easily” – in effort to express, in an indirect manner, Allah’s Power (Au.).

23. Allah is capable of taking away the rain itself to other areas, or the rain water to flow away entirely instead of staying on the surface of the earth, or go down deep for man to be able to reach (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali elaborates on the rain cycle: “Normally the rain comes well

distributed; it soaks into the soil; the moisture is retained for a long time in all high grounds; it soaks and penetrates through many layers of soil and forms the architecture of physical geography; the retentive powers of higher soil enables rivers to flow perennially even where, as in India, the rainfall is seasonal and confined to a few months in the year. Another form in which water comes down from the sky according to due measure is in snow and hail: these also have their place in the economy of air and soil. Were it not for snow and glaciers in the higher mountain regions, some of the rivers would fail in their abundant flow. As wonderful as the supply of water and moisture is its drainage. It returns to the sea and air in all sorts of ways, and the formation of mist and clouds repeats the cycle. Were it not for the drainage and the clearance of the waters, we should have floods and water logging, as happens when the normal process of nature is temporarily obstructed. The same thing happens when the rain comes down and in other than due measure. These ab-

[19] Then We brought forth for you therewith gardens of date-palm and vines²⁴ wherein are many fruits for you, of which you eat.

فَأَنْشَأْنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ
وَأَعْنَابٍ لَّكُمْ فِيهَا فَاوَاكِهِ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا
تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And (We brought out) a tree²⁵ which springs forth from Mount Sainaa²⁶; it produces oil and seasoning²⁷ for those who eat.²⁸

وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ تَنْبُتُ
بِالدُّهْنِ وَصَنِيعٍ لِلْأَكْلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

normal conditions also have their value. But how grateful should man be for Allah's gifts in the ceaseless process of nature on such an enormous scale!"

In our times (2010) so much rain fell within a day or two in Pakistan that an area equal to Britain was under water for several weeks. It was followed by rains in Australia where an area equal to France and Germany combined together was under water for a couple of weeks.

24. The two trees, of dates and grapes, have been chosen for mention because the Arabs of that time were familiar with them, and accorded them preference over most other fruits (Ibn Jarir).

25. The allusion is to the olive tree (Ibn Jarir).

26. "And (We brought out) a tree which springs forth from Mount Sainaa": This is another way of saying, "issues forth from a mountain

which gives forth trees." Further, (Sinai of English) is pronounced both as Sainaa' as well as Seenaa' in Arabic (as also "Seeneen": Zamakhshari). And, some, like Ibn 'Abbas and Mujahid, have thought that at this point the allusion by the word "Saina" is to the blessed nature of the Mount. There have been other interpretations too (Ibn Jarir). According to Ibn Zayd, Tur is the name of a chain of mountains that extends from Egypt to Ayla ('Aqaba) – Qurtubi.

It is also thought that the textual "toor" stands for a mountain that is covered by trees. If it is entirely rocky supporting no plant life then it is known as "jabal" (Ibn Kathir).

27. The textual word "sibgh" lends several connotations. When it is said, "sabagha-at-ta'aama" it would mean he rendered the food savory; or, he colored it; or, offered something as seasoning for the food presented, e.g., sauce or vinegar. Tropically, as E.W. Lane has pointed, it meant to

[21] And, surely there is for you an instructive example in the cattle. We give you as drink from that which is in their bellies; there are in them numerous (other) benefits for you, and of them you eat.²⁹

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] And on them and on the ships, you are borne.

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

the Arabs 'altering of a thing.' Thus, with a single word, the Qur'an alluded to various uses of the olive (Au.).

28. In a report preserved by Ahmad, the Prophet has recommended the consumption of olive oil and its use for cooking purposes for, as he said, "It is from a blessed tree" (Ibn Kathir).

Medically it is quite well established that olive oil produces less cholesterol in the body and hence causes less heart attacks. People of the geographical area where it is consumed report less occurrence of cancer also. A thorough research is still due (Au.).

Mawdudi writes: "(Olive oil is) the most popular product in all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The olive tree lasts for one and a half to two thousand years. (Older commentators say "several thousand years": au.). Olive trees live for so long that on the basis of the height and breadth of some in Palestine it is estimated that they date back to the

days of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

The olive tree is mentioned here in association with Mount Sinai. This is presumably because the original habitat of the olive tree is Mount Sinai which in turn is the most prominent place in that region."

It might also be noted here that that the present day Israeli government, mercilessly uproots olive trees in occupied Palestine, and prevents the Palestinians – through a variety of governmental decrees - from planting new ones, right at a time the West hypocritically sheds tears at the uprooting of any tree anywhere in the world. Such is their hatred of Islam and Muslims. At the moment (2011), they are almost going nuts from the fear of Islam and Muslims (Au.).

29. Mechanized life cuts some people off the natural world of realities. Yusuf Ali reminds them about Allah's favors through the cattle: "From cat-

[23] *And We did send Nuh to his people.³⁰ He said, 'O my people! Worship Allah. You have no god other than He. Will you not then fear?'*

[24] *Said the chiefs of the unbelievers of his people, 'This is no more than a man like yourselves who seeks to gain superiority over you.³¹ Had Allah willed, He could have surely sent down angels.³² We have never heard of this³³ among our ancestors of old.*

وَأَقْدَ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ
اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

فَقَالَ الْمَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا
هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَفْضَلَ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَّا
سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

tle we get milk and meat, also from their skins we make leather for shoes, boots, straps, saddlery, and numerous other uses; from camel's hair and sheep's wool we weave cloth, hangings, carpets, etc.; from the horns of cattle we make cups and articles of ornament or use; and camels, horses, donkeys, mule etc., are used for riding, carrying loads, and drawing vehicles."

30. Yusuf Ali shows the connection between the earlier passage and this new one, "The material gifts having been mentioned, which we receive from a Wise and Kindly Provider, our attention is now directed to Allah's Providence in spiritual matters. He sent Teachers to instruct and guide us, and though they were mocked, rejected, and accused of falsehood and selfishness, they were protected by Allah, and Allah's Truth at length prevailed."

31. (While this was said partly in earnest), partly it was to provoke the people to anger (Alusi).

Mawdudi comments: "The enemies of the truth have always been wont to charge that the activity of reformers is actuated by their hunger for power. This very charge was leveled by Pharaoh against Moses and Aaron and was phrased in the form of the following question 'Have you come to turn us away from the way of our forefathers that the two of you might become supreme in the land?' (*Yunus* 10: 78). The Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) was also subjected to a similar accusation: that he was striving to become the king of the Jews..

"It is inconceivable for those who ceaselessly hanker after worldly benefits, after pomp and glory, to appreciate that anyone can strive simply for the good of mankind, and that all such striving be absolutely sincere

[25] Surely, he is naught but a man bedeviled;
so wait on him for a while.³⁴

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ فُتِرَ نَصُوبًا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ
حِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] He said, 'My Lord! Help me for that they
give me the lie.'

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٢٦﴾

and selfless. Such people are wont to come up, every now and then, with catchy slogans and lay false claims to be working for the common welfare of all. They do so even though the true purpose of their effort is nothing else but to achieve power and influence. Furthermore, they regard craftiness and deception as absolutely natural. No wonder then that they tend to believe that no one can call for reform sincerely and altruistically. If someone does call for reform, he must inevitably be prompted, like them, by some ulterior motive. For example, as a subterfuge for the realization of his own selfish designs.

“It is also interesting that accusation of hungering after power are always hurled at reformers by those who have been able to entrench themselves in power or by their sycophantic cronies. They seem to believe that the power they enjoy is their birth-right. Hence, if they strive to wrest power from others and to perpetuate their hold on it, all is viewed as

perfectly legitimate. But it becomes altogether objectionable if anyone else, someone who has no birth-right to enjoy power, shows the least sign of hungering for it.”

32. Zamakhshari remarks: “Consider the wonders of error and ignorance. They were prepared to accept stones as gods, but were not prepared to grant messengership to a human!”

33. “This” of the text refers to the call that Nuh was making, viz., worship Allah alone (Ibn Jarir). And, either no Messenger had appeared among them for a long time, or, alternatively, the unbelievers were so engrossed in the life of the world that they never had time to learn about messengers and messages of the past (Kashshaf).

34. What they meant is, wait for a while, maybe he will be cured of his madness, but if he is not, then we shall take him out through assassination (Kashshaf).

[27] So We revealed to him (to the effect), 'Construct the boat under Our sight and Our instruction.³⁵ Then, when Our command comes, and the oven gushes forth,³⁶ take on board³⁷ of every pair two,³⁸ as well as your family, except for him of them against whom the Word has preceded; and address Me not concerning the wrongdoers; they are to be drowned.

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا
وَوَحَيْنَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ فَاسْلُكْ
فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا
مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي
فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] Then, when you are settled - you and those with you on the boat - say, 'All praise for Allah who delivered us from a people given to wrongdoing.'

فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى
الْفُلِكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ
الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] And say, 'My Lord! Enable me to land a blessed landing, and indeed You are the best of those who enable to land.'

وقُلْ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ
الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

35. The rendering of "wah-yinaa" as "instruction" is influenced by Tabari's understanding (Au.), and the implication is, Allah Himself supervised the work in order that defects may not remain in it (Zamakhshari). For, soon there was going to be no land to allow for any repair or improvement (Au.).

36. In common language, "tannur" is an oven. It is a hole in the ground, about a meter deep, lined up with baked clay. Coal or firewood is placed at the bottom. The rising heat cooks the bread lined up on the walls. It was in the past perhaps the fastest and the most economic way of making bread in large quantities. The method is still in use in eastern

countries and the bread thus made is considered a delicacy. Of the word, however, as used here, several interpretations have been reported from the *Salaf*. But, as Imām Razi points out, there is no need to look for allegorical meanings if the apparent meaning, viz., 'oven,' is possible. So, Nuh was told that he was to wait for water to gush forth from a place most unlikely to yield water: an oven. When that happened, he was to board the boat (Au.).

For other explanations refer to Huud, verse 40.

37. Since "aslaka" gives the sense of insertion, one can venture to guess that the ship had a door at the side

[30] Verily, in that are signs; and indeed We were determined to test.³⁹

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ وَإِن كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Then We raised after them another generation.

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِم قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] And We sent among them a Messenger from themselves (commanding), 'Worship Allah. You have no god other than He. Will you not then observe precaution?'

فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِن آلِهِ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] But said those of the chiefs who had disbelieved and denied the Meeting of the Hereafter, and whom We had luxuriated in the life of the world,⁴⁰ 'This is naught but a man like yourselves (who) eats of what you eat, and drinks of what drink.

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

through which the unwilling animals had to be virtually pushed through, or, inserted (Au.).

38. "Zawjayn" refers to male and female of every species, whereas "two" is "za'idah", added for emphasis (Zamakhshari, Razi). Yusuf Ali wrote at an earlier occurrence (10: 40), "Zaujain: the dual number refers to the individuals in each pair of opposite sexes. Some of the authoritative commentators (e.g., Imām Razi) construe in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species."

39. Yusuf Ali again, "Noah's contemporaries had all sorts of chances and warning. But they refused to believe

and perished. But Allah's Truth survived, and it went to the next and succeeding generations. Will not mankind understand?"

40. Mawdudi analyses the minds and the situation: "This characterization of the opponents is significant. The ringleaders opposing the Prophet (peace be on him) were those who held the leadership of their people. The error into which all of them had fallen was their denial of Life after Death. Hence, they had no notion of being accountable or answerable to God. This, in turn, was because of their excessive infatuation with worldly life and their refusal to believe in any value above material

[34] *If you obeyed a man like yourselves, in that case, surely you will be the losers.*⁴¹

وَلَيْنَ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

well-being. The fact that at that time they enjoyed a considerable degree of prosperity totally swamped them in this erroneous belief. They were so deeply engrossed in worldliness that they considered themselves to be right merely because they thrived materially. They were, thus, in no mood to accept their beliefs, morality and way of life, which they thought to be the main cause of their success in this world, could be mistaken. Human history has repeatedly provided evidence of the fact that the opponents of the truth have always held these three features common. Little wonder, then, that the same scenario obtained in Makkah at the time when the Prophet (peace be on him) embarked on his reform movement.”

Never before were the evils of luxury as evident as in today’s contemporary world: pornography, nudism, homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, incest, group sex, exchange of wives, sex with animals, drug and alcohol consumption, gambling, lottery, ob-

scene music, individualism, break up of the families, et al .. humans have crossed all bounds of decency because of a single factor: affluence. As every lamp flares up before going off, the decline after which there will be no recovery, as say the experts, specialists and thinkers, has begun. A huge struggle is about to begin for the remaining resources of the world, especially in the Middle-east. Western powers are prowling around like hungry wolves (Au.).

41. “I.e., you will be following a very foolish course indeed if you were to obey a mere mortal” (Majid).

Yusuf Ali has a slightly different comment, “The type of narrow Syberite, who enjoys the good things of this life, denies a future life, and is jealous of any one who presumes to widen his horizon, is here described in a few masterly strokes. He is bored by any mention of the serious things beyond his ken. What good is it, he says, to talk about the future? Enjoy the present. The gain is all in the present: the loss is all in the future.”

[35] Does he promise you that when you are dead, and have become dust and bones,⁴² that you will be brought forth (again)?

أَبْعِدُكُمْ أَنْكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا
أَنْكُمْ مُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] Far-fetched, far-fetched indeed is what you are being promised.

هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] It is none other but this our present life: (in which) we die and live,⁴³ and we shall never be raised up (again).

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[37] He is no more but a man who has fastened a lie on Allah; and surely, we are not going to believe in him.'

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا
وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] He said, 'My Lord! Help me for that they cry me lies.'

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] He (Allah) said, 'In but a little while they are sure to turn regretful.'

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] So a Cry seized them justly and We reduced them to scum. So, away with a wrongdoing people.

فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ
عُتَاءً فَبَعْدًا لِلْفَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] Then, We brought forth after them other generations.⁴⁴

ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرُونًا آخَرِينَ
﴿٤٢﴾

[43] No nation can hasten its term, nor delay (it).

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ
﴿٤٣﴾

42. Their allusion was to the bones that are left after the flesh and muscle turn dust (Tabari).

43. That is, one generation dies while another takes birth, one goes, another comes, just like crops, one is harvested while another begins to appear in the field (Tabari).

In Yusuf Ali's words: "They seem to say, 'There is no future life: that we shall die is certain; that we have this life is certain: some die, some are born, some live; and so the cycle continues; but how can dead men be raised to life?'"

44. "Qarn" is literally an epoch or a phase in the history of a people (Au.).

[44] Thereafter We sent Our Messengers in succession. Every time its Messenger came to a nation, they cried him lies. So, we made some of them follow others,⁴⁵ and made them as but tales.⁴⁶ So away with a people who would not believe.⁴⁷

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا كُلًّا مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً
رَسُوهُنَّ كَذَّبُوهُ فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا
وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ فَبُعْدًا لِقَوْمٍ لَا
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Then We sent Musa and his brother Harun with Our signs and a manifest Authority.⁴⁸

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا
وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] To Fir`awn and his chiefs. But they waxed proud. In fact, they were a people high-and-mighty.

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأَتْهُ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا
عَالِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

45. That is, We made some of them succeed others in destruction (Tabari).

46. Another possible connotation is that they became subjects of talk (Tabari) or topics that evoked wonder (Razi).

Yusuf Ali comments: "Their habitations and their organizations have been wiped out. What remains is merely a vague story of their existence, a tale that is told. Where their name remains, which is not always the case, it is only a by-word, suggesting all that is unstable and ephemeral,- 'to point a moral and adorn a tale.'"

47. It was our Lord's kindness that He did away with the unbelieving, corrupt, and incorrigible nations of

the past. Even without there being any trace of that scum today, life is almost unlivable because of the overwhelming filth of unbelief and moral depravity prevalent among those who followed them. One can imagine what today's life would be like if Allah had allowed every new generation inherit collective perversions of the past (Au.).

48. "Sultan" of the text is difficult to render in English. Primarily it denotes might, force, power, authority, etc. No interpretation of the word is reported of the *Salaf* at this point. The one nearest to being satisfactory has been advanced by Zamakhshari who said that the allusion is perhaps to Musa's staff, which was the greatest and most manifest of signs. It turned into a snake on command and swal-

[47] So they said, 'Should we believe in two men like ourselves, while their people are subject to us?'⁴⁹

فَقَالُوا أَنْتُمْ مِنْ لَيْشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عَابِدُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] Thus they rejected the two, and thus were of those were destroyed.

فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Indeed, We gave Musa the Book haply that they would be guided.⁵⁰

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] And We made Maryam's son and his mother a sign⁵¹ and We sheltered the two on high ground:⁵² a place of rest and furnished with a flowing spring.⁵³

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

lowed all the snakes of the charmers. It was the same staff that was used to strike a rock that gave out water in the form of gushing springs. It was the same staff that Musa had used to part the sea.

49. "I.e., how can we acknowledge their spiritual greatness when they belong to a subject nation of which we are the rulers" (Majid).

50. The obvious reference is to the Israelites, who received their two most important Messengers in half belief, half rejection. And hence too, the mention of `Isa ibn Maryam later in the passage (Au.).

In Yusuf Ali's words: "Moses and Aaron had a twofold mission: (1) to Pharaoh and his Court, which failed because of Egyptian arrogance; (2)

to the Israelites, for whom the Law was received on Mount Sinai, but they repeatedly rebelled against Allah. In both cases there were miracles ('clear signs') and other proofs which showed that they came at Allah's command, and were inspired by His Authority."

51. Maryam was born to a barren mother and a father far past child producing age, while Jesus Christ was created entirely without a father. Thus both were great signs of Allah (Au.).

52. Some of the classical interpreters, such as Abu Hurayrah, have said that the textual "*rabwah*" alludes to the whole of Palestine. Egypt, Dimashq, are other explanations (Tabari). But Ibn `Abbas thought it meant "a high ground" (Ibn Kathir).

[51] 'O Messengers.⁵⁴ Eat of the good (and pure) things⁵⁵ and work righteousness;⁵⁶ surely I am Knowing of what you do.⁵⁷

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

A few modern commentators are inclined to believe that the allusion is to Egypt to which Maryam fled with her child to escape from Herod, "an oppressive and despotic tetrarch of Palestine." Majid quotes, "Egypt was the only place of refuge easily reached from Bethlehem. It was outside the dominion of Herod, under Roman government, and contained a population of at least a million Jews, who were more wealthy and enlightened than those of Palestine."

Alusi and Thanwi are also inclined to this opinion. But Yusuf Ali thinks we do not need to look far. It has already been mentioned (in 19: 22-24):

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَّتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَاصِيًا (٢٢) فَأَجَاءَهَا
الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ
هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا (٢٣) فَوَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا
تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا [مریم : ٢٢ - ٢٤]

"So she conceived him and retired with him to a remote place. And the birth pangs drove her to the trunk of (date) palm-tree. She cried, 'O that I had died before this and become forgotten, lost in oblivion.' He called her from below her, 'Grieve not. Your Lord has set below thee a rivulet.'" However, this

does not seem to be the most plausible explanation because of the usage of the word "aawayna-huma" in this present verse, which suggests providing a shelter to a mother afraid on account of her child. The two, who according to historical accounts, mysteriously disappeared from Palestine, were once again reported seen in Jerusalem only when Jesus Christ was twelve. A fair guess is that they had gone to Egypt. The present day Gospels also supports this. Ref. Matt. 2: 13-15 (Au.).

53. The translation of "ma`een" reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas as in Tabari.

54. Mawdudi explains: "Quite obviously this does not mean that all Messengers were assembled together at one particular place and addressed collectively. Rather, this manner of address simply signifies that the same directive was given to all Messengers who were raised at different times and in different places. In this sense, the Messengers represent a single group that had been entrusted with an identical Message."

Although *rusul* is in plural, the intended meaning is that individual Messengers were addressed at their own times to this effect (Alusi and others).

55. That is, eat of the lawful things. Hence all Prophets were very specific about consuming only the lawful. Once Umm 'Abdullah b. Shaddad sent across a bowl of milk to the Prophet. He returned it with a question, "Where did you get a goat from?" It is only when she explained that she had bought one, that he drank from it. He remarked at that time, "Messengers have been instructed to partake of only the lawful" (Razi). The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir).

Zamakhshari adds: It is said that the "good and the pure" things should have three qualities: lawful, clean, and invigorating. Lawful is that by which Allah has not been disobeyed; pure, that which does not lead to man's forgetfulness of Allah; and strength-giving that which holds together the body and safeguards the mind.

Majid writes: "God's apostleship is not at all identical with asceticism. The passage may well imply the condemnation of the abstemious practices of the Christian monks."

Muhammad Asad has another line of approach. He writes: "This rhetorical apostrophe to all of God's apostles is meant to stress their humanness and mortality, and thus to refute the argument of the unbelievers that God could not have chosen 'a mortal like ourselves' to be His message-bearer: an argument which overlooks the fact that only human beings who themselves 'partake of the good things of life' are able to understand the needs and motives of their fellow-men and, thus, to guide them in their spiritual and social concerns."

56. This implies that pure and lawful food helps generate righteous deeds (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi strikes another note: "The word *at-tayyibat* used in the Qur'an signifies things that are at once clean in themselves and which are obtained through clean and lawful means.

"The directive to partake clean things strikes at the two extremes of monasticism and Epicureanism and brings into relief the moderate and balanced approach which characterizes Islam. A Muslim should neither deny himself lawful things, nor should he hanker after everything of the world without distinguishing between that which is lawful and that which is not.

[52] And surely this Ummah of yours is one Ummah,⁵⁸ and I am your Lord; so fear Me.⁵⁹

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٥٢﴾

“It is also significant that the directive to partake of the clean things precedes the directive to act righteously. This suggests that righteous behavior becomes absolutely meaningless if it is not accompanied with the lawfulness of what one eats and the lawfulness of the earning that enables that eating. The very first condition of being righteous is that man should subsist on what is lawful.”

According to a *hadith*, the Prophet said,

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَا أَمَرَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ فَقَالَ { يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ } .. ثُمَّ ذَكَرَ الرَّجُلَ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ ثُمَّ يَمُدُّ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ وَعُغْدِي بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابَ لِذَلِكَ

“People. Allah is pure and likes pure things.” He followed this statement by reciting the above verse and then added: “A person undertakes a long journey. His clothes are soiled and his hair is disheveled. But the food that he eats is unlawful, the drink that he drinks is unlawful, the dress

that he wears is unlawful, and his body has been nourished on what is unlawful. He raises his hands to the sky and prays: ‘O my Lord! O My Lord!’ How can his prayer be answered?” (Ibn Kathir, Mawdudi).

57. This verse could be linked to the previous one where Jesus and Maryam were mentioned. This particular one seems to be saying, “(We informed the two that Our command to previous Messengers was of the same nature viz., “O Messenger! Eat of the good and pure things and work righteous deeds.”

58. The textual *Ummah* of both the occurrences has been interpreted as “religion” by Ibn Jurayj as in Ibn Jarir.

However, the possibility remains that it is “nation” that is meant. That is, “O Messengers, these your nations were one nation which believed in Allah’s Oneness and worshipped Him alone.”

59. Asad comments: “As in 21: 92, the above verse is addressed to all who truly believe in God, whatever

[53] But their (followers) split up their affair between themselves into segments⁶⁰: every faction rejoicing in what was with them.⁶¹

فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

their historical denomination. By the preceding reference to all of God's apostles the Qur'an clearly implies that all of them were inspired by, and preached, the same fundamental truths, notwithstanding all the differences of the time and the social development of their followers."

60. The textual word "zubur" (sing. *zabarab*) is for pieces, or, as done above, segments (Alusi); or perhaps sects (Au.).

Mujahid and Qatadah are reported to have said that the textual word "zubur" is to be understood as books or scriptures. That is, each group had a book of its own (cut out of the original: Au.), relied on it, used it as a source of doctrine and Law, in place of the original text, believing not (adds Ibn Jarir), that the Truth is one, even if (add other commentators), laws, especially the derived ones, were different.

61. Qurtubi cautions that the verse applies to the principal matters of faith and not to derivatives or details of Law. (That is, it is disagreement over fundamental issues which leads

to the formation of sects. As for details, either those related to doctrines, or to the Law, there have been differences, but such differences do not make sects). Allah Himself said (5: 48),

لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا [المائدة : ٤٨]

"For every one of you We have prescribed a Law and a Way."

Asad expounds: "In the first instance, this verse refers to the various religious groups as such: that is to say, to the followers of one or another of the earlier revelations who, in their course of time, consolidated themselves within different 'denominations', each of them jealously guarding its own set of tenets, dogmas and rituals and intensely intolerant to all other ways of worship (*manasik*, see 22: 67). In the second instance, however, the above condemnation applies to the breach of unity within each of the established religious group; and since it applies to the followers of all the prophets, it includes the latter-day followers of Muhammad as well, and thus constitutes a prediction and condemnation of

[54] So leave them in their bewilderment⁶² for a while.

فَذَرْنَهُمْ فِي غَمَرْتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] Do they think that by the wealth and offspring,⁶³ with which We extend them,

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ
﴿٥٥﴾

[56] We are hastening to them the good things? Nay, they perceive not.⁶⁴

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ
﴿٥٦﴾

[57] Verily those who for fear of their Lord are in awe.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ
﴿٥٧﴾

the doctrinal disunity prevailing in the world of Islam in our times – cf. the well-authenticated saying of the Prophet quoted by Ibn Hanbal, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi and Darimi: “The Jews have been split up into seventy-one sects, the Christians into seventy-two sects, whereas my community will be split up into seventy-three sects.” (It should be remembered that in classical Arabic usage the number ‘seventy’ often stands for ‘many’ – just as ‘seven’ stands for ‘several’ or ‘various’ – and does not necessarily denote an actual figure; hence what the Prophet meant to say was that the sects and divisions among the Muslims of later days would become many, and even more numerous than those among the Jews and the Christians.”

62. (The textual term “*ghamrah*” is a bit difficult to translate). Literally,

it is for water of such depth as sufficient to drown a man (Shafi and others). Thus the word is used for what covers. Here it means bewilderment, confusion, heedlessness, and misguidance all put together (Qurtubi).

63. Note the order: “wealth” and then “offspring.” That is the order of preference by the people in general. They first vie for wealth. Satisfied on that, they go for children. However, if they fear that the children will come in the way of gathering wealth, then, they postpone having children, or cut down their number (Au.).

64. To paraphrase the last few verses, “Do those people who have split their religion into sects (each fundamentally different from another), imagine that it is because of this that the good things are being hastened to them? Rather not. They are being tried, and are led to further intransi-

gence and heedlessness thereby, but they do not perceive the plan” (Au.).

Allah said elsewhere (6: 178):

إِنَّمَا نُكَلِّمُهُمْ لِيُزِدُوا إِيمَانًا [آل عمران : ١٧٨]

“We give them respite so that they may increase in sinfulness.”

And (68: 44):

فَدَرَبْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَدِّبْ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ
حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ [القلم : ٤٤ ، ٤٥]

“So, leave Me alone with such as deny this speech. We shall gradually lead them (to their destruction) in a manner they will not know.”

We also have a report in Ahmad in this context. The Prophet said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَسَمَ بَيْنَكُمْ أَخْلَاقَكُمْ كَمَا قَسَمَ بَيْنَكُمْ
أَرْزَاقَكُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُعْطِي الدُّنْيَا مَنْ يُحِبُّ
وَمَنْ لَا يُحِبُّ وَلَا يُعْطِي الدِّينَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَحَبَّ فَمَنْ
أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ الدِّينَ فَقَدْ أَحَبَّهُ وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا
يُسَلِّمُ عَبْدٌ حَتَّى يَسَلَّمَ قَلْبُهُ وَلِسَانُهُ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ حَتَّى
يَأْمَنَ جَارُهُ بِوَأَيْتِهِ قَالُوا وَمَا بِوَأَيْتِهِ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ قَالَ
عَشْمُهُ وَظَلْمُهُ وَلَا يَكْسِبُ عَبْدٌ مَالًا مِنْ حَرَامٍ فَيُتَفَقَّ
مِنْهُ فَيُبَارِكَ لَهُ فِيهِ وَلَا يَتَصَدَّقُ بِهِ فَيُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَلَا يَتْرُكُ
خَلْفَ ظَهْرِهِ إِلَّا كَانَ زَادَهُ إِلَى النَّارِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
لَا يَمْحُو السَّيِّئَ بِالسَّيِّئِ وَلَكِنْ يَمْحُو السَّيِّئَ بِالْحَسَنِ
إِنَّ الْحَبِيثَ لَا يَمْحُو الْحَبِيثَ

“Allah has distributed between you good conduct as He has distributed among you provision. Indeed Allah bestows this world upon him He loves and Him He

does not. But He does not bestow faith and practice except upon him He loves. So, whomsoever He led to religion, loved him. And, by Him in whose hands is Muhammad’s life, a man does not become a Muslim until his heart and tongue become Muslim. And, that person has not believed from whose harm his neighbors are not at peace.” They asked him, “What do you mean by the harm?” He answered, “His wrongdoing and misbehavior.” Then he continued, “And, a man does not earn wealth by unlawful means, and then spends it, to be blessed in it. Nor is his charity accepted if he offered it; and he does not leave it behind him but is his provision for (the journey) to the Fire. Verily, Allah does not wipe out evil with evil, but rather, wipes out evil with the good. Surely, the impure does not wipe out the impure” (Ibn Kathir).

Asad remarks: “(the verse) implies, firstly, that worldly prosperity is not the ultimate good, and secondly, that the breach of the unity spoken of in the preceding passage was, more often than not, an outcome of mere worldly greed and of factional striving after power.”

[58] *And those who believe in the revelations of their Lord.*⁶⁵

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] *And those who associate not (aught) with their Lord.*⁶⁶

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] *And those who give whatsoever they give while their hearts are in fear, that to their Lord they are to return.*⁶⁷

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ
أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

In simpler lines of Mawdudi, “.. it needs to be emphasized that the present life is meant essentially to test man rather than to recompense him for his works. As far as man’s moral acts are concerned, even if there is a recompense for them during this worldly life, the recompense is on a very limited scale and is highly imperfect. Additionally, in the recompense itself there is an ingrained element of test and trial. It would be a misconception of the highest magnitude, rather a folly, if we were to disregard the above and believe that whatever good a person receives here is in reward for his goodness, and that receiving such a reward is an index of the recipient being right, righteous, loved and favored by God. Likewise, the disposition to regard anyone who is hit by misfortunes as one who is necessarily under ‘punishment’, is in the wrong, unrighteous, and among those who are disapproved of by God is quite unjustified.”

65. Mention of “belief in Allah’s revelations,” comes after the mention of fear of the Lord. We have to look for a meaning, then, other than the apparent. And that possibly is, ‘these people ponder over the revelations even now, and then and freshly believe in them as the Truth from their Lord.’ That implies new understanding and newest application (based on Alusi).

66. It should be obvious that since the passage is speaking of believers, this verse is talking not of open association, such as of belief in pagan deities, but rather, of hidden and subtle association such as, e.g., showing off (riyaa’) or dependence on other than Allah (based on Alusi).

67. Hasan has said: That is, although they are constant in performing deeds of charity, they are not sure such deeds will be enough to rescue them from the punishment of the Hereafter. Others of the *Salaf* are close to this meaning. ‘A’isha in fact

[61] They (are the ones) who are hastening on to good, and they are outracing to them.⁶⁸

أُولَئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْحَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ هَاهُنَا
سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] And We charge not any soul save to its capacity. And with Us is a Book that speaks the Truth,⁶⁹ and they shall not be wronged.⁷⁰

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ تَفْسًا إِلَّا آِلًا وَسِعَهَا وَلَدِينَا
كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ
﴿٦٢﴾

[63] Nay, but their hearts are (covered) in bewilderment over this,⁷¹ and they have deeds besides that, of which they are workers.⁷²

بَلْ قَلُوبُهُمْ فِي عَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا وَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ
مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

asked the Prophet in reference to this verse, “Is it those who commit wrong and so are in fear?” He replied,

هو الذي يذنب الذنب وهو وجل منه؟ فقال: لا
وَلَكِنْ مَنْ يَصُومُ وَيُصَلِّي وَيَتَصَدَّقُ وَهُوَ وَجِلٌ

“Rather not. But a man fasts, prays, and gives in charity but is fearful that it might not be accepted” (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi).

That is because they fear they might be short on the requirements or on purity of intention (Au.).

‘A’isha’s report has been declared trustworthy by Albani also (S. Ibrahim).

Hasan al-Busri also said, “A believer gathers together ihsaan (good deeds and intentions) and apprehensions, while the hypocrite gathers together evil (deeds) and false hopes (Ibn Jarir, Shabbir and others). Hasan is also reported to have said, “We have

met people (i.e., the Companions) who were more fearful on the score of their good deeds than you are on the score of your evil deeds (Qurtubi).

68. That is, they hasten to the good deeds (Se`di).

Another affordable interpretation is that of Ibn ‘Abbas who said, ‘good luck has preceded them’ (Ibn Jarir).

69. The allusion is to the Record of deeds (Ibn Jarir).

70. Majid comments: “(the wicked receiving never more than their due, and the virtuous receiving never less than their due).”

71. “Over this,” i.e., over the Qur’ān, whether it is a revelation or not (Ibn Jarir).

72. That is, apart from their disbelief in Allah and doubts over the Qur’ān, they have other evil deeds with which

[64] Till, when We seize their affluent ones with chastisement, at once they are groaning (in supplication).⁷³

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ
يَجْأَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] Groan not today; you shall certainly not be helped by Us.

لَا تَجْأَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَا تُنصَرُونَ
﴿٦٥﴾

[66] Indeed, My revelations⁷⁴ used to be recited upon you, but you would turn away on your heels,

فَدَكَانَتْ آيَاتِي تُثَلَّىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فُكِنْتُمْ
عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنكِصُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

they carry on. That is how Mujahid, Abu al-'Aaliyyah and others have explained it. They also expressed the possibility that there are other (evil) deeds that they are yet to perform, and which they will necessarily attempt (Qurtubi, Ibn Jarir).

Nonetheless, Abu Muslim's opinion was that the pronoun in "lahum" is for those who hasten in good deeds: i.e., those who are believers, do good deeds, but are in fear that their efforts might not be acceptable after all. It is these who have "deeds other than that," i.e., supererogatory good deeds that they put forward in hope of winning salvation; in which case, Razi adds, "ghamrah" (rendered as covered here) would be interpreted as (hearts of the believers) "covered in thoughts and apprehensions." Alusi's own opinion is that this is not an interpretation that one can feel comfortable with.

73. Apart from groaning, the root word "ja'ara" carries several other connotations such as the oxen's low, raising of the voice in supplication, submission and humility, or, vocally pleading, seeking help, etc. And, as Ibn Zayd, Ibn Jurayj and others have pointed out, that happened at Badr (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari).

According to Ibn Jurayj, the allusion by "those who were seized" was to those that died at Badr, while by "ja'ara" it is to those that were left in Makkah to moan, lament, and cry out their grief. Historians tell us that the Makkans mourned the loss at Badr for weeks during which their women would throw cloaks on the horses of the dead and parade them around in the city. But, adds Alusi, it seems more likely that the allusion is to what is going to happen in the Hereafter.

74. The translations of "aayaat" as revelations reflects the understand-

[67] Waxing proud against it,⁷⁵ uttering non-sense⁷⁶ in nightly sessions.⁷⁷

﴿٦٧﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ بِهِ سَامِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ

ing of several commentators such as Qurtubi (Au.).

75. "Against it:" to what is the allusion by "it?" Ibn `Abbas, Hasan, Qatadah and Dahhak – as in Ibn Jarir - have said that the allusion is to the *Haram*. That is, by virtue of it. In other words, the Makkans waxed proud because of the *Haram* around which they lived.

Other commentators also mention the above possibility.

76. "Uttering nonsense" is the translation of "tahjuruun" (textually occurring at the end of the verse). Its second possible meaning is, "they abandon" or "ignore" (the Truth) - Ibn Jarir and others. A third meaning is, points out Alusi, "obscenity."

77. The translation of "*saamiran*" as nightly conversation follows the understanding of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Sa`eed ibn Jubayr. A second interpretation is that the word lends the meaning of "being at peace." That is, they were at peace that by virtue of they being custodians of the Grand Mosque, they would not be chastised (Ibn Jarir).

Literally, "*samara*" is for moonlit night. It is in such nights that the people sat down in groups gossiping away their time (Shafi` and others).

Asad adds: "In combination with the phrase *kuntum ... tahjuruun*, this expression indicates the pursuit of endless, fruitless discussions divorced from all reality, or a mere play with words leading nowhere."

Depending on where a comma is placed in the verse, it could have different meanings. The present translation places it after "bihi". But, if it is placed earlier, then the rendering will be, "Waxing proud, uttering non-sense thereof in nightly sessions," in which case two other interpretations can be offered (Au.). One, the allusion by the preceding "bihi" is to the *Haram*. That is, they defile the *Haram* by conducting their nightly sessions there, talking nonsense. And two, the allusion is to the Prophet about whom they uttered all kinds of baloney in their nightly conversations (Ibn Kathir).

In view of this verse Ibn `Abbas has thought, according to a report declared trustworthy by Hakim, that

[68] *Have they not reflected over the Word, or⁷⁸ there has come to them what came not to their fathers of old?*⁷⁹

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا أَمْ يَأْتِ
آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

it is undesirable to spend time in nightly gossips (Shawkani).

Qurtubi adds: A report preserved in Muslim says that the Prophet used to delay the *'Ishaa* Prayer until the first third part of the night and disapproved of sleep before and gossip after it. The disapproval of sleep before the Prayers was because of the fear of one missing it. As for gossip after it, it was disapproved because one might talk of the disapproved things and sleep over it as the last deed of the day. One should rather terminate the day with a good deed. After all, Allah has created the night for rest. He said (25: 47):

{وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِيَاسَا وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا
وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا} [الفرقان: ٤٧]

"It is He who made for you the night a means of cover, the sleep (a means of) rest and made the day for spreading about."

Nonetheless, if one stays awake at night seeking knowledge, then there is no harm. Several reports from the Prophet and early Muslims lead to this opinion.

78. Ibn 'Abbas treated the textual "am" as "bal." That reverses the meaning of the verse which would then read as, "Nay, there has come to them what came not to their fathers of old" (Ibn Jarir).

79. (The good qualities of the Prophet were never hidden from the Quraysh. He was not simply one of them, but rather someone who was from one of their core families). Historians have preserved a sound report which says that the day he married Khadijah (fifteen years before he was commissioned), his uncle Abu Talib addressed the marriage party comprised of Quraysh and Mudar tribes in the following words: "Praise to God who made us the offspring of Ibrahim, the seeds of Isma'il, the stock of Ma'add, the race of Mudar, the guardians of His House, the custodians of His *Haram*, who provided us a home that is visited for pilgrimage, a sanctuary of peace, placing us over the common people as their rulers. As for this son of my brother, Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, he cannot be weighed against anyone but will be found weightier. As

[69] Or, did they not recognize their Messenger, that they are (of) him deniers?⁸⁰

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] Or, do they say he is possessed?⁸¹ Nay, he has brought them the Truth but most of them are averse to Truth.⁸²

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْتَرَتْهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

for the fact that he is a man of poor means, (I might remind that) wealth after all is one of those things that slip away fast. Now Muhammad, being of those whose family connections you know well, has asked Khadijah's hand – the daughter of Khuwaylid - offering her as mahr, part paid out in cash, and part pending, out of my wealth. And, by God, I believe he has a good future before him” (Alusi).

80. The allusion is to the fact that the Arabs contemporary to the Prophet were not unfamiliar with stories and traditions of the Middle-eastern Prophets who had in the past brought the message of God's Oneness. They were also familiar with the Peninsula Messengers such as Hud, Salih and Shu'ayb, whose accounts they had received, even if sketchily, from their elders. Finally, they greatly revered Ibrahim and Isma'il, whom they regarded as their own Prophets (Au.: with the substance from Mawdudi).

Shabbir adds: This verse seemingly contradicts another verse (36: 6) which says,

{لِيُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ} [يس: ٦]

“In order that you might warn a people whose forefathers were not warned.”

But that is not correct. For, the present verse is speaking of the distant forefathers, whereas that of *Surah Yaa Seen* is speaking of the immediate forefathers.

81. Majid remarks: “Note a reverberation of the old pagan priggishness in the dictum of a modern Christian: ‘The fundamental thing in him was that he was a pathological case.’ (MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam*, p. 63).”

82. “I.e., they hate to admit the truth: the reason being – as the sequence shows – that the world-view propounded by the Qur'an is not in accord with their own likes and dislikes or preconceived notions” (Asad).

[71] *Had the Truth⁸³ followed their caprices, surely the heavens and the earth and all those within them would have been ruined.⁸⁴ Nay, We have brought them their admonition, but they are turning away from their admonition.*

وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ
السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ بَلْ
أَتَيْنَاهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنِ
ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

Ibn Kathir reports Qatadah as having said, "It was reported to us that the Prophet met a man and told him, 'Come to believe.' He replied, 'You invite me to a thing that I have an aversion to.' The Prophet told him, 'Even if you are averse to it.' It is also reported that he told another man, 'Come to believe.' But it distressed him (to hear) and he thought himself above it. The Prophet told him, 'Consider. If you were on a rugged and toilsome path and then met a man whom you know by face and by family, and he invites you to an easier path, will you follow him?' The man replied, 'Yes.' He told him, 'By Him in whose hands is Muhammad's life, you are in a most rugged path if you remained on it, and I am inviting you to a path easier than it if you followed it.' It is also reported to us that the Prophet once told a man 'Come to believe.' But it distressed him too. So he asked him, 'Consider. If you knew two young men: one of them when he speaks, speaks the truth, and when you trust him with something he keeps the trust. Would

he be preferable to you or he who, when he speaks he lies, and when trusted, fails?' The man replied, 'Of course the man who, when he speaks, speaks the truth, and when trusted, fulfills the trust.' So the Prophet told him, "That is how you are in relation to your Lord."

83. Suddi, Abu Saleh and Ibn Jurayj have said that by "*Haq*" at this point, the allusion is to Allah. That is, "Had Allah followed..." (Ibn Jarir). Such as, for example, their suggestion (43: 31),

{لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ}
[الزخرف: ٣١]

"Why has not this Qur'ān been sent down upon a man from the two great townships?" (Ibn Kathir).

84. Far from the entire universe, even if a village should be subjected to whimsical desires, it will meet with its destruction (Shabbir).

Sayyid Qutb comments: "And, had the Truth followed their caprices, surely the heavens and the earth and

all those within them would have been corrupted,' for Truth is one, a single entity, whereas caprices are many and changeable. It is by one Truth that the world – the whole of it – can be successfully run. Its laws do not deviate (from their course) following someone's caprice. Its ways do not change following casual suggestions. Had the Truth followed all that deviated, capricious thoughts, or casual suggestions advocate, all would be destroyed: moral values, rules, principles, in fact, the human-kind itself. Scales and standards of judgment would have become a pot-pourri, and the whole of it would have swung between anger and pleasure, dislike and grudge, fear and hope, activity and passivity, and the rest of caprices, emotions, agitations and other influencing factors. Whereas, the nature of the existing universe, and its movement in the direction of a destination both require firmness, constancy and continuity on a firm principle, and a designed path, that neither alters nor swings in different directions, nor deviates (even momentarily).

“Following the above model adopted for the construction and running of the universe, Islam made human life and its law a part of the above principle – the whole being looked after by

Him who takes care of the whole universe as well as its component parts. Man then is a single component, a small part, of a universe that is submitted to the laws laid down for the whole. It is right and proper that He alone should lay down the laws for man who lays down the laws for the universe and runs both in wonderful coherence. Hence, the laws governing the world cannot bend down to man's will, which would simply destroy the whole.”

Mawdudi has another point to bring to our notice: “.. how can facts constantly conform to a myriad of mutually conflicting wishes? Foolish people fail to appreciate that if there is any discordance between their wishful thinking and reality, then it is their wishful thinking that is to blame rather than reality. In denying reality, such people cause no harm to it per se, instead they only harm themselves.

“This immense system of the universe is based on well-established realities and inalterable laws. Living in the framework of such a universe, it is imperative that man strive to bring his thoughts, wishes and conduct in conformity with reality. He should constantly apply himself, with the help of rational argument, experi-

[72] Or do you ask them for tribute? But your Lord's tribute is better,⁸⁵ and He is the best of providers.

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرْجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

ence and observation, to what reality indeed is. It is only the puerile who, at both mental and practical levels, adamantly cling to their preconceptions, wishes and biases and who attempt to show those realities as conforming to their preconceived ideas.”

85. As Allah said elsewhere (34: 47),

{قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنَّ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ} [سبأ: ٤٧]

“Say, ‘Whatever I have asked of the wage is yours. My wage is upon Allah alone.’”

And (42: 23),

{قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى} [الشورى: ٢٣]

“Say, ‘I do not ask for it any wage, except for kin-love’” (Ibn Kathir).

Zamakhshari points out – with Razi seconding him - that two terms have been used here: *kharj* and *kharaaj*. It is said that *kharj* is used for that donation that is voluntarily made, whereas *kharaaj* for that which a man is forced to hand out. However, by implication the word *kharj* lends the meaning of “a little sum” while *kharaaj* of “a great reward.”

Mawdudi elaborates: “Before embarking on his mission as the Message-bearer of Islam, he (the Prophet) was a fairly prosperous trader. After becoming involved in Islam, he began to face want and privation. Before he was designated as God’s Messenger, he was held in high esteem by his people. Thereafter, however, he was subjected to both verbal abuse and physical hurt, and even his life was at risk. In the past, he had lived a happy life with his family, but thanks to his mission, he became engaged in a struggle which left him little time for rest or peace. Moreover, the cause that he was [espousing] yielded no advantage to him directly. On the contrary, it antagonized virtually every element of his people so much so that his own kith and kin seemed bent on the utmost hostility towards him. In view of all this, who in the right mind would say that the work of the Prophet (peace be on him) was that of a self-seeker?”

“Self-seekers are wont to come forward as champions of tribal and national chauvinism. They use their ability and craftiness in a manner that enables them to assume the

[73] Indeed, you are inviting them to a Straight Path.⁸⁶

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] But surely those who do not believe in the Hereafter, are deviating from the Path.⁸⁷

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَآكِفُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

leadership of their people. Self-seekers are never advocates of unpopular causes; they are never the proponents of an idea that would frontally challenge the chauvinistic biases and prejudices of their people, let alone espouse an idea that negates the very foundation on which the tribal pre-eminence of the Makkan unbelievers rested.”

86. Majid writes, “A fact apparent even to the Prophet’s modern critics. ‘Mohammad’s bearing towards his followers, no less than towards his opponents, exhibits the assurance of being the vicegerent of God and the exponent of His will’ (Muir, p. 126).”

87. Ibn Kathir repeats an earlier quoted report from Imām Ahmad that reflects the truth about the Prophet’s followers of this day.

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَتَاهُ فِيمَا يَرَى النَّائِمُ الْمَلَكَانِ , فَقَعَدَ أَحَدُهُمَا عِنْدَ رِجْلَيْهِ , وَالْآخَرُ عِنْدَ رَأْسِهِ , فَقَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَ رِجْلَيْهِ لِلَّذِي عِنْدَ رَأْسِهِ: اضْرِبْ مِثْلَ هَذَا وَمِثْلَ أُمَّتِي , قَالَ: إِنَّ مِثْلَ هَذَا وَمِثْلَ أُمَّتِي كَمِثْلِ قَوْمٍ سَفَرُوا اسْتَهْوُوا إِلَى رَأْسِ مَقَارَةِ , فَلَمْ

يَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ مِنَ الرَّادِ مَا يَمْطُوعُونَ بِهِ الْمَقَارَةَ , وَلَا مَا يَرْجِعُونَ بِهِ , فَبَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ كَذَلِكَ إِذْ أَتَاهُمْ رَجُلٌ عَلَيْهِ خِلَّةٌ حَبِيرَةٌ , فَقَالَ: أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ وَرَدَتْ بِكُمْ رِيَاضًا مُعْشِبَةً , وَحِيَاضًا رَوَاءَ أَتَّبِعُونِي؟ قَالُوا: نَعَمْ , فَأَنْطَلِقُ بِهِمْ فَأُورِدُهُمْ رِيَاضًا مُعْشِبَةً , وَحِيَاضًا رَوَاءَ , فَأَكْلُوا , وَشَرِبُوا , وَأَسْمَتُوا , فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: أَلَمْ أَلْفَكُمُ عَلَى تِلْكَ الْحَالِ؟ قَالُوا: بَلَى , فَجَعَلْتُمْ إِنْ وَرَدَتْ بِكُمْ رِيَاضًا مُعْشِبَةً , وَحِيَاضًا رَوَاءَ أَنْ تَتَّبِعُونِي؟ قَالُوا: نَعَمْ , فَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ: صَدَقَ وَاللَّهِ لَتَسْبِعَنَّهُ , وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ: قَدْ رَضِينَاهَا نُقِيمُ عَلَيْهَا.

Ibn `Abbas says that two angels came to the Prophet in his dream. One of them stood near the head while another at the feet. Said he at the feet to the one at the head, “Strike a similitude for him and his followers.” The other said, “His example and that of his followers is like a people in journey who ended at the head of a place promising destruction. They did not have enough provision to either carry on further, or to return back. While they were in that fix there came to them a man in an expensive cloak. He asked them, ‘Do you think you will follow

me if I showed you a garden thick and green and an overflowing pond?' They answered, 'Of course yes.' So he led them to a thick green garden with an overflowing pond. They ate and drank to fatness. At that point he asked them, 'Did I not find you in that place in that (dire) situation, and I took a promise from you that if you followed me I would lead you to a thick green garden and an overflowing pond?' They said, 'Surely you did.' He asked, 'Now. Right ahead of you is a garden thicker than this and a pond overflowing better than this one. So, follow me.' So, a group said, 'By God he spoke the truth and we shall follow him.' But another group said, 'We are satisfied with this and shall remain here.'"

Another report from Abu Ya'la says,

إني ممسك بحجركم: هَلُمَّ عن النار، هلم عن النار، وتغلبوني وتقاومون فيها تقاوم الفرائش والجنادب، فأوشك أن أرسل حجركم وأنا فرطكم على الحوض، فتزدون علي معا وأشتاتا، أعرفكم بسيماكم وأسمائكم، كما يعرف الرجل الغريب من الإبل في إبله، فيؤذّب بكم ذات اليمين وذات الشمال، فأناشد فيكم رب العالمين: أي رب، قومي، أي رب أمّتي. فيقال: يا محمد، إنك لا تدري ما أحدثوا بعدك، إنهم كانوا يمشون بعدك القهقري على أعقابهم، فلأعرفن أحدكم يأتي يوم القيامة يحمل شاة لها ثغاء، ينادي: يا محمد، يا محمد. فأقول:

لا أملك لك شيئا. قد بلغت، ولأعرفن أحدكم يأتي يوم القيامة يحمل بعيرا له رُغاء، ينادي: يا محمد، يا محمد. فأقول: لا أملك شيئا، قد بلغت، ولأعرفن أحدكم يأتي يوم القيامة يحمل فرسا لها حمحمة، فينادي: يا محمد، يا محمد، فأقول: لا أملك لك شيئا، قد بلغت، ولأعرفن أحدكم يأتي يوم القيامة يحمل سقاء من آدم، ينادي: يا محمد، يا محمد: فأقول: لا أملك لك شيئا قد بلغت

"I am holding you by your clothes saying 'Away from the Fire, away from the Fire.' But you overcome me falling into it like the insects fall into it. It is possible that I might release you of your clothes, while I precede you at the Pond. So you will come to me in groups and individually. I would know you from your looks and by your names, just like a man know his camel among a herd. You will be taken to the left and the right. So I will plead to the Lord of the worlds, 'My people, O my Lord. My people, O my Lord.' It will be said, 'O Muhammad. You do not know what they did after you. They turned back on their heels.' I will know one of you on the Day of Judgment carrying a goat bleating, (and the man) pleading to me, 'O Muhammad, O Muhammad,' and I replying, 'I have no power for you against Allah. I have

[75] And, if We showed them mercy, and removed what is upon them of affliction,⁸⁸ surely, they would obstinately persist in their rebellion, wandering blindly.

وَلَوْ رَحَّمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ ضُرٌّ
لَلَّجُوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

already conveyed the message.' And, I will know one of you appear on the Day of Judgment carrying a camel growling and appealing to me, 'O Muhammad, O Muhammad,' and I replying, 'I have no power for you against Allah. I have already conveyed the message.' And, I will know one of you appear on the Day of Judgment carrying a horse neighing and appealing to me, 'O Muhammad, O Muhammad,' and I replying, 'I have no power for you against Allah. I have already conveyed the message.' And, I will know one of you appear on the Day of Judgment carrying a leather bottle pleading to me, 'O Muhammad, O Muhammad,' and I replying, 'I have no power for you against Allah. I have already conveyed the message.'"

The above report, says Ibn Kathir, has been doubted for its authenticity because of one of the narrators. But Nasa'i and Ibn Hibban have passed a favorable judgment about him. (The collector of *Kanz al-'Ummal* also

declared that the narrators are trustworthy (Au.).

88. The allusion is to the hardships of dry weather and hunger that the Makkans were then experiencing (Ibn Jarir). The Prophet had prayed against them, as reports of the *Sahihayn* say, that they be given the taste of seven years (of drought) like the seven years of Yusuf. Another cause of Makkan starvation was that Thumamah b. Uthaal had embraced Islam and cut off the Makkan trade routes (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi adds: According to some reports the Prophet had prayed against them while he was still in Makkah. And then repeated his prayers (for one whole month) at Madinah. When he raised himself from the second cycle (*raka'ah*) bow during the *Fajr* Prayers, he would say, "O Allah. Rescue Walid b. Walid, Salamah b. Hisham, 'Ayaash b. Rabi'ah, and other weak Muslims (detained at Makkah). O Allah tighten Your hold on Mudar. O Allah send upon them years like the years of Yusuf." Sometimes he prayed in the above

[76] We had (earlier) seized them in punishment,⁸⁹ but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they entreat (submissively).⁹⁰

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاَهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا
لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

manner after the *ruku`* of the last cycle of the *'Isha* Prayers. Those very days Thumamah b. Uthaal (leader of the Banu Bakr tribe) was captured and brought to Madinah. After three days of hesitation he declared his Islam and straightaway went to Makkah to perform *'Umrah*. When he said "*Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk*" in the Islamic manner the Makkans smelt trouble. They asked him, "Have you turned a Saabi?" He replied, "Rather not. I have become a Muslim." Then in reply to their rude gestures he threatened, "By Allah not a grain will reach you at Makkah without the Prophet's leave." The above two – the supplications and Thumaamah's resolve - led Makkans to starvation and according to one report the Quraysh wrote to the Prophet, (to pray for their relief) or as another narration says, sent Abu Sufyan, which happened a little before the fall of Makkah.

89. Ibn `Abbas reports that during the drought Abu Sufyan went to the Prophet and said, "I beseech you by Allah, and by the rights of blood. We have been reduced to eating

blood and animal hair" (which they cooked with blood: Qurtubi). Allah revealed this verse. According to another report Abu Sufyan came down to Madinah and said, "You killed our fathers with the sword and their children with hunger" (Ibn Jarir).

90. That is exactly what happened with the Makkans. The Prophet prayed for the removal of the drought, but it made no difference to their intransigence and arrogance.

An implied meaning of what Hasan said is that tribulations seem like coming from *Shaytan* if one does not take them in true Islamic spirit. "So, treat them as having been sent by Allah," he said, "by humbling yourselves and seeking His forgiveness" (Ibn Jarir).

Accordingly, once Wahab b. Munabbih was imprisoned. When he came out someone said, "Shall we not sing some poetry for you O Abu `Abdullah?" He replied, "I am at the other end of Allah's punishment." Allah has said, 'We have already seized them in punishment, but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they

[77] Until, when We opened on them a door to severe chastisement, behold, they are despairing therein.⁹¹

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

[78] It is He who produced for you (the faculties of) hearing,⁹² sights⁹³ and hearts;⁹⁴ little do you give thanks.⁹⁵

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] And it is He who scattered you in the earth, and to Him shall you be gathered back.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

[80] And, it is He who gives life and deals death, and His is the alternation of the night and day. Will you not then reason?

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] Nay, but they said the like of what the earlier ones said.

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] They said, 'What, when We are dead and have become dust and bones, are we indeed to be raised up again?

قَالُوا أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَأَنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] Surely, this we were promised, we and our forefathers, earlier (also). This is nothing but tales of the ancients.'

لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] Say, 'Whose is the earth and whoso thereon, if you know?'

قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

submissively entreat (Him).” Then he fasted for three days. He was asked, “What was that fast for?” He replied, “Something happened to us, so something had to be done.” That is, he was imprisoned, so he had to demonstrate his submission (Ibn Kathir).

91. The allusion is to further intensification of the dry season, accom-

panying hunger and starvation (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*).

92. Everywhere in the Qur’ān, hearing comes in singular form while other faculties come in plural. Alusi thinks that perhaps it is because “sam” is masdar and hence can be brought in singular form alone. Another modern explanation is that it is because one can only hear and make

sense of sound one at a time, whereas the eye can see a lot of things at one time (Au.).

93. The following should be an interesting reading on the eye:

The Eye

In construction, the eye is one of the most complicated and marvelous organs of the body. Although the actual process of seeing is performed by the brain rather than by the eye, the function of the eye is to translate the electromagnetic vibrations of light into patterns of nerve impulses to transmit to the brain for further processing. Without the eye in place, the brain can see nothing. But of course, we might also remind ourselves that it is neither the brain which sees nor the eye. Both are nothing but cells and cells cannot see. It is another reality that sees.

Outwardly, the eye consists of an eyelid and an eyeball. But hidden behind is a huge complexity. The eyeball consists of a lens covered at top and bottom with Iris diaphragm and both covered with a transparent liquid. The batting of the eyelids replaces the liquid. The liquid helps catch any dust that could damage the lens. The Iris diaphragm closes in bright light, decreasing the lens exposure, or opens in dim light, increasing the

exposure. In other words it serves the function of constantly varying the aperture.

Six muscles move the eyeball upward, downward, to the left, to the right, and obliquely. It is estimated that the eyes can focus on no less than 100,000 distinct points in the visual field. The muscles of the two eyes, working together, also serve the important function of converging the sight on any point being observed, so that the images of the two eyes coincide.

The whole of the eyeball is not the lens. It is only a thin convex layer in the front. The rest of the eyeball is transparent jelly. The light, (which is nothing but packets of photons) released by a shining body, is sent through the lens, where the image is inverted, through the whole of the eyeball (transparent jelly) and hits the inner spherical screen known as the retina.

The retina has several layers. At the surface are wire-like fibers that pass through a single hole (known as the blind spot) to become what are known as the optical nerves, and which end up at the brain. The rest of the retina consists of several layers of material. It is the first layer which acts as the electronic inter-

face to the brain. The incoming photons of light pass through it, and through other layers performing several functions to reach what are known as the Photocells. These are very special cells, in the shape of rods as against the roughly spherical cells of others parts of the body. The rod has a round head in front, a thin neck followed by the rod shaped body: placed vertical to the retina (horizontal to the body) and closely packed like match sticks in a box. There are about 125 million rod cells in each retina. The round head of the Photocell has in front a ball shaped nucleus which, like every one of the 100 trillion body cells, carries the DNA). Behind the head is the neck after which are the mitochondria. Known as power houses, the mitochondria are found in every single cell in thousands. Their function is to release energy for cellular operations while processing some 700 different kinds of chemicals. Behind this layer of mitochondria lies a layer of folded material meant for catching photons. The layered and folded form helps catch every photon that ever enters into the eye. Otherwise, the photons are small enough to pass through a single layer and emerge on the other side unscathed. This area then, which lies at the back of the

retina, and at the back of the horizontally placed cells, actually is the light gathering structure that traps the photons, to send back information to the front portion for processing and then forwarding the message to the brain through the nerve cells placed at the outer face of the retina. Thus, light first goes all the way to the end, where it is processed, then it is forwarded back to the frontally placed Electronic interface layer, to be finally sent to the brain through nerves: a very complicated arrangement but extremely efficient.

The whole of the back layer of the retina however is not lined up with rod shaped photocells. Somewhere in the centre is a small area, known as the fovea which has cone-shaped photocells which are less sensitive than the rest of the rod area. Thus the visual field of the eye is composed of a small central area of great sharpness (the fovea) somewhere at the center of the retina, surrounded by a larger area of lesser sharpness. In the latter area the sensitivity to light is great. As a result, dim objects can be seen at night on the peripheral part of the retina when they are invisible to the central part.

(The largest eye ever recorded is a colossal 370 mm in diameter be-

longing to a giant squid with 10 meter-tentacles. The size is intriguing because a 20 mm eye can perform the same functions as efficiently, and even an elephant has an eye ten times smaller).

We have given the details above to prove the point that the eye happens to be a very difficult organ to explain in evolutionary terms. For, evolutionists believe in gradual selection of slight but useful variations through millions of years before an organ can evolve to perfection. But the eye requires a whole apparatus, consisting of very specialized parts, designed and manufactured for specific functions, before it can start seeing anything. One of those parts could be explained away, somehow - say the Electronic data processing unit. But it has no function if the photocells are not in place. So, why should the body place millions of the processing unit, without the data to process? And so on. Every part fits well in a scheme. But, singly, none of it is of any use. An evolving eye would have been working in several directions, with several parts, in several places, to develop the final machinery, capable of seeing. Darwin, therefore, confessed, "To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances, for adjusting the focus to different

distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of the spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree.'

Recent findings about the variety it takes in design has further weakened the "blind watch-maker" theory. There certainly is a design behind the eye. Lobsters for example, have been discovered, to the embarrassment of the blind followers of Darwin, to have eyes whose facets are perfect squares. Now, curves, oblong shapes, and circles can be explained. But how to explain squares? Writes Michael J Denton, "One of the most striking features of the lobster eye which is obvious even on superficial inspection is that the facets of the eye are perfect squares. It is very unusual to meet with perfect square structures in biology. As one astronomer commented in *Science* (magazine): "The lobster is the most unrectangular animal I've ever seen. But under the microscope a lobster's eye looks like perfect graph paper" (*Nature's Destiny*, The Press Books, 1998, p.354). Surely, the eye seems to be a clear case of, in the words of Denton, "directed evolution," if there was any.

Looking at the development of the eye from another angle, one can say that it offers us an undeniable proof of a Creator's Hand. The eye depends on the light to see. But for the eye to see, it must be able to detect a particular type of radiation to be able to form an image. The sun sends out various kinds of energies: the Ultra Violet rays, the X-ray, the Gamma ray, the Light ray, the Infra red, the Radio waves, etc. Of these, it is only the Light rays, which have a convenient wavelength of only 0.5 microns, that are suitable for a clear vision. The UV, X-ray, or Gamma rays are highly destructive. They would destroy the biological lens (the sensitive retina) if allowed into it in large quantities.

Moreover, had the eye had been developed to see the Infra Red or Radio waves, it would have had to be several times the present size. In such an event, it would have lost the clarity of close vision, reducing the field of vision. Hence, Radio telescopes have to be very large to be able to form images. And they cannot spot objects close at hand. A human eye using Radio waves, (which have a wavelength of 100 centimeters), would have had to be of diameter 10 kilometers to perform the same function as the present eye. Even mi-

crowaves of 1 cm. wavelength would require an eye of diameter 10 meters to see with the same resolution.

It is only the Light ray which offers an image of high resolution. And the eye is very suitable to see them. Further, if the eyes had developed the capacity to see the UV, X-ray, or Gamma rays, it would have been too small and incapable of functioning. It is another thing that such an idea is entirely hypothetical. An eye capable of seeing these rays would need human cells in far smaller size, such as those that cannot have sub-cellular organisms.

Yet, the eye is capable of seeing what Radio telescopes can. This it has achieved by reducing the size of the photoreceptor cells to a mere 2 microns. (In fact, no vertebrate's eye is known to have a photoreceptor cell less than 2 microns in size). So that, although the amount of light falling on the retina from a distant star is 1 trillion (10¹²) less than that from brightly lit snowfield, it can see both. Michael J. Denton writes, "Consideration of the many conflicting criteria which must be satisfied in attempting to optimize resolution of a camera-type eye utilizing light of a wavelength of about 0.5 microns, including minimizing diffraction, maximizing illumination, maximiz-

ing field of view, minimizing spherical and chromatic aberration, etc., suggest that all-high resolution optical devices will necessarily be of the same design and dimensions. Each will consist of a small lightproof hollow rounded structure between 1 and 6 centimeter in diameter, containing at the front an aperture or "pupil" through which the light can enter, capable of varying from about 1 to 8 millimeters in diameter, and a lens through which the light can be focused onto a light-sensitive plate. In fact, all high resolution vertebrate eyes and high-quality modern cameras approximate this design" (*Nature's Destiny*, The Free Press, 1998, p. 63-64).

However, one need not be armed with the above scientific information, to reach the conclusion that the eye could not have evolved, but could have only been created in one go. From a common man's point of view there are two simple arguments against the evolutionary explanation with reference to the eye. First, how could the eye evolve without the biological organism knowing that there is something out there to see and that it will need a very complex apparatus to perform that function? Second, how did the biological organisms know that the objects outside were

colorful in order to develop an eye capable of seeing colors? Surely, they could have gone on seeing objects in black and white without realizing that the world is colorful.

That there is an external Power acting on us, is brought to light by an amazing phenomenon revealed by modern research. If a special spectacle is placed before the eye, which blinds the eye to the rest of the world, but which has a lens that inverts the images going into the eye, then the person sees an inverted image of everything. He sees, e.g., that the sky is below and the earth above. He has great difficulty moving about or picking up a thing. However, this is for a short period of about 15 days. If the spectacle is worn continuously for more than that period, one fine day the eye inverts the images, so that everything becomes normal for the person, as if the spectacle is not there. And, when the special spectacle worn for several weeks is removed, the eye once again sees everything upside down: the earth above and the sky below. It needs another 15 days or so to once again invert the images to see the earth below and the sky above. Who tells the eye or the brain of the spectacles' special effect, if they are no more than electronic data processing machinery? (Au.)

[85] They will surely say, 'Allah's.' Say, 'Will you not then heed?'⁹⁶

﴿٨٥﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

[86] Say, 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Great `Arsh?'⁹⁷

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

94. Yusuf Ali comments, "As elsewhere, 'heart' is to be understood as the seat both of feeling and intelligence. 'All means by which knowledge can be gathered, judgement formed, and goodness cultivated, are provided for you by Allah. If you are grateful, you would use those in His service, which is expressed in your service to your fellow men. But instead you ignore these gifts, question Allah's Providence, and blaspheme against Him."

Also see note 90 of *Surah Al-Hajj*.

95. Commenting on "little do you give thanks" Abu Muslim has said that the meaning is not that you thank little, but rather you do not thank at all. It is similar to what is said about an ungrateful, argumentative man, "How little he thanks!" (Razi)

96. Yusuf Ali tries to clear modern man's mind, answer a recurring question, and exhorts to belief, "If their argument is that such things about the future life cannot be known or proved, they are referred to the things

which are actually before them. The tangible things of the earth – can they postulate their order or government except by a Power or Force or Energy outside them? They will admit that there is such a Power or Force or Energy. We call it Allah. Go a step further. We see a sublime Universe in the heavens above, stretching far beyond our ken. They will admit its existence and its grandeur. We ask them to entertain a feeling of reverence for the Power behind it, and to understand their own feeling and their dependence upon that Power."

97. As says a well-known *hadith*:

ما السموات السبع مع الكرسي إلا كحلقة ملقاة بأرض فلاة وفضل العرش على الكرسي كفضل الفلاة على الحلقة

"The seven heavens and seven earths are no more than a ring thrown into the desert when compared to the Kursiyy. And the Kursiyy is similarly comparable to the `Arsh." And Dahhak reports Ibn `Abbas as saying that the `Arsh has been so named because of its great height (Ibn Kathir).

[87] They will surely say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Will you not then fear?'⁹⁸

﴿٨٧﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

[88] Say, 'In whose hand is the sovereignty of all things⁹⁹ - who protects but is not protected, if you know?'

﴿٨٨﴾ قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

[89] They will surely say, 'Allah's.' How then are you bewitched?¹⁰⁰

﴿٨٩﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ

[90] Nay, but we have conveyed them the Truth and indeed they are liars.¹⁰¹

﴿٩٠﴾ بَلْ أَنْتِنَا هُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ

98. On the same note as the previous one, Yusuf Ali continues, "If this great and glorious Universe inspires you with awe, surely the Power behind is more worthy of your awe, especially if you compare your dependence and its dependence upon Him."

99. The textual "*malakut*", (lit. dominion, sovereignty: Au.), has been understood by Mujahid as meaning treasures (Ibn Jarir).

(That should explain the Qur'anic answer to the question about *mala-kut* as "*lillah*" [Allah's] - Au.

100. "Sahar is not only 'bewitched' but also 'be turned away from his course or way'" (Majid). That is, it is also used in the sense of 'khad' (deception) - Au.

And Yusuf Ali once again, "The order and unity of purpose in the

Universe argue unity of design and goodness in its Maker. Is it not then sheer madness for you to run after fancies and fail to understand and obey His Will? It is delusion in you to seek other than Allah."

101. Asad explains the verse and shows the connection with the next, "Lit., 'they are liars' - i.e., they deceive themselves by asserting that they believe in God and, at the same time, rejecting the idea of a life after death, which - in view of the fact that many wrongdoers prosper in this world while many righteous lead a life of suffering - is insolubly bound up with the concept of divine justice. Apart from this, a denial of the possibility of resurrection implies a doubt as to God's unlimited power and, thus, of His Godhead in the true sense of this concept. This latter doubt often finds its expression

[91] Allah did not take to Himself any son¹⁰² and there never was any god with Him; else each god would have carried off what He created,¹⁰³ and some of them would have risen against the others.¹⁰⁴ Glory to Allah, above what they ascribe.¹⁰⁵

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ
إِلَهِ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا
يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

[92] Knower of the Unseen and the seen, far above what they associate (with Him).

عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَالَى عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] Say, 'My Lord! If you should show me that with which they are threatened,

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيئِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

in the mystic belief in a multiplicity of divine powers: and it is to this erroneous belief that the next verse alludes."

102. "The Arab polytheists of the time also claimed that their deities were God's offspring" (Mawdudi).

103. "... implying that in such a hypothetical case (of several gods), each of the gods would have been concerned only with his own sector of creation, thus causing complete confusion in the universe" (Asad).

104. Ibn Rushd discusses the question of Allah's Oneness in his Faith and Reason in Islam (which is a translation of three of his treatises, "Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah fi 'Aqa'id al-Milla, Fasl al-Maqal and Al-Damimah). He presents the Ash'ari method of argument, which happens to be the argument for-

warded by most Muslim philosophers (*mutakallimun*) of the past and adopted by quite a few commentators including Ibn al-Qayyim (Badae'). In Ibn Rushd's words, "(The Ash'arites maintain that) 'If there were two [gods] or more, it would be possible for them to disagree, and if they disagree, their [disagreement] would involve only three alternatives: (1) either they would all accomplish what they desired, or (2) no one would attain what he desires, or (3) only one of them would accomplish what he desires but not the other.' They add that it is impossible that none of them could accomplish what he desires, for if this were the case then the world neither be existing nor non-existing. Moreover, it is impossible for what they both want to come to be, for the world would then be existing and non-existing at

the same time. Thus, the only alternative left is that what one of them wishes will be accomplished, while what the other desires will be thwarted. Accordingly, the one whose will is not fulfilled is impotent, and the impotent cannot be a god.”

However, Ibn Rushd finds the above method inadequate on philosophical grounds and offers his own argument. He writes: “... As for denying the divinity to any other than He, the religious method in this regard is the one that God Almighty has spoken of in His Precious Book in three verses. The first is the saying of the Almighty: ‘Were there in them both [heaven and earth] other gods than Allah, they would surely have been ruined.’ (21: 22) The second is the saying of the Almighty, ‘Allah did not take to Himself a child and there was never any god with Him; or else each god would have carried off what He created, and some of them would have risen against the others. Exalted be Allah above what they ascribe.’ (23: 91) The third is the saying of the Almighty, ‘Say, “If there were other gods with Him, as they say, then surely they would have sought access to the Lord of the Throne.”’ (17: 42)

“The meaning of the first verse is implanted in the instincts [of man]

by nature. It is self-evident that if there are two kings, the actions of each one being the same as those of the other, it would not be possible [for them] to manage the same city, for there cannot result from agents of the same kind one and the same action. It follows necessarily that if they acted together, the city would be ruined, unless one of them acted while the other remained inactive, and this is incompatible with the attributes of divinity. When two actions of the same kind converge on one substratum, that substratum is corrupted necessarily. [This] is the meaning of the saying of the Almighty: ‘Were there in them both [heaven and earth] other gods than Allah, they would have surely been ruined.’” (Faith and Reason in Islam, p.39-41, tr. by Ibrahim Najjar, One-world Publications, Oxford, 2001).

Yusuf Ali summarizes the argument, “The multiplicity of gods is intellectually indefensible, considering the unity of Design and Purpose in His wonderful Universe.”

We might add here that apart from theory, the created world itself offers convincing proofs of Allah’s oneness. Two aspects may be noted. First: an amazing phenomenon is that in whatever direction the observatories

[94] Then, my Lord! Place me not among the wrongdoing people.¹⁰⁶

رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

[95] Although verily, to show you wherewith We threaten them, We are surely Able.

وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

are turned, they report back that the universe is more or less just the same all around; that is, there is an almost uniform pattern of distribution of stars, galaxies, nebulae and other cosmic material. Technically known as 'homogeneity' it has defied explanation. If the 'Big Bang' theory, including its Inflationary version, is correct, then how is homogeneity to be explained? The consequence of the Big Bang would have been that matter would be found unevenly distributed in space. Uniform distribution points to a Hand in its making. A second noteworthy phenomenon is that the whole observable universe is run by a single set of physical laws, which in fact can be reduced to the four fundamental Forces of Nature: the weak force, the strong force, the electromagnetic force and the gravitational force. If that had not been the case, we would not have been able to receive data from the cosmos, analyze it and form meaningful conclusions. Thus, the unity of the created world, and unity of laws lead to

the unity of the Creator, or His Oneness (Au.).

105. "To suppose that Allah has a son or family or partners or companions is to have a low idea of Allah, Who is high above all such relationships. He is the One True God and there can be none to compare with Him" (Yusuf Ali).

106. This, of course, does not mean that there was any danger that the Prophet (peace on him) would suffer the same fate as the evildoers if Allah's chastisement descended. But, rather, the chastisement – if sent down - would be of such nature that even those who have no fear of it should better seek not to witness it. It also emphasizes, by allusion, to the notice of the believers, that when Allah's punishment comes upon a people as retribution for their collective misdeeds, there is some likelihood of the righteous being affected by it (with a point from Alusi).

Accordingly, one of the Prophet's words of supplication – in Tirmidhi

[96] *Repel the evil with that which is better.*¹⁰⁷
*We are most knowing of what they attribute
 (to you).*

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ
 بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] *And say, 'My Lord! I seek refuge in You
 from the whisperings of the Satans.'*¹⁰⁸

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ
 ﴿٩٧﴾

and Ahmad and trustworthy - runs
 on the same line. It says:

وإذا أردت بعبادك فتنة فاقبضني إليك غير مفتون

“If You wish to try a people
 (i.e., chastise them), then, take
 me back unto You untried” (Ibn
 Kathir).

Zamakhshari offers another explanation: One might supplicate to gain what one knows as sure to come from Allah, as well as seek His refuge from what he knows is not going to strike him, for reasons of obedience, humbleness - and offer readiness to submit to whatever comes. The Prophet used to seek Allah's forgiveness seventy times during a session, not because he was a sinner, but to demonstrate his humbleness and self-abasement before the Creator. How nice Hassan's comment on Abu Bakr's statement who said when installed as a *Khalifah*, “I have been made in charge although I am not the best of you.” Hasan remarked, “Of course he knew that he was the best of them, but he was being hum-

ble.”

Yusuf Ali draws the obvious conclusion: “In other words, we must eschew the society of evil ones.”

107. Ibn Abi Hatim and Abu Nu'aym (in his *Hilyah*) have recorded Anas as saying (in explanation of this verse): “If someone points out a defect in his brother, which he does not have, then let him say, ‘If what you say is untrue, then I pray to Allah that He forgive you. But if you are true then I seek from Allah that He forgive me’” (Alusi).

108. “*Hamaza*” is to prod (or prick, which Ibn Abbas explained as suggestions, incitement from the Satans: Ibn al-Qayyim [*Badaae'*]). E.g., the iron piece that is fixed on to the heel of a shoe to prod the riding animal is called “*mahmaaz*.” Satans prod men to sin in a similar fashion (so that they jump to evil deeds) - Alusi. It has also been said, adds Ibn al-Qayyim, that “*Hamaza*” refers to general Satanic suggestions or provocation, while “*nafakha*” (or “*nafatha*”) are

[98] And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they should attend me.¹⁰⁹

﴿٩٨﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٨﴾

for specific suggestions, i.e., suggestions to specific purposes. It may also be noted that evil can have Satanic as well as human sources. The previous verse instructs that human evil be thwarted by returning with what is better, whereas Allah's help is to be sought for evils of Satanic origin.

Ibn Kathir adds: Hence the Prophet's Prayer-words,

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من الشيطان الرجيم من همزه
ونفخه ونفثه

“O Allah I seek Your protection against Satan the outcast – from his urgings, suggestions, and blows.”

The *hadith* is in Ahmad which Hakim declared *Sahih* (Au.).

109. Accordingly, Jabir reported: I heard Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) say: “Satan is present with everyone of you in everything he does. He is present even when a man eats. So if any one of you drops a mouthful he should remove away anything dirty and eat the rest and not leave it for the devil; and when he finishes (food) he should lick his fingers, for he does not know in what

portion of his food the blessing lies.”

Ibn Kathir adds: The Prophet has, therefore, instructed us that we spell Allah's name at the start of every act. One of his Prayer-words preserved by Abu Da'ud says,

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من الهدم، وأعوذ بك من التردّي،
وأعوذ بك من الغرق، والحرق والهزم، وأعوذ بك أن
يتخبطني الشيطان عند الموت، وأعوذ بك أن أموت
في سبيلك مدبراً، وأعوذ بك أن أموت لديغاً.”

“O Allah! I seek Your refuge from collapsing, I seek Your refuge from falling down (from a height), I seek Your refuge from drowning, burning, and extreme old age. I seek Your refuge that *Shaytan* should confuse me at the time of death, and I seek Your refuge that I should die fleeing from the battle field, and I seek Your refuge that I should die bitten” (Ibn Kathir).

The above *hadith* is also found slightly differently worded in *Al-Jami' as-Saghir* of Suyuti, and is presumed to be of good strength (Au.).

Ibn Kathir also reproduces a report of Ahmad that says, “The Prophet used to teach us words of supplica-

[99] Till, when death comes to one of them he says, 'My Lord! Send me back,¹¹⁰

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾

tion that were to be said at bedtime if in a fearful state:

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَاتِ مِنْ عَذَابِهِ وَعِقَابِهِ وَشَرِّ عِبَادِهِ، وَمِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَأَنْ يَخْضُرُونَ

“I seek refuge in Allah’s complete words from His anger, punishment, and from the evil of His bondsmen; and from the prompting of the Satans and that they should come near me.”

The reporter added, “`Abdullah ibn `Amr (b. al-`Aas) used to teach his mature children these words to be said at bedtime. As for those who were too young to say it meaningfully, he would write down for them on a piece of paper and hang it by their necks.”

This report is also in Abu Da’ud, Tirmidhi and Nasa’i. However, Tirmidhi gave the *hadith* a *Hasan Gharib* tag.

Muhammad b. `Abdul Rahman states that the report is declared *Sahih* by Hakim. (But, Hakim added the words that there is difference in opinion over the *hadith*: Au.).

Accordingly, Shah Abdul Haq has thought that wearing of amulets is

allowed in Islam. But this is disputed. However, what is not disputed is that the use of amulets that have pagan words in them. They are outlawed (*Tuhfah*).

Shamsul Haq Azeemabadi notes that according to Jazari too, use of amulets is allowed although the matter is disputed. Nevertheless, Ahmad and others have few other reports which say that the Prophet taught these words for insomnia and other sleep disorders (*`Awn al-Ma`bood*). That is, a second set of reports do not have the statement about `Abdullah ibn `Amr having ??? h+ung the words by the neck of the children.

110. (The textual “irji`uni” is in plural addressing a group. But the word is preceded by “Rabbi” meaning, “My Lord” – in singular: Au.). It seems the unbelievers are addressing both Allah as well as the angels through one short sentence: “My Lord! Send me back.” (Ibn Jarir). Or, to put it differently, “O Lord [and O angels] send me back” (Mawdudi). But it could be a plural of respect (Majid), addressing one who is worthy of it (Mawdudi), a usage that

[100] Haply I could work righteousness in that I left (behind).’ By no means! It is but a word that he utters;¹¹¹ and ahead of them is Barzakh¹¹² until the Day they shall be raised.

لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا
كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى
يَوْمٍ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

can be demonstrated with a couplet (Zamakhshari and Razi); although, “such a plural is not ordinarily used in addressing Allah” (Yusuf Ali). A third possibility is to express recurrence. That is, the unbeliever will recurrently say, ‘Send me back, send me back’ (Qurtubi, Asad).

111. It would be futile to send them back, for, in that case, there can be two situations, (1) the memory of life on earth, that of the grave, and that of the Resurrection and accounting is retained. In this situation, they will not undergo any trial and will lose the right to choose by their free will. Alternatively (2), the entire memory is erased for them to step into the world, once again, as they did before: infants, not knowing anything. But, given the long experience of receiving the Truth but rejecting it out of pride, despite having recognized it as the truth, the attitudes would be repeated and the exercise futile (Au., with a point from Mawdudi) – although, in actual fact, the whole human life-cycle will have to be repeated to test them (Au.).

112. Literally, *Barzakh* is for a barrier. Here it stands for, according to Ibn Jarir, the barrier that makes it impossible for the unbelievers from returning to past life on earth. In general, adds Ibn Jarir, the word also stands for the world in between the two worlds: this present world and the Hereafter. Abu Umamah was in a funeral. When the dead body was placed in the grave he remarked, “This is the *Barzakh* until the day they will be resurrected.” Mujahid, Ibn Zayd, Dahhak, and others held the same opinion.

Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir have similar comments to make.

Majid quotes Dr. Iqbal, “(*Barzakh*) ... a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego’s attitude towards time and space ... a state in which the ego catches a glimpse of fresh aspects of Reality, and prepares himself for adjustment to these aspects (*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*).

To escape from the allegorical, one might modify the above by saying, “... a state of consciousness (in the

[101] Then, when the Trumpet is blown, that Day there will be no ties of kinship between them anymore,¹¹³ nor will they ask after one another.¹¹⁴

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ
يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

grave) characterized by ..” (Au.).

113. Thanwi cautions us that the breaking up of the ties will not be absolute. It will be experienced by the unbelievers and wrongdoers. The Qur'an said (43: 67),

{ الْأَخْلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ }
[الزخرف: ٦٧]

“(Close) friends that day will be enemy unto each other – but for the pious.”

As for the true believers (although they will forget each other when the Trumpet is given the first blow), their ties will remain on Judgment Day. The Qur'an said (52: 21),

{ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ
ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ } [الطور: ٢١]

“As for those who believed and their offspring followed them in faith, We shall join them with their offspring.”

Further, there are reports that the Prophet is an exception. Blood ties with him will not be broken. He said in a *hadith*,

فاطمة بضعة مني يقبضني ما يقبضها و يبسطني ما يبسطها

يبسطها و إن الأنساب يوم القيامة تنقطع غير نسبي
و سبي و صهري

“Fatimah is a part of me. That angers me which angers her, and that pleases me, which pleases her. And all blood ties will be severed on the Day of Judgment except for my blood ties, my connection and my wedlock ties.” (Haythami declared it *Sahih*: S. Ibrahim). The first part of the *hadith*, (i.e., about Fatimah) is in the *Sahihayn* in slightly different words.

He also said, as recorded by Ahmad,

ما بال رجال يقولون إن رحم رسول الله صلى
الله عليه وسلم لا تنفع قومه ؟ بلى والله إن رحمي
موصولة في الدنيا والآخرة، وإني أيها الناس فرط لكم
إذا جئتم، قال رجل: يا رسول الله أنا فلان بن فلان،
فأقول لهم: أما النسب فقد عرفت ولكنكم أحدثتم
بعدي وارتدتم الفهقري

“What’s the matter with men who say that the blood ties of the Apostle of Allah will not be of any profit to anyone. Why not? My blood ties are connected in this world and in the Hereafter. And I will, O people, precede you

[102] Then, he whose scales are heavy,¹¹⁵ those then, they are the prosperers.

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] While he whose scales are light, they are the ones who lost their souls, dwelling in Jahannum forever.

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(at the Pond). A man will (come and) say, ‘Messenger of Allah. I am so and so, son of so and so.’ I will tell them, ‘As for the lineage, I recognize it. But you did things after me and turned back on your heels.’”

We also have on record ‘Umar’s words, who said when he married ‘Ali’s daughter Umm Kulthum, “By Allah, I have no other objective (behind this marriage) except that I heard the Prophet say,

كل سبب ونسب فإنه منقطع يوم القيامة إلا سببي ونسبي

‘Every instrument and blood tie will be severed except for my instrument and my blood tie.’”

It is said that he offered her 40,000 as her Mahr, in her honor. There are other reports confirming that the lineage with the Prophet will not be severed on the Day of Judgment.

Most of the above reports have been reproduced by Shawkani. His editor

S. Ibrahim adds that ‘Umar’s words that he heard the Prophet say, “Every instrument ..” up to “blood tie” are trustworthy in Albani’s opinion.

114. “And when the Trumpet is blown ... nor will they ask after one another”: which blow of the Trumpet is it? Ibn ‘Abbas has explained that this will be at the first blow when all ties of relationship will be forgotten and no soul will inquire after another. It is only after the second blow of the Trumpet that some of them might seek to know about others. The Qur’anic verse of *Surah Al-Saaffat* numbered 27 is referring to that. It says,

{وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ} [الصافات: ٢٧]

“Then some of them will come forward asking after the others.”

115. The translation of “mawaazeen” as “scales” is far from accurate and has been adopted for convenience, for, as Zamakhshari has pointed out, “mawaazeen” is the plural of “maw-

[104] The Fire will smite their faces, and they will be (grinning) therein with curled lips.¹¹⁶

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

[105] 'Were not My revelations recited upon you but you cried them lies?'

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] They will say, 'Our Lord! Our wretchedness prevailed over us;¹¹⁷ and we were a people astray.¹¹⁸

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِفُونَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

[107] Our Lord! Remove us from out of it. Then, if we returned (to evil), we shall indeed be wrongdoers.'

رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

[108] He will say, 'Remain despised therein, and speak not unto Me.¹¹⁹

قَالَ احْسَبُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿١٠٨﴾

zoon” which is for a thing which has been weighed. Here, it means those deeds that are weighty, as Ibn `Abbas explained.

116. The translation is figurative, otherwise “*kalaha*” is to curl lips exposing the teeth. When Ibn Mas`ud was asked for explanation, he said, “Haven’t you seen a burnt (animal) head with curled back lips and exposed teeth?” A *hadith* is reported in Tirmidhi, who accredited it, (as well as in Hakim who rated it *Sahih*: Au.), that the Prophet said in explanation of this verse:

تَشْوِيهِ النَّارِ فَتَقْلَصُ شِفْتَهُ الْعُلْيَا حَتَّى تَبْلُغَ وَسَطَ رَأْسِهِ، وَتَسْتَرْخِي شِفْتَهُ السُّفْلَى حَتَّى تَضْرِبَ سُرَّتَهُ

“The Fire of Hell will burn their lips so that the upper lip will

shrink back to cover half of his head while the lower lip will fall down to his navel” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

117. “(This dialogue ... is meant to bring out the futile excuse characteristic of so many sinners who attribute their failings to an abstract ‘bad luck’ ... and thus, indirectly, it stresses the element of free will – and, therefore, of responsibility – in man’s action and behavior” (Asad).

118. “And we were a people astray” – perhaps the unbelievers will add this phrase that day in hope that sometimes admission of errors helps in winning forgiveness (Thanwi).

119. Ibn Jarir pieces together (at verse 105) several reports coming

from Muhammad ibn Ka`b and others to give us an account of various conversations that will take place between the people of the Fire and others. (A shortened version was reported by Qurtubi earlier. See *Ibrahim*, verse 44, who repeats it here. Ibn Kathir and Razi also present in a shorter form):

They (the reporters) were told that the people of the Fire will plead the guardians of Hell for help saying (40: 49),

{ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ} [غافر:
[٤٩]

"Pray to your Lord that He may reduce from us a day of the torture."

They will reply in words Allah used (i.e., [40: 50],

{فَادْعُوا وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ} [غافر:
[٥٠]

"Pray yourself. And the prayers of the unbelievers will be not but lost in vain."

Having lost hope with them they will next address the Keeper of Hell (43: 77)

{لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ} [الزخرف:
[٧٧]

"Let your Lord deal us death."

He will not reply to them for 80,000

years of the Hereafter and then turn to them to say (43: 77),

{إِنَّكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ} [الزخرف: ٧٧]

"You will stay (therein)."

When they get the answer they will say to each other, "Let us bear in patience, as the inhabitants of Paradise remained steadfast in Allah's obedience." So they will remain bearing the torments patiently until their patience will be up. They will cry out in exasperation (14: 21),

{سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرَعْنَا أَمْ سَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَّحِيصٍ} [إبراهيم: ٢١]

"It is all the same for us whether we refuse to endure or observe patience. There is no place of escape for us."

At that point Iblis will intervene as in the verse (14: 22),

{وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَّ الْحَقِّيَّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ} [إبراهيم: ٢٢]

"And Satan will say when the matter is concluded, 'Allah promised you a true promise, and I too promised. But I failed in my promise.'"

At that they will begin to hate themselves.

They will be told (40: 10),

{لَمَقَّتْ اللَّهُ أَبْصَارُ مَنِ مَفْتِكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُونَ} [غافر: ١٠]

"Surely, Allah's hatred of you was greater than your hatred of yourselves, when you were invited to faith but you refused.

They will say (40: 11),

{ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ { [غافر: ١١]

"Our Lord! You gave us death twice and brought us to life twice. Now, we admit our sins. So, is there a way out?"

They will be told (40: 12),

{ ذَلِكُمْ بِأَنَّهُ إِذَا دُعِيَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ كَفَرْتُمْ وَإِنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ تُؤْمِنُوا فَالْحُكْمُ لِلَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيرِ { [غافر: ١٢]

"That, because when you were invited to Allah alone, you disbelieved. But if He was associated with, you believed. So the judgement is for the Most High, the Great."

They will feel downcast, but will call again saying (32: 12),

{ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ { [السجدة: ١٢]

"O our Lord! We have seen and heard. So send us back so that we can do righteous deeds, we are now believers."

He will answer (32: 14),

{ فَذُوقُوا يَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا إِنَّا نَسِينَاكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ يَمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ { [السجدة: ١٤]

"Taste then because you forgot this day's meeting. We have also forgotten you. Taste the everlasting punishment for what you were doing."

Then they will ask (14: 44),

{ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نُجِيبُ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ { [إبراهيم: ٤٤]

"O our Lord! Defer us to a near term. We shall respond to Your call and follow the Messengers."

They will be told (14: 44),

{ أَوَلَمْ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ زَوَالٍ { [إبراهيم: ٤٤]

"Were you not the ones who swore aforetime that you will not have to move (to the next world)?"

At that they will be further disappointed but will again ask (35: 37),

{ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ { [فاطر: ٣٧]

"O our Lord! Remove us (from here) so that we can do righteous deeds."

Allah (swt) will answer them (35: 37),

{ أَوَلَمْ نَعْمَرِكُمْ مَا يَنْدِكُرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَدَكَّرُ وَجَاءَكُمْ النَّذِيرُ { [فاطر: ٣٧]

"Did we not lengthen your life, that he might remember who wished to remember; and a warner came to you?"

[109] There surely was a group from among My slaves who used to say, "Our Lord! We have believed; therefore forgive us, and have mercy on us, surely, You are the best of the merciful."

إِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
آمَنَّا فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ
الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

[110] But you took them in jest, to the point that they made you forget My remembrance; and you remained making fun of them.

فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِحْرِيًّا حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوَكُم ذِكْرِي
وَكُنْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

[111] I have indeed rewarded them this Day for their patient endurance, that they – they are the triumphant.¹²⁰

إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا أَلَيْسَ لَهُمُ
الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

[112] He will ask, 'How long did you tarry in the earth – by number of years?'

قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ
﴿١١٢﴾

So, taste (the punishment), there is no helper for the wrongdoers."

Allah will reply (23: 108),

Thereafter He will leave them un-addressed for a while, and then say (23: 105),

{ قَالَ احْسَبُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ } [المؤمنون: ١٠٨]
"Remain despised therein, and don't speak to Me (any further)."

{ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُنذِرُكَ عَلَيْنَا فَأَنْتَ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبْتُمْ } [المؤمنون: ١٠٥]

"Were not My revelations recited upon you, but you would cry them lies?"

Thereafter, they will never address Him again, but only howl and bark at each other and the lid will be laid over them and sealed.

When they hear that, they will see a ray of hope and will say, "May be He will show us mercy." So, they will say (23: 106),

{ رَبَّنَا عَلَبْنَاكَ عَلَيْنَا شَقَوْنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ } [المؤمنون: ١٠٦]

"O our Lord! Our wretchedness got the better of us. We were a misguided people."

Zmakhshari has a shorter report but attributes it to Ibn `Abbas. Alusi too has a shorter version whose original sources include Bayhaqi and Hakim, who accredited the report, although Alusi is not so convinced of the accreditation. In any case, this is not a *hadith* (Au.).

120. With reference to the words, "I have indeed rewarded them this Day

[113] They will answer, 'We tarried a day or part of a day, so ask those who keep count.'¹²¹

قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَاسْأَلِ
الْعَادِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾

[114] He will say, 'Indeed you tarried not, but a little; if you had but realised.'

قَالَ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

[115] Did you think we created you only for sport¹²² and that to Us you would not be returned?'

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا
لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾

[116] Exalted is Allah, the (Ultimate) Sovereign, the (Ultimate) Truth.¹²³ There is no god but He, Lord of the noble `Arsh.

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ﴿١١٦﴾

[117] And whosoever invokes another god along with Allah, whereof he has no evidence, assuredly, his reckoning is with His Lord. Surely the unbelievers shall not prosper.¹²⁴

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ
لَهُ بِهِ فَإِذَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ
الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

[118] And say, 'My Lord! Forgive and show mercy, and You are the best of the merciful.'

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ
الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

for their patient endurance, that they - they are the triumphant" – it should not be thought that the reason stated here is all the reason for the reward, but rather, one of the many reasons (Thanwi).

121. The allusion could both be to the angels as well as humans who keep account of events (such as the historians) – Ibn Jarir.

Asad adds: "The disappearance, upon resurrection, of man's earth-bound concept of time is indicated by the helpless answer, ('ask those who keep count')."

122. That is, if not for the Judgment in the Hereafter, the sinner and the obedient, the pious and the rapscallion, would all be on par and equal, reducing this life to a mere farce (Razi).

123. Alusi understands the combination of the two Attributes as (*al-haqeequ bil-malikiyyati*): "The True Sovereign," or, "[the One to whom] sovereignty truly [belongs]."

124. Note that the *Surah* started on the note: "Succeeded indeed the believers", and ends on the note, "Surely the unbelievers shall not prosper" (Zamakhshari). مَنَّتْ



Surah 24
Al-Nūr
 (The Light)
 Madinan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE MERCIFUL

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] (This is)¹ a surah which We have sent down, made obligatory;² and revealed therein verses clear (of evidences),³ that haply you may take heed.

سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا
 آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١﴾

1. The words in parenthesis are from Ibn Jarir.

2. The great majority have read the text as it appears in all copies now. But Mujahid read "*farad-naha*" as "*farrad-naha*," explaining the term as, "We have expounded it, and have sent down thereby commandments of various sort." But most others, having read it as "*farad naha*," understood it as meaning, "We have made obligatory the injunctions therein" (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Alusi).

Al-Fard in Arabic is to break up a thing. Hence "*Fara'id al-Mirath*" i.e., "Breakup of the inherited property" (Qurtubi).

Majid, and after him Mawdudi, both stress on the emphatic form of the address here. In the simpler words of Mawdudi, "(That is), whatever has been said in this *Surah* is not in the nature of 'recommendations' or 'suggestions', that may or may not be followed.. They are, instead, categorical commands which must be followed.. Further, far from being ambiguous, these commands are couched in terms which are both clear and categorical.. No other *Surah* of the Qur'an has a more forceful preamble."

3. Asad writes: "It would seem that the special stress on God's having laid down this *Surah* 'in plain terms' is connected with the gravity of

[2] The fornicatress⁴ and the fornicator:⁵ lash each of the twain⁶ (with) a hundred stripes.⁷ And, in matter of Allah's religion, no tenderness for the two should take hold of you,⁸ if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of believers witness their chastisement.⁹

الرَّائِيَةُ وَالرَّائِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِئَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

the injunctions spelt out in the sequence: in other words, it implies a solemn warning against any attempt at widening or re-defining those injunctions by means of deductions, inferences or any other considerations unconnected with the plain words of the Qur'an."

4. English dictionaries define fornication and adultery variously. We have for our convenience chosen to use throughout this discourse the term fornication for sex of the *ghayr muhsin* (roughly, the unmarried) and adultery for illegal sex committed after *ihsan* (consummation of marriage).

Commentators have pointed out that in the verse (5: 38),

{وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جِزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ} [المائدة: ٣٨]

"As for the thief - man or woman - amputate their hands, as a recompense for what they have earned: a punishment exemplary from Allah.." the male was mentioned first. But in the present verse it is the female forni-

cator that has been mentioned first. Why? It is because it is women who allow fornication to happen.

The affair starts with the eye-contact. It is by the means of looks in her eyes that a woman expresses her consent to go further on the road to sin. Encouraged by the looks in the eyes, man makes proposals with the help of sneaky insinuations. When acceptance is shown by the other side, then come direct proposals leading to moral corruption of both. If a woman refuses to respond through eye contact, there is nothing the male can do about it. In fact, right up to the end the woman can refuse. If she is not ready, there is no course left to the man but to withdraw. Thus, women are the major cause of fornication and perhaps the reason why her mention preceded that of man (Au.).

5. That is, not the married adulterer and adulteress but rather the unmarried fornicator and fornicatoress (Ibn Jarir).

6. The textual word for “lash each of the two” is preceded by a “*fa*” which is known as “*fa shartiyyah*” (the conditioning *fa*) implying that they might be lashed only if the crime is well proven (Qurtubi). Thus a single syllable serves the function of a sentence (Au.).

Alusi presents a few other reasons for which one might look up into the original.

7. An incident preserved by Bukhari provides us some legal details:

قَالَ إِنَّ ابْنِي كَانَ عَسِيْقًا عَلَى هَذَا ، فَزَيَّ بِامْرَأَتِهِ ،
وَإِلَيَّ أُخْبِرْتُ أَنَّ عَلَى ابْنِي الرَّجْمَ ، فَأَقْدَمْتُ مِنْهُ مِائَةَ
شَاةٍ وَوَلِيْدَةٍ ، فَسَأَلْتُ أَهْلَ الْعِلْمِ فَأَخْبَرُونِي أَنَّ عَلَى
ابْنِي جَلْدُ مِائَةٍ ، وَتَعْرِيبُ عَامٍ ، وَأَنَّ عَلَى امْرَأَةِ هَذَا
الرَّجْمَ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -
« وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لِأَقْضِيَنَّ بَيْنَكُمَا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ
، الْوَلِيْدَةُ وَالْعَنَمُ رَدٌّ ، وَعَلَى ابْنِكَ جَلْدُ مِائَةٍ وَتَعْرِيبُ
عَامٍ ، اعْدُدْ يَا أُتَيْسُ إِلَى امْرَأَةِ هَذَا فَإِنِ اعْتَرَفَتْ
فَأَرْجَمْتُهَا » . قَالَ فَعَدَا عَلَيْهَا فَأَعْتَرَفَتْ ، فَأَمَرَ بِهَا
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَزَجِمَتْ

It is reported that two bedouins came to the Prophet (*saws*). One of them said, “This son of mine was a house-servant in this man’s house. He fornicated with his wife. So I ransomed my son by offering a hundred goats and a slave-girl. Then I consulted the knowledgeable people and they told me that my son should be whipped a hundred times and

banished for one year, and that the woman should be stoned to death.” The Prophet answered, “I shall rule by the Book of Allah. The slave-girl and the goats may be returned to you. Your son should be whipped and banished for a year.” (Then he pointed) and said, “O Unays, rise up and seek to know from the woman. If she admits, stone her to death.” He went up to her, she admitted and was stoned to death. Accordingly, all three Imāms have ruled that a free unmarried person, if he is mature of body and sound of mind, should be whipped and banished for a year. Imām Abu Haneefah however ruled that the banishment is the prerogative of the ruler. He could banish if he wished or imprison him for a year (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

The *hadīth* also proves that if one or both are married, then the Islamic punishment for adultery is death by stoning. And, the Prophet’s words, “I shall rule by the Book of Allah” go to prove that a verse specifically mentioning stoning to death was there in the Qur’ān. Otherwise, the verses in question do not recommend stoning to death which was what the Prophet (*saws*) decided for the woman. The *rajm* verse has been taken off reci-

tation, but the injunction remains in practice. According to a *hadith* in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Ahmad, the Prophet said,

خُذُوا عَنِّي خُذُوا عَنِّي قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ هُنَّ سَبِيلًا النَّبِيُّ
بِالتَّبِيبِ جَلْدُ مِائَةٍ وَرَمَى بِالْحِجَارَةِ وَالْبِكْرُ بِالْبِكْرِ جَلْدُ
مِائَةٍ وَتَفْئِي سَنَةٍ

“Take from me, take from me. Allah has made a way for them. A married with a married person: a hundred lashes and stoning to death; a virgin with a virgin: a hundred lashes and exile for a year.”

And, when he said, “Allah has made a way for them,” the Prophet was referring to the verse in *Surah al-Nisa'* (no. 15) which said,

{ وَاللَّاتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا
عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي
الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى يَتَوَقَّاهِنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا
[النساء: ١٥] }

“Such of your women as commit indecency let four of you testify against them. If they do testify then detain them in the homes until death overtakes them or Allah appoints for them a way” (Shafi').

See notes 60-75 of *Surah al-Nisa'* of this work for a few other details.

Hence `Umar is recorded in the *Sahihayn* as having said while on the *mimbar*,

أما بعد، أيها الناس، فإن الله بعث محمدًا بالحق،
وأُنزل عليه الكتاب، فكان فيما أنزل عليه آية الرجم،
فقرأناها ووعيناها، ورجم رسول الله صلى الله عليه
وسلم ورجمنا بعده، فأخشيت أن يطول بالناس زمان
أن يقول قائل: لا نجد آية الرجم في كتاب الله،
فيضلوا بترك فريضة قد أنزلها الله

“People. Allah sent Muhammad with Truth and sent down a Book which once contained the verse pertaining to *rajm*. We read it and stored it in knowledge. Following that, the Prophet stoned (the adulterer) to death, and we did the same after him. But I fear that after a long time has passed someone will say, ‘We do not find the commandment of *rajm* in the Book of Allah.’ They would thus abandon a commandment that was revealed in the Book and will go astray for not following what Allah has revealed.”

According to a report in *Musnad Ahmad*, he added,

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ يَقُولَ قَائِلُونَ أَوْ يَتَكَلَّمُ مُتَكَلِّمُونَ أَنَّ عُمَرَ
زَادَ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ لِأَتَّبِعُهَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ
كَمَا تَرَكْتُ

“If not for the fear that people would say `Umar added into the Book of Allah, I would have got

the *rajm* commandment added to Allah's book, as it was revealed."

`Umar also predicted that there will be people (in this *Ummah*) who will reject *rajm*, intercession, punishment in the grave, and that people will be removed from the Fire after they have been burnt (to coals). Another report of Nasa'i has Zayd b. Thabit (the scribe who wrote the Qur'an) says,

وإن كنا لنقرأ فيها : والشيخ والشيخة إذا زنيا
فارجمهما ألينة ... فرفع فيما رفع

"We used to recite (in the Qur'an) the verse, 'The old man and the old woman that commit adultery, stone them to death.' But later, it was withdrawn among those that were withdrawn" (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

In other words, it is not these words, "the old man and the old woman .." that were the words removed from the memory. They forgot the actual words (Au.).

The above is one of the many versions. Bukhari and Muslim also have the first part of the above report (Au.).

Thus, adds Alusi, apart from the reports of the Prophet's own example, stoning to death is proved by the *Ijma`* of the *Ummah*. If the reports from the Prophet (*saws*) are of the

Ahad kind (singletons), then the consent of the Companions accords it legality. For, when `Umar spoke of the punishment by stoning to death, and that he wished he could insert it as a footnote in the *Mus-haf*, none of the Companions disagreed with him according to the issue the status of "*Ijma` al-sukuti*" (silent consent).

Mawdudi wrote: "This practice (of stoning to death) was also followed (after the Prophet) by each of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs during their respective periods of rule. Besides, they openly declared this to be the punishment for such an offence. The Companions and Successors were completely unanimous in their views on this verse. Not a single statement was made by anyone which might lead one to conclude that anyone in the early period of Islam had any doubts about the validity of this punishment. Even in later times, leading Muslim jurists in different parts of the world were unanimous that this punishment was a well-established practice of the Prophet (peace be on him)."

Indeed, apart from the woman of the above incident, we also have the incidents of Ma`iz Aslami and the Ghamidi woman who were both stoned to death (Au.).

The punishment of stoning to death is not peculiar to Islam. That was the punishment prescribed in the Mosaic Law which Jesus Christ confirmed as valid. Majid quotes from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (v. III, p. 554): “Prostitution by a betrothed virgin, .. and the rebellious son are, according to the Pentateuchal laws, to be punished with death by stoning.” This is substantiated by *Torah* texts. One of them says, “If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones..” (Deuteronomy, 22: 23-6). The Talmud stipulates a punishment for the daughter of a priest that the Jews might not want the non-Jews to know. Mawdudi quotes: “.. if a man fornicates with the daughter of a priest, according to Judaic law, he is to be hanged until death, whereas the girl is to be burnt alive (*Everyman’s Talmud*, pp. 319-20).” Either of the two, Hinduism or Judaism, seem to be influenced by the other, for, as Mawdudi quotes again, the Dharma Shastra of Manu says that if a girl is a Brahmin, and the male a non-Brahmin, then the punishment would be to burn alive the man” (Mawdudi).

Jesus confirmed that the law of stoning to death was still valid. He was brought a woman who had fornicated. The Jews had brought her to him in the hope of trapping him. If he judged that the woman was to be stoned to death following the Judaic law, he could have got arrested for judging by other than the Roman Law. If he had, on the other hand, judged by the Roman Law, which did not allow for stoning to death, he stood to be condemned as a false Prophet. But he defeated their purposes. The whole story, which reads still beautiful, is as follows:

“Jesus went to the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came to him; and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman taken in adultery: and when they had set her in the midst. They said to him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with [his] finger wrote on the ground, [as though he heard them not]. So when they continued asking him, he raised himself,

and said to them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they who heard [it], being convicted by [their own] conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, [even] to the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised himself, and saw none but the woman, he said to her, Woman, where are those thy accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said to her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8: 1-10).

The above shows that the Hebraic law required stoning to death as punishment for adultery. It was not applied however, because of common prevalence. Majid brings to our notice the following: “Capital punishment (among the Israelites) was of such rare occurrence as to be practically abrogated. In fact, many a judge declared openly for its abolition, and a court which had pronounced one sentence of death in seven years was called the court of murderers.” Indeed, the Jews went further and slandered their Prophets and holy men in order to mitigate their own sexual crimes. Majid quotes from History of Prostitution

by Scott, “Most of the old Hebrew prophets and lawmakers themselves patronized harlots, and looked upon such escapades as the mildest of paccadillos .. In short, promiscuous sexual relations on the part of men, so long as they were not duly advertised, came in for little in the way of censure.”

As regards lashing before stoning to death, whether it is mandatory or not, it might be noticed that the two in the case quoted above were not lashed. The opinion of the *Fuqaha*’ therefore was that it is not mandatory, except that Imām Ahmad ruled that an adulterer must be first lashed, following the Qur’ān, and then stoned to death, following the *Sunnah*. Imām `Ali too was of this opinion. In his own time he got a woman first whipped on a Thursday and then got her stoned to death on a Friday remarking, “I got her whipped following the Book of Allah, and stoned to death following the Prophet’s *Sunnah*” (Ibn Kathir).

8. What exactly is the implication of the words “No tenderness for them should seize you?” Is it the feeling of pity on them that is disapproved of? No. It implies that ‘your pity should not prevent you from inflicting the punishment as prescribed.’ That is

what the addition of the words, “in Allah’s religion” lends. That is how Mujahid, Sa`id ibn Jubayr, Ibn Jurayj and others understood it. Abu Hurayrah is reported to have said, “Execution of one of Allah’s prescribed punishment on a piece of land is better for its people than forty nights of rain.” Abu Hurayrah then recited this verse.

The above is sometimes attributed to the Prophet, but that is incorrect. They are Abu Hurayrah’s own words (Au.).

And hence, as Abu Mujliz and Ibn Zayed said, once the case has been presented to the authorities, they should show no tenderness towards the perpetrators, but rather, punish them according to the law. However, they may not go an extra mile in punishing them. For example, when `Umar’s unmarried slave-girl committed fornication, and the time for whipping came, he pointed to the lasher at her legs – meaning strike her there. Someone reminded him, “No tenderness for them should seize you.” He answered, “Should I kill her?” (Ibn Jarir); according to other reports, “We have not been asked to kill her.”

As for the feelings of pity for the sinners, it should always be there. Why,

it should be there for animals too! We have a *hadith* in Ahmad which says that a Companion told the Prophet,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَذْبُحُ الشَّاةَ وَأَنَا أَرْحَمُهَا أَوْ قَالَ إِنِّي
لَأَرْحَمُ الشَّاةَ أَنْ أَذْبَحَهَا. فَقَالَ: وَالشَّاةُ إِنْ رَحِمْتَهَا
رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ

“Messenger of Allah, when I slaughter a sheep I feel sorry for it.” He replied, “As for the sheep, if you felt compassion for her, Allah will show you compassion” (Ibn Kathir).

Haythamiyy remarked in the *Zawaa'id* that the above report is trustworthy (Au.).

Some have, all the same, understood the words to mean, whip them hard so that they feel the pain. Qatadah, Hasan, Sa`id b. al-Musayyib figure here, although they do not seem to have much ground for this opinion since, after all, levels of the pain felt being different from person to person, the strength of the lashes cannot be determined (Ibn Jarir reworded, Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi looks at various aspects of the issues involved and offers a detailed study. The reader will do well to study the original. We pick up a few sentences from here and there. He writes: “Unlawful sex is viewed by Islam as a crime which, if no

steps are taken to curb it, strikes at the very root of humanity and civilization. Both the survival of the human race and the continuity of man's collective existence make it imperative that sexual relations between men and women are confined to their lawful forms alone." Elsewhere, "In fact, human society cannot even come into being without the matrimonial tie which makes a man and woman live together and, thus, found a family and thereafter foster further relationships between other families, which in turn gives birth to a community and a society. If a man and a woman were to start freely meeting each other just for the purpose of mutual enjoyment in total disregard of the objective of establishing a family, then this would strike a fatal blow to man's collective life and demolish the very foundation on which society is built."

9. The word in the text for group is "*ta'ifah*" which is applicable to any number of people above one. Hence Mujahid's opinion was that the presence of even one meets with the condition. Qatadah, Zuhri and others thought that at least three persons should witness the punishment (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Asad adds: "The number of those to be present has been deliberately left unspecified, thus indicating that while the punishment must be given publicly, it need not be made a 'public spectacle.'"

As regards the purpose of a group of people witnessing the scene, apart from the obvious feelings of shame and guilt that their presence is likely to provoke, it is a means of admonition to those present. It is also expected that the group will, as Nasr b. 'Alqamah has said in a report in Ibn Abi Hatim, pray for their forgiveness (Ibn Kathir).

The strong deterring effect cannot be overemphasized (Au.).

General Notes

"Islamic jurisprudence, in this respect, stands in 'splendid isolation' from the laws of many other nations. Among the Greeks, and also in early Rome, illicit sexual intercourse was no crime at all unless a married woman was involved. Even in 'Great Britain' it was reckoned a spiritual offence, that is cognizable by the spiritual courts only. The common law took no further notice of it than to allow the party aggrieved an action of damage.' (EBr. I. p. 234, 11th ed.)" – Majid.

There are four crimes for which the Qur'ān and *ahadīth mutawatirah* have themselves fixed the punishment, not leaving them to the opinion of a jurist or a ruler. These are known as hudud. They are only four: Theft, slander, intoxication and illicit sex. For other kinds of crimes, the *Shari'ah* has not prescribed the punishment, but rather, has left to the discretion and judgment of the rulers and law enforcing authorities. Such of them are known as *ta'zirat* (Shafi').

“(In view of the requirement of four eye-witnesses to the crime of adultery), it might be thought that the punishment prescribed is an illusory thing, affecting no one, and that it can never be applied. The answer is that Islamic system of life is not built on punishments. But rather on the prevention of the causes that lead to crimes. It also relies on the purification of the souls and the cleansing of the conscience, as also on the good feelings that the hearts give rise to and prevent a man from committing crimes that disconnect him who commits and the society at large. Therefore, it does not punish but either the braggart who does it so openly that the people are able to witness, or someone who admits and seeks redemption, like Ma'iz Aslami or the Ghamidiyy woman” (Sayyid).

Fiqh Points

- Zamakhshari in brief but Imām Razi, Qurtubi and Alusi deal with various issue involved at great length. We present only the main points ignoring the substantiations that go with them. To draw advantage from ready-made translations, we have taken some notes from Mawduḍi, even if found in Arabic commentaries:

- Adultery is a major sin. Allah (*swt*) mentioned it along with *shirk* and murder. He defined the believers in words (25: 68), “And those who do not call upon another deity along with Allah, do not kill a soul that Allah has forbidden save in right, and do not commit adultery; and whoever did that, will meet a great sin.” Its final commanded was preceded by a lesser one as prescribed in (4: 15) which said (although there, it was only women who were mentioned: Au.), “Such of your women as commit indecency let four of you testify against them. If they do testify then detain them in the homes until death overtakes them or Allah appoints for them a way.”

- *Zina* has been defined as “A man having sex with a woman in her vagina, she being other than his legal wife, without he owning her, with

or without consent of the woman, and he without any doubt about the identity of the woman.” (That is, the man might not have mistaken her for his wife: Au.).

- The definition would remain the same in reverse if the accused is a woman.
- The conditions for “ihsan” are, according to Imām Abu Hanifah, six: Islam, freedom, soundness of intellect, puberty, a legal marriage and, consummation.
- A Muslim who has married a slave-girl, a child, a mad woman or a woman of the People of the Book, is, technically not a “muhsin” (Alusi).
- The commandment of death by stoning have been reported by Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Ali, Jabir b. `Abdullah, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, Abu Hurayrah, Buraydah Aslami, Zayd b. Khalid and many other Companions.
- Although the act is of the same class, greater number of scholars have ruled that technically sodomy is not *Zina*.
- Adultery of a married pair entails stoning of both to death. (This is proved by reports that have come to us through mutawatir narrators, even if the reports do not attain the strict technical mutwatir status. The

evidence for the prescribed punishment (*rajm*) is of the same nature as `Ali’s courage. We do not have a report about his courage that can be technically declared mutawatir, but at the same time the fact is so well-known that it can be declared as something beyond doubt (Alusi).

- If one of them is not married, then it is a hundred lashes for the crime.
- According to Imām Shafe`i, the punishment for sodomy is the same as that for adultery: either stoning to death, or lashes, and an year’s exile, depending upon the marital condition of the perpetrator. Malik, Ahmad and Is-haq are of the same opinion. Abu Bakr thought that a wall should be demolished over him. `Ali ibn abi Talib however said that he might be thrown down a cliff, which (both opinions: Au.) seem to be influenced by the punishment Allah (*swt*) meted out to the people of Lut.
- Abu Hanifah, Malik and Thawri have ruled that to have sex with an animal is not *Zina*. Nevertheless, the person involved deserves to be punished (Razi). And the animal should be killed (Au.).
- Imām Shafe`i has ruled that a virgin male committing fornication may be lashed and then exiled for a

year. He followed the report of the Prophet's time of a farm worker committing sex with his master's wife who was exiled. Imām Malik ruled that the male should be exiled but not a female. Abu Hanifah however said that exile should be left to the Amir to decide, (it is not essential part of the punishment) for, a singleton report (ahad) cannot abrogate a Qur'ānic rule which did not mention exile. Also, during the time of `Umar when he exiled someone, the exiled man went and joined the Romans. So `Umar remarked, "Here onward I shall not exile anyone" (Razi). It is possible the Prophet had exiled the young man for a specific reason (Alusi).

- With reference to adultery, the following are a few other conditions for the application of hadd (capital punishment): (a) adulthood, (b) soundness of mind, (c) free (and not a slave), (d) a properly conducted marriage, and (e) consummation of marriage (*dukbul*) - sex before puberty does not remove the condition of *ihsan*, this was the opinion of Abu Hanifah, (f) Islam (i.e., the sinners should be Muslims) since, according to Abu Hanifah, greater responsible position (as that of a Muslim) entails greater punishment as against a *Dhimmi* who has lesser responsibil-

ity (to behave) not having received the message of Islam. However, Shafe`i disagreed with Abu Hanifah over this and said that it is not necessary for a person to be a Muslim to receive the Islamic hadd since the Prophet (*saw:s*) had ordered a Jewish pair to be stoned to death.

- The four witnesses required for proving adultery where the sinners do not admit, must testify that they saw the very act and the very organs one in another. That they saw them on top of one another might not prove the case (Au.).

- As regards confession of the crime, according to Imām Shafe`i, one admission is enough, but Abu Hanifah ruled that the accused must admit four times in different sittings before he can be delivered the capital punishment. On the other hand Imām Ahmad said that four confessions in one sitting are enough.

- If the accused does not confess, medical examination will not be conducted to determine whether sexual intercourse did occur (Mawdudi).

- "The majority of jurists.. do not consider the mere fact of pregnancy a sufficient ground to subject anyone to lapidation or flogging" (Mawdudi).

- In case of accusation or confession, the identity of the partner in crime, man or woman, will not be demanded (Mawdudi).
- The other party, if identified by the partner, will not be prosecuted on the basis of the accusation alone if he denies involvement (Mawdudi).
- In fact, a person voluntarily admitting the crime may not be immediately subjected to the capital punishment, since, as Mawdudi puts it, "Islamic law does not make it obligatory for people to confess their crimes. Nor does it make obligatory for them to report offences committed by others to the authorities." According to a report in Bukhari, when someone came to the Prophet and said that he had committed a crime and deserved hadd punishment, he paid no attention to him. A little later, when the man rose up after his Prayer behind the Prophet and said, "I am guilty, so punish me," the Prophet (*saws*) asked, "Did you not offer Prayers with us just now?" When he said yes, the Prophet told him, "Allah has pardoned your sin" (Mawdudi modified).
- "However, once the authorities are informed that such an offence has been committed, there remains no room to spare the guilty the required

punishment.. (When Hazzal had led Ma'iz Aslami to report his sin to the Prophet, which led to his death by stoning), the Prophet told Hazzal, "Had you covered his crime with your garment, it would have been better for you" (Mawdudi).

- In case of qadhf (slander), the hadd punishment will only be applied when the slandered demands it. If he or she forgives, the courts will take no action (Shafi`).
- A slave receives half the punishment as a free Muslim does. And since half of stoning to death is not executable, they are only flogged. According to some, the fornicators receive only forty lashes.
- There is no difference in opinion that it is an established Muslim authority, i.e., an Islamic state, that can execute Islamic capital punishments. A corollary of this is that, since application of capital punishment is obligatory in Islam, establishing a state on Islamic principles also becomes obligatory.
- Nevertheless, as regards slaves, Imām Shafe`i's opinion was that a master could execute the Islamic punishments on his slaves. But, once again, Abu Hanifah differed. He would not allow such authority and such powers to anyone ex-

cept an Islamic state. As regards the *hadīth* which instructs that if a slave-girl commits fornication twice, the master may whip her, it should be understood in the general sense of “punish her” and not in the sense of “execute the Islamic punishment.”

- Testimony of only those witnesses who fulfill the conditions laid down by Islamic Law as being trustworthy can be accepted (Mawdudī).

- Whipping should be neither light nor hard. Zamakhshari points out that the Qur’ānic word “*fajlidu*” with its root in “*jild*” (meaning skin) implies: do not whip so hard as to hurt the flesh, nor so light as to spare the skin too of the pain. When ‘Umar was brought a tough looking whip he said, “This is hard. Bring me a lighter one.” So they brought a light one. He remarked, “This is too soft. Bring me something in between.” Qurtubi reports that once ‘Umar handed over a whip to a lasher and remarked: “Here, whip him but let not your arm-pit be exposed.” In fact, once ‘Umar got a lasher lashed twenty strokes for having lashed another too hard.

- The number of strokes could however be increased in more serious cases. For example when somebody was brought to ‘Umar in a drunken

state in the month of *Ramadan*, he ordered that he be given a hundred lashes: eighty for drinking, and twenty for defiling *Ramadan*. Similarly, when a man was found molesting a child, the governor of the town ordered that he be given three hundred lashes. When Imām Malik came to know of the judgment, he did not object to it (Qurtubi).

- There is no need to remove a man’s ordinary clothes at the time he is whipped. But he should not be allowed to wear padded ones. As for a woman, in no case any part of the body should be uncovered. In fact, she should be so well wrapped that no part gets accidentally uncovered during whipping.

- A male is to receive the lashes from a standing posture, but a *Muslimah* should be made to sit.

- All parts of the body might receive the lashes, but not the face, the stomach, or the private parts. Although some have allowed whipping on the head, Imām Abu Hanifah would not allow it. Imām Razi’s own belief is that hitting on the head can result in injury to the brain. This opinion is influenced by the Prophet’s words to Hilal b. Umayyah who brought to him the accusation against his wife. The Prophet (*saws*) remarked: “Ei-

ther you produce four witnesses, or you will receive lashes on your back.”

- It is not allowed to whip in small numbers at a time, say two lashes a day. However, larger break down, such as twenty a day, is allowed. Alusi adds: Once `Ali (b. Abi Talib) whipped a man with a branched whip, giving him forty lashes. That is, he counted each stroke as equal to two.
- A pregnant woman may not be whipped until she has delivered.
- A sick man may not be whipped until he recovers. If he suffers from a permanent disease of dangerous order, he may not be whipped at all. He might, instead, be lashed just once with a broom made up of a eighty strands. This is following the instruction to Ayyub (*asws*), who had sworn that he would whip his wife a hundred times, but wished to find a way out. Allah ordered him (38: 44), “And take in your hand a (bunch of) grass, and strike therewith: and break not (your oath)..”
- Whipping should be done in normal weather conditions, when it is neither too cold nor too hot.
- According to Imām Shafe`i and Ahmad, the Imām (judge) or the witnesses may or may not witness

the execution of the punishment. However, Abu Hanifah ruled that in case of stoning to death, the witnesses should throw the first stones, then the Imām (judge) and then others. The Prophet himself however did not attend the stoning to death of either Ma`iz al-Aslami or of the Ghamidiyyah.

- If fornication or adultery is proved through free confession, capital punishment will still be withheld if the person recants. This was the opinion of Abu Hanifah, Thawri, Ahmad and Is-haq.
- A woman is to be buried up to her breast in the ground before stoning begins. But a man need not be so buried. Ma`iz Aslami was not buried and so he began to run away when the stoning began, although he had brought the case of adultery against himself, and had insisted on the enforcement of the punishment. When he ran away, he was caught and stoned to death. When the incident was reported to the Prophet (*saws*), he remarked, “Why did not you let him escape?”
- If a man and woman are found enwrapped in a sheet, and so it is not possible to establish whether they had sex or not, the hadd is not applicable. However, `Umar, `Ali, `Ata`,

Malik and Ahmad have said that they should be given a hundred lashes each (Alusi).

- When dead, the sinner(s) might be given bathing and buried in the normal manner.
- If a man has sex with his wife's slave-girl, he will face the hadd punishment (Qurtubi).
- There is no Allah-prescribed punishment (*hadd*) for slandering an unbeliever, man or woman. On the other hand if a non-Muslim falsely accuses a Muslim, he will be given eighty lashes (Qurtubi).
- If a slave slanders a free person, he or she will receive half the punishment, forty lashes. This is following the instruction in verse 25 of *Surah al-Nisa'* (Qurtubi).
- Slandering a dead Muslim is as good as slandering someone alive, but up to one generation and not further up to second-generation or third (i.e., grandfather and above). If an heir (say a son) takes the case to the court, and the crime is not proved, the accuser will receive lashes (Alusi).
- There is no prescribed punishment for a master who falsely accuses his slave. This is following a *hadith* in

the *Sahihayn* which says: "Whoever accused his slave will have the hadd (the legal punishment) executed on him on the Day of Judgment, unless the slave committed what he was accused of" (Qurtubi).

- If one of the four witnesses evinces uncertainty, the other three will be lashed (Qurtubi).
- Imām Shafe`i and Malik have ruled that fornication is forbidden by Allah (*smi*). Therefore, if a Muslim commits it in a non-Muslim land, hadd should be executed on him. But As-hab al-Ra'yi (presumably Hanafiyyah) have said that if fornication is committed in Dar al-Harb, a Muslim might not be punished by Islamic Law in the Islamic land (Qurtubi).

(In the statements above, it is remarkable to note that although Razi was himself a general follower of the Shafe`i Maslak, he clearly indicated his inclination to accept Hanafiyy position on several points) [Au.].

hadith literature has preserved a few cases of adultery or fornication that were brought to the notice of the Prophet: They were all Muslims while one involved a Jewish pair. Two of them have already been referred to. Hereunder are three others, stated briefly.

(i) Muslim reports: Ma`iz b. Malik al-Aslami came to the Prophet (*saws*) and said, "Messenger of Allah. I have sinned, so purify me." The Prophet turned his face away from him and told him, "Go away and seek Allah's forgiveness." But Ma`iz appeared again and again. At the third time the Prophet sent word to his tribe to find out if there was anything wrong with the man. They said nothing was wrong with him and that he was otherwise a righteous person. When Ma`iz came back a fourth time the Prophet asked him, "(Purify you?) Of what should I purify you?" He replied, "Of adultery." The Prophet (*saws*) asked the people around him, "Is this man out of his mind?" They said, No, he was perfectly in his senses." Then he asked if he was drunk. So someone went up, smelled his mouth and said, "No he is not drunk." Then the Prophet asked, "Did you commit adultery?" He replied, "Yes." He asked him, "Did you have sexual intercourse with her" He said, "Yes." He asked him, "Did yours disappear into hers?" He replied, "Yes, like a kohl-stick into its bottle." So the Prophet ordered that he be stoned to death. They took him to Baqi` fields and stoned him to death. The Prophet did not go. When they began to stone him he

ran away. He was chased, caught, and stoned until he was motionless. He actually shouted at them that he had been deceived by his tribesmen who had assured him that he would not be killed and so he should be allowed to go back to the Prophet. But the crowd wouldn't listen to him. When the Prophet was told about it, he remarked, "You should have let him come to me." Later he said, "Ma`iz repented a repentance that would suffice for a whole community." According to another report in Abu Da'ud, the Prophet was going somewhere after the Ma`iz incident. He heard two men say something about the man dying the death of a dog. As he continued on his way he found the carcass of a donkey. He halted and beckoned the two. When they came up he said, "Eat out of it." They exclaimed, "Messenger of Allah, who can eat of it?" He said, "Your indulgence just now in the honor of your brother was worse than eating from this carcass. By Him in whose hands is my life, just now he is in the rivers of Paradise, diving in and out of them."

(ii) The second incident is in Muslim and other books. They speak of a woman from the Ghamid tribe. She came and reported that she had committed the sin. The Prophet

[3] A fornicator does not marry¹⁰ but a fornicatress or an idolater;¹¹ and none marries a fornicatress but a fornicator or an idolatress. That indeed is forbidden to the believers.

الرَّابِّي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِيَةُ
لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ وَحُرْمٌ ذَلِكَ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

(saws) told her, “Woe unto you. Go and seek Allah’s forgiveness.” She replied, “Rather not. Perhaps you want to turn me back as you had tried to turn back Ma`iz. But I am pregnant from the sin.” The Prophet told her, “Come back after you have delivered.” So she came back after the birth. He told her that the child was too young and that she was to breast feed her. So she went back and came later with a piece of bread in the child’s hand. The Prophet said, “I am not going to get you stoned to death while the baby has no one to look after.” At that point one of the Ansar said, “I volunteer to look after the child.” So the Prophet ordered her stoned to death. When Khalid b. Walid threw a stone at her, her spattered blood sprinkled his clothes. He cursed her. The Prophet told him (later), “She repented a repentance which, if distributed over the people of Madinah, would have sufficed them all.”

(iii) The case of a Jewish pair was brought to the Prophet. He was asked to judge. He went to their dwellings

and after he was seated, asked them what the punishment was according to their law. They replied, “Disgrace them and then flog them.” `Abdullah ibn Salam intervened, “You have lied. It (*Torah*) mentions stoning to death. Produce it.” So they brought it out and spread it before him. However, while reading they placed their hand at the portion which mentioned stoning. `Abdullah b. Salam cried out, “Lift your finger.” They removed the finger and there it was, stoning to death. So the Prophet (*saws*) ordered the pair stoned to death. The narrator says, “I could see the man trying to shield the woman from the stones (when the two were being stoned).”

10. The word “*nikah*” as it appears in this context (which Asad renders as: “couples with”) affords two meanings and hence the verse has been understood differently by different scholars. Originally the word was coined to mean wedlock. But with usage it came to be used for sexual intercourse also.

11. Ibn Jarir writes: It is widely reported that there were a few prostitutes in Madianh, (some of them Jews or Christians while others Yethrabite slave-girls: Alusi), who were available on hire. They placed signs over their houses and anyone could enter freely. Now, there were many migrant Muslims (*As-hab al-Suffah*: Qurtubi) who were too poor to be able to marry. So they thought they could for the moment fill the void by marrying one of them. Some of the owners thought they might even use them as a source of income. They consulted the Prophet (*saws*) who prohibited them saying that they were fit for fornicators and pagans alone. Subsequent to that this verse was revealed. (The reports are widely reported: Qurtubi. They are in Ahmad and Nasa'i: Ibn Kathir).

The report of Marthad b. Abi Marthad meeting his old lover `Inaq as he penetrated Makkah to smuggle out some Muslims is quite widely reported. After one such operation, during which he encountered her, he expressed his wish to marry her if the Prophet would allow and this verse was revealed.

Shawkani traces the report in Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn

Marduwayh, Bayhaqi and Hakim, the last of whom declared it trustworthy. And S. Ibrahim adds that Albani too thought it was trustworthy.

In any case, there is almost consensus of opinion that a fornicator or fornicatress could be taken in marriage if they sincerely repent (Ibn Kathir); although there is a *hadith* which says,

لا ينكح الزاني المجلود إلا مثله

“A fornicator who has been whipped will not marry but someone like him.” Albani declared this *hadith* of Abu Da'ud and Ahmad as *Sahih* (S. Ibrahim).

A group of scholars believe that this commandment stands abrogated by a verse which follows (no. 32), “And marry off your orphans..” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). For, one problem then would be that such men and women who committed sinful sexual acts, would be forced to marry either fornicators or pagans. Ibn al-`Arabiyy was also against such a meaning, and therefore, the correct meaning seems to be, as Ibn `Abbas has said, “Sex with an adulteress does not happen but from a fornicator or a pagan.” Ibn Khuwayzmandad had another point: “Probably the verse is applicable to a fornicator who commits

[4] And those who cast (allegations against) chaste women¹² but fail to produce four witnesses, lash them (with) eighty stripes and do not accept any testimony of theirs ever after.¹³ Those - they are the pervert (ones).¹⁴

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا
بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً
وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[5] Except those who repent thereafter and make amends, surely then Allah is Oft-For-giving, Most Kind.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

[6] As for those who cast (allegations against) their spouses, and there are no witnesses for them except themselves, then the testimony of one of them shall be four oaths by Allah that he indeed is of the truthful.

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ
شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ
أَرْبَعٌ شَهَادَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ
﴿٦﴾

the act so openly as to get caught and punished. He or she should not be taken in marriage by a believer” (Qurtubi). There have been many other interpretations, too numerous for presentation (Au.).

It is also reported that Ibn `Abbas understood that the Qur’anic statement expresses a fact, viz., none but a fornicator commits sex with a fornicator or with a pagan (Razi, Qurtubi). Thus he understood the word “*nikah*” in the sense of sexual intercourse. That is how Sa`id b. Jubayr, Mujahid, Dahhak and a few others understood. Ibn Jarir’s own preferred meaning is also the same. In other words, the allusion is to fornicators, adulterers, and pagans who have free sexual intercourse between them-

selves, which is prohibited to the Muslims.

12. Lit., *muhsanat* is “women who are fortified (against unchastity), i.e., by marriage and/or faith and self-respect” (Asad). The term “*muhsanat*” has been the choice perhaps because any slander against a woman can be far more destructive than against a man. But there could be a linguistic reason too. Perhaps it is the “*anfus*” (souls) that is meant, which is feminine in Arabic and hence “*muhsanat*.” When the allusion was to women alone the Qur’an used the following expression (4: 24):

{وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ: ٢٤}

“the chaste ones of the women” (Qurtubi).

13. There has been difference in opinion over acceptance of someone's testimony who falsely accused another of sexual misdemeanor. Is his testimony to be never accepted? According to Sha'bi, 'Ata, Ta'us, Mujahid, Dahhak and others, if he repented and admitted that he was wrong in his accusation, his testimony could be accepted after he received his due punishment (Ibn Jarir). That was the opinion of Imām Malik also (Qurtubi). 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz accepted him only when another was there in his support. Qadi Shurayh however would not allow such a man's testimony ever after that. He remarked, 'We do not know if he has truly repented and amended or not.' So said Hasan, Ibrahim and a few others (Ibn Jarir).

Imām Abu Haneefah was also of the same opinion. (His opinion was that the words: "Except those who repent thereafter and make amends," are connected with their questioning in the Hereafter. If they repent, Allah (*swt*) might forgive them since, as stated in the next verse, "surely then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Kind." As for their ban against testimony in this world, it remains (Shafi'). However the other three Imāms declared that if the man repented and amended, his testimony could be accepted (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Quite a few have thought that the testimony of a person who was involved in a false case, will never be accepted again in his life, even if he repented, in matters over which he was whipped. And the differences in opinion have prevailed because of the difference over to whom the article "illa" of the fifth verse is applicable (Qurtubi).

Asad adds: ".. Since such a complete evidence (of four eye-witnesses) is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, in practice, it is obvious that the purpose of the above Qur'anic injunction is to preclude, in practice, all third-party accusations relating to illicit sexual intercourse – for, 'man has been created weak' (4: 28) – and to make a proof of adultery dependent on a voluntary, faith-inspired confession of the guilty parties themselves."

14. The textual word for "the pervert" is *fasiqun* which leads us to believe that to slander a chaste person is one of the major sins in Islam (Razi). Thanwi adds: If the slanderer is lying, then he is obviously a *fasiq*, but if he is truthful, then too he is a *fasiq* for he accuses without four witnesses and unnecessarily embarrasses the accused.

[7] And the fifth (time) that the curse of Allah be on him if he should be of the liars.¹⁵

وَالْحَامِسَةُ أَنْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ
الْكَاذِبِينَ وَيَدْرَأُ ﴿٧﴾

[8] And it shall avert the chastisement from her that she should testify by Allah four times that he indeed is of the liars.

عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَ شَهَادَاتٍ
بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٨﴾

15. Ibn `Abbas reports that when the verse about the requirement of four witnesses was revealed Sa`ad b. `Ubadah remarked, "Is this how it was revealed Messenger of Allah? By Allah, if I am to chance upon someone in the very act (with my wife) am I to go about looking for four witnesses? By Allah, I would not look for four witnesses and let the man finish his act (but rather, I would kill him then and there)." The Prophet (*saws*) complained to the Ansar about their leader Sa`ad. They said, "Messenger of Allah, indulge him, for he is a man of great sense of honor. He never married but virgins, and when he divorced a woman we did not have the courage to marry her." It should so happen that the very next day Hilal b. Umayyah came to the Prophet to register his accusation against his wife but without four witnesses. (That was in the ninth year after *Hijrah*: Qurtubi). The Prophet in truth did not like to hear him, but he would not withdraw. Finally, he resorted to Li'an (mutual invocation

of curse) that is, made the two swear as in the above verse. When Hilal had sworn four times the Prophet told the people to restrain him from the fifth oath since it would draw Allah's wrath. But Hilal swore unhesitatingly the fifth time too. Similarly when the woman's turn came she too swore four times. The Prophet told his Companions to prevent her from swearing the fifth time, as it would draw Allah's wrath. When warned, the woman hesitated for a moment and then saying, "I shall not disgrace my people" went on to swear the fifth time. When she had done that, the Prophet spared them both the punishment, separated them and remarked, "Watch her baby. If she brings someone of such and such qualities then it belongs to the father, but if she brings one of such and such qualities then it belongs to the alleged one." She indeed brought a well-built child, brownish, who later became a governor of Egypt. His parentage remained unknown. According to a few other reports it

[9] And a fifth (time) that the wrath of Allah be on her if he should be of the truthful.¹⁶

وَالْحَامِسَةَ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ
مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] And, if it were not for Allah's grace and His mercy on you and (the fact) that Allah is Oft-relenting, full of Wisdom (you would have never found this guidance).¹⁷

وَأَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
تَوَّابٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

was Hilal b. Umayyah himself who had first entered the mosque and said to the people (commenting at the revelation of the verse about four witnesses, “Isn’t it that) a man finds someone with his wife. Now if he killed him, you will kill him too. But if he brought her to the authorities (without the four witnesses), you will whip him?” The Prophet did not like to hear those words. And, it wasn’t even a week before he came complaining that he had seen his wife with a man (in bed), and Allah (*swt*) revealed the verse of mutual curse (Ibn Jarir, Razi).

The above report is to be found in many *hadith* works. A shorter version is in Bukhari according to whom when she gave birth to a child similar to Shurayk b. Sahma’ (the man involved), the Prophet (*saws*) remarked, “If not for the testimony she bore, I would have got her stoned to death” (Ibn Kathir).

Fiqh Rules

- After the oath of condemnation (or, mutual invocation of curse: *Li`an*), the two, husband and wife, are to be separated by the court, with nothing due to either from the other.
- Their separation will be considered *tafaq ba’in*, that is, they can never remarry each other (Thanwi).

16. The difference may be noted. A lying man receives Allah’s curse while a lying woman receives His anger. This is because it is very unlikely that a man will accuse his wife falsely (as he has the power to divorce her: Au.); while it is more likely that a woman will deny out of shame and fear of the people, hence she is promised greater punishment (Ibn Kathir, reworded).

17. The verse ends abruptly, Asad comments: “This sentence, which introduces the section dealing with the condemnation of all unfounded or unproved accusations of unchastity – as well as the similar sentence

[11] Surely, those who brought forward the lie¹⁸ are a band of you.¹⁹ Do not reckon it evil for you, rather it was good for you.²⁰ For every one of them is what he earned of the sin;²¹ while he among them who took the chief part therein,²² shall have a great chastisement.²³

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ
لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ
وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ



which closes it in verse 20 – is deliberately left incomplete, leaving it to man to imagine what would have happened to individual lives and society if God had not ordained all the above legal and moral safeguards against possible false accusations, or if He had made a proof of adultery dependent on mere circumstantial evidence. This idea is further elaborated in verse 14-15.”

18. “*Ifk*” in Arabic is an extremely disproportionate lie or slander (Kashshaf).

19. “*Usbah*” and “*Isabah*” in Arabic are for a group of people numbering ten to forty (Zamakhshari). This seems to be a later opinion. For, Qurtubi reports Ibn ‘Abbas’ opinion that it is a group of men from three to ten. Mujahid though said it is five to fifteen.

What band was this? Ibn Jarir answers: except for three slanderers that we know, the others of those referred to by Allah (*swt*) as a band are unknown. This is what ‘Urwah wrote

to ‘Abdul Malik b. Marwan: “You have asked me to identify the band but none has been named in this connection except Hassan b. Thabit, Mistah b. Uthathah and Hamnah bint Jahash.” ???(But of course, those three were “of you.” ‘Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Sallul was not “of you” of the Qur’an but rather “of them,” indeed, the arch hypocrite, and hence not counted: Au.).

20. For, it was the great slander that caused the revelation of such important instructions (Au.).

Mawdudi writes: “Another good that ensued from this incident was that it made the Muslims realize that the Prophet (peace be upon him), with all his spiritual loftiness and the very special mission bestowed upon him by God, did not have access to the realm that lies beyond sense-perception.”

21. That is, to each of them is a punishment in proportion to his role in the false accusation (Zamakhshari).

22. Dahhak has said that the one who started it first - `Abdullah b. abi Sallul – is the one “who took the chief part therein” – i.e., adds Ibn Jarir, it was he who played the main role through and through and will take the main part of the punishment too. `Aisha herself, along with many others, believed that the allusion is to `Abdullah b. abi Sallul. Although `Aisha also applied the words to Hassan b. Thabit. Masruq reports, “I was with `Aisha when Hassan visited her. She ordered that he be properly received. When he was gone, I asked her, ‘Do you do that to him who played the chief part?’ She answered, ‘Isn’t it enough that he has been struck with blindness. I would say, that is the major punishment he has received.’ (Ibn Kathir thinks the allusion of the above words to `Aisha, although in Bukhari, is doubtful since he is not the one who played the major role).

However, it may be noted that that it is not she who said about Hassan as the one who bore the major part. As for her remark when someone said that to her, is it possible that she did not mean it seriously, but said so in the general loose sense (Au.).

Tribal rivalry led some of Banu Umayyah to believe that `Ali was also implicated. Hisham b. `Abdul

Malik said so before Zuhri. Zuhri denied it. Hisham said he was lying. Zuhri gave him a piece of his mind and added that if a caller in the clouds cried that lying was declared lawful he would not lie. Then he reported a *hadith* from `Aisha herself (now in Bukhari) that named Ibn Ubayy (Shawkani).

The ten Qur’anic verses of this passage were revealed in connection with the slander cast against `A’isha. She herself narrated her story, and we present it here in a somewhat free form adding in parenthesis what a few other reports have to mention:

The Ifk Story:

“The Prophet used to cast lots among his wives to choose one of them to accompany him in his journeys. I was the one in whose favor the cast fell allowing me to accompany him in one of his journeys. (That was the Banu Mustaliq – also known as Muraysi` - campaign that took place in the 4th year after *Hijrah*: Qurtubi). This was after the commandments of hijab had been revealed. Therefore, I remained in the litter (hawdah) and stayed within when we camped. Thus we traveled until the Prophet completed the journey and began to return. As we were approaching Madinah, we paused for a while. Short-

ly, it was announced that the journey would be resumed. So I hastened away from the troops to attend to a call of nature. As I came back, I discovered that the borrowed necklace was gone. I went back looking for it and it took me some time to return. In the meantime the attendants who used to lift the litter, hoisted it on the camel without realizing that I was not in. After all, those days women ate mere mouthfuls and were generally thin. I found my necklace but the army was gone. So, I repaired to the place where I originally was, and not finding a caller or a responder, lay down, hoping that they would soon discover my absence. As I lay down, I fell asleep.

“Now, Safwan b. Mu`attal had rested for the night behind the army. (He was a very courageous man whom the Prophet used to appoint as the rearguard of the main army: Qur-tubi. He also picked up fallen things as the caravan advanced: Au.). He set out just before the day break and arrived at the campsite. As he approached he could see the outline of a person sleeping. As he drew near, he recognized me: he had seen me before the hijab verses were revealed. He exclaimed, “To Allah we belong and to Him we will return.” I woke up and covered my face. By Allah, he

did not speak a word except to repeat “To Allah we belong ..” He brought the camel forward, made it kneel so I could climb and set out leading the camel by its halter to catch up with the army by noon.

“Then doomed was he who was to be doomed. (Note how `A'isha avoids saying she was slandered: Au.). And the one who bore the greatest of the sin was `Abdullah ibn abi Sallul. In any case, we returned to Madinah where I fell ill for almost a month. Those days the people were talking among themselves about the slander, but I knew nothing about it. However, it did strike me as strange that the Prophet was not treating me as kindly as his usual whenever I had fallen sick. He would enter in and merely say after salutation, “How would you be?” That was what struck me as strange, otherwise I knew nothing about the affair. One night I went out to Manasi`, where we went to attend to nature's call at night. Umm Mistah was with me.

Those days there were no water closets in Madinan homes – in the fashion of the Arab houses. In fact, we recoiled from having them at close quarters. In any case, I went out with Umm Mistah and, as we were walking up she stumbled over her

apron and murmured, 'May Mistah (her son) be ruined.' I expressed my displeasure for she saying that about someone who had fought at Badr. So she told me all about the talk of the slanderers. (I forgot all about what I had come out for. I just didn't feel anything about it anymore, and returned without attending to the call). The news added another illness to my previous illness. As I returned and the Prophet came in he asked me the usual "How would you be?" I asked him if I could go to my parents. Actually, I wanted to seek confirmation of the story from them. He allowed me and as I went to my parents, I asked my mother about it. She told me to take it easy since rarely it happens that a man loves a beautiful wife but his other wives should conspire against her. I couldn't believe my ears. (I asked her if Abu Bakr knew. She said yes. Then I asked if the Prophet knew. She answered yes. I began to cry. Abu Bakr was on the roof reciting the Qur'an. Hearing my voice he came down and asked what the matter was. He was told that I had learnt of the affair. His eyes were filled with tears). I spent the night crying, continuously shedding tears, without a moment's sleep.

"As revelation was not in the offing, the Prophet consulted 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Usama b. Zayd about divorcing a wife. (Note how she avoids using her own name: Au.). Usama told him, "We do not know except good of her." As for 'Ali, he said, "Messenger of Allah, Allah has placed no restriction on you. There are plenty of other women besides her. In any case, you might inquire her maid. She is sure to know." So the Prophet (*saws*) asked Barirah, "Have you ever noticed anything suspicious about 'A'isha?" She swore that she knew nothing bad of me except that I would mix the dough and sleep off on it for a goat to enter and devour it off clean. (She also said, "Had she been like what is being attributed to her, surely, Allah would not have kept His Messenger in dark about her." And the people were amazed at her understanding of the religion).

'A'isha added, when the news reached the man implicated, he exclaimed, "By Allah, I have never uncovered a woman's shoulder ever in my life." (He meant, he had never committed illicit sex: Qurtubi). In fact he died a martyr in a battle later. (That happened during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, in the battle of Armenia in the year 19 A.H.: Qurtubi). Angry at being accused,

he struck Hassan with a sword on his head, and Hassan was lucky to have survived, as it only took some skin off the skull.

“[The Prophet also consulted his wife Zaynab bint Jahash (sister of Hamnah bint Jahash, one of the slanderers) about `A'isha. She replied, “By Allah, I know nothing but good of her.” This, despite the fact that she was jealous of `A'isha]. So the Prophet went up the mimbar and said addressing the people, “People! Who will help me against a man who hurts me by slandering my family while, by Allah, I know nothing but good of her, and have never suspected the man that they are implicating who has in fact never been in (my house) except in my presence.”

[Probably the Prophet conducted the inquiry for the satisfaction of the people: Au.].

“At that Sa`d b. Mu`adh got up and said that he would deal with the man for him. He said, ‘If he is of the Aws tribe, I’ll cut off his head, but if he is from another tribe, you suggest as to what shall we do with him.’ At that Sa`d b. `Ubadah got up. He was the leader of Khazraj, a righteous person but affected by tribal chauvinism. He taunted Sa`d b. Mu`adh, ‘By Allah, you can’t, and will never be able

to kill him.’ In reply Sa`d b. Mu`adh said, ‘By Allah, we shall surely kill him. You are a hypocrite yourself defending a hypocrite.’ That provoked the two groups Aws and Khazraj to vent anger at each other and came near to exchanging blows while the Messenger stood on the pulpit trying to calm them down. He kept appealing until the voices died down.

“And I kept weeping the day, unceasingly, without a moment’s sleep until my parents thought my liver will burst up. Then an Ansari woman came in to see me. But she sat there and only wept with me. While we were in that state the Messenger of Allah came in and sat down. A month had passed since the rumors and he had never sat down with me for that period. He recited the invocatory supplication and began to say, “`A'isha! Such and such things have been reported to me about you. Now, if you are innocent, Allah will exonerate you. But if you are guilty then seek Allah’s forgiveness and repent to Him, for, when a person admits his guilt and then repents, Allah also relents to him.’ (According to another report, she pointed to the Ansari woman sitting at the door and taunted him, ‘Don’t you feel shy that the woman would remember the things you say now?’).

[The above sentence was beautifully woman-like of `A'isha: Au.].

“In any case, those words of the Prophet stopped my tears completely. I had not a trace of them in my eyes anymore. I turned to my father and said, ‘Answer the Messenger of Allah on my behalf.’ He said, ‘I do not know how to answer him.’ So I told my mother, ‘Answer the Messenger of Allah on my behalf.’ She said, ‘I do not know how to answer him.’ So, although I was pretty young and did not know much of the Qur`ān, I said, ‘By Allah. I believe you have heard so much of this scandal that it has got planted in your hearts and you have begun to believe in it.’

[We might remind ourselves that the above sentence is from a teen-ager: Au.].

“(According to one version, ‘your hearts are drunk up in it’). Now, if I were to say I am innocent – and of course I am – then you will not believe me. But if I admitted – although I am innocent, you will believe me. By Allah, I cannot find any example to give you except that of Prophet Yusuf’s father (she forgot his name) who said, “So goodly patience is most fitting. And Allah’s help is to be sought against what you allege.”

“Then I lay down in the bed and turned my face away from them. I felt strongly at that point that Allah would exonerate me. It is another thing that I never dreamt He would send down a revelation in that regard that would be recited for ever. I thought myself too insignificant for that, but rather, it would be that the Prophet would see a dream exonerating me. And by God, the Prophet did not move from where he was sitting, nor had anyone left the house when Allah sent down His revelation. He was overtaken by the state that usually overtook him on such occasions, until drops of pearl-like sweat began to roll down from the heaviness of revelation although it was winter. Then he recovered, wiped the sweat from his forehead, smiled and said, ‘Be of good cheer `A'isha, Allah has exonerated you.’ My mother exhorted me, ‘Rise and go up to him,’ I said, ‘By Allah, I shall not rise and will not go to him, nor shall I thank anyone but Allah the Glorious who sent down the exoneration.’ (She also added, I was pretty angry at that moment and said, ‘I am not going to thank any of you. Aren’t you the ones who wouldn’t believe in me?’). Allah had revealed, ‘Surely, those who brought forward the lie are a band of you .. until the next ten verses.”

[12] Why was it not that when you heard it, the believing men and women thought good of themselves²⁴ and said, 'This is an obvious lie?'²⁵

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا
إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾

The narration is found in several *hadith* books. The above version seems to have been pieced together by several reporters and is in Ibn Is-haq (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Some time later, 'A'isha and Zaynab contended with each other over their respective virtues. Zaynab said, "I am the one who was given in marriage to the Prophet up in the Heavens." 'A'isha said, "I am the one in whose exoneration was revealed in Allah's Book when Safwan took me up on the camel." Zaynab asked, "Tell me, what did you say when you were up on his camel?" 'A'isha replied, "I said (4: 173),

{ حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ } [آل عمران: ١٧٣]

Zaynab remarked, "You said the words of the believers."

23. That is, those of them who died having not repented (Qurtubi).

24. The verse, "Why was it not that when you heard it, the believing men and women think good of themselves?" could be somewhat intriguing to some, especially the words, "think good of themselves." Ibn Ja-

rir offers rescue: This is because the adherents of Islam are like a single individual. They are one community. Accordingly, when Umm Ayyub told her husband Abu Ayyub, "Have you heard what the people are saying about 'A'isha?" – he answered, "Indeed, I have. But that is a lie. (Let me ask you), would you have done such a thing O Umm Ayyub?" She answered, "Of course I would never do such a thing." He remarked, "But 'A'isha is better than you."

Ibn Kathir traces the report in Ahmad.

25. "And said, 'This is an obvious lie?'" - that is, there was no need for investigation into a case so obvious. The first reaction should have been to reject it outright as Abu Ayyub did (Ibn Jarir).

That is because, Ibn Kathir adds, the circumstantial evidence was too strong. The Mother of the believers had come into the (middle of the) camp, riding Safwan's mount, at noon time, right before the eyes of the beholders. Had there been any foul play of any sort, the two would

[13] Why did they not bring four witnesses against it? So, when they did not bring the witnesses, then it is they indeed who are liars in the sight of Allah.²⁶

لَوْلَا جَاؤُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] And, were it not for Allah's grace and mercy upon you in this world and the Next, surely a grievous chastisement would have touched you for that into which you plunged.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] When you were receiving it on your tongues²⁷ and were speaking with your mouths²⁸ that of which you had no knowledge and reckoned it insignificant, while it was grave in the sight of Allah.²⁹

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

not have come in receiving the gaze of all and sundry.

Even an enemy of the Islamic truth Muir is quoted by Majid as having written, "Little remark is needed, regarding the character of `A'isha.. Her life, both before and after must lead us to believe her innocent of the charge."

26. Accordingly, the Prophet ordered Hassan b. Thabit, Hamnah b. Jahsh and Mistah b. Athathah whipped. The reports are in Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad and others but which Tirmidhi thought reached only the Hasan status (Qur-tubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Ibn Ubayy himself was spared because, says Shawkani, his punish-

ment was reserved for the Hereafter as against the above three who gained redemption through their worldly punishment. The Prophet has said,

إنها كفارة لمن أقيمت عليه

"(Worldly punishment) is a means of redemption upon whomsoever they are executed."

The words of the *hadith* in Muslim are:

وَمَنْ أَصَابَ شَيْئًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَعُوقِبَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ

"Whoever of you fell into any of it (i.e. a sin) and is delivered any punishment (hadd) then, that is his redemption" (S. Ibrahim).

27. `A'isha herself read the present-day textual "*talaqqawnahu*" as "*taliqunahu*" – and she knew well

[16] Why was it not that when you heard it, you said, 'It is not proper for us that we should speak of this. Glory to You (our Lord),³⁰ this is a great slander.'

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] Allah exhorts you that you should ever return to the like thereof, if you are believers.³¹

يَعِظْكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] And Allah makes clear to you the verses, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

what was revealed in her connection – meaning, “when you continued to receive (the false story).” However, the consensus is over “*talaqqawna-hu*” (Ibn Jarir, *Kashshaf*). And the meaning is, you were freely passing it on from tongue to tongue (*Kashshaf*).

وَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ مِنْ سَخِطِ اللَّهِ لَا يُدْرِي هُوَ بِهَا يَهْوَى بِهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ

“Verily, a man speaks out a word that angers Allah, while he attaches no importance to it, but he is thrown thereby into the Fire” (Ibn Kathir).

28. All words come from the tongue, so what’s the meaning of the words “When you received it on your tongues?” The answer is, the slanderers never let their slander cross through to their minds. They took it easy, without thinking about the significance of what they were saying, passing it on as casually as received, from tongue to tongue (*Kashshaf*, reworded).

30. Originally, *Subha-naka* (Glory to You) was said at every moment when great wonders hidden in Allah’s creation became apparent. Subsequently, with usage, it came to be spelled at anything wonderful or strange thing happening (*Zamakhshari*).

29. A *hadith* points to the mischief of the tongue. The Prophet (*saws*) said in a report preserved in the *Sahihayn*:

31. The Prophet has added his own emphasis to the Qur’anic prohibition against attacking people’s honor. He said in a *hadith* of Ahmad,

لَا تُؤْذُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُعَيِّرُوهُمْ وَلَا تَطْلُبُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ طَلَبَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ طَلَبَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ حَتَّى يَفْضَحَهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ

[19] Surely those who love that indecency³² should spread among the believers, shall have a painful chastisement in this world and the Next.³³ Allah knows and you know not.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ
﴿١٩﴾

[20] And, but for the grace of Allah upon you and His mercy, and that Allah is All-clement, All-Merciful, (you were lost).

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
رُؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

“Do not cause pain to Allah’s slaves nor taunt them. And do not seek to know their hidden affairs. For, he who sought to know the hidden affairs of his brother Muslim, has Allah after his hidden affairs, until He humiliates him in his own house” (Ibn Kathir).

32. Majid comments: “The word ‘*Al-Fahishah*’ in this context does not signify the act of lewdness but the dissemination of scandals and gossip, the wide-spread social vice – the word of scandal repeated and reiterated at hundreds of (places).”

Mawdudi however sees that the implication can be expanded. He writes: “The words used in the verse embrace all the various forms that

might be used to spread moral corruption and lewd behavior including those means employed to awaken sexual passion, be they poetry, song, fiction, picture, plays and drama.”

33. That is, if they continued living and died unrepentant (Qurtubi).

Asad adds: “The Qur’anic warning against slander and, by obvious implication, against any attempt at seeking out other people’s faults finds a clear echo in several well-authenticated sayings of the Prophet: ‘Beware of all guesswork [about one another], for, behold, all [such] guesswork is most deceptive (*akdhab al-hadith*); and do not spy upon one another, and do not try to bare [other people’s] failings’ (Muwatta’).”

[21] Believers! Follow not Shaytan's footsteps. Whoever follows the footsteps of Shaytan (should know that) verily he (only) enjoins indecency and the reprehensible. And, were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever purified (himself),³⁴ but rather Allah purifies whom He will, and Allah is All-hearing, All-knowing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] And let not those of virtue³⁵ among you and wealth swear against expending on the kin, the poor, and the emigrants in Allah's cause.³⁶ They ought to pardon and overlook. Do you not wish that that Allah should forgive you?³⁷ And Allah is All-forgiving, All-kind.

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَن يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

34. That is, as Ibn `Abbas understood, none of you would have, all by himself, been led to any good nor saved from any harm, without Allah showing the way (Ibn Jarir).

Imām Razi explains that the term “*zaki*” is applicable to a person who has obtained a high degree of Allah's Pleasure (*rida*). Hence one says,

زكى الزرع

meaning “the crop has attained its fullest growth.”

35. Imām Razi points out (and Alusi seems to agree) that the term “*fadl*” of “*ulu al-fadl*” can allude either to this worldly “*fadl*” or the next-worldly. If we assume that it refers to this worldly “*fadl*” then, it cannot

be rendered as “wealth” or “bounty” because that is already mentioned in “*sa`ab*” (abundance or wealth). Therefore, it can only be understood as spiritual “grace” or “virtue” of this and the next world. This description fitted well Abu Bakr who was a person of spiritual virtue far more excellent than any other after the Prophet.

36. This was revealed in reference to Abu Bakr swearing over Mistah's part in the slander on `A'isha. He used to support him materially because he was a cousin to him through his aunt, and because he was a poor immigrant, and one who had participated in the battle of Badr. He swore that he would no more support him financially after the incident. Allah (*swt*) revealed this verse. Dahhak has

[23] Surely those who slander chaste,³⁸ unwary,³⁹ believing women are cursed in this world and the Next and for them (awaits) a great punishment.⁴⁰

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] The Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will testify against them as to what they were doing.

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ
وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

said that there were a few others also, from among the Ansar, who had sworn like Abu Bakr (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir). But the second opinion – about the Ansar – does not seem very sound (Qurtubi).

37. When Abu Bakr heard of this revelation he said, “Indeed, I wish to be forgiven” (Ibn Jarir).

The Prophet expressed the substance of this verse in his words by saying,

من لا يرحم لا يرحم

“He who doesn’t show mercy, is not shown mercy” (Qurtubi).

38. The translation of “*muhsanat*” as chaste has Ibn Jarir’s authority behind it.

39. Morally bankrupt people’s languages (in whose culture father mates with daughter, brother marries sister, priest with priest), cannot have words in current usage for expressing such qualities as they deem out of date: chastity, bashfulness, personal

purity, etc. Zamakhshari’s definition for the textual “*ghafilat*” therefore, could perhaps give some sense to those who do not have a single equivalent for “*ghafilat*.” He defines the term as ...but first in Arabic:

السليمات الصدور ، النقيات القلوب ، اللاتي ليس
فيهن دهاء ، ولا مكر ، لأنهن لم يجربن الأمور
ولم يوزن الأحوال ، فلا يفتنّ لما تفتن له المجربات
العرفات - الكشاف

We can now attempt a somewhat free translation: “*Ghafilat* are those women whose breasts are preserved in primordial purity, and hearts clean. Those, who are free of guile and cunning, for they have not yet experienced (some) things, and have not yet tasted (some) affairs; so that, they are not yet conscious of matters that the experienced and the seasoned ones are conscious of.”

40. The verse could be applicable to `Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his compatriots who never repented (Alusi and others).

[25] That day will Allah pay them in full their just due⁴¹ and they will know that Allah, He is the Manifest Truth.⁴²

يَوْمَئِذٍ يُؤْفِقُهُمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ
أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Evil (words) are for evil men, and evil men are for evil (words); and good (words) are for pure men and pure men are for good (words).⁴³ They are innocent of what they (the evil ones) say.⁴⁴ Theirs shall be forgiveness and a provision honorable.⁴⁵

الْحَبِيبَاتُ لِلْحَبِيبِينَ وَالْحَبِيبُونَ لِلْحَبِيبَاتِ
وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ
أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ
وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

The Prophet added his own emphasis counting slander of chaste women as one of the great seven destroyers. The others being, as in a report of the *Sahihayn*:

الشِّرْكُ بِاللَّهِ ، وَالسِّحْرُ ، وَقَتْلُ النَّفْسِ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ
اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ، وَأَكْلُ الرِّبَا ، وَأَكْلُ مَالِ الْيَتِيمِ ،
وَالسَّوْءُ بِيَوْمِ الرَّحْفِ ، وَقَدْفُ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
الْعَافِلَاتِ

Ascribing partners unto Allah, magic, killing an innocent soul, devouring usury, devouring orphans' property, running away from the battle-field, and slandering chaste believing women (Ibn Kathir).

41. The rendering of “*din*” as “just due” tries to be close to the understanding of Ibn `Abbas as in Tabari. He said “*dinahum*” means “*hisabahum*.”

42. This is the meaning of “*Al-Mubin*” that Ibn Jarir prefers as correct.

However, “One Who Manifests” is another possible meaning. Zamakhshari is also of the same opinion.

It might also be made note of, adds Zamakhshari, how Allah (*swt*) dealt with the slander of `A'isha in His revelation. He stated it briefly and then expanded on it, He emphasized on it and then repeated it, and, came with words of threat that He used for the Associaters alone in other parts of the Qur`an. Anyone wishing to know the position of honor that the Prophet (*saws*) occupied with Allah, might read the passage dealing with `A'isha's slander. If Allah dealt with it so seriously, it was because `A'isha was his wife.

43. A literal translation should be: Evil (women) are for evil (men) ...” but this is not how the great majority of the earliest scholars have understood it.

But rather, the translation as it is now, is how Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Ibn Nujayh, Dahhak, Qatadah, Sa`id b. Jubayr and many others of the early scholars have understood. That is, evil words are for evil men; to them they suit most. Whereas, good men are innocent of them. On the contrary, good words are for good men. To them they suit most.

Ibn Jarir also understands this *ayah* in this manner, yet reports that Zayd b. Aslam thought they meant that good women are for good men .. to the end.

Nuhhas has said that this is the best that has been said about the verse, although he is not against Zayd's interpretation altogether (Qurtubi).

44. That is, the good ones are quit of what the words the evil ones use (Ibn Jarir).

45. Most commentators agree that the first application of the verse was to `A'isha, a lady of great virtues. The Prophet (*saws*) said about her:

فَضْلُ عَائِشَةَ عَلَى الْبَنَاتِ كَفَضْلِ الثَّرِيدِ عَلَى سَائِرِ
الطَّعَامِ

“`A'isha's superiority over other women is like that of mutton-pudding over other dishes” (Alusi). She said about herself, “I have been given preference over others in several things: (a) An angel brought down my photo to the Prophet (before marriage, to say that ‘this is chosen to be your wife’), (b) I was the only virgin the Prophet married, (c) I held the unique position that revelations came to the Prophet while I was with him under the same blanket, (d) my exoneration was sent down from the heavens, (e) the Prophet died in my house, (f) he was buried in my house, (g) I was created pure in the house of the pure, (h) I was promised forgiveness and an honorable provision (Zamakhshari, Alusi, Shafi` and others).

It might be noticed in the above that the woman inside `A'isha makes an important point of being a virgin when the Prophet married her. The Prophet himself however, hardly ever expressed any such sentiment (Au.).

[27] Believers! Do not enter houses other than your own houses until you have ascertained welcome⁴⁶ and have saluted their occupants. That is better for you, haply you will heed.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا
غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْنِسُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا
عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

46. Ibn `Abbas was quite sure that the original revelation was “*ista’dhinu*” (seek permission) which the scribe wrote as “*ista’nisu*” (seek familiarity or friendliness). Some reports say that that is how it was written in Ibn Mas`ud’s copy of the Qur`an (Ibn Jarir). Nonetheless, the usage of the word “*ista’nasa*” is not any new in Arabic language. We might recall that when `Umar entered upon the Prophet in his upper chamber when he had sworn that he would not see his wives for a month, he used the same word “*asta’nis*” (lit., “should I attempt pleasantry?: Au.) - Qurtubi.

The word has also been used in the Qur`an in *Surah al-Ahzab*, verse 53, which says,

{فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ ۗ إِنَّ
[الأحزاب: ٥٣]

“When you have finished eating, disperse, without seeking conversation” (Razi).

The attribution therefore, of the opinion above to Ibn `Abbas and others is incorrect (Zamakhshari,

Razi, Qurtubi). In fact, writes Shanqiti, all the Uthmani copies of the Qur`an have it written as “*ista’nisu*.” Alusi however does not believe the attribution is incorrect and sets about explaining what Ibn `Abbas could have meant.

However, Mujahid and Ibn Zayd thought it was “*ista’nisu*” alone, meaning, “make yourselves familiar.” That is, clear your throat, and make some sort of noise to let the occupants know that someone is at the door.

In any case, whether this or that, it is desirable that one seeks the permission of the occupants before entering, even if it happens to be one’s mother inside. The following is in *Muwatta`*:

سَأَلَهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ اسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَىٰ أُمِّي
فَقَالَ « نَعَمْ ». قَالَ الرَّجُلُ إِنِّي مَعَهَا فِي الْبَيْتِ.
فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- « اسْتَأْذِنُ
عَلَيْهَا ». فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ إِنِّي خَادِمُهَا. فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ
اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- « اسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَيْهَا أَجْحَبُ
أَنْ تَرَاهَا غُرْيَانَةً ». قَالَ لَا. قَالَ: فَاسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَيْهَا {
موطأ مالك ٥ / ٤٨٧}

Someone asked the Prophet (*saws*) whether he should seek permission even if it is his mother? He answered, “Yes.” He said, “She is living with me in the house.” He told him, “Seek her permission.” The man said, “I am her attendant.” The Prophet answered, “Seek her permission. Do you wish to see her naked?” The man said, “No.” He said, “Then better seek her leave.”

And once someone said at the Prophet's door,

حَدَّثَنَا رَجُلٌ مِنْ بَنِي غَامِرٍ أَنَّهُ اسْتَأْذَنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- وَهُوَ فِي بَيْتٍ فَقَالَ أَلَيْحَ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- لِحَادِمِهِ « اخْرُجْ إِلَى هَذَا فَعَلِمَهُ الْإِسْتِئْذَانَ فَقَالَ لَهُ قُلِ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ ». فَسَمِعَهُ الرَّجُلُ فَقَالَ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ فَأَذِنَ لَهُ النَّبِيُّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- فَدَخَلَ.

“Shall I come in?” He said to his attendant, “Go out to this man and teach him the manner of entering (a home). Tell him to say, ‘*Al-salamu aleykum*’ and then ask, ‘Shall I enter?’” The man at the door heard and said, ‘*Al-salamu aleykum*, shall I enter?’ The Prophet allowed him and then the man entered.”

(The report is in Abu Da'ud, Ahmad and other books and is of considerable strength: S. Ibrahim).

Accordingly, it is reported of Ibn Mas'ud that he would clear his throat or make some noise at the door of his own house for the occupants to know he was coming in (Ibn Jarir, Zamakshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Visiting Manners

Permission to enter might be sought three times. A report is preserved in the *Sahihayn* which says that Abu Musa sought entry into 'Umar's gathering three times and turned back finding no response. In the meanwhile 'Umar became conscious of the voice and sent someone after him, but he was gone. When he showed up again 'Umar asked him why had he returned earlier? Abu Musa told him that he had followed the Prophet's instruction: thrice you seek to be admitted but if there is no response you may return. 'Umar threatened him with stripes if he did not produce witnesses. So Abu Musa went to a group of Ansar and asked them if anyone had also heard it from the Prophet. They said, “The youngest of us will help you out,” and sent Abu Sa'id al-Khudri with him. He testified before 'Umar that the Prophet (*saws*) indeed had said such a thing. 'Umar remarked, “Nothing but trading led me to miss this one” (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

A report of Abu Da'ud, quite credible, says that once the Prophet visited Sa'd b. 'Ubadah. He said "Al-salamu alaykum" at the door, three times. Every time he said that, Sa'd replied in a low-pitched voice which the Prophet did not hear and so he returned. Sa'd ran after him and explained that he wished to hear his Salam several times and hence replied in low tones. Sa'd offered him a bath and the Prophet bathed himself. Then he offered him some food that had food coloring in it. Finished, the Prophet supplicated in words, "O Allah, send Your peace and mercy on the household of Sa'd b. 'Ubadah." When he wished to depart, Sa'd offered him his donkey and asked Qays to accompany him. The Prophet told Qays to also mount. But he refused. So he told him, "Either mount, or go back." Qays preferred to go back (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

According to another report in Abu Da'ud, though of unknown reliability,

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- إِذَا أَتَى
بَابَ قَوْمٍ لَمْ يَسْتَقْبِلِ الْبَابَ مِنْ تَلْقَاءِ وَجْهِهِ وَلَكِنْ
مِنْ زَكْبِهِ الْأَيْمَنِ أَوْ الْأَيْسَرِ وَيَقُولُ: السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ.

"When the Prophet visited someone, he did not stand right in front of the door, but rather, ei-

ther on the right side or lefts side of it and say, 'Al-salamu alaykum, Al-salamu alaykum'" (Ibn Kathir).

Visiting manners also demand that one might not peep into the house one is visiting. The Prophet (*saws*) said in a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn*:

فَإِنَّمَا الْإِسْتِئْذَانُ مِنَ النَّظَرِ

"Permission has been legislated for the sake of the sight."

According to a report in the *Sahihayn*, the Prophet said that,

لَوْ اطَّلَعَ فِي بَيْتِكَ أَحَدٌ وَمَ تَأَذَّنَ لَكَ ، حَذَفْتَهُ بِحِصَاةٍ
فَقَمَّاتُ عَيْنِهِ ، مَا كَانَ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ جُنَاحٍ

if you struck a visitor peeping into your house with a stone and it blinded him, no indemnity will be required of you (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Bukhari, Abu Da'ud and Ahmad have a report from Jabir who said,

أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي دِينَ كَانَ عَلَى
أَبِي، فَدَقَقْتُ الْبَابَ، فَقَالَ: "مَنْ ذَا؟" قُلْتُ: أَنَا.
قَالَ: "أَنَا، أَنَا" كَأَنَّهُ كَرِهَهُ

"I went to the Prophet (for an errand)." I knocked at the door. He asked, 'Who is it?' I answered, 'It's me.' He asked, 'Me, me? Who is me?' – as if he did not like the visitor's words (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

[28] But if you find not anyone therein, then do not enter into them until you are permitted.⁴⁷ And if you are told, 'return,' then return.⁴⁸ That is purer for you; and Allah is Knowing of what you do.

[29] There is no blame upon you that you should enter uninhabited houses,⁴⁹ in which are your goods. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

One might also knock at the door; but not too noisily. Anas b. Malik reports that they used to knock at the Prophet's doors with their nails (Qurtubi).

47. This refers to houses without their occupants within. One's entry into them would be illegal. It might also be extended to houses where the master of the house is absent. One might not enter into them if invited in by a child or a house servant unless they have specific instruction from the master of the house. The words, "if you do not find anyone" could be saying, "if you do not find anyone (of authority) to allow you in" (Alusi).

48. Somehow, throughout the ages, Muslims have not been able to say "go back" to anyone at the door. Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir report

from one of the emigrants, "All my life I never had the opportunity to hear from anyone, 'return,' so that I could return, a bit downcast."

Their attitude to welcome a guest, at whatever time he may come, has got better of their awareness to conserve time. Indian scholars say that a scholar should welcome a man looking for consultancy at any odd hour, even if it is wee hours of the night (Au.).

49. Such as store houses, and, by implication, cafeterias and other public places of unobstructed visit.

Ibn Abi Hatim reports that it was first Abu Bakr who asked the Prophet about such places as store-rooms, stock-yards, inns, and other public places where there is no one to seek permission from. In response Allah revealed this verse (Alusi and others).

[30] Say to the believers that they lower their gazes⁵⁰ and guard their private parts.⁵¹ That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is Aware of what they do.

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

50. According to the majority the min of the textual “*min absaribhim*” has been declared as “*tab`idiyyah*” – meaning, “lower some of your gazes,” i.e., those that are cast at the forbidden. A minor opinion is that the min here is “*za`idah*” such as in, “*ma min ilahin ghayruhu*,” while a few others have treated it as a “*silah*” (conjunctive) - Razi.

Our translation at this point is more to attain fluency rather than accuracy (Au.).

Ibn `Abbas explained that the instruction is to lower the gaze from every unsightly thing. Obviously, it is not possible to walk about with the sights fixed to the ground. The meaning is, do not look at things unlawful to look at (Ibn Jarir).

The first fall of the sight on an undesirable thing is forgiven, but, as a *hadith* of Muslim asserts, it must be taken off quickly. In this vein we might quote a tradition preserved in the *Sahihayn*. The Prophet said,

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْجُلُوسَ عَلَى الطَّرِيقَاتِ. فَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا بِئْسَ ،
 إِنَّمَا هِيَ مَجَالِسُنَا نَتَحَدَّثُ فِيهَا . قَالَ « فَإِذَا أَبَيْتُمْ

إِلَّا الْمَجَالِسَ فَأَعْطُوا الطَّرِيقَ حَقَّهَا » قَالُوا وَمَا حَقُّ
 الطَّرِيقِ قَالَ: غَضُّ الْبَصَرِ ، وَكَفُّ الْأَدَى ، وَرَدُّ
 السَّلَامِ ، وَأَثَرُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ، وَتَهَيُّ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ .

“Be you warned of sitting at the roadsides.” They protested, “But we need to get together and chat.” He said, “If you do not wish to do without those assemblies, then give the roadside its due.” They asked, “And what’s its due?” He replied, “Lower your gaze, hold back any harm (to passers by), return salutations, enjoin the virtuous and prohibit the wrong.”

Accordingly, when during a campaign, Ghazwan was staring at a girl with uncovered face, Abu Musa Ash`ari hit so hard on his eye that it got swollen. “You are looking at something that can only harm you and not benefit you.” Now, Ghazwan was a sensitive man. It is reported that he was not seen smiling thereafter until his death. In fact, Sha`bi has said – although his times were better than ours - one might not stare hard and long at his mother, sister or daughter (Qurtubi).

[31] And say to the believing women that they lower their gazes⁵² and guard their private parts⁵³ and not reveal their adornments except for what (ordinarily) appears thereof,⁵⁴ and (that) they draw their veils over their bosoms,⁵⁵ and reveal not their adornments except to their husbands,⁵⁶ or their fathers,⁵⁷ or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women,⁵⁸ or those their right hands own, or male attendants free of desire,⁵⁹ or children who have no knowledge of women's hidden parts, and that they should not strike with their feet in order to draw attention to what they conceal of their adornment.⁶⁰ And turn to Allah, all of you, O believers, haply that you will prosper.⁶¹

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَعْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى خُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاؤَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرَ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

We have seen how free license has led girls in Western households to fear their own fathers and other close relatives (Au.).

According to a *hadith* in Bukhari, Muslim and others the Prophet (*saws*) said about one's wandering eye:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ عَلَى ابْنِ آدَمَ حَظَّهُ مِنَ الزَّيْنَةِ ، أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ لَا مَحَالَةَ ، فَرَيْنَا الْعَيْنَ النَّظْرُ ، وَزَيْنَا اللِّسَانَ الْمَنْطِقُ ، وَالتَّنَفُّسُ تَمَنَّى وَتَشْتَهَى ، وَالْفَرْجُ يُصَدِّقُ ذَلِكَ كُلَّهُ وَيُكَذِّبُهُ

“Allah has written on Adam's son his share of adultery which he commits inevitably. The adultery of the eyes is the sight (that gazes at the forbidden), the adultery of the tongue is to talk, the inner

self wishes and desires and the private parts testify all these or deny them.”

لا تتبع النظرة النظرة فإنما لك الأولى وليست لك الثانية

It has been said about guarding one's gaze against falling on undesirable things that as a reward Allah (*swt*) bestows Light to his eye and (wisdom) flows through his heart. Hence many scholars have discouraged men from staring at (handsome) boys. In fact, the *Sufiya* have written against it in very strong terms (Ibn Kathir).

51. That is, not uncover their `awrah (parts of body to be necessarily covered). A *hadith* in Tirmidhi, (which

is declared Hasan and translated freely here: Au.), says that the Prophet was asked about one's `awrah. He answered,

”احْفَظْ عَلَيْكَ عَوْرَتَكَ إِلَّا مِنْ زَوْجِكَ أَوْ مَا
مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ“، قُلْتُ: فَإِذَا كَانَ بَعْضًا فِي
بَعْضٍ؟ قَالَ: ”فَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ لَا يَرَى عَوْرَتَكَ
أَحَدٌ فَافْعَلْ“، قُلْتُ: أَرَأَيْتَ إِذَا كَانَ أَحَدُنَا جَالِسًا
وَحْدَهُ؟ قَالَ: ”اللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُسْتَعَجَى مِنْهُ“.

“Guard your `awrah save from your wife or what your rights hands own.” He was asked, “Man to man?” He replied, “Try and see to it that he does not see your `awrah.” He was asked, “What about when a man is alone?” He answered, “Allah is more deserving that you should be shy of Him.”

`A'isha was asked about her relationship with the Prophet when in private. She said,

ما رأيت ذلك منه ، ولا رأى ذلك مني .

“He did not see of me and I did not see of him.”

Nevertheless, scholars have allowed a man and wife to see each other's private parts (Qurtubi); but not the anus (Au.).

52. The preferred opinion about women looking at non-closely-related men (*ghayr mahram*) is that it is

disallowed for them to look at them with carnal desires, but allowed if the look is not carnal. This is supported by the *hadith* about Ibn Umm Mak-tum entering upon the Prophet and he asking Umm Salamah and May-muna (his two wives) to move away. They said, “But he is blind who can neither see us nor recognize us?” He replied, “But, are you two also blind?” Tirmidhi rated this *hadith* *Hasan Sahih*. As for women allowed to look at men's faces without carnal desire, that is supported by the report preserved in the *Sahihayn* that a group of Abyssinian circus men were allowed to perform in the yard of the mosque and the Prophet (*saws*) allowed `A'isha to look at them from behind him (Ibn Kathir).

53. Abu al-`Aliyyah has said that every “guard their private parts of the Qur`ān alludes to ‘safeguarding against illicit sex,’ except for this instance where it means to say, ‘let no one see the private parts’ (Ibn Kathir).

54. (The exact implication of the textual word “*zeenah*” [adornment] has been widely disputed). But there is no difference in opinion that by “ornaments” the allusion actually is to the organs of ornament (Shafi` from Alusi).

Ibn Jarir writes: Ibn Mas`ud is widely reported to have said that of adornments there are two kinds: the apparent and the non-apparent or the visible and the invisible. The allusion here is to the apparent adornment. It is applicable to clothes. As for what is non-apparent, it is bangles, anklets, necklaces etc. Hasan and Ibrahim were also of the same opinion. Abu Is-haq substantiated this opinion with another verse wherein the word “*zeenah*” is used in the same sense (7-31):

{ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ }
[الأعراف: ٣١]

“*Adam’s children! Put on your (best) attires at every Prayer.*”

Ibn `Abbas on the other hand believed that the apparent adornment applies to the jewelry in public, and the face in the privacy of homes. Sa`id ibn Jubayr said the allusion is to palms and face (without specifying whether in public or private). Dahhak, and Awza`i held the same opinion.

A third opinion, that of Hasan, is that the allusion by the textual “*zeenah*” is both to the clothes as well as the face. “My own opinion,” writes Ibn Jarir, “is that the allusion is to the face and hands.”

Ibn Khuwayzmandad was of the opinion that if a woman is beautiful she ought to cover her face and hands in public – a rule that does not apply to old, or ugly looking women (Qurtubi).

55. The textual word is the plural of “*jayb*” which is for pocket which used to be on the breast in earlier times, and even during our own times both in Spain as well as in Egypt. In fact Bukhari has a chapter-heading which says, “Shirt pocket on the breast.” A *hadith* (of the *Sahihayn*: Au.) which gives examples of a miser and a charitable person, implies that the Prophet’s own two pockets were on the breast (Qurtubi).

‘A’isha is reported to have praised Ansari women who, when they heard of this revelation, tore their cloaks to cover themselves up thoroughly with one half of the torn cloaks (Ibn Jarir). The report is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir).

56. The “*zeenah*” of this occurrence was explained by Ibn Mas`ud as meaning, earrings, necklace, etc. Ibn `Abbas however added that apart from earrings, necklace, bangles, they should not show anything else of their ankles, neck or hair to anyone apart from their husbands and others mentioned here (Ibn Jarir).

57. A common rule applicable to all the categories of the verse is that progenies below and progenitors above are included by default. Further, maternal or paternal uncles have not been mentioned because they are, in reference to these commandments, like their sons who have also not been mentioned. These are all the mahaarim whom a woman can never marry (Qurtubi).

58. That is, Muslim women. Non-Muslim women should not see Muslim women's adornments as stated above, unless they happen to be their slave-girls. Hence 'Umar ibn al-Khattab wrote to Abu 'Ubaydah (the Syrian governor), "I have been told that Muslim women enter into public bathrooms along with those of the People of the Book. Prevent them from that, otherwise they will (get used to) going in (freely)" - Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir.

As for the oft-quoted *hadith* by those contentious of "*niqab*" viz.,

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا أَنَّ أَسْمَاءَ بِنْتَ أَبِي بَكْرٍ دَخَلَتْ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- وَعَلَيْهَا ثِيَابٌ رِقَاقٌ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- وَقَالَ « يَا أَسْمَاءُ إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ إِذَا بَلَغَتْ الْمَحِيضَ لَمْ تَصْلُحْ أَنْ يَرَى مِنْهَا إِلَّا هَذَا وَهَذَا ». وَأَشَارَ إِلَى وَجْهِهِ وَكَفْفِيهِ. قَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدَ هَذَا مُرْسَلٌ

'A'isha says that Asma' bint Abi Bakr entered upon the Messen-

ger of Allah clad in thin clothes. The Prophet told her: "O Asma', when a woman attains puberty, it does not behoove her that she should expose anything except this and this," .. pointing to his face and the two palms.

Well, this *hadith* cannot be used as evidence because Abu Da'ud has himself declared it weak.

59. Ibn 'Abbas and several of the early commentators have explained "*ghayru uli al-irbah min al-rijal*" as those men who are not in the right state of mind and hence have no desire whatsoever for women and women have no desire for them (Ibn Jarir). In Majid's words, "ghayru uli al-irbah signifies both 'wanting in intelligence' as well as 'wanting in sexual desire.'"

Muslim women could display their earrings, necklaces and bangles, but, as for their anklets, neck or hair, that they should refrain from displaying to anyone except their husbands and others named herewith. However, although hermaphrodites are naturally included, but, if they have a wicked look, they might also not be allowed free access to women's quarters (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Hence we have reports in *hadith* books against such of them. One of

them, in (Bukhari and) Muslim, has Umm Salama reporting that she had a eunuch (as a slave) in her house whom they used to consider one of the “*ghayr irbah*” (of the Qur’an). Allah’s Messenger was once in the house when he (the eunuch) said to Umm Salama’s brother `Abdullah b. Abu Umayyah:

إِنْ فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الطَّائِفَ غَدًا أَذَلَّكَ عَلَى ابْنَةِ عَيْلَانَ ، فَإِنَّهَا تَمْبُلُ بِأَرْبَعٍ وَتُدْبِرُ بِثَمَانٍ . فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - « لَا يَدْخُلَنَّ هَذَا عَلَيْكَرَّ (صحيح البخارى)

“If Allah grants you victory at Ta’if tomorrow, I will show you the daughter of Ghaylan, for she moves forward in fours and backward in eights.” Allah’s Messenger heard this and said: “Do not allow this man to enter upon you again” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

(The Prophet has also prohibited that men be put into test through description of another woman to them in a way it provokes their carnal self). He said,

لَا تَبَاشِرِ الْمَرْأَةَ الْمَرْأَةَ فَتَسْتَعْتَبَهَا لِرُؤُوسِهَا ، كَأَنَّهَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهَا (صحيح البخارى)

“Let not a woman describe to her husband another woman, as if he sees her.”

60. That is, they should not strike their feet adorned with anklets on

the ground in order to draw attention to themselves (Ibn Jarir and others).

Also included in the prohibition is women using strong perfumes. The Prophet said, in a report of Tirmidhi declared *Hasan Sahih*,

كُلُّ عَيْنٍ زَانِيَةٌ وَالْمَرْأَةُ إِذَا اسْتَعْطَرَتْ فَمَرَّتْ بِالْمَجْلِسِ فَهِيَ كَذَا وَكَذَا يَعْنِي زَانِيَةٌ - قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ. (سنن الترمذی)

“Every eye is an adulterer. And when a woman perfumes herself and then passes by an assembly (of men), she is so and so,” meaning, she is an adulteress.

(Then there is a *hadith* that warns of risks in interactions within the homes with non-*mahrams*). The Prophet said:

”إِيَّاكُمْ وَالذُّخُولَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ“ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِّنَ الْأَنْصَارِ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَرَأَيْتَ الْحُمُو؟ قَالَ: ”الْحُمُو الْمَوْتُ“.

“Beware of entering upon women.” One of the Ansar asked, “Messenger of Allah, what about a brother-in-law?” He answered, “A brother-in-law is death.”

(Ibn Kathir).

Imām Razi points out that far from displaying their “*zeenah*,” Muslim women are being instructed not even to draw attention to them. Based on

this, the jurists have drawn the conclusion that a woman should not raise her voice, for that will draw attention to her. A woman's voice is more charming than her adornments and this is the reason why it is not allowed for women to say the Adhan.

61. Makki has said that there is no other verse in the Qur'an which has more pronouns than this one, which has in all twenty-five of them (Qurtubi). The lower in order is verse 228 of *Al-Baqarah*. Both deal with women and both carry alliteration effects (Au.).

Fiqh Points:

The following are from Imām Razi

- Of `Awraat there are four kinds: man to man, woman to woman, woman to man, and man to woman.
- Man to man: It is not allowable for a man to expose to another man anything of his body between the navel and the knees, both included.
- Woman to woman: The same as above, i.e., it is not allowable for a woman to expose anything of her body to another woman anything between the navel and the knees.
- Woman to man: Of this category there can be various situations. A woman might not expose anything of her body to a non-*mabram* except

the face and the two hands. On the other hand, it is not allowed for a man to look at a woman's face unless there is a specific need, such as, e.g., medical examination, identification, or intention to marry, etc. A second look is disallowed.

- A slave-girl owned by a man is like his wife. But if she is partly owned, (i.e., a joint owner with another person), or she is under contract of freedom (*mukaatabah*), or kept as mortgage, or a pagan, or married (to someone, slave or free), then, the most she can display are those parts of the body that are visible during work, without exposing which she can do no work.

- As regards a male slave owned by a woman, there is difference in opinion. Some say he might see her *zeenah*, but other jurists have said no. There is a report in Abu Da'ud, Ahmad, Ibn Marduwayh and Bayhaqi (and is trustworthy: S. Ibrahim) which says that the Prophet (*sams*) went to Fatimah with a male slave he had with him as a gift to her. Fatimah had a shroud too short with which if she covered her head, it would not cover her feet, and if she covered her feet, the head would remain out. The Prophet remarked, "You do not have to worry since (in front of you)

it is either your father or your slave.” But, Alusi, adds, the slave in question could well have been a boy since the term the Prophet used was “ghulam.”

- Man to woman: If the woman is not his wife, then his `awrah against her is his `awrah against men: from the navel to the knee. But if he is her husband or Lord (in the technical sense) then there is no `awrah.
- It is also not advisable to be naked when alone. The Prophet said when asked, “Your Lord is more deserving that you should be shy of him.” According to another *hadith*, “Beware from nakedness for, with you are those who do not part company except when you are in the water closet or when a man is with his wife.” (The *hadith* is in Tirmidhi who declared it weak: Au.).
- (It is in keeping with the Islamic directives with regard to Hijab, primarily designed not to provoke men and women sexually that women have been ordered not to wear perfumes with strong odors. According to a report in Abu Da’ud), once a woman came out of the Prophet’s mosque and passed by Abu Hurayrah. He stopped her and asked, “Allah’s slave, are you coming from the mosque?” When she said yes, he told her, “I

have heard my beloved Abu Qasim (the Prophet) say, “The Prayer of a woman who wears perfume in a mosque is not accepted until she takes the bath of ritual purification at home” (from Mawdudi).

- Touching a non-*Mabram*’s body is also not allowed in Islam. The Prophet used to take the oath of allegiance from men with their hands in his hand, but not of women, to whom he administered the oath verbally and then said, “Finished. Your oath has been taken.” (From Mawdudi).
- The Prophet strictly forbade women from traveling without a *mabram*, or traveling with a non-*mabram*. There is a tradition from Ibn `Abbas that the Prophet said in his sermon: “No man should meet a woman in privacy unless she is accompanied by any of her *mabram*, and no woman should travel unless she is accompanied by a *mabram*. (From Mawdudi).

The Face

- The Malikiyyah and the early Ahnaf are of the opinion that the face and hands are not included in the `awrah of a woman. One of their supporting evidence is the *hadith* (apart from the interpretation of the Qur’ān), which says that once Asma’ bint Abi Bakr came before the Prophet clad

in thin clothes. He told her, “When a woman matures she should not expose anything of her body except this – he showed his face and hands” (Sabuni). But the *hadith* has been unanimously declared weak because a narrator is missing between `A'isha and the next person in the line of narration (Au.).

- However, so far as rank and file of the Hanafiyyah is concerned, that is their earlier position. Their latter day scholars, especially the powerful Deobandi school, has declared the face and the hands included in `awrah which a woman cannot display before a non-*mabram* (Au.).

- The Shafe`iyyah and Hanabilah maintain that the whole of a Muslim woman's body is `awrah, including her face and hands (Sabuni).

- The *Sunnah* also tells us that it is unlawful for men to look at woman's faces. The Prophet was asked (Muslim) about a sudden look (at a face). He said, “Turn it away.” He also told `Ali (Ahmad, Abu Da'ud), “Do not follow one look with another. For, the first is for you, but the second is not for you.” (The report however is weak: S. Ibrahim). A third is the incident of the Prophet turning away *Fadl's* face away from the Khath`amiyy woman during Hajj.

Finally, we have a Qur`ānic verse (33: 53), “And when you ask them (the Prophet's wives) a thing, ask them from behind a curtain” (which implies that the face is included in the `awrah) - Sabuni.

- In any case, Mufti Shafi` writes, there is no difference in opinion between the *Fuqaha'* that in situations of “*fitnah*” the face must be necessarily covered. (And *fitnah* is defined as that situation in which a man's look turns towards a woman's face twice: Au.). There is also consensus of opinion that the face and hands are not covered in the `awrah-requirement of the Prayers, so that, if a woman offers Prayers with the face and hands uncovered, her Prayer is acceptable. Further, there is no difference in opinion that although a woman might offer Prayers with an uncovered face, it is not allowable for men to look at her face, which is `awrah for them, either during Prayers or at any other time (Shafi`). Nevertheless, if the face and hands are covered, then too the Prayer is valid (Au).

- “The Qur`ānic command to lower gazes was prescribed at a time when women were allowed to move around with their faces uncovered. Some have argued, for example,

[32] Marry⁶² the spouseless⁶³ among you,⁶⁴ and the righteous⁶⁵ among your slaves and slave-girls; if they be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty;⁶⁶ indeed Allah is All-encompassing,⁶⁷ All-knowing.

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾

that if the faces of women were already covered, the direction would be pointless. Such a view is irrational and contrary to the actual facts. The assumption underlying this argument is not tenable because even in a society where women kept their faces covered, there were occasions when a man might quite accidentally come face to face with a woman. Moreover, even a woman who kept her face covered might uncover it for one reason or another. Furthermore, even if Muslim women covered their faces, non-Muslim women were likely to move around with uncovered faces” (Mawdudi).

• “According to (a) tradition (in Abu Da’ud), the son of Umm Khallad had attained martyrdom in a battle. She went to the Prophet to inquire about him with a veil that covered her face. This amazed some Companions who said to her in astonishment, ‘Even in this situation your face is covered?’ She replied, ‘I have lost my son, not my modesty.’

• “There is yet another tradition narrated by `A’isha (also in Abu Da’ud) that someone presented a paper to the Prophet from behind a curtain. The Prophet asked whether that hand was that of a man or a woman.”

• As for the tradition involving *Fadl* b. `Abbas during the Farewell Pilgrimage according to which he was staring at a woman and the Prophet turned his face away, it might be recalled that it is forbidden in the state of ihram to use a niqab to cover the face. We might also remember `A’isha’s report that during the same Hajj journey, they used to keep their faces uncovered, covering them only whenever a caravan passed by (from Mawdudi).

62. Yusuf Ali shows the connection: “The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage.”

Qurtubi, Shafi` and others write: With regard to marriage, the prevalent opinion is that if a man feels

that he might fall into sin, then marriage is an obligation on him (*wajib*). However, if he doesn't feel so, and can keep himself chaste of mind, body and eyes, then the opinion of Imām Shafe`i is that it is "*mubah*" (allowed) for him (to either marry or stay single) but Imām Abu Haneefah said that it is "*mustahab*" (desirable) that he got married. (Malikiyyah and Hanabilah are also with the Ahnaf over this issue: Rawai'). Accordingly, to engage oneself in devotional acts is, according to Imām Shafe`i, better than getting married, while to Abu Haneefah, getting married is better.

63. *Ayama* is the plural of *ayyim* which is for a spouseless man or woman, (whether previously married or not) - Ibn Jarir.

Originally the word "*ayyim*" was for a married woman who had lost her spouse for some reason. A *hadith* uses the word in this sense. Subsequently the word was extended to include any free (and not slave) man or woman who was spouseless, which is the meaning here (Alusi).

The Prophet (*saws*) has said in a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn*:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ
فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصْرِ وَأَخْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ
فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وِجَاءٌ (صحيح مسلم)

"Young men. Let him who can afford, marry. It helps in lowering the gaze and safeguarding chastity. However, let him who cannot afford it fast, for it helps control sexual urge" (Ibn Kathir).

And, according to Abu Haneefah and Malik, a slave-girl or male slave may be coerced into marriage by the master, for that will close the door to several evils (Qurtubi). Nevertheless, the directive is of a recommendatory nature. In Asad's words, "As most of the commentators point out, this is not an injunction but a recommendation to the community as a whole."

64. The Christian religion's aversion to marriage is well-known. Majid quotes: "Actually" (wrote a Christian writer: Au.), "the misogyny of Saint Paul and his associates went so far that the sexual act which led to the birth of the child was itself a sin, and a filthy one at that." (Another wrote: Au.), "It was this outlook of sex which led to the rule that no man or woman, married or unmarried, who had performed the sex act the previous night, should take part in Church festival or in the Eucharist" (Scott, History of Prostitution).

65. "*Salehin*" of the text carries a wide connotation to include physical, moral and material fitness (Au.).

66. Since in the Islamic system the husband is responsible for maintenance of his wife, he needed this assurance (Au.).

Hence Ibn Mas'ud used to say, "Seek prosperity in marriages for Allah (*swt*) has said, 'if they be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty'" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

And a *hadith* of Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah says:

ثَلَاثَةٌ كُلُّهُمْ حَقٌّ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَوْنُهُ الْمُجَاهِدُ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ وَالنَّاسِكُ يُرِيدُ الْعَفَافَ وَالْمُكَاتِبُ يُرِيدُ الْأَدَاءَ

"Three there are whose help is binding on Allah: Someone trying to get married; a slave who has entered into an agreement to gain freedom and (sincerely) intends to pay (the amount); and a fighter in the way of Allah."

We find the Prophet himself marrying off a man who had nothing beyond a piece of cloth on his body and could not manage even an iron ring as "*mahr*" .. marrying him off to a woman on the condition that he would teach her of the Qur'an he knew (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Sabuni raises a question and then answers it: Do we not see around us people who remain poor after marriage? The answer is, being rich or poor, married or unmarried, is by Allah's will. Being single would not mean the man would get rich, nor getting married and having children necessarily makes a man poor. Allah (*swt*) is capable of enriching a man although married and with large number of children, as well as rendering a man poor even if he remained single. Further, we should not forget the *hadith* which says,

وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَمَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُ إِيمَانَهُ إِلَّا
الْفَقْرُ ، وَلَوْ أَعْنَيْتُهُ لَأَفْسَدَهُ ذَلِكَ

"There are some among My slaves whom nothing suits but poverty. Were I to enrich him, his (spiritual) condition would deteriorate" (Rawae').

The above is a weak report (Au.).

67. "*Wasi*" as an attribute of Allah is difficult to explain with a single word. Ample, Bounteous, of unlimited resources, etc. are ways in which the meaning contained in it could be explained and yet not adequately (Au.).

[33] And let those who find not (the means for) marriage,⁶⁸ observe chastity, until Allah enriches them from His bounty. And those who seek a contract (for freedom)⁶⁹ from among those your right hands own, contract with them,⁷⁰ if you know any good in them.⁷¹ And give them of the wealth of Allah that He has bestowed on you.⁷² And constrain not your (slave) girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity,⁷³ in order to seek the chance goods of the life of (this) world.⁷⁴ Whoever constrains them, then, surely Allah is, (to them) after their constraint, Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.⁷⁵

[34] And now We have sent down to you verses illuminating, and an example of those who went before you, and an exhortation unto the Godfearing.

وَلَيْسْتَغْفِرِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُعْطِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا وَأَنْتُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ وَلَا تُكْرَهُوا فَتَيَانِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِعَاءِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِيَبْتِغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَنْ يُكْرِهِنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

68. The words in parenthesis reflect Zamakhshari's suggestion (Au.).

69. Literally "kitab" is for writing, meaning here, a written agreement (Zamakhshari and others). Asad comments: "The noun *kitab* is, in this context, an equivalent of *kitabah* or *mukaatabah* (lit., "Mutual agreement in writing), a juridical term signifying a "deed of freedom" or "of manumission."

70. The injunction refers to a written agreement between a slave and his master which, in the words of Majid, "obliges the master to set his slave at liberty on receiving a certain sum

of money which the latter collects either by his labour or by receiving free gifts from well-to-do Muslims." Asad adds, "(an agreement: Au.) .. to the effect that the slave undertakes to purchase his or her freedom for an equitable sum of money payable in installments before or after the manumission, or, alternatively, by rendering a clearly specified service or services to his or her owner. With this end in view, the slave is legally entitled to engage in any legitimate, gainful work or to obtain the necessary sum of money by any other lawful means (e.g., through a loan or a gift from a third person)."

Now, what is the rule? Is it necessary for a master that if his slave wishes to enter into a deal by which he would pay a sum and win his freedom that he should accept the proposal? The answer according to `Umar, Ibn `Abbas and `Ata' is that it is obligatory (*wajib*); while a few others maintained that it is not *wajib*, but is entirely to the discretion of the master. The earlier opinion, adds Ibn Jarir, seems to be the correct one. Hence a report by Anas b. Malik: "Seereen asked me for release on an amount but I refused. He complained to `Umar. He raised his whip over me and said, 'Make the contract' and recited this verse. (Ibn Kathir treated this report as trustworthy: Shawkani).

Ibn Kathir however reports that according to Imām Shafe`i, Malik and Abu Haneefah, it is not obligatory since a *hadith* of the Prophet says that a Muslim cannot be forced to expend his wealth except willingly.

Asad presents perhaps the generally acceptable position: In view of the imperative form of the verb *katibuhum* ("write it out for them"), the deed of manumission cannot be refused by the owner, the only precondition being an evidence – to be established, if necessary, by an unbiased arbiter or arbiters – of the slave's

good character and ability to fulfill his or her contractual obligations. The stipulation that such a deed of manumission may not be refused, and the establishment of precise juridical directives to this end, clearly indicates that Islamic Law has from its very beginning aimed at abolition of slavery as a social institution, and that its prohibition in modern times constitutes no more than a final implementation of the aim."

71. How is this "good" to be evaluated? What are the parameters? According to Ibn `Umar, Ibn `Abbas and Malik bin Anas, it is the ability to earn their livelihood, so that they do not become a burden on the state. But Hasan, Mujahid, Ta'oos, Abu Saleh, and others said that it is moral qualities such as truthfulness, integrity, etc., that must be checked before the deal is made. But it seems it is the combination of the two that is meant (Ibn Jarir).

"Thus," writes Sayyid, "the master must ensure that the man to be freed should have the ability to live on his own, and earn his own livelihood. He should not be let loose to be a burden on the society.. Islam is a practical system and not an ideal one which would say, 'Let all the slaves be freed, at once, and all else is

secondary.' No. Islam deals with the real situation in a practical manner. If the freed slave is incapable of earning his or her own livelihood, then he is likely to find himself enslaved again. He is not free in truth. He might be forced into meanly ways in order to survive, and end up polluting the society. After all, he was freed to cleanse the society, and not to pollute it anew."

72. There are two opinions about who is alluded to: the master, or wealthy persons of the society? The first addressee seems to be the masters, and then those who can afford to help in the matter. The practice of the *Salaf* was that when a slave brought up the amount agreed upon, they would keep a part and return a part which in most cases happened to be about twenty-five percent. However, that, only when the slave had brought in the money he had agreed upon. That is, the entire amount. They would take the whole amount from him and then return a part as their contribution. So, this is how they understood this Qur'anic injunction.

Ibn Jarir thinks it is the men of means who are addressed, in which case, obviously, the first would be the master himself if he happens to

be rich. He and Ibn Kathir have the same kind of reports to present to substantiate their opinions.

Asad comments: "According to all authorities, this relates (a) to a moral obligation on the part of the owner to promote the slave's efforts to obtain the necessary revenues by helping him or her to achieve an independent economic status and/or by remitting a part of the agreed-upon compensation, and (b) to the obligation of the state treasury (*bayt al-mal*) to finance the freeing of slaves in accordance with Islamic principles - enunciated in 9: 60 - that the revenues obtained through the obligatory .. *Zakah* are to be utilized, among other purposes, 'for the freeing of human beings from bondage (*fi riqab*).' Hence, Zamakhshari holds that the above clause is addressed not merely to persons owning slaves but to the community as a whole."

Sayyid further elaborates on state help. He writes: "Herewith, it is the community that is addressed. They are to marry off the spouseless. The majority of scholars believe that the statement is not imperative, but only suggestive. Their proof is in the fact that the Muslim society at the time of the Prophet was not without unmarried persons .. However, in our

opinion the address is of imperative nature, not in the sense of the unmarried being forced to marry, but in the sense of the fortunate ones helping off the less fortunate ones wanting to get married, with the view to safeguarding their chastity. It would be a means of protection, and of cleansing the Islamic polity of moral perversion. This is something that is obligatory on the community, and what leads to the completion of an obligation, is itself an obligation.

“We might also straighten up the account by saying that Islam – as a complete and comprehensive system – solves the economic problems at its roots. It places the responsibility of earning livelihood on the individuals themselves: those who are capable of it and do not need the help of the governmental treasury. However, in exceptional cases it declares the treasury responsible for certain kinds of help.. This, as said, is the exceptional case, and not the norm. Islamic economic system is not based on exceptional situations, but on the norms of every individual making his or her own effort to earn the needs of life.

“However, if the Islamic society finds – after the efforts of the individuals – poor men and women, whose own earnings are not enough for them to

get married, then it is the community which has to come out in support. Allah ordered its rich to rise up to the need.”

73. Why did Allah add, “If they desire chastity?” Zamakhshari answers that it is because it is only those who desire chastity that can be forced.

Others have explained that in pre-Islamic times the slave-girls freely indulged in it which did not win them respect. When Islam came, some of them resisted when asked to comply. So their masters are being taunted: will you now (who used to disdain it earlier) make them do it, while they have changed and are resisting it?

Sabuni writes: The masters are being taunted: Look! You are supposed to guard the chastity of the slave-girls that you own. Will you stoop so low as to put to prostitution those, who, although not expected to be very mindful of chastity, are now unwilling? (Rawae’)

74. It is widely reported that it is ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy b. Sallul who occasioned the revelation of this verse. He had a slave-girl called Musayka. (In fact, according to Muslim two, Musayka and Umaymah, both of whom he tried to force to prostitution: Shawkani). She came to some of the Ansar and complained

that her master was forcing her to prostitution. Some other reports say she went to Abu Bakr. He reported to the Prophet. The Prophet instructed him to hold back the slave-girl, and Ibn Ubayy shouted in frustration: "Who will save us from Muhammad. He is snatching away our slaves too." So Allah revealed this verse. (Report about Musayka is in Nasa'i: Ibn Kathir). Another report says that 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy had a Qurayshi prisoner he had taken at Badr. And he had a slave-girl called Mu`adha. The prisoner sought her. But the slave-girl was not willing. Now, Ibn Ubayy wished her to lie with him hoping she would get pregnant by him, bring a child, and for whom also Ibn Ubayy could demand and collect ransom. So, he would beat her for refusing, and she complained to the Ansar (Ibn Jarir). Qurtubi adds, "Those days a man would pay 100 camels to retrieve his son born through a slave-girl owned by another."

The report about Mu`adha is in Abdul Razzaq's collection (Ibn Kathir). Actually, it is reported that Abdullah ibn Ubayy had six slave-girls, two of whom complained against his coercion (Zamakhshari).

At all events, the Prophet declared it unlawful, as in a well-known *hadith* in Muslim, which includes,

شَرُّ الْكَسْبِ مَهْرُ الْبَغِيِّ وَتَمَنُّ الْكَلْبِ وَكَسْبُ الْحَبَّامِ

"The worst of earning is the earning through prostitution, the price of a dog, and those of a soothsayer" (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

75. That is, Allah will forgive a slave-girl's adultery if she is forced into it. The sin will be entirely upon the one who forced her (Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr and others: Tabari).

Yusuf Ali points to a perennial problem: "Where slavery was legal, what is now called the "white slave traffic," it was carried on by wicked people like 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, the Hypocrite leader at Madinah. This is absolutely condemned. While modern nations have abolished ordinary slavery, the "White Slave Traffic" is still a big social problem in individual States. Here it is absolutely condemned. No more despicable trade can be imagined."

The individual states of Yusuf Ali's mention, now cover whole continents. Sexual exploitation of women, highest ever at present in the West, where every fourth woman has, admittedly, shown sexual favors to the

[35] Allah is the Light⁷⁶ of the heavens and the earth.⁷⁷ The likeness of His Light⁷⁸ is like a niche⁷⁹ within which is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass.⁸⁰ The glass as if it were a pearly (white) star:⁸¹ lit from a blessed tree - an olive - neither of the east nor of the west.⁸² Its oil would well-nigh glow forth even though fire touched it not.⁸³ Light upon Light.⁸⁴ Allah guides to His Light whom He will.⁸⁵ Allah strikes similitudes for mankind.⁸⁶ And Allah is Knowing of all things.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ
كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي
زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ
يُوَفَّدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا
شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ
لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ
لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ
لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

superiors in employment, is actually more rampant than the voluntary admittance to the surveyors (Au.).

76. With regard to the word “Nur”, Ibn `Abbas said that the allusion is to Allah’s guidance found in every believer’s heart. Some others have said that it is the Nur of the Qur’ān which is the source of all guidance. There have been a few other, minor opinions too (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi writes: The attribution of Nur to Allah is in the same vein as the people saying about a man, “He is the light of the town.” Allah may be referred to as *Nur* by way of praise; otherwise, Allah is not ‘the Light’ that the eyes can see.

One might be reminded, says Shab-bir, that just as other Attributes of Allah, such as Hearing, Sight, etc., Nur is another Attribute that does

not hazard a guess on the basis of attributes known to us.

Ibn `Abbas and Anas b. Malik have also explained the words, “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth” as meaning, “He is the Guide of all those in the heavens and the earth,” for, Anas added, Allah’s Light is His guidance (or, conversely, His guidance is like Light: Au.). – Ibn Jarir.

In fact, Qurtubi writes, Allah (*swt*) named His Book as *Nur*. He said (4: 174)

{ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا } [النساء: ١٧٤]

“We have sent down to you a clear Light.”

Allah also called His Messenger a Nur. He said (5: 15)

{ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ } [المائدة: ١٥]

[١٥]

“Surely, there has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book.”

Zamakhshari comments: The meaning is, He is the possessor of the Light of the heavens and the earth, and the Owner of the Light of the heavens and the earth .. in the like manner of Allah’s words (2: 257),

{اللَّهُ وَرَبُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ} [البقرة: ٢٥٧]

“Allah is the protector of the believers. He brings them out of darkneses into Light” – i.e., from falsehood into guidance.

Allah attributed Light to the heavens and the earth in one of the two senses. Either to point at the vastness of its radiance and its dissemination, so that it reaches all corners of the heavens and the earth; or it might have been meant to say that those in the heavens and the earth seek and draw Light thereby ..

‘Ali (ra) is reported to have commented on the words, “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth” as meaning, “He spread across the truth in it, has proliferated it so that it brightened up by His Light, or, brightened the hearts of its inhabitants.”

We have a report in the *Sahihayn* which says that when the Prophet

got up for his pre-dawn Prayer he would say,

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ ، أَنْتَ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ قَيِّمُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ، ...

“O Allah, for You the praise. You are the Light of the heavens and the earth and what is in them. For You the praise. You are the Care-taker of the heavens and the earth and what is in them ..” to the end of the *hadith* (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali adds: “The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is Allah. We can only think of Allah (*swt*) in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know, but physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: e.g. (1) it is dependent upon some source external to itself; (2) it is a passing phenomenon; if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena; (3) it is dependent on space and time; its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands of years before it reaches the earth. The perfect Light of Allah is free from any such defects.”

We could perhaps end with Dr. Iqbal's remark as quoted by Majid. Noting that Iqbal died in the 1930's, one may appreciate how abreast he was of newest discoveries and how intelligently he applied them to religious truths, in contrast with the cheap material now being presented under the nomenclature "The Qur'ān and Modern Science": "The teaching of modern physics is that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and is the same for all observers whatever their own system of movement. Thus in the world of change, light is the nearest approach to the Absolute. The metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must in view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God."

77. In our effort to understand this parable, which can be referred to as the "beauty-spot" of the Qur'ān, and which has not failed to strike as the most beautiful to countless non-Muslim readers, we might start with a general remark by Yusuf Ali. We shall turn to him often for his remarks as we go down the text. He writes at this point, "Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of light, which contains layer upon layer of transcendent truth about spiritual

mysteries. No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject."

78. "The likeness of His Light": To whom is the pronoun "his" referring to, and to what Light is the allusion? There are a variety of answers from the earliest commentators. As for the pronoun, Ubayy b. Ka'b said that the allusion is to the believer. That is, Allah is talking of the light in the heart of the believer.

79. Asad remarks: "The particle ka ("as if" or "as it were") prefixed to a noun is called kaf al-tashbih (the "letter kaf points to a resemblance [of one to another]" or "indicating a metaphor"). In the above context it alludes to the impossibility of defining God even by means of a metaphor or a parable – for, since "there is nothing like unto Him" (42: 11), there is also "nothing that could be compared with Him" (112: 4). Hence, the parable of "the light of God" is not meant to express His reality – which is inconceivable to any created being and, therefore, inexpressible in any human language – but only allude to the illumination which He, who is the Ultimate Truth, bestows upon the mind and the feelings of all who are willing to be guided. Tabari, Baghawi and Ibn

Kathir quote Ibn `Abbas as saying in this context: “It is the parable of His light in the heart of a believer.”

80. In explanation of the words niche, lamp, glass and the oil, a variety of opinions have been expressed by the scholars of the first few generations. Tabari sums up as follows: The Light is the light of the Qur`ān, the niche the believer’s breast, the lamp is the Qur`ān, and the glass his heart. Ubayy b. Ka`b, Ibn `Abbas and a few others expressed opinions close to this.

Yusuf Ali offers a few clues and opens new avenues of thought: “The first three points in the Parable center round the symbols of the Niche, the Lamp, and the Glass. (1) The Niche (*Mishkat*) is the little shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows. The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped to throw the light well into the room, and if the wall was white-washed, it also acted as a reflector: the opening in front made the way for the light. So with the spiritual Light; it is placed high, above worldly things; it has

a niche or habitation of its own, in Revelation and other Signs of Allah; its access to men is by a special Way, open to all, yet closed to those who refuse its rays. (2) The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it; the Niche is actually made for it. (3) The Glass is the transparent medium through which the Light passes. On the one hand, it protects the light from moths and other forms of low life and from gusts of wind, and on the other, it transmits the light through a medium which is made up of and akin to the grosser substances of the earth (such as sand, soda, potash, etc.), so arranged as to admit the subtle to the gross by its transparency. So the spiritual Truth has to be filtered through human language or human intelligence to make it intelligible to mankind.”

81. Asad notes: “The “lamp” is the revelation which God grants to His prophets and which is reflected in the believer’s heart – the “niche” of the above parable (Ubayy ibn Ka`b as quoted by Tabari) – after being received and consciously grasped by his reason .. for it is through reason alone that true faith finds its way into the heart of man.’

82. “Neither eastern nor western”: once again, there are several opinions. Tabari’s own preference is that the olive tree is situated in such a way that it receives full light from the sun – in the east-west direction. Such an olive tree yields full fruit. However, Hasan has said that it is not a tree of this earth but rather heavenly, and hence neither eastern nor western.

Ubayy b. Ka`b said, “That is how a believer is. He is protected from calamities touching him, and if struck, he is helped by Allah to remain steadfast. Thus he lives following four conditions: if he speaks, he speaks the truth; if he judges, he judges in justice; if he is tried, he observes patience; and if given, is grateful. Among others (not of his class) he is like a living person walking about between the dead in the graves (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali adds: “This Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It is universal, for such is Allah’s Light. As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different way. An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the

south aspect will give the sun’s rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and vice versa in the southern hemisphere. But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day; it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So Allah’s light is not localised or immature: it is perfect and universal.”

83. That is, the Qur’ānic revelation is of such qualities as to shine by itself. When details, evidences and other signs are added, then it is light upon light (Ibn Jarir).

84. Ubay b. Ka`b commented on “light upon light” in the following words:

فهو يتقلب في خمسة من النور، فكلامه نور، وعمله نور، ومدخله نور، ومخرجه نور، ومصيره إلى النور يوم القيامة إلى الجنة. (تفسير ابن كثير)

“So (the possessor) goes about with five kinds of nur: His speech is nur, his action is nur, his entry is nur, his departure is nur and his ultimate destination is nur on the Day of Standing to Paradise” (Ibn Kathir).

Asad again, “The essence of the Qur’ānic message is described elsewhere as ‘clear [in itself] and clearly showing the truth’ .. and it is, I be-

lieve, this aspect of the Qur'an that the above sentence alludes to. Its message gives light because it proceeds from God; but 'it would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it': i.e., even though one may be unaware that it has been 'touched by the fire' of divine revelation, its inner consistency, truth and wisdom ought to be self-evident to anyone who approaches it in the light of his reason and without prejudice."

85. A *hadith* explains this. Imām Ahmad reports the Prophet as having said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ خَلْقَهُ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ ، فَأَلْقَى عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نُورِهِ ،
فَمَنْ أَصَابَهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ النُّورِ اهْتَدَى ، وَمَنْ أَخْطَأَهُ
ضَلَّ

"Allah created His creation in darkness then He threw of His Light on them. So, whosoever received the Light that day, was guided aright, while he who missed it, went astray." (Suyuti declared the report as trustworthy in his *Jami`*: Au.).

Another *hadith* – quite trustworthy – of Imām Ahmad says,

الْقُلُوبُ أَرْبَعَةٌ قَلْبٌ أَجْرَدٌ فِيهِ مِثْلُ السِّرَاجِ يَزْهَرُ وَقَلْبٌ
أَعْلَفٌ مَرْبُوطٌ عَلَى غِلاَفِهِ وَقَلْبٌ مُنْكَوسٌ وَقَلْبٌ
مُصْفَحٌ فَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأَجْرَدُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ سِرَاجُهُ فِيهِ
نُورُهُ وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأَعْلَفُ فَقَلْبُ الْكَافِرِ وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ

الْمُنْكَوسُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُنَافِقِ عَرَفَ ثُمَّ أَنْكَرَ وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ
الْمُصْفَحُ فَقَلْبٌ فِيهِ إِيمَانٌ وَنِفَاقٌ فَمَثَلُ الْإِيمَانِ فِيهِ
كَمَثَلِ الْبَقْلَةِ يَمُدُّهَا مِدُّهَا الْمَاءُ الطَّيِّبُ وَمَثَلُ النِّفَاقِ فِيهِ
كَمَثَلِ الْفَرْحَةِ يَمُدُّهَا الْقَيْحُ وَالِدَّمُ فَأَيُّ الْمَدَّتَيْنِ غَلَبَتْ
عَلَى الْأُخْرَى غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْهِ (إسناده جيد)

"Hearts are of four kinds, (a) a clear heart like a shining lamp; (b) a covered heart, bound from all sides; (c) a heart turned upside down; and (d) an armor-clad heart. The clear heart is that of the believer. It has its shine. The closed heart is that of the unbeliever. The heart turned upside down is that of the hypocrite: he knew and then denied. As for the armor-clad heart, it is one which has both faith and hypocrisy embedded in it. The example of the faith in it is like a plant that is helped by clean water; and the example of hypocrisy in it is like that of a wound which is worsened by blood and pus. So, whichever of the two overcomes the other, dominates" (Ibn Kathir).

86. "I.e., because of their complexity, certain truths can be conveyed only by means of parables and allegories" (Asad).

Thanwi writes: In the like manner, when Allah (*swt*) places the light of His guidance into the heart of a believer, then, his willingness to receive

[36] In houses that Allah has allowed to be raised⁸⁷ and wherein is mentioned His Name, glorifying Him therein, in the morning and the evenings.⁸⁸

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيُذَكَّرَ
فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ
وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾

the guidance increases by the day as he is ever ready to act according to commandments. Sometimes, he might not even be aware of the commandments, for knowledge is obtained gradually, (yet he is ever ready to obey) in the same manner as the oil, which would light up even if fire did not touch it. When he obtains knowledge, then, with his resolve to live by it, which is a higher state, his light of knowledge blends with it, and the fusing together of knowledge and action (*'ilm wa 'amal*) get transformed into true light. It does not happen with him that when he receives knowledge, he suffers from indecision or procrastination, so that, if it agrees with the baser self then it is accepted, and when not, rejected. This opening of the heart and the light have been referred to in another verse which says (39: 22),

{أَقَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ} [الزمر: ٢٢]

"He then, whose heart Allah opened for Islam, so that he is upon a Light from his Lord.." and, in another place (6: 144),

{فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ} [الأنعام: ١٢٥]

"Then whomsoever that Allah wishes to guide, He opens his heart for Islam."

87. That is, the lamps are in houses that Allah has permitted that they be raised. And by "houses" the allusion is to mosque. That was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Hasan, Mujahid, Ibn Zayd and others (Ibn Jarir).

Hasan (al-Busri) has said, "Allah did not mean by these words that the buildings be raised high, but rather, that they be honored" (Kashshaf).

Mosques

The commentators use the occasion to collect together Prophetic traditions concerning mosques. Here is a summarized report of their various presentations:

Ibn `Abbas is reported to have said that the mosques on earth shine for those in the heaven just as stars shine for the inhabitants of the earth (Qurtubi).

A *hadith* of Muslim says,

مَنْ عَدَا إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ وَرَاحَ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ تَرْتِلاً
كُلَّمَا عَدَا وَرَاحَ

“Whoever went to a mosque in the morning or in the evening, Allah prepares for him a place in Paradise every time he goes either in the morning or in the evening.”

According to another, well-known *hadith*,

بَشِّرِ الْمَشَائِرَ فِي الظُّلَمِ إِلَى الْمَسَاجِدِ بِالنُّورِ النَّامِ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Give glad tidings of complete Light to those who walk up to the mosques in darknesses” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The Prophet also said,

مَنْ تَطَهَّرَ فِي بَيْتِهِ ، ثُمَّ مَشَى إِلَى بَيْتِ مَنْ مِنْ بَيْتِ اللَّهِ
تَعَالَى فَيَقْضِي فَرِيضَةً مِنْ فَرَائِضِ اللَّهِ كَانَتْ خُطْوَاتُهُ
إِحْدَاهُمَا تَحُطُّ حَطِيئَةً ، وَالْأُخْرَى تَرْفَعُ دَرَجَةً

“Whoever cleansed himself in his house then went to one of the houses of Allah in order to do the obligatory Prayer, then, one of his steps erases a sin while another raises his rank in Paradise.”

Another report says,

صَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ فِي جَمَاعَةٍ تَعْدِلُ صَلَاتَهُ وَخَدَّهُ حَمْسًا
وَعِشْرِينَ

“A man’s Prayer in the mosque is twenty-five times better than his Prayer alone in his house” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Uthman b. `Affan (ra) said, I heard the Prophet say,

مَنْ بَنَى مَسْجِدًا يَبْتَغِي بِهِ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ بَنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بَيْتًا
مِثْلَهُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever built a mosque seeking Allah’s Face, Allah will build for him a house similar to it in Paradise” (Qurtubi).

The report is in the *Sahihayn* (Ibn Kathir).

Another report has `A’isha saying,

أَمَرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِنَاءَ الْمَسَاجِدِ
فِي الدُّورِ ، وَأَنْ تَنْظَفَ وَتُطَيَّبَ

“The Prophet ordered (us) to build mosques in the neighborhoods and that they should be kept clean and perfumed” (Ahmad, Abu Da’ud, Tuhfa: S. Ibrahim, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Once a man announced in the mosque about a camel he had lost. The Prophet (*saws*) told him,

لا وجدت ، إنما بُيِّتُ الْمَسَاجِدِ لما بُنِيَتْ لَهُ

“May you not find it. Mosques are built for what they are built” (Muslim) – Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir.

One may not enter a mosque having eaten such pungent vegetables as garlic, onions, etc., unless cooked and their smell destroyed (Qurtubi).

A report of Hasan (good) status states that the Prophet prohibited trade, commerce and poetical sessions in the mosques (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i).

One may not even discuss worldly affairs in the mosque. The Prophet said, according to a report in Muslim,

إِنَّ هَذِهِ الصَّلَاةَ لَا يَجِلُّ فِيهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّاسِ
هَذَا، إِنَّمَا هُوَ التَّسْبِيحُ، وَالتَّكْبِيرُ، وَقِرَاءَةُ الْقُرْآنِ

“Nothing of the people’s talks suits these mosques. They are for glorification, exaltation (of Allah) and for recitation of the Qur’an.”

Accordingly, once when Khalaf b. Ayyub was sitting in the mosque a lad came in to tell him something. He went out of the mosque to answer him. When he returned he explained, “For such and such number of years I haven’t talked worldly affairs in this mosque, and didn’t like to do it now” (Qurtubi).

Most scholars say that it is desirable (*mustahab*) that one may not sit down upon entering a mosque without offering two cycles of Prayer (Qurtubi).

Bukhari has Yezid b. Kindi reporting, “As I stood in the mosque, ‘Umar told me, ‘Fetch me those two men.’ So I brought them to him. He asked them, ‘Where are you from?’ They said, ‘Ta’if.’ He said, ‘Had you been of this town I would have punished you for raising your voices in the Prophet’s mosque.’”

The Prophet had earmarked a special door for women to enter his mosque. During ‘Umar’s reign, he strictly barred men from using that door either for entering or for going out of the mosque (Abu Da’ud).

As for women, the best places for them for Prayers are the inmost parts of their houses. Ahmad reports about Umm Humayd, the wife of Abu Humayd al-Sa’idi that she went to the Prophet and said, ‘I love to Pray with you.’

فَدَعَلِمْتُ أَنَّكَ تُحِبُّنِ الصَّلَاةَ مَعِيَ وَصَلَاتِكَ فِي
بَيْتِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ صَلَاتِكَ فِي حُجْرَتِكَ وَصَلَاتِكَ
فِي حُجْرَتِكَ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَلَاتِكَ فِي دَارِكَ وَصَلَاتِكَ
فِي دَارِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ صَلَاتِكَ فِي مَسْجِدِ قَوْمِكَ
وَصَلَاتِكَ فِي مَسْجِدِ قَوْمِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ صَلَاتِكَ
فِي مَسْجِدِي (صحيح ابن حبان)

He replied, ‘I understand that you love to Pray with me. But your Prayer within your house is better than your Prayer in your quarters. And your Prayer in your quarters is better than your

Prayer within your compound.
And your Prayer in your compound is better than your Prayer in the mosque of your people.
And your Prayer in the mosque of your people is better than your Prayer in my mosque.’

It is reported that she got a mosque constructed in the inmost quarter of her compound and used to Pray therein until she met with Allah.

But of course they cannot be prevented from Praying in the mosques provided they do not make a nuisance of themselves, for a report in Bukhari says,

لا تَمْنَعُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ الْمَسَاجِدَ

“Do not prohibit Allah’s bondswomen from Allah’s mosques” (*Sahihyan*), while reports in Abu Da’ud and Ahmad add, “Although their houses are better for them.” During the Prophet’s time women’s presence at *Fajr* is well reported.

But, things began to change after him so that `A’isha had to remark, as in the *Sahihayn*,

لَوْ أَدْرَكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - مَا
أَخَذَتْ النِّسَاءُ لَمَنْعَهُنَّ كَمَا مَنَعَتْ نِسَاءَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
(صحيح البخارى)

“Were the Prophet to know what innovations women had brought, he would have forbidden them from the mosques just as Israelite women were forbidden.”

As regards decoration of mosques, there are two opinions about their legality. One opinion says it is undesirable. Abu Da’ud has a narrative according to which the Prophet (*saws*) said,

مَا أُمِرْتُ بِتَشْيِيدِ الْمَسْجِدِ

“I have not been commanded to decorate the mosque” (Ibn Kathir).

In another report he said,

لا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى يَتَبَاهَى النَّاسُ بِالْمَسَاجِدِ.

“The hour will not strike until people begin to compete in (the decoration of) mosques” (Ahmad, Abu Da’ud, Ibn Majah) – Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir.

This is strengthened by the report which tells us that when `Umar (ra) got the Prophet’s mosque expanded and renovated, he ordered the contractor not to use bright colors that might distract the devotees.

A second opinion is that there is no harm. Apart from several, this opinion is influenced by the Qur’anic words (24: 36),

[37] Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah, performance of Prayers and giving in charity.⁸⁹ They fear a Day when the hearts and sights will be convulsed.

رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ
يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

﴿٣٧﴾

{ فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ } [النور: ٣٦]

“In houses that Allah has allowed to be raised” – where “raised” is understood in the sense of “raising the esteem and honor.” They also rely on the report which says that when `Uthman ibn `Affan expanded the Prophet’s mosque, he used some expensive wood.

It is also reported that when `Umar b. `Abdul `Aziz expanded the Prophet’s mosque, he got it decorated quite heavily, without anyone objecting to it. That was during his governorship of Madinah, before he took over as the Caliph.

As for the *hadith* which says, “The Hour will not strike until people begin to boast about mosques” (i.e., as to who built the better one), some scholars have argued that this *hadith* does not say anything about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of decoration. Nevertheless, it is certainly desirable that the mosques be lit on special occasions, and especially so in the month of *Ramadan* (Qurtubi).

88. It might be noticed that morning is in singular while evening is in plural. This is because the textual word “*ghuduww*” is the root word (masdar) which cannot be made plural, whereas “*asal*” (sing.: *aseel*) is a noun of which a plural can be made” (Razi and others).

Majid adds: “The Arabic word *asil* indicates the time from afternoon to dark, thus covering the two afternoon prayers and the two evening prayers” (to which, if the morning prayer is added – the *ghuduww* – we would arrive at five daily prayers: au.). Some experts of the past however have conjectured that *asal* is the plural of plural *usul*, which is the plural of *asil*.

89. In reference to this verse we have a narration in Hannad b. Sirri’s collection, as in Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh, and Bayhaqi which reports Asma’ bint Yezid saying that the Prophet (*saws*) said,

يجمع الله يوم القيامة الناس في صعيدٍ واحدٍ يسمعهم
الداعي ، وينفذهم البصر ، فيقوم منادٍ ، فينادي

[38] So that Allah may reward them for better than what they did and add to them out of His grace. And Allah provides whom He will without reckoning.

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] As for the unbelievers, their works⁹⁰ are like a mirage in a vast (sandy) field that the thirsty deems to be water. Until, when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing,⁹¹ but (instead), finds Allah near it. So He paid him his account in full. And Allah is swift at reckoning.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَاهُمْ كَسْرَابٍ بِقَيْعَةٍ يُخْسِبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾

: أين الذين كانوا يمدحون الله في السراء والضراء؟ فيقومون ، وهم قليل ، فيدخلون الجنة بغير حساب؛ ثم يعود فينادي : أين الذين كانت تتجافى جنوبهم عن المضاجع؟ فيقومون ، وهم قليل فيدخلون الجنة بغير حساب؛ ثم يعود فينادي : ليقم الذين كانوا لا تلهيهم تجارة ، ولا بيع عن ذكر الله ، فيقومون ، وهم قليل فيدخلون الجنة بغير حساب ، ثم يقوم سائر الناس ، فيحاسبون

“Allah will collect together mankind in one plain field where a caller’s voice will reach them (all) and the eyes will see (all). Then a caller will rise up and call out, ‘Where are those who praised Allah in their ease and hardships?’ A few will rise up and enter Paradise without reckoning. Then the caller will call out, ‘Where are those whose bodies were rent separate from the beds?’ A few will rise up and enter Paradise without reckoning. Then the caller will call, ‘Where are those whom commerce and trading

did not distract from the remembrance of Allah?’ A few will rise up and enter Paradise without reckoning. Then the rest of the people will be taken up for reckoning.”

Hakim declared this report as credible (Shawkani).

The Companions were the first generation to which this verse applied perfectly. ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud is reported to be in the market-square when the Adhan was called out. He saw the traders abandon their trade and goods and repair to the mosque. He remarked, “These are the ones Allah (*swt*) spoke of when He said, “Men, whom neither commerce nor sale detracts from the remembrance of Allah ..” A similar report comes from Ibn ‘Umar (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others).

90. By the “works,” it is the allusion is to good deeds of the unbelievers.

[40] Or like darkneses in a deep sea which is covered by a wave above which is a wave, above which are clouds, (layers of) darkneses, some upon others. When he holds out his hand, he can hardly see it.⁹² And he whom Allah did not assign a Light, for him there is no Light at all.

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ
مِّن فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ
بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ
يَكِدْ يَرَاهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا
لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

They look bright here but worthless in the Hereafter. "I.e., he is bound to realize on Judgment Day that all his supposedly 'good' deeds have been rendered worthless by his deliberate refusal to listen to the voice of truth (Zamakhshari and Razi)" – Asad.

91. Yusuf Ali writes: "The mirage, of which I have seen several instances in the Arabian deserts and in Egypt, is a strange phenomenon of illusion. It is a trick of our vision. In the language of our Parable, it rejects the Light which shows us the Truth, and deceives us with Falsehood. A lonely traveller in a desert, nearly dying of thirst, sees a broad sheet of water. He goes in that direction, lured on and on, but finds nothing at all. He dies in protracted agony."

92. Ubayy b. Ka`b has said that the example is that of an unbeliever who lives in five-fold darkness: of speech, deeds, entry, exit, and the destination into the Fire (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali adds: "The rebel against Allah finds himself like the man deluded by a mirage. The Truth which he rejected is always with him. The mirage which he accepted leads to his destruction."

Ibn Kathir writes: These two verses give us the example of two classes of unbelievers: those who think, understand and imagine that they are on something, while they are not. They keep working, hoping to find good results. But when they arrive at the terminal end, they find nothing there. This is how Ubay b. Ka`b, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others understood it. Hence a report of the *Sahihayn*, which says that the Jews will be asked on the Day of Judgment, "What were you worshipping?" They'd say, "We used to worship `Uzayr, Allah's son." They will be told, "You lied. Allah never took a son. (In any case) what do you want now?" They will reply, "Our Lord! We are thirsty, give us a drink." It will be said, "Can't you see?" At that

[41] Do you not see⁹³ that whosoever is in the heavens and (in) the earth celebrates Allah's glory,⁹⁴ and (so do) the birds with wings outspread?⁹⁵ Each one has known its prayer and (words of) glorification.⁹⁶ And Allah is the Knower of what they do.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صَافَّاتٍ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ
صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ
﴿٤١﴾

[42] And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and to Allah is the journey's end.

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ
الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤٢﴾

point Fire will be made to look like a mirage, waves upon waves (of water). They will rush into it, one upon another. The other verse is speaking of the ignorant masses who blindly follow their leaders: they know nothing, understand nothing.

93. Mawdudi shows the connection: "It has been pointed out earlier .. that although God is the Light of the whole universe, only those who truly believe and act righteously will benefit from this light. As for all others, even though light abounds around them, they will continue to stumble in darkness. There are many signs that point to this light. Anyone who looks at these signs with his heart's eye will perceive God at work all around him. But those whose hearts are blind, no matter how much they strain their eyes, their perception will not go beyond biology, zoology, and such other ologies, and they will utterly fail to see

God's hand operating in the universe."

94. That is to say that they have been given complete *Nur* (Alusi).

95. It might be of some interest to note that the largest birds can have a span of over a meter when they have outspread their wings, while the smallest are a few millimeters across. A few achieve the speed of 300 km an hour while some can fly 12,000 km non-stop. We shall have more to write on this topic, later in this work, Allah willing (Au.).

96. That is, each one "knows his, her, or its mode of prayer and hallowing" (Majid).

Mujahid has said that the mention of "prayer" (*salah*) in the words "Each one has known its prayer and (words of) glorification," the word 'prater' is for humans while the "(words of) glorification" (*tasbeeh*) is for others of Allah's creation (Ibn Jarir).

[43] Have you not considered that Allah drives the clouds?⁹⁷ Then He joins them together,⁹⁸ then He piles them into a mass⁹⁹, so that you see the rain¹⁰⁰ issuing forth from its midst?¹⁰¹ And He sends down from the sky, mountains (of clouds) wherein is hail. Then, He strikes therewith whom He will, and turns it away from whom He will. The flash of its lightning well-nigh snatches away the sights.

أَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ
بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ
مِنْ خِلَالِهِ وَيُنزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ
فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَنِ مَن يَشَاءُ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهِ
يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] Allah alternates the night and the day. Surely, in that is an instructive example for those who have vision.

يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾

Another possibility exists, however, that the active participle of the verb “`alima” be understood as Allah. The translation of the verse then would be, “He (Allah) has known each one’s prayer and (words of) glorification.” Hence He followed up by saying, “And Allah is, of what they do, Knowing.” There have been variant readings too (Qurtubi).

97. Allah (*swt*) chose a specific word here “*yuzji*” with its root in “*zaja*” which is used in the Qur’ān in reference to clouds alone. Lisan and Sihah say it is for pushing forward a thing gently. The connotation fits well the cloud formation described below (Au.).

98. It is commonly stated in science books and unquestionably accepted by the readers that the winds drive

the clouds. In a sense this is true. But it is forgotten that the winds normally have the scattering effect and do not collect together to close gaps in gas particles. We have to understand the Qur’ānic statement then, as alluding to the role the winds play in condensation of water particles (Au.).

99. The textual word “*rukaam*” gives the sense of something piled one upon another: an accurate description of the formation of rain clouds in the atmosphere (Au.).

100. The word “*wadq*” has two meanings: rain as well as lightning (Qurtubi). The word was chosen perhaps to express both the meanings, and which fits the context (Au.).

101. The word in the original for “*midst*” is “*khilaal*” which is the plu-

ral of “*khalal*.” It should be strictly translated as “interstices” – as done by Majid – which in turn is explained by the dictionaries as “a small or narrow space or interval between things or parts, esp. one of a series of alternating uniform spaces and parts: e.g., the interstices between the slats of a fence. The word seems to fit wonderfully with the process of rain drops leaving the *saws* in the final stages of rain formation. We might in a few lines try to understand cloud formation and rains - otherwise an extremely complicated process, a miracle by itself - in the following, taken from several scientific works:

Cloud formation

Most people do not know that cloud formation is a miraculous event. Thousands of things have to happen for the clouds to form: and they must happen at the right time and right place, at right temperature. In fact, the process is so complicated, that no prediction can be made of when and where clouds will form. Nevertheless, since rain patterns are surprisingly regular, as against the expected haphazard, it can be concluded that an external Agency is in control of the process. Herewith a short, brief, and therefore an incomplete account to impress on the reader that if not

for Allah’s power, vapors rising from the earth could not coalesce into clouds to ultimately fall back as rain, consistently falling in the same place - year after year, following a certain pattern.

Clouds are formed by the lifting of damp air which cools by expansion under continuously falling pressure. The relative humidity increases until the air approaches saturation. Then condensation occurs on some of the wide variety of aerosol particles present. For continued condensation leading to the formation of cloud droplets, the air must be slightly supersaturated. Among the highly efficient condensation nuclei are the salt particles produced by the evaporation of sea spray, but it appears that particles produced by human-made fires and by natural combustion (for example, forest fires) also make a major contribution. Condensation onto the nuclei continues as rapidly as the water vapor is made available by cooling of the air and gives rise to droplets of the order of 0.01 mm in diameter. These droplets, usually present in concentrations of several thousand per cubic inch, constitute a nonprecipitating water cloud.

Growing clouds are sustained by upward air currents. Considerable

growth of the cloud droplets is necessary if they are to fall through the cloud, survive evaporation in the unsaturated air beneath, and reach the ground as drizzle or rain. Drizzle drops have radii exceeding 0.1 mm, while the largest raindrops are about 0.24 in. (6 mm) across and fall at nearly 10 m/s.

Cloud droplets are seldom of uniform size for several reasons. Droplets arise on nuclei of various sizes and grow under slightly different conditions of temperature and supersaturation in different parts of the cloud. Some small drops may remain inside the cloud for longer than others before being carried into the drier air outside.

A droplet appreciably larger than average will (within the cloud) fall faster than the smaller ones, and so will collide and fuse together) with some of those which it overtakes.

The second method of releasing precipitation can operate only if the cloud top reaches elevations where temperatures are below 32°F (0°C) and the droplets in the upper cloud regions become supercooled.

In a cloud composed wholly of liquid water, raindrops may grow by coalescence with small droplets. For example, a droplet being carried up from the cloud base would grow as it ascends by sweeping up smaller droplets. When it becomes too heavy to be supported by the vertical upcurrents, the droplet will then fall, continuing to grow by the same process on its downward journey. Finally, if the cloud is sufficiently deep, the droplet will emerge from its base as a raindrop.

In a dense, vigorous cloud several kilometers deep, the drop may attain its limiting stable diameter (about 0.2 in. or 5 mm) before reaching the cloud base and thus will break up into several large fragments. Each of these may continue to grow and attain breakup size. The number of raindrops may increase so rapidly in this manner that after a few minutes the accumulated mass of water can no longer be supported by the upper currents and falls out as a heavy shower. The conditions which favor this rapid multiplication of raindrops occur more readily in tropical regions.

[45] And Allah created every moving creature from water. So some of them go upon their bellies, and some of them go upon two legs, while some of them go upon four.¹⁰² Allah creates what He will. Surely, Allah has power over all things.

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] We have indeed sent down signs that make (things) clear. And Allah guides whom He will to a straight path.

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ مُبِينَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] And they say,¹⁰³ 'We believe in Allah and the Messenger, and we obey.' But then a party of them turns away after that. Those, they are not believers at all.

وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] When they are invited to Allah and His Messenger so that he might judge between them,¹⁰⁴ then lo, a party of them is swerving away.¹⁰⁵

وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

102. The above does not mean that there are no creations that move on more than four. There could be. There is nothing in the Qur'an to deny it (Qurtubi).

103. Hypocrites are the subject of this verse.

104. Mawdudi comments: "These words clearly establish that the Messenger's verdict is the same as God's and the Messenger's command is the same as God's. Likewise, when someone is called to the Messenger (peace be upon him), this call is not merely to the Messenger. In fact it amounts

to calling him to both God and the Messenger."

105. It is reported that the revelation of this passage was occasioned by a dispute between a hypocrite (Bishr or Bashir) and a Jew. The Jew invited him to the Prophet for judgment. The hypocrite suggested that they rather go to Ka'b b. al-Ashraf. Finally they decided on presenting the case to the Prophet who judged in favor of the Jew. But the hypocrite was not satisfied. He said, "Let us go to `Umar." When they went to `Umar and explained their case, the Jew added, "We have been to

[49] But if the right be theirs, they go to him submitted.¹⁰⁶

وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or, do they doubt? Or, do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? Nay, but those - they (themselves) are the unjust.

أَفِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَمْ ارْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولَهُ بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

the Prophet and were judged in this manner.” `Umar said, “Is that so. OK then, stay put until I come back.” He came out of his house with a sword and struck him dead. Then he said, “That’s what we do with those who are not satisfied with the judgment of Allah and His Prophet.” It seems Jibril remarked that `Umar had distinguished between falsehood and truth, and since then he came to be known as Farooq (Alusi, under verse 47).

Ibn Hajr adds in *Fut-h*: Although the (above) story comes through a weak chain, it gathers strength from other sources. It is said that it was the Prophet who first referred to `Umar as Farooq (*Kitab al-Musaqat*).

Mawdudi adds: “Here people are urged to willingly accept the judgments made in accordance with the Qur`an and the *Sunnah*. It is quite obvious that this requirement is not restricted to the time of the Prophet

(peace be on him) alone. Instead, this is something that will always be required of Muslims, whether they lived in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) or in any subsequent period.”

Hasan al-Busri has in fact said, “He who is summoned by a Muslim ruler, but fails to turn up is a wrongdoer devoid of all rights” (Ibn Kathir and others).

106. “*Dha`ana*” in Arabic is actually for quick obedience, or hastening to obey (Lisan: Au.). Hence Mujahid said that it means they hasten (to the Prophet) – Ibn Jarir.

Yusuf Ali comments: “The Hypocrites only wanted to go to the judge who they thought was likely to give judgment in their favour. If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily came to the Prophet, knowing that he was just and would judge in their favour, even against his own adherents. But

[51] *The only saying of the believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that he could judge between them is to say, 'We hear and we obey.'*¹⁰⁷ *They indeed – they are the prosperers.*

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] *And whoever obeyed Allah and His Messenger, feared Allah, and was conscious of Him, those – they are the triumphant.*¹⁰⁸

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

if they had done wrong, an impartial judge was not to their taste. They would rather go to some one who would tip the balance in their favour! This form of selfishness and iniquity was not confined to the Hypocrites of Madinah. It is common in all ages, and should be suppressed.”

107. “.. i.e., without any mental reservation. The term *qawl* (lit., ‘saying’) has here the sense of a genuine spiritual ‘response’ in contrast to the mere lip-service alluded to in verse 47 above” (Asad).

Mawdudi again, “Regardless of the category to which such person belongs (of the doubters, hypocrites, etc.: Au.), he is undoubtedly steeped in error. Anyone who holds these views (as expressed in these verses: Au.) and still claims to be a believer

and a member of the Muslim society and who seeks to derive benefits from this association is indeed a cheat, a betrayer of trust, a fake and perfidious person. He also wrongs himself because his constant deception and cheating make him the embodiment of the worst moral traits. He also wrongs his fellow-Muslims who take him at his word, consider him to be a part of the Muslim society, and establish a myriad of social, cultural and political relations with him.”

108. So, apparently, this is a simple formula: Whoever obeyed Allah (by following the Qur’ān), His Messenger (in terms of following the *Sunnah*), and feared Allah for what of the sins he committed in the past, and conscientiously avoided them during the rest of his life, will be triumphant.

[53] *And they swore their strongest oath by Allah (that) if you ordered them, they would surely go forth. Say, 'Do not swear. (The quality of your) Obedience is well known.¹⁰⁹ Surely, Allah is Aware of what you do.'*

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن أُمِرْتُمْ
لَيَخْرُجْنَ قُلْ لَا تَقْسِمُوا طَاعَةً مَّعْرُوفَةً إِنَّ
اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] *Say, 'Obey Allah and obey the Messenger.' But if you turn away, then upon him is only what is placed upon him,¹¹⁰ and upon you only what is placed upon you.¹¹¹ However, if you obey him, you will be guided. And there is nothing upon the Messenger except clear deliverance.¹¹²*

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا
فَأِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ
وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا
الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٥٤﴾

109. That is, your obedience is well-known as mere lip service (Ibn Jarir, Alusi and others). This opinion is attributed to Mujahid. Another possible meaning is, "Let your obedience be identified, (as of good intentions); swearing is unnecessary" (Razi, Qurtubi).

"Alternatively," adds Mawdudi, "it might mean that the obedience and surrender to God required of believers is of a well-known quality. Those who are truly obedient to God stand apart from others, their distinctiveness can be perceived by everyone. Their conduct leaves no room whatsoever for any doubt that might prompt them to swear so as to convince others about the sincerity of their faith."

Asad writes: "This is an allusion to the ephemeral, self-deceiving enthu-

siasm of the half-hearted and their supposed readiness to 'self-sacrifice', in contrast to their obvious reluctance to live up to the message of the Qur'an in their day-to-day concerns."

110. That is, upon him is only the duty of delivery of the message (Ibn Jarir).

111. That is, upon you is the duty of acceptance and obedience (Ibn Jarir).

112. Yusuf Ali offers his comment: "If you disobey Allah's commands as explained by His Prophet, you are not going to be forced. The Prophet's mission is to train your will and explain clearly all the implications of your conduct. The responsibility for your conduct rests entirely on yourselves."

[55] Allah has promised those among you who believed and did righteous deeds (that) He shall surely make them succeed (in authority) in the earth even as He made those succeed who were before them, and (that) He shall surely establish for them their religion - the one which He has approved for them, and that He shall surely give them in exchange, after their fear, peace (and security)¹¹³ - they shall worship Me, not associating aught with Me.¹¹⁴ And whoever disbelieves after that,¹¹⁵ those then, they are the defiantly disobedient (ones).¹¹⁶

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] And observe the Prayer, give out the Zakah, and obey the Messenger - haply so you are shown mercy.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] Think not the unbelievers are able to frustrate (Allah) in the earth. Their abode is the Fire, and surely, an evil destination.

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٥٧﴾

113. Abu al-`Aliyyah said, the Prophet (*saws*) spent ten years in Makkah in a state of fear: calling to Allah in open and secret. Then he was ordered to move to Madinah where he and his Companions remained in fear for long, wearing their arms day and night. So someone remarked, "Will a day come when we will be in peace and lay aside our arms?" At that the Prophet said, "It will not be too long before one of you will sit amongst a large company, unguarded, without any steel around." And Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir,

Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Shawkani). The reports are in Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabarani (in his *Awsat*) and Hakim who declared it creditable (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali adds: "If this verse was revealed about the time of the Battle of the Ditch (*Khandaq*), also called the Battle of the Confederates (*Ahzab*) A.H. 4-5, we can imagine the comfort it gave to the Muslims who were besieged in Madinah by a force ten times their number. The Muslims then lived in a state of great suspense and danger, and under arms for days on end. (See xxxiii. 9-20). The secu-

rity and authority they were promised came to them subsequently in abundant measures.”

114. Asad provides the subtle connection between different parts of the verse: “I.e., the believer’s freedom of fear is a direct outcome of his intellectual and emotional refusal to attribute to anyone or anything but God the power to shape his destiny.”

Most commentators are of the opinion that this promise was made true during the Caliphate of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Some would exclude the period of `Ali when political troubles within the Islamic polity began to surface. But politics apart, `Ali’s period too was of such quality, that there is no reason to consider it significantly different from the earlier period. It is another thing that troubles began right after `Uthman’s murder. But that was the cause, while the troubles that surfaced during `Ali’s period, were the effect (Au.).

Shafi` writes in above reference: Baghawi has reported through his chain of narration the following speech of `Abdullah ibn Salam, which he delivered when he sensed that `Uthman could be murdered, “Allah’s angels have been guarding your city from the time the Prophet came down to it. It has continued

down to this day. By Allah, if you killed `Uthman, these angels will return and never come back. By Allah whoever of you took part in his killing, will be raised with a severed hand. Know it that Allah’s sword has been in the sheath. Once it is brought out, it will never be put back, for, whenever a Prophet is killed, seventy-thousand men have to lose life in compensation and when a *Khalifah* is killed thirty-five thousand people are killed in compensation.”

Qurtubi however, who reports (Abu Bakr) Ibn al-`Arabiyy of the same thoughts, does not believe that *istikhlaf* in the land should be understood in the political sense. As Ibn al-`Arabiyy wrote, the promise was open to embrace the Nubuwwah, the *Khilafah*, the establishment of the Call to Islam and the *Shari`ah* in general and it was fulfilled through everyone who could make any contribution including jurists, the Imams and others. Also, it was not bound to a period, except that its high point and apex was achieved at the time of the *Khilafah al-Rashidah*, `Ali’s period not excluded. For, a couple of internal battles that mark `Ali’s period, did not have any effect on the general peace and progress that prevailed. Those were only ripples in the flow of the Islamic tide.

Herewith, Ibn Kathir's somewhat shortened remarks: The fulfillment of the promise had begun to take shape even during the Prophet's time, culminating in the 20th year after his death, marked by `Uthman's murder. During his own time, Islam had spread to every nook and corner of the Arabian Peninsula, with most rulers embracing Islam or paying tribute. And, in acknowledgment of his position in Arabia, the rulers of Rome, Egypt, Alexandria, `Oman, and Habasha had sent him gifts. His successor Abu Bakr (who would not agree to a single command of Islam broken), first took control of the entire Peninsula and then extended the rule to Syrian regions. He was inspired to select `Umar ibn al-Khattab as his successor. He proved to be just the right man for the right job, establishing justice in the entire Islamic world, laying an order never heard of before. Egypt, rest of Syria and Persia also fell to his excellent rule. Kisra and Qaysar retreated to the farthest points of their empires, now reduced to kingdoms, or maybe fiefdoms, and their wealth was distributed among the people. A new era of peace, justice, freedom and confidence began. During `Uthman's reign, who succeeded `Umar, the Islamic rule was further expand-

ed to cover North Africa, several large islands of the Mediterranean Sea, and in the East to Chinese territories through Khurasan and other West Asian regions. Kisra was finally killed during his time and Allah's promise expressed at the tongue of His Prophet came true. He had said (Muslim), "Allah folded together the earth for me and I looked at the east and the west of it. The dominion of my *Ummah* will reach the places I was shown." But then, as we know, `Uthman was murdered and decline began.

115. Abu Sha`tha' reported, "I was sitting with Hudhayfah (b. al-Yaman) and `Abdullah (ibn Mas`ud) when Hudhayfah remarked, 'Hypocrisy has departed. Hypocrisy was during the time of the Prophet. Now it's going to be disbelief after belief.' Ibn Mas`ud asked, 'Why do you say that?' Hudhayfah replied with this and the previous verse. Ibn Mas`ud laughed. Sho`bah (the next reporter) met Abu Sha`tha after some time. He asked him as to why Ibn Mas`ud had laughed. He replied, 'I don't know. A man laughs both at something pleasing, as well as something displeasing. So I do not know why he laughed.'"

Abul `Aliyyah however believed that the disbelief is to be understood as

not disbelief in Islam but rather, ungratefulness to the blessings of Allah. Accordingly, it is said that the situation of complete peace remained until `Uthman was murdered. With his murder fear began to prevail (Ibn Jarir).

116. This is also apparent in our history. The Companions were the most committed followers of Allah's commands. The promise to them then, was fulfilled in its complete sense. But weakness began to prevail after them, and, accordingly, the victories of those who fell short in the observation of certain commandments, also fell short in certain respects. Nonetheless (the promise remains true in reference to those who remain true to the commandments: Au.). In a well-reported tradition, the Prophet said,

لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي قَائِمَةٌ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ حَادَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ ظَاهِرُونَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

“A group of my *Ummah* will remain on Truth overcoming (opposition). Those who forsake them or oppress them will not be able to do them any harm – until the Day of Judgment” (Ibn Kathir, summarized).

Sayyid writes: “Allah’s promise to those of the followers of the Prophet who believe and do righteous deeds

is that He will make them succeed in the earth, that He will establish for them the religion that He has approved for them, and that He will accord them peace after fear. Such is the promise. Allah’s promise is true. And Allah’s promise has to be fulfilled. And Allah does not break his promise. What then is the reality of faith and what is the true meaning of succession?

“The reality of the faith after which Allah’s promise comes true is a huge reality that covers all of the human endeavor and which directs the entire human endeavors (to a goal). It does not take its place in the heart but it begins to announce its presence in the form of deeds, activities, frameworks and edifices: all of them directed to Allah; the faithful not desiring anything but the approval of Allah. Faith then is Allah’s obedience and submission to Him in everything minor or major. The inner self’s desires do not remain active along with it, nor the low cravings of the heart, nor the inclinations of the natural kind – except that it follows what the Prophet brought from Allah.

“It is that faith then (alluded to here) which embraces the whole of man, including his inmost thoughts, the

recesses of his heart, the longings of the soul, the inclinations of his nature, the movements of his body organs, the gestures of his limbs, and his conduct with his Lord, his near ones, and the mankind in general – propelling himself with all these towards Allah. This is well represented in Allah's words in the same verse that gives the reason for succession and establishment in the earth: 'They shall worship Me, not associating any with Me.' Association then has several openings and colors. And to be turning to other than Allah either physically or sub-consciously is one of the several kinds of association with Allah.

"This faith then is the way of the life, whole of it. It includes everything that Allah has ordered. And Allah's commandments include obtaining of the means (for fulfillment of the commands), getting ready the equipment, employment of the material means, and preparation for bearing the great Trust in the earth, the Trust of *Khilafah*.

"And what is the reality of the succession? Of the *Khilafah*?

"Well, it is not the possession, or the subjugation, or triumph, or rule.. All of these are only there as a condition of utilization for the reformation

and construction, and for realization of the program that Allah has laid down for humankind, so that they can follow it and so that they can attain through it the highest position delineated for them in the earth, that which is deserving of a creation that Allah has honored.

"Succession in the earth (*istikhlaf*) is the ability to build it and improve it, not the ability to destroy and corrupt. It is the power to administer justice and achieve contentment, not the power to oppress and subjugate. It is the ability to raise above: the humans and the human systems, and not to lower - at the individual and social level - to the levels of the animals.

"This then is the *istikhlaf* that Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds .. He has promised them this succession in the earth just as He allowed succession to the believers and righteous before them – so that they can realize the right way that Allah has opened for them, and establish the justice that He has willed, and walk up the way that assures their rise to the heights that He has decreed for them the day He created them. For, those who have arrogated power corrupt the land, spread rebellion and injustice and

[58] Believers,¹¹⁷ let those your right hands own and those of you who have not attained puberty, seek permission of you (before entering) at three times: before the dawn Prayer, at noon when you lay aside your (outer) garments (for rest),¹¹⁸ and after the night Prayer - three (occasions) of privacy for you.¹¹⁹ There is no blame upon you nor upon them beyond these (occasions), some of you going about in rounds upon others. Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses, and Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ
مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ
مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ
وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّهْرِ وَمَنْ
بَعْدَ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ
لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَهُنَّ
طَوَافُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾

who take them down to the level of the animals. These are not the successors. They are being tried in their situation, or others are being tried by them: those whom they have overcome, for a wisdom that Allah has decreed.

“A clue to this understanding of the succession is Allah’s statement that follows it, “And He shall establish for them the religion that He has approved for them.” Establishment of the religion will follow its establishment in the hearts, as its establishment is accomplished in life and its affairs. It is consequent to this that Allah has promised the establishment of their succession in the earth, and that He will make the religion that He has approved for them to overcome others on the earth: this religion of theirs which commands

reformation, justice, and overcoming the desire for base earthly things. It commands building of this earth and the utilization of that which Allah has placed therein: the wealth, provision, and power, all directed with great fervor towards (obtaining) Allah’s (approval).”

117. Asad provides relief to those who see incoherence in Qur’anic passages. He writes: “In pursuance of the Qur’anic principle that the social and individual – as well as the spiritual and material – aspects of human life form one indivisible whole and cannot, therefore, be dealt with independently of one another, the discourse returns to the consideration of some of the rules of healthy social behavior enunciated in the earlier parts of this *Surah*. The following passage takes up and elaborates the

[59] And when your children attain puberty, then let them (also) seek permission, as those sought permission who were before them.¹²⁰ Thus does Allah make clear His verses, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا
كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَلِكَ
يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ
﴿٥٩﴾

theme of the individual's right to privacy, already touched upon in verses 27-29 above."

118. The word used for noon-time is "zaheerah", which is applied, strictly speaking, to hot summer afternoons, implying perhaps, that only such needs might be legitimate for removal of outer garments (Au.).

119. The implied meaning is that children must be trained in manners, etiquette and respect for the commandments of Islam (Razi).

120. In other words, children and household workers are required to seek the permission of the master and mistress of the house before entering their private quarters at three times: before dawn, afternoon (which is the siesta time) and after nightfall when everyone has retired to his chambers. However, when children grow to manhood, they too must seek permission of the masters and mistresses

entering upon them at any time of the day. And, by extension, permission must be sought of all those who have reached puberty before one enters into their private chambers (Zamakhshari).

Sa'id b. Jubayr reported that Ibn 'Abbas said, "There are three verses that people have given up practicing: (a) This present verse, (b) 'If there appear at the time of division (distant) relatives, orphans or (other) poor persons, make provision for them thereof (4: 8),' and (c) 'Surely, the most noble in the sight of Allah are the most pious (49: 13).'" – Ibn Kathir and others.

We have quoted the above to give an inkling of the level of application of the Qur'anic injunctions at the time of the Followers (*tabe' iyyuun*) - these were the only three directives that they seem to have neglected (Au.).

[60] And women of post-menstrual age¹²¹ who have no hope of marriage - there is no blame upon them that they should lay aside their (outer) garments, (but) not wantonly displaying adornment. Yet, that they should restrain themselves is better for them.¹²² And Allah is All-hearing, All-knowing.

وَالْمَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ
نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ
ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ
خَيْرٌ هُنَّ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

121. The textual word is “*qawa`id*” (sing. *qa`id*, just as hamil: Qurtubi), and not *qa`idat* (sing. *qa`idah*). The latter would have been used if the allusion was to those women who have taken to sitting, or the squatting women. But, *qa`id* is used for a woman who has reached her post-menstrual period and hence has lost interest in sex, and in whom others have lots interest; in consequence, whose company is not sought after by men - Zamakshari, Razi, Qurtubi and others.

Ibn Qutaybah however has said that the word is so rooted (in *qa`ida*) because past a certain age, women spend most of their time sitting (Sabuni).

122. That is, there is no sin upon such women as have passed the age of interest in sex, that they remove the outer garment with which they cover their heads or shoulders, within the confines of the house or the family quarters. However, if they wore them on, it would be better for them (Ibn Jarir).

[61] There is no restriction upon the blind, nor upon the lame any restriction, nor upon the sick any restriction, nor upon yourselves that you eat of your (own) houses,¹²³ or the houses of your fathers, or the houses of your mothers, or the houses of your brothers, or the houses of your sisters, or the houses of your paternal uncles, or the houses of your paternal aunts, or the houses of your maternal uncles, or the houses of your maternal aunts, or of those (places) whereof you possess the keys, or (the house) of a friend of yours.¹²⁴ There is no blame upon you that you eat all together or separately.¹²⁵ But when you enter houses, send greetings of peace upon one another – a greeting from Allah, blessed¹²⁶ and goodly.¹²⁷ Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses haply you will ponder.¹²⁸

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبَارَكَةً طَيِّبَةً كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

﴿٦١﴾

123. “In the consensus of all the authorities, the expression ‘your houses) implies in this context to ‘your children’s houses’, since all that belongs to a person may be said to belong, morally, to his parents as well” (Asad).

The Prophet told a man who inquired about what his father could take from his wealth,

أَنْتَ وَمَالُكَ لِأَبِيكَ

“You and your wealth are your father’s” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir), although the *hadith* has been understood to mean differently too (Qurtubi).

124. One of the several opinions about this verse is that the people bore a kind of prejudice against the blind, the sick, the lame and other disabled persons, not too willing to share dinner tables with them. So Allah (*swt*) revealed this verse. There are a few other opinions, such as, many super-sensitive people thought that if they ate with the disabled, they, the disabled, might not get their full share because of their various disabilities, entailing the questioning of the table-companions, and so they avoided eating with them altogether. Another opinion has it that some people visited the houses of their

kindred: brothers, sisters, etc., but refrained from eating there when offered on grounds that the master of the house was not present. So Allah removed this encumbrance by revealing this verse. Yet another opinion is that sometimes a man had a lame or blind person as a visitor and wished to feed him, but could not do it himself. So he took him to the house of his father, son, etc., to be fed there. But both, the guest brought on (the handicapped) as well as the acting guest, (the man who took them), felt that perhaps it was not right to do such things and so Allah revealed this verse.

But the most likely opinion (according to Ibn Jarir) seems to be that which is reported by Zuhri. He said that the Companions of the Prophet handed over the keys to their houses when they left for campaigns, to the blind, the lame, etc., allowing them free entry into the houses and partaking of anything within them. But the trustees refrained from entering their houses in their absence and so Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari [in parts], Razi, Ibn Kathir).

In all cases, the condition attached is that the masters of the houses, do not mind to what is eaten of their hous-

es. This is evidenced by the Prophet's words who said, "A Muslim's property is not lawful (to another) except by his good will (Qurtubi).

The use of the word *sadeeq* in the text requires a line or two of explanation. Firstly, friend of English is indeed not equivalent of *sadeeq* of Arabic. *Sadeeq* has its root in *sadaqa* which means, to be true, sincere, honest, deal truthfully, etc. *Sadeeq* is therefore, someone with whom the relationship is that of truthfulness, sincerity and trust to the absolute degree. In contrast, a friend is a mere acquaintance of some time, a bit close, but not necessarily one to the other absolutely truthful, sincere or honest (Au.).

Zamakhshari reports that according to Ibn 'Abbas and Ja'far al-Sadiq, *sadeeq* seems to hold a special position in Islamic thought and culture.

(According to Zamakhshari and Razi, the word is used both as a singular as well as a plural noun [just as 'aduww: Qurtubi] – although another word exists for the plural: *asdiqa'*: Au.).

Those in Hellfire will ignore many others, but will mention those they will miss most: *asdiqa'*. They will say (26: 100-101),

{ قَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ (١٠٠) وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ }
 [الشعراء: ١٠٠، ١٠١]

“(Today) We do not have an intercessor (by our side), nor a warm *sadeeq*.” And, it is reported of Hasan (al-Busri) that once he entered his house to find his friends falling upon a basket of tasty victuals he had placed under his bed. They were cleaning it off. It is said that Hasan’s face brightened up. He smiled happily and said, “That is how we found them.” That is, explains Zamakhshari, that is how he found the Badri Companions he had met: one of whom would enter the house of his friend and ask the maid to bring out his personal purse. He would take from it what he wished. When the master returned and was informed of what his *sadeeq* had done, he would be so pleased that he’d free the slave-girl.

125. Once again there are a variety of opinions but the one most likely to be correct is that some of the Arabs, like Banu Kinanah, never ate their food unless they had someone to share with, while there were Arabs who never ate with others. Allah removed the inconvenience both ways: they were free to eat together in groups, or individually – no restriction need be there either way (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The verse is of course speaking of the legality. Otherwise, it is preferable that food be eaten together. Ahmad has a report which says that once someone complained to the Prophet,

إِنَّا نَأْكُلُ وَلَا نَشْبَعُ ، قَالَ : فَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَفَرَّقُونَ ، قَالُوا : نَعَمْ ، قَالَ : فَاجْتَمِعُوا عَلَى طَعَامِكُمْ ، وَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ يُبَارِكْ لَكُمْ فِيهِ

“We but do not feel satiated.” He replied, “Perhaps you eat separately.” They said, “Yes.” He said, “Get together over your food, pronounce Allah’s name, you will be blessed therewith.”

According to another report in Ahmad, Abu Da’ud and Ibn Majah, the Prophet said,

كلوا جميعا ولا تفرقوا؛ فإن البركة مع الجماعة

“Eat together. Do not separate out, for blessing is with the group” (Ibn Kathir).

126. Linguistically, “*barakah*” is for growth and increase (Sabuni).

127. A *hadith* can be quoted in support of the verse. Anas says,

خدمت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عشر سنين فما قال لي في شيء فعلته لم فعلته ولا قال لي في شيء تركته لم تركته ، وكنت واقفاً على رأس النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أصب الماء على يديه فرفع رأسه إلي وقال : ” ألا أعلمك ثلاث خصال تنفع بهن؟ ” قلت بأبي وأمي أنت يا رسول الله بلى ، فقال ”

[62] Believers are only those who believed in Allah and His Messenger; and when they are with him over a collective affair,¹²⁹ do not depart until they have sought his permission.¹³⁰ Surely, those who seek your permission, they are the ones who believe in Allah and His Messenger. Therefore, if they seek your permission for an affair of theirs, then give permission to whosoever of them you will, and ask Allah's forgiveness for them.¹³¹ Surely, Allah is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِذَا
اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذَنَ لِمَن
شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

من لقيت من أمتي فسلم عليهم يطل عمرك ، وإذا
دخلت بيتاً فسلم عليهم بكثر خير بيتك ، وصل
صلاة الضحى فإنها صلاة (الأبرار) الأوابين ”

“I served the Prophet ten years. He never reproached me over a thing I did as to why I did, and never questioned me about a thing I didn't do as to why I did not. Once I was by his side pouring water on his hand while he made ablution, he raised his head and said, ‘May I not teach you three things that might profit you?’ I said, ‘By my parents, yes, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Whomsoever of my *Ummah* you come across, greet him in the Islamic manner, Allah will lengthen your life. When you enter into a house, greet them Islamically; the good of your house will be increased. And, do the Duha Prayer, for it is the Prayer of those who turn (to

Allah) often” (Razi).

Although its various parts are found in different collections as pieces, but this report is not found as one whole in any well-known collection.

128. Asad comments: “The whole of verse 61 is so highly elliptic a form that disagreements as to its purport have always been unavoidable. However, if all the explanations offered by the early commentators are taken into consideration, we find that their common denominator is the view that the innermost purport of this passage is a stress on the brotherhood of all believers, expressed in a call to mutual charity, compassion, and good-fellowship and hence, the avoidance of all unnecessary formalities in their mutual relationship.”

129. Lit., an affair that collects people together (Majid).

130. Thus, after having instructed the believers about how to enter upon a people, by seeking their leave, Allah now instructs them the etiquette of departing when they have to. He began by instructing how to behave when leaving the Prophet's company. It is by seeking permission to leave. (And, of course, if it happens to be a person of authority, then he has the right to say no: Au.). The Prophet (*saws*) added clarification by saying, as in a *hadith* of Abu Da'ud,

كُلُّوا جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفْرُقُوا فَإِنَّ الْبَرَكَهَ مَعَ الْجَمَاعَةِ

“When one of you enters upon a gathering, let him say Salam, and when he wishes to leave, let him say Salam: neither the first nor the second is more important than the other.” The report is also in Nasa'i and Tirmidhi who rated it Hasan (Ibn Kathir).

The verse, “Believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger; and when they are with him

over a collective affair, do not depart until they have sought his permission” might sound a bit intriguing, especially the adjective “only” at the beginning. Qurtubi gives us the clue. He writes: A man's faith could not be said to be complete without he paying full attention to what the Prophet was saying, since what he was saying was meant to complete (or improve) an affair. His slipping away would mean he was trying to spoil what the Prophet was trying to improve.

The instruction however, notes Shafi', was when the Prophet had collected them. If they had come on their own, they were free to leave whenever they wished, which they often did.

131. At this point “Ask Allah's forgiveness for them” requires an explanation and Alusi provides us: Because, their seeking permission – however legitimate – could have had traces of the preference of this world over that of the affairs of the Hereaf-

[63] Place not the Messenger's summon among yourselves (on the same footing) as the summon of some of you to others.¹³² Allah has known those who slip away from you surreptitiously.¹³³ Let those then who go against his command beware, lest a tribulation strikes them¹³⁴ or a painful punishment afflicts them.¹³⁵

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ
بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
يَسْتَلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لَوَادًّا فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ
يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ
يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

ter, which needed to be sought for-giveness for.

132. There are two opinions. One of them treats “du`a” of the text not as summons but as “prayers” or “supplication.” What they thought it meant is, do not treat the Prophet’s supplication against you like you would each other’s. If he prayed against you, you would suffer. Therefore, be careful not to provoke him to supplicating against you. A second opinion treats the word “du`a” as “term of address.” That is, do not address the Prophet coarsely or disrespectfully, such as to say, “O Muhammad!” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Jarir’s preference is the former interpretation in view of the context. When summoned to a meeting, the Companions were not to slip away using another as cover – as the hypocrites did. If they did so, the Prophet’s anger would be provoked against such of them entailing their destruc-

tion.

Imām Razi however prefers the meaning as reflected in the translation (and which Ibn al-Qayyim also mentions as possible). That is, do not treat the Prophet’s summon as some of you summoning others, those others responding or not responding.

133. This has reference to the hypocrites who could not bear to sit long in the Prophet’s assembly, and slipped away taking someone’s cover.

The cause of revelation could be more than one. Ibn Is-haq, Ibn al-Mundhir and Bayhaqi (in his *Dala’il*) have reported that when the Arab confederates led by the Quraysh came down in a mass to attack Madinah, the Prophet (*saws*) was prompted to dig a trench in the north of Madinah. His Companions helped him in the digging. But the hypocrites evinced their weaknesses.

A Muslim for example, if he had to leave temporarily, would find a replacement for himself and then seek the Prophet's permission to go. And, when allowed to go, he would return as fast as he could. But the hypocrites would slip away from behind the lines without seeking the Prophet's permission and without he ever knowing that they had slipped away (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

Qurtubi adds: In fact, when, during that campaign, 'Umar sought permission to leave for Madinah for a while, the Prophet said, "You may go, for, by Allah, you are not a hypocrite." Those words were meant for the hypocrites. (In practice, the Companions sought the Prophet's permission on other occasions too: Au.).

When 'Umar intended an 'Umrah, he sought the Prophet's permission who responded by saying, "O Haf's father. Do not forget us in your supplication."

134. By the tribulation, the allusion is to the seal placed upon the hearts, so that guidance cannot penetrate (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi gives it a wider connotation. He writes: "The word *fitnah* used in this verse has been interpreted by Ja'far al Sadiq to mean the 'dominance of wrong-doers.' If Muslims disobey the commands of the Messenger (peace be upon him) they will be subjected to the yoke of unjust and oppressive rulers. While this is one of the forms of *fitnah*, it is by no means the only form. For *fitnah* might manifest itself in countless other ways such as mutual dissension and feuding, moral degeneration, the dissipation of collective cohesion, the spread of internal disorder and chaos, the breakdown of the material power of a people and its subjugation by others."

135. The words, "Let those then who go against his command beware" have a wide application. The deeds of the followers of the Prophet would be judged with his deeds as the criteria. What matched would be accepted, while what did not, would be rejected. The Prophet said (Muslim, *Fut-h*),

مَنْ أَحْدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

"Whoever brought in our affair

[64] Lo! Surely to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.¹³⁶ He ever knows what (state) you are upon. And the day they shall be returned to Him, He will inform them of what they did.¹³⁷ And Allah is knowing of all things.

أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قَدْ
يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ
فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

(i.e. Islam) that which is not of it, stands rejected” (Ibn Kathir).

136. That is, it is not right for one who is owned by another - in this case the slaves owned by their Master Allah, the Owner of the heavens and the earth - that they disobey

Him. He knows well how they are responding to the commandments and injunction being revealed (Ibn Jarir).

137. The allusion is to those who slipped behind the cover of others,





Surah 25

Al-furqān¹

(The Criterion)

Makkan²

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Relationship

Yusuf Ali has the following to state as relationship between this and the previous chapter: “This *Surah* further develops the contrast between Light and Darkness, as symbolical of knowledge and ignorance, righteousness and sin, spiritual progress and degradation. It closes with a definition of the deeds by which the righteous are known in the environment of this world.”

1. The *Sahihayn* and several other books have recorded ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab as saying:

سَمِعْتُ هِشَامَ بْنَ حَكِيمٍ بْنِ حِرَامٍ يَقْرَأُ سُورَةَ الْفُرْقَانِ فِي حَيَاةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَاسْتَمَعْتُ لِقِرَاءَتِهِ فَإِذَا هُوَ يَقْرَأُ عَلَى حُرُوفٍ كَثِيرَةٍ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ بِهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَكِدْتُ أُسَاوِرُهُ فِي الصَّلَاةِ فَتَصَبَّرْتُ حَتَّى سَلَّمَ فَلَبَّيْتُهُ بِرِدَائِهِ فَقُلْتُ مَنْ أَقْرَأَكَ هَذِهِ السُّورَةَ الَّتِي سَمِعْتُكَ تَقْرَأُ قَالَ أَقْرَأَنِيهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقُلْتُ كَذَبْتَ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ أَقْرَأَنِيهَا عَلَى غَيْرِ

مَا قَرَأْتَ فَأَنْطَلَقْتُ بِهِ أَقْوَدُهُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقُلْتُ إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ هَذَا يَقْرَأُ بِسُورَةِ الْفُرْقَانِ عَلَى حُرُوفٍ لَمْ تَقْرَأْ بِهَا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أُرْسِلُهُ أَقْرَأُ يَا هِشَامُ فَقَرَأَ عَلَيْهِ الْقِرَاءَةَ الَّتِي سَمِعْتُهُ يَقْرَأُ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْتُ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَقْرَأُ يَا عُمَرُ فَقَرَأْتُ الْقِرَاءَةَ الَّتِي أَقْرَأَنِي فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْتُ إِنَّ هَذَا الْفُرْقَانَ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيَّ سَبْعَةَ أَحْرَفٍ فَأَقْرَأُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ

I heard Hisham b. Hakeem reciting *Surah al-Furqaan* during the life of the Messenger. I paid attention to his recitation and in many words different from what I had been taught by the Prophet. I could hardly hold myself from pounding on him during the Prayers, but decided to be patient until he would finish. When he was finished I wrapped him in my cloak and asked him who had taught him recite the *Surah* he had recited that way. He answered that it was the Prophet himself

[1] Blessed³ is He who sent down⁴ the Criterion⁵ upon His slave,⁶ that he may be a warner⁷ unto the worlds.⁸

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ﴿١﴾

who had taught him that way. I denounced him as a liar and took him to the Prophet. I complained to him that he was reciting in a way different from what he had taught me.” He said, “Release him.” Then he said, “Recite to us O Hisham.” He recited in the manner I had heard him recite. The Prophet remarked, “That is how it was revealed.” Then he said, “Recite to us, O `Umar.” “So I recited in the manner he had taught me.” The Prophet remarked, “That is how it was revealed. This Qur`ān has been revealed following seven letters. Therefore, recite what of it is easy to you” (Shawkani).

There is no consensus of opinion over what was meant by “seven letters.” But perhaps the most logical one is that some words of the Qur`ān could be read in more than one way, but not more than seven ways. This is Ibn Hajr’s opinion as in *Fat-h*. To cite an example, the word “*tukallimuhum*” of *Surah Al-Naml*, verse 82 has been variously read as “*taklimuhum*” and “*tunabbi’uhum*.” Or, “Maalik” of *Surah al-Fatiha* has also been read

as “Malik.” Or the word “*khalifah*” has also been read as “*khaliqah*.” In all cases, it hardly matters how they are read because they yield meanings close to each other (Au.).

2. Reports suggest that this *Surah* has Makkan and Madinan verses mixed up together (Qurtubi). Dahhak and Muqatil have said that this *Surah* was revealed 8 years before the revelation of *Surah al-Nisa’* (Mawdudid from Tabari and Razi at verse 68). Its date has no significance (Yusuf Ali).

3. The meaning of “*tabaaraka*” as given here reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas as in Ibn Jarir, and of Zajjaj as in Qurtubi.

The report about Ibn `Abbas is in Ibn Abi Hatim also (Shawkani).

Linguistically however, as Zamakhshari, Razi and others point out, the word in the root is *barakah* which means increase in (all kinds of) good and beneficence. In this case, *tabaaraka* would point to overflow of benefits and goodness from Allah. It is outflow of good that resulted in the revelation of the Qur`ān, and hence the importance of knowledge (Razi).

There have been other explanations, quite philosophic, by Razi (though in greater detail by Alusi) while Qurtubi, as well as others inform us that the root word leads us to another meaning: that of permanence and eternity of Allah's Attributes.

Ibn al-Qayyim explains that the attribution of "*barakah*" to Allah means attribution of the Qualities of mercy, power and honor to Him. In verb form the word becomes "*tabaaraka*" which is applicable only to Allah and none else. Hence, he on whom He bestowed "*barakah*" is mubaarak, e.g., the mubaarak Book, the mubaarak Messenger, etc. Here, however, as well as in all other places in the Qur'an, the word "*tabaaraka*" has been used as an adjective and not as a verb (Badaa'i').

Yusuf Ali adds: "*Tabaaraka*: the root meaning is "increase" or "abundance". Here that aspect of Allah's dealing with His creatures is emphasised, which shows abundant goodness to all His creatures, in that He sent the Revelation of His Will, not only in the unlimited Book of Nature, but in a definite Book in human language, which gives clear directions and admonitions to all. The English word 'blessed' hardly conveys that meaning."

4. The textual word for "sending down" is "*nazzala*" which is a verb form used for expressing exaggeration or emphasis. Here it has been used to emphasize the gradual, and therefore, fragmented sending down of the revelation as against the previous Scriptures that were sent down as one whole (Ibn Kathir). As Allah said (3: 3), points out Razi:

{ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ } [آل عمران: 3]

"He has sent down upon you the Book with the truth, confirming that which preceded it (as) He sent down the Tawrah and the Injil."

In this *ayah*, Allah used two different words for two different Revelations. He used *nazzala* for the Qur'an, while *anzala* (which is for sending down in one installment) for *Torah* and *Injeel*.

5. Yusuf Ali comments on "*al-Furqan*": "That by which we can judge clearly between right and wrong. Here the reference is to the Qur'an, which has already been symbolised by light. This symbol is continued here, and many contrasts are shown, in the midst of which we can distinguish between the true and the false by Allah's Light, especially the contrast between righteousness and sin.ᵇ"

A second meaning, as most commentators have pointed out, is that of a separator – from *faraqa*: to separate – in this case, the separator of truth and falsehood.”

6. `Abd (slave) is an honorific title. The best that one can do is to be an `abd of Allah. When Allah uses the term for a person, it means He holds that person in high repute. Hence, on all important occasions Prophet Muhammad was referred to as an `abd in the Qur`ān (Ibn Kathir).

7. Ibn Zayd has said that the pronoun of *li-yakuna* is for the Prophet. He was and remains a warner unto the worlds. Allah said (35: 24),

{ وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ } [فاطر: ٢٤]

“And there hasn’t been a nation except a warner had been in it.”

And (26: 208),

{ وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا هَا مُنذِرُونَ } [الشعراء: ٢٠٨]

“And We did not destroy a town but it had its warners.”

Initially, there was only one warner: the Messenger. After he had passed away, he became a warner unto everyone who received the message after him. The Qur`ān said (6: 19),

{ وَأَوْجِيءُ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ } [الأنعام: ١٩]

“And this Qur`ān has been revealed to me in order that I warn you and those whom it reaches.”

That is, those that the Qur`ān reaches. Hence the Prophet is a warner unto the worlds. The Qur`ān told him to announce (7: 158),

{ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا } [الأعراف: ١٥٨]

“O people. I am indeed Allah’s Messenger unto you all.”

Ibn Zayd also said that Allah never sent a Messenger to the entire world population except Nuh, with whom He began a new creation, and Muhammad, with whom He ended (the series) – Ibn Jarir.

Qurtubi also explains the verse in the above manner.

The Prophet said,

بُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَأَفَّةِ الْأَحْمَرِ وَالْأَسْوَدِ

“I have been sent to the entire mankind, the reds and the blacks.”

The above report of Ahmad was evaluated as Hasan by Shu`ayb al-Arna`ud (Au.).

He also said,

أَعْطَيْتُ حَمْسًا لَمْ يُعْطَهُنَّ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي ... وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُبْعَثُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ خَاصَّةً وَبُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ عَامَّةً

[2] He to whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; who did not take a son, nor He ever had any associate with Him in His Kingdom. He created every thing, then He determined its due proportion.⁹

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

“I enjoy specialty in five things... and a Prophet used to be raised for his own people alone while I have been raised for the entire mankind.”

He mentioned as fifth that while others were sent to a particular nation, he was sent to all the peoples (Ibn Kathir).

Bukhari and Muslim recorded it (Au.).

8. “The worlds” – i.e., (the worlds of) the Jinn and mankind (Zamakhshari, Razi).

Sayyid adds: “The words, ‘that he may be a warner unto the worlds’ appearing in a Makkan *Surah* leave no room that from the first day of revelation this message was meant for all mankind; and not, as some historians state, that originally the message was for the Arabs alone; later, with the subjugation of the Arabs, the Prophet declared it for others too, as a later thought and introduction. This *ayah* disproves this theory.”

9. That is, created every being in form, shape, size, attributes, and potentialities in such a manner that each of them is able to perform its specific function in a precise manner (Zamakhshari).

Majid writes: “Several pagan philosophers, such as Epicurus, denied in toto the Divine superintendence of human affairs, and this human self-sufficiency was echoed by the latter-day Jews. The Sadducees among them held that there was no such thing as ‘fate’, and that ‘human actions are not directed according to it, but all actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the cause of what is good.’ (DB. IV. p. 53) The Holy Qur’an corrects all such misconceptions and makes it clear that every event, big or small, that comes to pass in the universe, is the direct outcome of the All-Wise, All-Righteous, All-Powerful God, and not the subject either to chance or necessity, and that the governing hand of God is visible through every process of nature, through the march of history, and through the fortunes of ev-

[3] Yet they have taken besides Him gods who do not create anything: in fact, are themselves created.¹⁰ They have no power to harm or benefit themselves, nor have power over death, or life, or resurrection.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَا يُخْلِقُونَ شَيْئًا
وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا
وَلَا نَفْعًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا
نُشُورًا ﴿٣﴾

[4] But said those who disbelieved, 'This is nothing but a slander that he has forged, and other people have helped him in it.'¹¹ Surely, they have brought forth an injustice and an untruth.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ افْتَرَاهُ
وَأَعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ آخَرُونَ فَقَدْ جَاءُوا
ظُلْمًا وَزُورًا ﴿٤﴾

[5] And they said, 'Tales of the ancients¹² that he has got written down which are dictated upon him morning and evening.'

وَقَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ اكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلَى
عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٥﴾

ery individual life, steadily working out His preconceived Plan.”

10. The idols of the idolaters are a good case in point. Their worshippers create them giving them forms and shapes, many of which are so terribly ugly, that were the idols given life, they would attack their creators for making them so ugly. The point is, the idols are themselves created beings which have no power over good or bad and yet they are worshipped! (Au., with a point from Zamakhshari).

11. Mujahid said that when the Makkans alleged that the Prophet had been assisted by some others in his forgery, their allusion was to the Jews (Ibn Jarir). But there were a few Makkans too who they al-

leged that they taught Muhammad (Qurtubi, Alusi and others).

What prevented them, Razi and Qurtubi wonder, from seeking the help of “those others” and produce a similar Qur’an?

And, what prevented them, wonders Mawdudi, from raiding the house of Muhammad, seize the relevant texts and place them before the public eye!?

But when such replies are given, their modern counterparts, the Western Orientalists, scholars and scientists pretend not to be listening (Au.).

12. According to a report attributed to Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Jurayj, it was Nadr b. al-Harith, one of the Quraysh, a widely traveled man who

[6] Say, 'It has been sent down by Him who knows (every) secret of the heavens and the earth. He indeed is ever Forgiving, ever Merciful.'¹³

قُلْ أَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٦﴾

used to say that the Qur'ānic revelations were "tales of the ancients." He would take the Prophet's place after he had left an assembly, and narrate tales of Rustam, Isfandyar, Persians kings, and others, and ask, "Aren't my tales better than the tales of the ancients that this man (Muhammad) narrates?" The Qur'ān referred to him no less than eight times, and every time the words employed were, "tales of the ancients" – Ibn Jarir.

Adds Ibn Kathir: This was a foolish and patently wrong statement from the pagans. It was commonly known that Muhammad did not learn how to read and write: neither in his childhood nor any time later in his life. He grew up right before their eyes from the day of his birth until he proclaimed Messengership at forty. They knew very well everything about him: his honesty, trustworthiness, righteousness, and that he was far away from lies, evil deeds and every unbecoming activity. But when Allah bestowed on him the great honor, they took to enmity and

began to accuse him of things every reasonable person knew he was innocent of. Sometimes they said he was a magician, at other times that he was a poet, while on other occasions that he was mad, until Allah said, "See how they strike similitudes for you! Thus they went astray and will not be able (to find) a way."

13. That is, Allah, who knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth, also knows the plotting and scheming of the opponents of the Prophet's call. He could have immediately punished them for their sins, but He is All-forgiving, All-merciful (Ibn Kathir, Zamakhshari, Razi and others).

Another possibility is that they are being coaxed into seeking forgiveness from One who is All-Merciful (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali writes: "The answer (to their objections) is that the Qur'ān teaches spiritual knowledge of what is ordinarily hidden from men's sight, and such knowledge can only come from Allah, to Whom alone is known the secret of the whole Cre-

[7] They (also) said, 'What is with this Messenger that he eats food and walks about in the markets?'¹⁴ Why an angel has not been sent down to him to be with him as a warner?

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ
وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ
فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

ation. In spite of man's sin and shortcomings, He forgives, and He sends His most precious gift, i.e., the revelation of His Will."

14. While promising more details later, Qurtubi points out that going about in the markets – for a purpose - is not an impious habit. Thanwi's penetrating mind brings out the idea that the undesirability reported in the ahaadith is for purposeless sauntering in the markets (today's window-shopping: Au.). In fact, he adds, if someone doesn't go into the markets out of pride, then his 'not going about' in them is undesirable, while going about would be commendable.

What he means is that some people never go the markets out of pride, leaving it for the plebian. Also see note 26 below (Au.).

Sayyid Qutb looks at other aspects: "Allah's honoring of Man manifests itself in this .. but those who do not appreciate the worth of this creature (Man), nor the true meaning of Allah's honor that Allah wished

for him, refuse that humans should have contacts with Allah through revelation. They refuse that one of the humans should be a Messenger from Allah. They see that angels were more suitable. They ask, 'Why an angel has not been sent down to him to be with him as a warner?' ...

"Allah's wisdom manifests itself in the fact that one of the humans should appear as a Messenger unto the humans. It can only be one of the humans - who feels like they do, who experiences their emotions, who undergoes their experiences, who shares their hopes and fears, who knows their tendencies and delights, who knows their needs and burdens, and, in addition, is favorably disposed towards understanding their weaknesses and shortcomings, who has hopes in their strengths and their efforts to advance, who walks with them step by step, who understands their motives, sensitivities and responses: for, in the end he is one of them, who explores with them the way to Allah ... through the revelations of Allah and seeks Divine help

to face the hardships of the way – it can only be such a human who could be raised as a Messenger.

“On the other hand, they find in him a model possible of imitation. For, he is a man like them, who seeks to raise them little by little. He lives among them bearing values, deeds and burdens about which he informs them that Allah has made obligatory on them and is desirous of them. Thus, he is in his own person a living explanation of the message that he brings to them. His life, his movements and his deeds are meant to be placed in front of them so that they could transfer them (unto themselves) line by line, and put into action, in the truest possible sense. They can aim to imitate him. For, he is a living example. Had he been an angel, they would not have thought of imitating his deeds nor to follow him, for, from the start they would have realized that his nature is different from their own. In that event, it would have been obvious that his behavior should be different from theirs, which would create no desire for imitation, nor any wish to conduct themselves in the light shown by him ...

“One of naïve objections raised by the unbelievers was that the Mes-

senger went about in the markets, seeking his livelihood... But Allah did not wish that he should possess a treasure or an orchard. He wished that he should be a complete example for them, who bore the responsibilities of messengership, while, at the same time struggled to earn his livelihood, as anyone of his followers did. So, that, no one of his followers who tired himself in earning his sustenance should say, ‘So far as the worldly needs are concerned, the Prophet had been taken care of. He never struggled to earn and hence was able to free himself for his beliefs, his message and his responsibilities thereof. He never faced any of the hardships (as I do).’ But, in actual fact, here was the Prophet, striving, in order to earn while he also struggled for his cause. So, the least that one of his followers can do today is to bear his own meager share of the Prophet’s burden. And he has his example before him. Yes, the Prophet did receive wealth later, toward the end of his life. That was in order that he should be an example of the other extreme also, and so that his example should remain complete. He did not allow the wealth that arrived to prevent him from any of his duties. But rather, he became like a wind unleashed in his generosity

[8] Or, a treasure poured down on him,¹⁵ or he should have had an orchard he could eat therefrom.¹⁶ The transgressors also said, 'You follow not but a man bewitched.'

أَوْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ يَأْكُلُ
مِنْهَا وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا
رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٨﴾

and came out the better when tested with wealth. So that, no one could say after him, 'The Messenger lived in poverty, wealth never distracted him in any way.' For, there he was, wealth coming to him in abundance, but he carried on as usual with his call, behaving those days as if he was poverty stricken."

15. That's what Fir`awn had said about Musa (43: 53),

{ فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ
الْمَلَائِكَةُ مُقَرَّرِينَ } [الزخرف: ٥٣]

"Then why not has he been given golden bangles or came with him angels (in) close company?" (Ibn Kathir).

16. Qurtubi, Alusi and Shawkani repeat the story narrated by Ibn Is-haq involving `Utbah b. Rabi`ah, Abu Sufyan, Nadr b. al-Harith, Abu al-Bakhtari and several others seeking a compromise solution with the Prophet, during which they made demands of the nature mentioned in this verse. See *Surah al-Isra'* note 144.

One can notice how the pagans came down in their demands. First they said "What's with this Messenger that he eats food and walks about in the markets?" That is, why is he not an angel without the need to eat and drink? Then they scaled down their demand to say that if he could not have been an angel, then, at least there should have been an angel in his company. They said (verse 7), "Why an angel has not been sent down to him to be with him as a warner?" Then they dropped the demand that an angel should accompany him. Yet, some sort of special treatment was, according to them, in order. Therefore they suggested, "A treasure (should have been) poured down on him." Finally, they scaled down to demanding that he could be a human like them in every sense except that at least economically he should be well off. So they demanded that "he should have had an orchard he could eat therefrom" (Zamakhshari).

[9] Behold how they strike similitudes for you! Thus they went astray and will not be able (to find) a way.¹⁷

انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا
فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩﴾

[10] Blessed is He who, if He wished, could give you better than all that: gardens underneath which rivers flow, and make for you palaces.

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي إِنْ شَاءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا
مِّنْ ذَلِكَ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
وَيَجْعَلُ لَكَ فُصُورًا ﴿١٠﴾

[11] But they have denied the Hour and We have prepared for him who denied the Hour a blazing Fire.¹⁸

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالسَّاعَةِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ
بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا ﴿١١﴾

17. This because the true path is one single path. Whoever lost it, will never find another, no matter in what direction he heads thereafter (Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi sums up: “These objections to the claim of Prophethood are not described here in order to refute them. Rather, they are mentioned simply to show the extent of the opponents’ blindness which arose from their spite and prejudice. Indeed, the charges so made against the Prophet were not even worth refuting. Rather, it was sufficient to mention them in order to demonstrate that they had no logical argument to support their contentions, and that they were opposing a sound and reasonable message with nothing more than vile and stupid statements. When they were told that polytheism, on

which their faith and culture rested, was erroneous and devoid of every bias, they made no effort to marshal any rational arguments in support of their beliefs. Instead, they sought to decry the Prophet (peace be on him) by saying that he was a man bewitched. When the Messenger of God (peace be on him) demonstrated that monotheism was the operating principle of the whole universe and when he pointed to the manifest proofs which supported his truth, they merely rebuffed his claim by saying that he was no more than a magician.”

18. Sa`id b. Jubayr is reported to have said that Sa`er of the text, rendered here as Blazing Fire, is thought to be a valley in Hellfire filled with pus (Ibn Kathir).

[12] When it sees them from a distant place, they will hear its raging and roaring.¹⁹

إِذَا رَأَتْهُمْ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ سَمِعُوا لَهَا
تَغَيُّظًا وَزَفِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

[13] And when they are flung into a constricted part of it, bound in chains, they will plead for destruction then and there.²⁰

وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُقَرَّنِينَ دَعَوْا
هُنَالِكَ تَبَوُّرًا ﴿١٣﴾

[14] (They will be told) 'Do not plead this day for a single destruction, but rather plead for several destructions.'

لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ تَبَوُّرًا وَاحِدًا وَاذْعُوا تَبَوُّرًا
كَثِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

[15] Say, 'Is that better or the Gardens of Eternity that is promised to the godfearing? That will be their reward and resort.

قُلْ أَدْلِكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي
وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَمَصِيرًا
﴿١٥﴾

19. Ibn `Abbas has said that a man will be dragged to the Fire, but it will withdraw some of it, folding upon others. The All-Merciful will ask her, "What's the matter with you?" It will say, "He seeks refuge from me." He will say, "Release My slave." And, another man will be dragged to the Fire. He will say, "My Lord! This is not what I had hoped from You." He will ask, "And what did you hope from Me?" He will say, "That Your mercy should overwhelm me." He will say, "Release My slave." And a man will be dragged to the Fire. It will rush towards him like a mule at barley and will let out a roar that will not leave anyone but in fear" (Ibn Jarir). This is a trustworthy report (Ibn Kathir).

20. Anas b. Malik reports that the Prophet said,

أَوَّلُ مَنْ يُكْسَى حُلَّةً مِنَ النَّارِ إِبْلِيسُ فَيَضَعُهَا عَلَى
حَاجِبَيْهِ وَيَسْحُبُهَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ وَذُرِّيَّتُهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَهُوَ
يُنَادِي وَابْتِوَاهُ وَيُنَادُونَ يَا تَبَوُّرَهُمْ قَالَ عَبْدُ الصَّمَدِ
قَالَهُمَا مَرَّتَيْنِ حَتَّى يَبْقُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَيَقُولُ يَا تَبَوُّرَاهُ
وَيَقُولُونَ يَا تَبَوُّرَهُمْ فَيَقَالُ لَهُمْ { لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ تَبَوُّرًا
وَاحِدًا وَاذْعُوا تَبَوُّرًا كَثِيرًا } {

"The first to be cloaked with a cloak of Fire will be Iblis. He will place it over his eyebrows and drag it along at his rear. His progeny will be behind him and he will be saying, 'O destruction,' and they will be called out, 'O their destruction.' Until, they will be held at the Fire and he will be saying, 'O destruction,' and they will be called out, 'O their destruction.' At that point it will be said, 'Do not plead this day for a single destruction, but rather for

[16] *There they will have whatever they desire, dwelling forever: a promise that had been asked for.*²¹

لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٦﴾

[17] *And the day He shall muster them and what they worship, apart from Allah²² and say, 'Was it you who misled these My servants, or is it they who lost the way?'*

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قِيْقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ﴿١٧﴾

several destructions” (Ibn Jarir, Razi).

The above report is in Ahmed (Ibn Kathir). The report is also in Bazzar, `Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh and Bayhaqi which Suyuti declared trustworthy although the credibility of one of the narrators has been questioned (Shawkani). Hence Albani declared it weak (S. Ibrahim).

Haythamiyy on the other hand expressed his opinion that all the narrators in the chain are trustworthy except one, but even he has been trusted by some scholars (Au.).

21. That is, it is a promise (of reward) that had been pleaded and prayed for in the past. Another possible meaning is “a promise binding upon your Lord” (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir).

In view of the popularly accepted opinion that Allah is not “bound” to reward His slaves for good behavior, the second possible meaning expressed above has a question mark before it. But Alusi explains that the reward in this case, has already been promised and, therefore, it becomes “a promise binding upon your Lord.”

22. Apart from others, among those that would be brought forth as worshipped, would be `Isa, some angels, and a few others of Allah’s slaves (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Kalbi has said that idols will also be given life, which could be the reason, added Zamakhshari, that the article maa (translated as “what” here) has been employed in place of mun (which is for the living) because idols will be greater in number.

[18] They will say, 'Glory to You. It did not behoove us that we should take protectors other than You.²³ But rather, You bestowed on them and their fathers (temporary enjoyment) until they forgot the Admonition, and became a ruined people.'

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ
تَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنْ
مَتَّعْتَهُمْ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ وَكَانُوا
قَوْمًا بُورًا ﴿١٨﴾

[19] (Allah will say) 'Now they have denounced you concerning what you said.'²⁴ So you can neither avert (it now) nor (find any) help.' And whosoever of you commits injustice,²⁵ We shall make him taste a great chastisement.

فَمَقَّدْ كَذَّبُوكُمْ بِمَا تَقُولُونَ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيعُونَ
صِرَافًا وَلَا نَصْرًا وَمَنْ يظْلِمْ مِنْكُمْ نَذِقْهُ
عَذَابًا كَبِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And We sent not any Messengers before you but they ate food and moved about in the markets.²⁶ And We have made some of you a (source of) trial for others. Will you then remain patient?²⁷ And your Lord is ever All-seeing.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِتْمَمَ
لِيَأْكُلُوا الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوا فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ
وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَنْتُمْ
وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

23. That is, how could we ask others to take us as protectors other than Allah, when we did not take protectors for ourselves other than Him? (Zamakhshari).

24. That is, 'Isa, angels, and all those who were worshipped besides Allah, will disown that their devotees ever worshipped them at their behest. But rather, those worshippers had in fact followed the Devil (Ibn Jarir).

25. Ibn Jurayj and Hasan have said that it is *shirk* (Association) that is meant by the *zulm* of the text (Ibn Jarir).

26. Qurtubi first points out that there is absolutely nothing wrong in going about in the markets if there is a need. Yet, it is not preferable to spend much time there or frequent them. Muslim has a *hadith* which says,

أَحَبُّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدُهَا وَأَبْغَضُ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى
اللَّهِ أَسْوَاقُهَا

“The most approved of places in the sight of Allah are mosques while the most despicable of them are market places.”

Salman al-Farsi is recorded in Bazzar as reporting the Prophet,

لَا تَكُونَنَّ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ السُّوقَ وَلَا آخِرَ مَنْ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّهَا مَعْرَكَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ وَبِهَا يَنْصَبُ رَأْيَتُهُ - (صحيح مسلم ٧ / ١٤٤)

“Do not be – if you can – the first to enter the market, nor the last to leave it, for it’s the battle-field of *Shaytan*. It is the place where he pitches his flag.”

According to another narration he said,

لَا تَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ السُّوقَ، وَلَا آخِرَ مَنْ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا، فَفِيهَا بَاضَ الشَّيْطَانُ وَفَرَّخَ

“Do not be the first to enter the marketplace nor the last to leave it. It is there that *Shaytan* laid eggs and brought out his chicks.”

Haythamiyy said: The authenticity of this report depends the identity of one of the narrators, if it was Qasim b. Yezid, he was reliable, but if he was Yezid b. Sufyan, he was weak (Au.).

27. Muslim has a *hadith* according to which Allah said to the Prophet,

إِنِّي مُبْتَلِيكَ، وَمُبْتَلِي بِكَ

“I shall test you and test (others) through you.”

And, it is reported that the Prophet said,

لو شئت لأجرى الله معي جبال الذهب والفضة

“Had I wished, Allah would have sent me mountains of gold and silver.”

The above report is in Bayhaqi’s *Shu`ab al-Iman*, but whose authenticity could not be established (Au.).

Reports in *Sahih* works also tell us that the Prophet was given the choice between being a Prophet-king or Messenger-slave and he chose to be a Messenger-slave (Ibn Kathir).

One of the ways in which the Prophet was tried was through poverty. (That was his personal trial. It had, however, other aspects). Had he been rich, it would have been said that they followed him because of his wealth. Similarly, the early poor converts became a source of trial for the rich of the Quraysh (Kashshaf, Alusi and others).

[21] And said those who have no hope of encounter with Us,²⁸ 'Why have the angels not been sent down to us or why do we (not) see our Lord?' Indeed, they have an arrogant conceit of themselves, and behaved insolently in a great insolent manner.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا
أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ نَرَى رَبَّنَا لَقَدِ
اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْا عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا
﴿٢١﴾

[22] The day they see the angels, no joy there will be to the criminals that day, and they will say, 'A barrier, forbidden altogether.'²⁹

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَى يَوْمَئِذٍ
لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حَجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا
﴿٢٢﴾

[23] And We shall turn to that which they did of deeds and shall render them floating dust scattered about.³⁰

وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَى مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ
هَبَاءً مَّنْثُورًا ﴿٢٣﴾

28. Meeting Allah does not necessarily mean, writes Razi, a face to face meeting with Him. After all, it is said about a blind man that he met the Governor, which does not mean he saw him. In any case, writes Qurtubi, the allusion is to "those who do not believe in the Hereafter, Resurrection, Heaven and Hell."

29. In classical Arabic the words, "*hijran mahjuran*" meant, "unlawful and forbidden." For example, adds Zamakhshari, when someone asked another, "Would you do something like this?" He would reply, "*hijr*," (meaning, "God forbid": Au.). Thus, the words could be attributed to the unbelievers also.

However, according to Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Hasan, Dahhak, Qatadah, `Atiyah and `Ataa Khurasani, these

are the words of angels who will mean to say that entry into Paradise is entirely forbidden unto anyone who did not say the kalimah (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

30. The "*habaa*" of the text is for those ordinarily invisible particles of dust that become visible in a dark room with the penetration of a ray of light. That is how `Ikrimah, Mujahid and Hasan explained it; while others have said that the allusion is to dust. A third opinion is that "*habaa*" is spilled water (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Another meaning offered by Ibn `Abbas is, "sparks of fire" (Alusi).

We should be warned however, adds Thanwi, not to depend too much on our deeds, which might look good, but lacking the true spirit hardly

[24] Companions of Paradise that day will be of better resort and (shall have) best places of repose.³¹

أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا
وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا ﴿٢٤﴾

worth anything. The Prophet has spoken of some people of this *Ummah* whose deeds will be turned *habaa'* on the Day of Judgment. Thanwi then quotes a *hadith* from Abu Nu'aym. However, its authenticity could not be traced.

Nonetheless, there is one in similar words in Ibn Majah which is declared *Sahih* in *Zawaa'id*, as noted in *Kanz*. It says,

لَأَعْلَمَنَّ أَقْوَامًا مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَأْتُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِحَسَنَاتٍ
أَمْثَالِ جِبَالِ تِهَامَةَ بِيضًا فَيَجْعَلُهَا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ هَبَاءً
مَنْثُورًا قَالَ ثَوْبَانُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صِفْهُمْ لَنَا جَلِيبُهُمْ
لَنَا أَنْ لَا نَكُونَ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَا نَعْلَمُ قَالَ أَمَا إِيْتَهُمْ
إِخْوَانُكُمْ وَمِنْ جِلْدَتِكُمْ وَيَأْخُذُونَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ كَمَا
تَأْخُذُونَ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ أَقْوَامٌ إِذَا خَلَوْا بِمَحَارِمِ اللَّهِ انْتَهَكُوهَا

“I know a people from among my followers who, on Judgment Day, will come with good deeds like white Tihama mountains. But Allah will turn them to *habaa'*. Thawban asked, “Messenger of Allah, describe them to us, disclose them to us so that we do not become of them because of our ignorance.” He replied, “Lo! They will be your brothers, of the

same skin and would take from the night as you take (your share, [that is, will pray “*tabajjud*”]) but a people who when they encountered Allah’s forbidden (things), they freely indulged in them.”

31. “*Mustaqarr*” is a place where a man spends most of his time, while “*maqeel*” where he retires to be with his wife. Altogether however, nine meanings are possible (Alusi). The textual “*maqeela*” has its root in “*Qaala*”, of which one of the meaning is to take siesta in the afternoon. Some have speculated – such as Ibn Mas’ud, `Ikrimah and Sa’eed b. Jubayr - that the reckoning for the believers will be all over by the midday, after which they will enter Paradise and go for a short nap (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

What is meant however, speculates Zamakhshari, is that they will engage themselves in some very pleasant activities, since, as we know, there will be no sleep in Paradise.

Alusi says that Ibn Mas’ud’s report has been declared authentic by Hakim.

[25] And, the day the heaven is rent asunder with clouds³² and angels will be sent down in a (magnificent) descent.

وَيَوْمَ تَشَقُّقُ السَّمَاءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] True sovereignty that day will belong to the Merciful. And it will be a day hard upon the unbelievers.

الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] The day the wrongdoer will bite his hands saying, 'O my (woe), would that I had taken a way along with the Messenger.

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] O my woe, would that I had not taken so and so for a close friend.³³

يَا وَيْلَتَى لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] Surely, he deviated me from the Admonition after it came to me.' And (surely) Satan was ever a deserter to man.

لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا ﴿٢٩﴾

32. The explanation commonly adopted by the commentators is that the heaven will split open to reveal some special material, of Noor, named clouds here, while another possible understanding according to Zamakhshari and others is that the heavens will split open along with the clouds.

33. The verse is open to application to anyone who befriends an evil man who prevents him from taking the path of the Prophet, although, perhaps the first to whom it was applicable was `Uqba b. Abi Mu`ayt. He took Ubayy b. Khalf as his friend to denounce the Prophet after declaring faith in him, to be thus led

into apostasy and blasphemy by an unkindly friend (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

A Muslim should be, cautions Shafi, careful about whom he befriends. The Prophet has said in a report preserved by Bukhari, "A man is on the religion of his friend. So, let him see whom he befriends." And, as Qurtubi cited, someone asked the Prophet, "Which of our acquaintances are the best?" He answered, "He who reminds you of Allah as you see him, who increases your knowledge when he talks, and whose deeds remind you of the Hereafter."

Haythami has said that the above *hadith* is in Abu Ya`la which has

[30] And the Messenger will say, 'My Lord! Truly, my people treated this Qur'ān as a (thing to be) discarded.'³⁴

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا
هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Thus have We appointed to every Prophet an enemy from among the criminals;³⁵ but enough is Your Lord as a Guide and a Helper.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ
الْمُجْرِمِينَ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًّا وَنَصِيرًا
﴿٣١﴾

Mubarak b. Hassan as one of the narrators, who has been trusted by some, while the other narrators are those of the *Sahih* works.

Shafi` also quotes a *hadith* in Ahmed, Tirmidhi and Abu Da'ud which says, "Accept not the company but that of a believer and let not your food be partaken but by a pious person." (This *hadith* does not mean that the impious should not be invited to food, but rather, as scholars have explained, it means one shouldn't get too close to them to be eating and drinking with them (Au.).

Qurtubi also writes: (The Prophet has instructed us about having the right type of friends). He said according to a narration preserved by Muslim, "The example of a good companion and an evil companion is like the carrier of musk and the blower in the bagpipe (the ironsmith). As for the carrier of musk, either he will gift you some or one might buy some from him. Or, in the least, you

will find fragrance with him. As for the blower into the bagpipe, either he will burn your clothes or you will get from him an evil smell." Malik b. Dinar has said, "That you haul stones in the company of the pious is better than that you should eat victuals in the company of the impious."

34. Another possible rendering for "mahjoor" is "abandoned" while another is "a plaything" (Au.).

Ibn Kathir comments: Not to believe in the Qur'ān is to abandon it. Not to ponder over its verses is to abandon it. Not to put its teachings and instructions to practice is to abandon it. And, to spend time in poetry, music or other pastimes, is to abandon it.

35. That is, in every age, every Prophet has had his share of enemies to deal with (Au.).

Asad writes: "Also refer 6: 112 which refers in very similar terms to the evil forces (*shayateen*) against which every

[32] Also said those who had disbelieved, 'Why has the Qur'ān not been sent down on him as one whole?'³⁶ That is how, in order to strengthen your heart therewith;³⁷ and We have rehearsed it in gradual rehearsal.³⁸

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ
جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ
وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] And no similitude will they bring to you, but We bring you the truth and the best explanation.

وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ
وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

prophet has had to contend with. The 'glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind' spoken of in that verse are exemplified in the present passage, prophetically, by the deceptive argument that the Qur'ān, having been enunciated fourteen centuries ago, must now be considered 'obsolete.'"

36. Asad comments: "Lit., 'in one piece,' or 'as one statement' – implying, in the view of the opponents of Islam, that the gradual, step-by-step revelation of the Qur'ān points to its having been 'composed' by Muhammad to suit his changing personal and political requirements."

37. Yusuf Ali writes: "Three reasons are given for the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān. (1) 'To strengthen thy heart': the tremendous task of winning the Arab nation, and through them the whole world, required superhuman patience, constancy and firmness,' and these qualities were strengthened by the gradual promul-

gation of solutions for each difficulty as it arose. (2) 'Slow, well-arranged stages': though the stages were gradual, as the occasion demanded from time to time, in the course of twenty-three years, the whole emerged, when completed, as a well-arranged scheme of spiritual instruction, as we have seen in following the arrangement of the *Suras*. (3) Questions put and answers given."

Majid quotes: "... for the Prophet himself these revelations coming as they did provided as Prophet's sustenance the spiritual food that strengthened his heart and supplied the necessary stimulus throughout a long and arduous mission .. At the most trying movements in his prophetic career it comforted and consoled him, and at no time did it take a surer tone in predicting ultimate triumph than when to all outward appearances the Prophet's condition was hopeless (MA)."

[34] Those who will be mustered to Jahannum upon their faces³⁹ - it is they who are worst in position and most misguided in path.

الَّذِينَ يُحْشَرُونَ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ
أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Indeed, We gave Musa the Book and appointed with him his brother Harun as an assistant.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهُ
أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ وَزِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] Then We said, 'You two go to the people who have laid the lies against Our signs.' Then We destroyed them (in) utter destruction.

فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَا إِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بآيَاتِنَا
فَدَمَّرْنَا لَهُم تَدْمِيرًا ﴿٣٦﴾

38. That is, “We have sent it down gradually, little by little” (Qurtubi).

Another interpretation, that of Ibn Zayd, is, “We have explained (the revelation) adequately” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Asad has another connotation in mind: “I.e., free of all inner contradictions.. The concise phrase rattalnaahu tarteela comprises the parallel concepts of ‘putting the component parts [of a thing] together and arranging them well,’ as well as ‘endowing it with inner consistency’. Inasmuch as full consistency and freedom from contradiction in a message spread over twenty-three years of a life as full of movement and drama as that of the Prophet does give a clear indication of its God-inspired quality, it is bound to strengthen the faith of every thinking believer; and there lies, according to the Qur’an itself, the reason for its slow, gradual rev-

elation. (When applied to the reciting of the Qur’an – as in 73: 4 – the term tarteel refers to the measured diction and the thoughtful manner in which it ought to be enunciated).”

39. Anas b. Malik reports that a man went up to the Prophet and asked, “How will they be mustered on their faces?” He answered, “He who makes them walk on their feet has the power to make them walk on their faces.” And Abu Hurayrah said that there will be three kinds of people on the Judgment Day: (i) those riding beasts, (ii) those on their feet, and (iii) those on their faces (Ibn Jarir, Razi). The *hadith* quoted is in *Sahihayn* and other books (H. Ibrahim).

The *Sufiya* have said, adds Razi, that those whose hearts were stuck in this world, (stuck in the mud: Au.), will be befittingly resurrected with their faces stuck in the mud.

[37] And the people of Nuh - when they cried lies to the Messengers⁴⁰ - We drowned them, and made them a sign for the people. And We have prepared for the unbelievers a painful chastisement.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَعْرَفْنَاهُمْ
وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ
عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] And `Aad, Thamud, the people of the Russ,⁴¹ and many generations in between.⁴²

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ وَأَصْحَابَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُونًا بَيْنَ
ذَلِكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٨﴾

40. How are we to understand the words, “they cried lies to their Messengers” (in plural) when we know that Nuh was the only Messenger sent to his people? The answer is that perhaps they denied Messengers sent to peoples earlier to Nuh, or, that they denied the need for Messengers altogether, as the Brahmins do (Zamakhshari, Razi).

41. For lack of details in the Qur’ān and *hadith*, there are various opinions over who the Companions of the Russ were. Qatadah’s opinion was that it was a town in Yamamah called Falj. `Ikrimah identified them with Companions of Yaaseen in Falj (in Yamamah). Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid simply said that Russ was a well; and the allusion is to Shu`ayb’s people who were largely shepherds (Razi). Doughty wrote in Travels in Arabia Deserta having seen a russ in Qaseem region in Waadiyy Rummah: “Where are seen wide ruins and foundations” (Majid).

Linguistically, russ is for any hole dug in the ground, such as a grave or a well. Hence Ibn Jarir believes they must be identified with the *As-haab al-Ukhlood* (Companions of the Trenches). Nonetheless, Ibn Is-haq has a narration from Ka`b al-Qurazi, who attributed his words to the Prophet, (but whose authenticity could not be checked: Au.). The Prophet said, “The first to enter Paradise will be a black slave. That is because Allah sent a Prophet to a town. But none believed but a black man. The townspeople dug a well, threw the Prophet in and sealed it with a stone slab. This (black) man used to carry wood on his back, sell it, buy food and drink and then, sliding the slab by Allah’s help, he would let the victuals down to him. It went on until one day he slept off before he could go to the woods. Allah sent on him seven years of sleep, after which he turned to another side, He sent another seven years of sleep on

[39] For each We struck similitude for him,⁴³ and each We annihilated in utter annihilation.

وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْأَمْثَالَ وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيرًا ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] And they have already come upon the town which was showered upon with an evil rain.⁴⁴ Have they not seen it then?⁴⁵ But they hoped not for resurrection.

وَلَقَدْ أَتَوْا عَلَى الْفُرْيَةِ الَّتِي أَمْطَرْنَا مَطَرًا السَّوَاءَ أَفَلَمْ يَكُونُوا يَرْتَوْنَهَا بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ نُشُورًا ﴿٤٠﴾

him. When he finally woke up, he thought he had slept off a few hours. He proceeded to gather the wood, sold it, and as usual went up to the well with the food. But he didn't find him, for, in the meantime, his people were sorry for what they had done to him, and had brought him out. The Prophet (who was brought out) kept inquiring about the black slave, but nobody knew anything about him, until he (that Prophet) died (Ibn Jarir).

The above report seems to be pretty weak (Ibn Kathir).

Further, Allah tells us that the people mentioned here were destroyed, whereas the above report says that they came to believe in their Prophet. If the above report is true then perhaps the Qur'anic verse does not allude to them, or, maybe, they were destroyed thereafter, for some other reason (Qurtubi).

42. Although one opinion says that qarn is a period – some saying 120

years, others, 100, and yet others 80, etc. – the Prophet at least used the term in the sense of generation. He said, “The best generation is mine (qarni), then those who come after them and then those who come after them” (Ibn Kathir).

Hakim has a report in his Al-Kuna coming from Ibn `Abbas who said, “Whenever the Prophet counted, he went as far as Ma'd b. `Adnan, at whom he would stop and say, ‘Genealogists lied (when they counted beyond this).’ Then he would recite, ‘and many generations between that’” (Shawkani).

43. In explanation of the singular pronoun, Qatadah said, “That is, unto each one Allah sent the warning to eliminate his excuse, and then destroyed him because of consistent denial” (Ibn Jarir).

44. That is, the people of Loot.

45. The allusion is to the Makkan trade caravans passing by the destroyed towns of the people of Loot.

[41] *And when they see you, they take you not but in jest: 'Is this the one whom Allah has raised as a Messenger?'*

وَإِذَا رَأَوْكَ إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا أَهَذَا
الَّذِي بَعَثَ اللَّهُ رَسُولًا ﴿٤١﴾

[42] *'He would have indeed wellnigh led us away from our deities, had we not stayed firm with them.'* But presently they shall know – when they see the chastisement – (as to) who was more astray in respect of the path.

إِن كَادَ لَيُضِلَّنَا عَنْ آهِنَاتِنَا لَوْلَا أَن صَبَرْنَا
عَلَيْهَا وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ حِينَ يَرَوْنَ
الْعَذَابَ مَنْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] *Have you seen him who took his own self as his god?⁴⁶ Will you then be a guardian over him?*

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ
عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلاً ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] *Or, do you think most of them hear or contemplate? They are but as cattle, nay, they are more lost of the way.*

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ
يَعْقِلُونَ إِن هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ
أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] *Have you not regarded your Lord,⁴⁷ how He stretches the shadow?⁴⁸ If He willed, He could have made it stand still; but then, We have made the sun its guide.⁴⁹*

أَمْ تَرَى إِلَى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ وَلَوْ شَاءَ
لَجَعَلَهُ سَاكِنًا ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ
دَلِيلًا ﴿٤٥﴾

46. Whoever follows his desires in religious matters, blindly going after everything that he receives (from others), seeking neither evidence nor proof, is the one who worships his (lower) self (Zamakhshari).

Yusuf Ali adds: “The man who worships his own passions or impulses or desires is the most hopeless to teach or lead or guide. If it were anything else the matter with him, the Prophet could argue with him. But Reason cannot prevail over blind passion. It is vain to hope that such a man could

be led, until his mad desires are kindled. No one could undertake any responsibility for him, for he obeys no laws and follows no advice. He is worse than brute beasts, which may not understand, but at least follow the wholesome instincts implanted in them by Allah. The lawless man has killed his instincts and is unwilling to submit to guidance.”

47. The translation is literal, otherwise, most scholars have understood the construction as meaning, “Have you not regarded the power of your

Lord?..” The form employed suggests that all observations of nature and its wonders should ultimately lead to the Lord of the world, His powers and His complete control (Au.).

Sayyid Qutub prefaces this passage with a few lines that could be profited from: “Time and again, the Qur’ān seeks the attention of the minds and hearts to the scenes of nature spread above us, and relates them with the minds and hearts. It awakens the senses in order to be ready to receive the effects in a renewed conscientious manner – receiving its lights and echoes – in order to interact and respond. It takes a journey into the universe so as to pick up during the excursion, signs that are spread all over, abundantly, in every corner, written over every of its page. The soul sees the Hand of the Maker behind them; that of the Planner and the Deliberator. As the mind saunters about, it can feel this Hand in everything over which the eyes fall, everything that it can sense and feel, everything that the ears pick up, and then, uses the information as guidelines to reflect deeper and reach his Lord.

“When a man learns to live in this world with his eyes and hearts open, when he is awake to his senses and spirit, is well connected with ideas and sentiments, then his life rises up against the allurements of this little earth. His perceptions of life also rise up along with his spirit. Every moment adds to his feeling that the horizons of the universe are far wider than the surface of the earth, that all that he sees is the product of a single Will, and is bound to a single set of laws ..(leading up inexorably to a single Lord).”

48. The allusion, according to Ibn ‘Abbas, Sa’id b. Jubayr, Dahhak and others, is to the (lengthening and shortening of the) shadow from dawn to the rise of the sun (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim and others (Shawkani).

That is, the darkness extends itself from the dawn until the rise of the sun (Au.).

49. An alternative translation could be, as done by Majid and others, “And then We have made the sun for it an indication.”

[46] Then We draw it in toward Us⁵⁰ - an easy drawing.⁵¹

ثُمَّ قَبَضْنَاهُ إِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٤٦﴾

50. Asad explains the change in pronoun: “As in so many other instances in the Qur’ān, the abrupt change from the third-person pronoun ‘He’ to ‘We’ is meant to illustrate the fact that God is undefinable, and that it is only the inadequacy of human speech – and, hence, of the human mind – that makes it necessary to refer to the Supreme Being by pronouns which in reality are applicable only to finite, created ‘persons.’”

51. That is, every time a part of it is withdrawn, some amount of darkness is placed in its wake, so that it does not disappear altogether, at once (Qurtubi).

The pronoun in “*qabadnaahu*” (the “it” of “We draw it”) has been explained by the ancient scholars as referring to the shadow. In other words, “Then We draw in the shadow toward Us..” And the meaning is, “We make the shadow disappear unnoticed and quickly,” where “quickly” is the explanation of “*khafiyyah*” offered by Ibn `Abbas (Ibn Jarir).

Yusuf Ali stretches the verse to cover the whole day: “As the sun rises higher and higher, the shadows contract.

In regions where the sun gets actually to the zenith at noon, there is no shadow left at that time. Where does it go to? It was but a shadow cast by a substance and it gets absorbed by the substance which produced it.” Further, “The shadows are constantly in a state of flux; so are all things in Creation, all things we see or covet in this life. Allah, if He wills, can give some of them greater fixity or comparative stability.”

Mawdudi thinks on the same lines. He explains the in-drawing toward Allah in the following words, “.. for, whatever vanishes or becomes extinct returns to God. From Him everything issues and to Him everything ultimately returns.”

It might be interesting to note that modern science tells us that everything has a shadow of itself, even under a shade. A man for example, has a shadow of himself falling on the earth even when he is standing under a shade. Thermal photography can photograph it even 72 hours after he has left the place. Could this be another implication of the words “stretches the shadow?” - Au.

[47] He it is who made for you the night a covering, the sleep a (means of) rest,⁵² and made the day a (time) to spread around.⁵³

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِيَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ
سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] And He it is who sends the winds bearing glad tidings before His mercy.⁵⁴ And We send down from the sky pure water.⁵⁵

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ
رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا
﴿٤٨﴾

[49] So that We might revive thereby a dead land, and water thereby great many of those We created of livestock and men.

لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيْتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا
أَنْعَامًا وَأَنَاسِيًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٤٩﴾

Imām Razi and Qurtubi add that the allusion by “in-drawing” could as well be to the darkening of the sun at the approach of the Hour when it will be gradually indrawn, (meaning, shrunk in size), to ultimately go out of existence.

With the above meaning before us, it might be useful to know that the scientific position is very near to this. Our sun, a medium sized star among the billions of stars in our galaxy, is calculated to be about 5 billion years old. At present it is burning its hydrogen. When its hydrogen is burnt out, it will begin to burn its helium. At that point in time, about 5 billion years from now, it will become a red giant of such size as to enclose the earth in its radius. Obviously, everything on earth will be reduced to ashes. After it has burnt out its helium, the sun will begin to contract, get reduced to a very small

size, a white dwarf in scientific jargon, and fade into oblivion. But of course, the Final Day scenario drawn by the Qur’ān is quite different from the death of the sun as predicted by modern science (Au.).

52. “*Sabt*” has several meanings such as, e.g., stretching. When a woman lets her tresses down, they say, “*sabatat al-mar’atu*.” Another meaning is to severe, hence sleep, which severs a man from activities. This is the connotation in the Jewish “*sabbat*” since they cease from all worldly activities. Khalil (the grammarian) said that “*sabt*” is used for heavy sleep (Qurtubi).

53. The word “*nushoor* (from *nashara*)” of the text could also mean, a time for people to spread around (looking for sustenance) - Ibn Kathir.

54. That is, the rains.

[50] And We have distributed it amongst them so that they might remember.⁵⁶ But most people are averse except to unbelief.⁵⁷

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ آيَاتِنَا لِيَذَكَّرُوا فَأَبَىٰ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٥٠﴾

55. “*Tahoor*” has a second connotation of “*Taahir*”, meaning, a purifying agent. Ahmed b. Yahya has said that *Tahoor* is something that is pure by itself and capable of purifying other things (Zamakhshari). And, according to Imām Abu Hanifah, it is the disappearance of one of the three cardinal qualities of water that renders it impure eliminating its purifying quality: change in its (i) taste, (ii) color and (iii) smell (Qurtubi).

56. The pronoun of “*sarrafnaahoo*” (We distribute it) alludes to the rain. Ibn Mas`ud and Ibn `Abbas have said that rainfall of any particular year are no different (in quantity) from those of another year. But Allah distributes them the way He wishes. Mujahid, Ibn Zayd and others expressed similar opinions (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

One wonders what was the source of Ibn `Abbas’ opinion about a fact discovered more than a thousand years after him (Au.).

But another possibility is that the pronoun in *sarrafnaahoo* is for this Message. That is, the Qur`an has been

well-rehearsed in a variety of ways so that people might be reminded and admonished, although most people prefer to disbelieve (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

57. What Allah meant when He said, “But most people are averse except to unbelief,” is, ‘(Although it is Allah who distributes the rains) people say, “it happened because of such and such star-effects”’ (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

Hence the *hadith* of Muslim which says that one morning, after the previous night had rained, the Prophet asked his Companions,

هل تدرّون ماذا قال ربكم ؟ قالوا الله ورسوله أعلم قال أَصْبَحَ مِنْ عِبَادِي مُؤْمِنٌ وَكَافِرٌ فَأَمَّا مَنْ قَالَ : مُطِرْنَا بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ مُؤْمِنٌ بِي وَكَافِرٌ بِالْكَوَاكِبِ . وَأَمَّا مَنْ قَالَ : مُطِرْنَا بِتَوْءِ كَذَا مُؤْمِنٌ أَوْ تَوْءِ كَذَا فَبِذَلِكَ كَافِرٌ بِي مُؤْمِنٌ بِالْكَوَاكِبِ

“Do you know what your Lord said?” They replied, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “Some of my slaves did their morning in faith, while others in disbelief. He who said, ‘It rained on us by the grace of Allah and His mercy,’ believed in

[51] Had We willed We could have raised into every town a warner.⁵⁸

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَذِيرًا ﴿٥١﴾

[52] So, obey not the unbelievers and strive against them therewith⁵⁹ – a great striving.⁶⁰

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] It is He who has let forth the two bodies of water: this one palatable and sweet, while the other salty⁶¹ and bitter. And He placed between the two a barrier, and a partition unbreachable.⁶²

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ قُرَاتٌ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَحِجْرًا مَحْجُورًا ﴿٥٣﴾

Me and denied the stars. While he who said, ‘It rained on us because of such and such a star,’ he then, is the disbeliever in Me and believer in the stars” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Hakim declared the report *Sahih* (Alusi).

Zamakhshari and Imām Razi add: Whoever attributed the falling of rains to stars or planets or to cosmic elements, in the absolute sense, committed kufr. However, it is not kufr to attribute to an external agent the immediate physical cause appointed by Allah.

58. That is, ‘just like We send down rain to every patch of the earth, We could also send a Warner to every town’ (Qurtubi).

59. That is, Ibn ‘Abbas and Ibn Zayd said, strive with the help of this Qur’an (Ibn Jarir).

60. The Prophet is being directed to put up a “great striving” because Allah did not send a Messenger to every town of his time. He was supposed to, therefore, contribute efforts, equivalent of the combined efforts of several Prophets to achieve the desired results in every town (Zamakhshari, Razi, slightly reworded).

61. Although the textual word is “*milh*” meaning salt, most have understood it as “*maalih*” or “*maleeh*.” The latter in fact happens to be a variant reading (Qurtubi). Alusi shows however that linguistically it is perfectly alright to say “*maa’un milh*” as it is also perfectly alright to say “*maa’un maalih*” (both meaning, salty water).

62. Mujahid’s opinion was that the letting forth of the two waters meant letting one of them flow into the other (Qurtubi), as it happens when river water joins with the sea (Au.).

According to the ancient scholars, the allusion is to the two bodies of water: of the rivers and of the seas. Allah has placed a barrier between them so that one does not spoil the other and both retain their qualities. The barrier between them is the land that prevents the seas from joining with the rivers. Mujahid however added that he was told by someone who had some naval experience that when Dijlah water (Euphrates) falls into the sea it doesn't mix up with the seawater but rather, a line separating the two remains visible. After reporting the above, Ibn Jarir expresses his own opinion that the land could not be considered as the barrier mentioned. But rather, the allusion is to the invisible barrier that is placed between them that prevents one from mixing with the other when the two waters meet (in the sea). This is because, Ibn Jarir adds, when the two waters are let forth, then, there is no barrier of dry land between them. Further, the *ayah* is speaking of the Power of Allah, (which is more apparent when the barrier is invisible between two adjacent bodies of waters).

Yusuf Ali considers both the meanings as possible whom Majid quotes, "Maraja: literally, let free or let loose cattle for grazing. Bahrain: two seas,

or two bodies of flowing water; for bahr is applied both to the salty sea and to rivers. In the world taken as a whole, there are two bodies of water, viz.,: (1) the great salt Oceans, and (2) the bodies of sweet water fed by rain, whether they are rivers, lakes or underground springs: their source in rain makes them one, and their drainage, whether above-ground or underground, eventually to the Ocean, also makes them one. They are free to mingle, and in a sense they do mingle, for there is a regular water-cycle .. and the rivers flow constantly to the sea, and tidal rivers get sea-water for several miles up their estuaries at high tide. Yet in spite of all this, the laws of gravitation are like a barrier or partition set by Allah, by which the two bodies of water as a whole are always kept apart and distinct. In the case of rivers carrying large quantities of water to the sea, like the Mississippi or the Yangtse-Kiang, the river-water with its silt remains distinct from sea-water for a long distance out at sea. But the wonderful Sign is that the two bodies of water, though they pass through each other, remain distinct bodies, with their distinct functions."

He adds, "Incidentally, this verse points to a fact which has only re-

cently been discovered by science. This fact relates to the oceans of the world: they meet and yet each remains separate for Allah has placed 'a barrier, a partition' between them." [However, this does not adequately explain the present verse which speaks of two bodies of water, one sweet, the other bitter. It could be used to explain another passage of the Qur'an (55: 19-22) which we shall attempt when we arrive at it by Allah's will (Au.)].

Mawdudi comments: "This happens whenever a large river flows into the sea. There are springs of sweet water at several locations in different seas where the sweet water remains separate from the salty water of the sea. Sayyidi `Ali Ra'is, a Turkish Admiral of the sixteenth century, mentions in his work, *Mir'aat al-Mamalik*, one such place in the Persian Gulf. He writes that he found springs of sweet water under the salty waters of the sea and drew drinking water from them for his fellow sailors. In more recent times, when the Arabian American Oil company began drilling oil wells in Saudi Arabia, they used the water of the same springs of the Persian Gulf as drinking water until the wells in the vicinity of Dhahran were dug. Also, near Bah-

rain, there are springs of sweet water under the sea from which people have drawn upon for ages.

"This verse identifies the wondrous manifestation of God's omnipotence as evidence of His Unicity. But there is an additional, albeit more subtle, meaning implicit in the verse too. No matter how bitter and salty the ocean of human society may become, God can always produce a righteous group of people in the same manner that He can produce a spring of sweet water in the depths of a salty ocean."

Shabbir remarks, "It is reported that from Arakaan to Chaatgaam (in Bangladesh) one can see two separate and distinct bodies of water: one clear (that of the river) while the other dark (that of the sea). This is visible for miles and miles. One of them remains sweet, while the other bitter. The interesting thing is that while the black body of water shows tempestuous characteristics, the clear water remains calm. "Here at (Gujarat) where I am staying," adds he, "it is people's daily experience to watch sea water rush into the land riding over the river water, for quite some distance, at the time of heavy tides. However, even when the river mouth is filled with bitter sea water, at bot-

[54] And it is He who created man out of water⁶³ and then made him kindred of blood and marriage.⁶⁴ And your Lord was ever Able.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ
نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿٥٤﴾

tom the water remains sweet. The two do not mix.”

Asad adds: “Some Muslim mystics see in this stress on the two kinds of water an allegory of the gulf – and, at the same time, interaction – between man’s spiritual perception, on the one hand, and his worldly needs and passions, on the other.”

63. “That is, (out of the) seminal fluid” (Majid). But the other meaning, viz., of creation out of water is also possible (Au.).

64. There are seven kindred through direct lineage and five through marriage both of which are mentioned in the Qur’anic verse 23 of *Surah al-Nisa’* which says:

{حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ
وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ
وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمْ اللَّائِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ
وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ اللَّائِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِنْ
نِسَائِكُمُ اللَّائِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ
بِهِنَّ فَلَا حُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَخَالَاتُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا} [النساء: ٢٣]

“Forbidden unto you are your mothers, daughters, sisters, pater-

nal aunts, maternal aunts, brother’s daughters, sister’s daughters, foster mothers who gave you suck, foster sisters by the suck, your mothers in law, step daughters who are in your care - of those women with whom you have consummated the marriage, however, if you have not consummated the marriage, then there is no harm, wives of those of your sons who are of your loins, and that you should bring together (in wedlock) two sisters, save for what is of the past. Surely Allah is All-forgiving, All-merciful.” Thus, the seven kindred of lineage are: (1) mothers, (2) daughters, (3) sisters, (4) paternal aunts, (5) maternal aunts, (6) brother’s daughter, and (6) sister’s daughter.” As for the five kindred through marriage, they are: (1) foster mothers, (2) foster sisters, (3) mothers in law, (4) step daughters, and (5) daughters in-law (Ibn Jarir).

That said, there is no consensus of opinion over what constitutes kindred of marriage (sahr). When asked,

[55] But they worship apart from Allah what can neither benefit them nor harm them. And the unbeliever is ever a partisan against his Lord.⁶⁵

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ
وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا
﴿٥٥﴾

[56] And We have sent you not (O Muhammad) but as a bearer of glad tiding and a warner.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] Say, 'I ask of you no wage for this, save that whosoever will, might take unto his Lord a way.'⁶⁶

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِن أَجْرٍ إِلَّا مَن
شَاءَ أَن يَتَّخِذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

`Umar ibn al-Khattab said that parents in law and wives were the sahr; the report being in `Abd b. Humayd (Shawkani). `Ali (ra) for instance said that "nasab" kindred is that which disallows marriage, whereas "sahr" allows it. According to another opinion coming down from him as well as from Dahhak, "sahr" is that relationship that accrues from suckling (Alusi). In short, sahr is the relationship that develops with marriage, from the woman's side (Au).

65. Partisan in the sense that he is a helper to *Shaytan* against his Lord. This is how many of the *Salaf* understood it (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

66. In his own style and words Ibn Jarir expresses the following: The

Prophet does not seek wages for his efforts, he is in no need of it, being provided by Allah, yet, if someone wished to expend and thus take a way to Allah, he could do so by expending his wealth on charity among the needy. That would be taking a way to Allah.

Or, Imām Razi adds, If he wished he could spend in charity after embracing Islam.

In his translation Asad suggests another possible connotation, and quite a nice one for that: The man who wishes to take a way unto his Lord, could himself be a reward unto the Prophet.

[58] And place your trust in the Ever-Living who will not die,⁶⁷ and celebrate His Praise. And sufficient is He to be acquainted with the sins of His servants.⁶⁸

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ وَكَفَى بِهِ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] (He) who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods⁶⁹ and then attained Istawa' on the `Arsh:⁷⁰ Al-Rahman, so ask any well-informed about Him.⁷¹

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا ﴿٥٩﴾

67. "The epithet .. 'who dies not,' or 'Imperishable' may have been necessitated by the very widely prevalent custom of deicide or godslaughter. 'Deicide, once supposed to find its only example in the crucifixion, has been, in fact, a wide-spread custom, which has left a deep impress on the religious thought of the race.' (ERE. IV. P. 523). The God of Islam, it required special emphasis, is the Immortal, the Imperishable, the Deathless" (Majid).

68. The fact that words, "And place your trust in the Ever-Living who will not die," are followed by "And sufficient is He to be acquainted with the sins of His servants" leads one to believe that to place trust in other than Allah is a kind of sin that the Lord is Aware of (Au.).

69. Zamakhshari and Imām Razi point out that Allah was quite capable of creating the universe in one

go. But creation in stages is more miraculous than a sudden creation which could have been attributed to an accident.

As to why six, the answer is, says Zamakhshari, there is no significance attached to them. It could have been any other number. There are nineteen keepers of Hell-fire, the bearers of `Arsh are eight, a week has seven days, there are five Prayers a day, and so on. Allah knows best why in each case He chose those numbers.

The textual word is "yawm" (day). But what day was it? Obviously not the day and night caused by the sun, for, as Zamakhshari has pointed out, the sun had yet to be created. Therefore, it could only have been "days" of another definition. Imām Razi speculates that perhaps Allah first created "time" and then created the heavens and the earth in six days. He is inclined to believe that those were

[60] And when they are told, 'Prostrate yourselves to Al-Rahman,' they ask, 'And what is Al-Rahman?'⁷² Should we prostrate ourselves to what you bid us?⁷³ And it increases in them aversion.⁷⁴

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَنِ قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَنُ أَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَأْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُورًا*
﴿٦٠﴾

six earth-days. But of course this is only a guess. For even now the days of the Hereafter are different. Verse 5 of *Al-Sajdah* tells us that the day of the other world is equal to one thousand years of ours. Another verse says (70: 4),

{ تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ
خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ } [المعارج: ٤]

"The angels and the Ruh rise up to him in a day whose measure is fifty thousand years."

See detailed discussion at verse 54, note 81 of *Surah Al-A'raf*.

70. Imām Razi points out that our knowledge that the 'Arsh was created before the heavens and the earth, should teach us caution in fixing the meaning of Allah's "*istawaa*" on it.

71. "I.e., (questions such as) 'what is His name? What are His attributes?'" (Majid), etc., maybe addressed to him who has knowledge of Him, such as the Prophet (Alusi and others). Or, in the words of Asad, "Ask God Himself: since He alone holds the keys to the myster-

ies of the universe, it is only by observing His creation and listening to His revealed messages that man can obtain a glimpse, however distant, of God's Own reality."

72. The pagans of the Prophet's time denied that Allah could be designated as *Al-Rahman*. They said that the only *Al-Rahman* they knew was that of Yamamah, (that is, Musaylimah the Liar).

At Hudaybiyyah, when the Prophet began to dictate the letter of armistice saying, "Write, 'In the name of Allah, *Al-Rahman*, Al-Raheem,'" they said, "Neither do we know *Al-Rahman*, nor Al-Raheem. But rather, write as you used to write, 'In your name O Allah'" (Ibn Kathir).

73. This question was asked by the Makkan pagans in the same vein as Fir'awn had done with Musa when he offered him faith in the Lord of the worlds. He asked (26: 23),

{ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ } [الشعراء: ٢٣]

"And what is (this) Lord of the worlds?" – Razi, Alusi.

[61] Blessed is He who set constellations⁷⁵ in the heaven and placed therein a lamp⁷⁶ and a shining moon.⁷⁷

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا
وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا ﴿٦١﴾

74. That is, the call to prostrate themselves to the All-Compassionate increases only aversion in them.

75. The translation reflects the understanding of Mujahid and Qatadah as in Ibn Jarir, as also of Sa'id b. Jubayr, Hasan and Abu Saleh as in Ibn Kathir. Alusi attributes it to Ibn 'Abbas and even names a dozen constellations that could have been alluded to. He points out further that although it cannot be denied that the heavenly bodies could influence the earth in some way or the other, (a point acknowledged by modern science), but they play no role in such events as births, conceptions, etc.

However, Ibn Jarir's own opinion is with 'Atiyah b. Sa'd, Ibn Rafe', Ibrahim and Abu Saleh, who said that the allusion is to a well-guarded fort in the heaven. They draw strength from another verse of the Qur'an which uses the word 'buruj.' It says (4: 78),

{أَيُّمًا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ
مُشِيدَةٍ} [النساء: ٧٨]

"Death will overtake you even if you were in fortified forts."

Ibn Jarir cites some poetical pieces to support this view.

This second opinion was also that of 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas and others, although the first opinion seems to be weightier, unless the stars of reference also happen to be the well-guarded palaces, in which case the two opinions can be reconciled (Ibn Kathir).

76. That is, the sun. Allah said elsewhere (71: 16),

{وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ سِرَاجًا} [نوح: ١٦]

"And made the sun a lamp."

Another reading of the textual siraj has been suruj – meaning, brightly shining stars (which would include the sun: Au.) - Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Alusi.

77. There has been at least one variant reading – that of Isma'i who was not trusted – who read the word qamar as qumur, meaning, moons (Qurtubi).

[62] He it is who made the night and the day follow each other - for him who desires to remember or desires (to show) gratitude.⁷⁸

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ
أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا ﴿٦٢﴾

78. The implication of the textual khilfah of the verse, as stated by Ibn `Abbas and Hasan is that Allah created the night and the day, following each other, so that, (as far as you are concerned) if you missed a good deed of the day, you might follow up and do it at night (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Accordingly, when a man went to `Umar ibn al-Khattab and said that he had missed the night Prayers, he remarked, “Seek in the day what you missed in the night,” and then he recited this verse, “It is He who made the night and the day follow each other for him who desires to remember or desires (to show) gratitude” (Ibn Jarir, Razi). Hence we have `Umar ibn al-Khattab himself narrating in Muslim that the Prophet said,

مَنْ نَامَ عَنْ حِزْبِهِ أَوْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ فَقَرَأَهُ فِيمَا بَيْنَ
صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَصَلَاةِ الظُّهْرِ كُتِبَ لَهُ كَأَنَّمَا قَرَأَهُ مِنَ
اللَّيْلِ

“Whoever missed doing any of his supererogatory of the night, but did it between *Fajr* and *Asr*, will have it written down as if he did it at night” (Qurtubi).

Qurtubi also quotes Ibn al-`Arabiyy (Abu Bakr) as saying, “I heard the great martyr Sheikh al-Akbar say, ‘Allah created man: living and conscious. This is His perfection (ka-maal). However, He imposed on him sleep, the need to attend to nature’s call, and attenuation in his powers (as he advances in age), for, perfection is for the Creator alone. So, if it is possible for a man to cut down on his food and sleep in order to free himself (for devotions), then, let him do so. It is a great loss that a man should live for sixty years, losing half of it sleeping at night, and then resting a sixth of the day, thus losing two thirds of his life, leaving him with just twenty years (of active life). It is certainly ignorance (jahaalah) and foolishness that a man should spend two thirds of his life seeking ephemeral pleasure (of sleep), and not spend his life in wakefulness for the delights of the everlasting world: with the Self-sufficient, the Keeper of His promise, who is neither short (of anything) nor is a wrong-doer.”

Another implication of the word khilfah is, (as Razi put it) mukhtali-

[63] And the Rahman's slaves (are) those who walk on the earth modestly,⁷⁹ and when the uncouth address them, they say, 'Peace.'⁸⁰

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

﴿٦٣﴾

fayn that is, one is bright while the other is dark (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas as documented by Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani), as also that of Mujahid, Qatadah and Kisaa'ee (Razi, Qurtubi).

79. Ibn Jarir writes that the textual "hawn" has been explained by Mujahid (through several routes) and `Ikrimah as tranquility (*sakinah*) and dignity (*waqaar*) while Ibn `Abbas and others thought it means submission, obedience, and humility. Yet others said it means they do not walk proud or arrogant but humble, and do not spread corruption. A few others thought that the second part of the verse explains the word hawn, viz., when they encounter the ignorant and the uncouth who wish to engage them in unseemly, coarse or indecent behavior, they avoid them gracefully or answer back courteously reminding them of things virtuous. Zayd b. Aslam was reported as saying, "I sought the explanation of this verse, 'those who walk on the earth modestly' but did not find it

with anyone. Then someone came to me in my sleep and I was told, 'It is those who do not intend any corruption in the land.'" (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi).

Perhaps the best explanation is provided by Alusi who quotes Abu `Abdullah as having said that to walk in the natural gait on which a man is born – without any artificiality - is hawn. He also quotes Ibn `Atiyyah's opinion that the verse in fact is not talking of the manner of walking, but rather, the manner of conducting oneself on the earth.

The structure of the verse lends strong support to this explanation. Further, a *hadith* which is found in several collections and which says that "fast pace walking drives out a believer's dignity," has been declared weak by Ibn Jawzi in his Jaami` (Au.).

The manner of the Prophet's walk has been reported as: 'Long strides, firm-footed, quick paced, as if going down a slope, dignified but neither lazily stepping forward, nor hurrying up.' On the other hand `Umar

ibn al-Khattab walked fast though in natural gait (Qurtubi and Alusi).

And when Hasan (al-Busri) was asked about this verse he answered, “Believers are a humble people. Their hearing, sight and limbs of the body are humbled to the extent that the common people think they must be sick. But in fact they are healthy of hearts, but the thing is, a kind of dread has entered into them – a fear that has not entered into the hearts of others. Their knowledge of the Hereafter prevents them from going after this world. So they say, ‘Praise be to Allah who dislodged from us the grief.’ By Allah, their grief is not the grief of this world, nor to them are those things of any great value by which they seek Paradise. It is fear of the Fire that makes them weep. Surely, he who did not take comfort in the comfort (provided) by Allah, will have his heart cut asunder by the grief over this world. And one who does not see Allah’s bestowals but in food and drinks, has, for sure, little knowledge. His punishment has drawn close” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir cautions that hawn certainly does not imply weakness or meekness or that they walk about as if they are sick, pretending humbleness. The *Salaf* have expressed disap-

proval of a pretentious walk. In fact, when ‘Umar b. al-Khattab saw a young man walking meekly, he asked him if he was sick. When he said no, he raised his whip against him and said, “Walk strong and upright.” A poet has well said, adds Qurtubi, about the well-measured walk of the pseudo scholars designed to impress the onlookers:

كلهم يمشى رويد * * كلهم يطلب صيد

meaning, “Everyone of them walks slow, everyone of them seeks a kill.”

Mawdudi adds: “So, what is it in one’s gait that is considered of such importance that it is the first attribute to be mentioned as a prerequisite for a true servant of God? A little reflection reveals that one’s gait is the first indicator of one’s whole character and personality. The gait of the cunning man is different from the gait of a tyrant, which is different from that of a civilized and upright person, which again is different from that of someone who is arrogant or criminal.”

80. That is, when an ill-mannered, uncouth person speaks to them roughly, they answer back politely, with restraint and control (Ibn Jarir from Hasan).

[64] And those who spend the night prostrate to their Lord, and standing.⁸¹ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتُؤْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا ﴿٦٤﴾

The salaam here, Asam has pointed out, is the salaam of goodbye and not a greeting (Razi). Nuhhas however thought that it is a salaam seeking goodly riddance. When the Arabs say, “*tasalluman minka*” they mean, “I am quit of you.” Hence, some scholars have said, one might use the same word “*salaaman*” (imparting the same meaning) while departing the company of unbelievers engaged in vain talk, but might say *salamun alaykum* while leaving the believers similarly engaged (Qurtubi).

They do not act, Shabbir points out, in the manner a pre-Islamic poet has portrayed:

ألا لا يجهلن أحد علينا
فنجهل فوق جهل الجاهلین

Hey! Let no vulgar treat us in a vulgar way

For, we will act vulgarly beyond the vulgarity of vulgars.

That is, the poet promises a vulgarity that would exceed the vulgarity

of the most vulgar of his tribe. We might add that at least the vulgar of the past knew a language that surpassed in beauty the language of today’s pretentious top-hats that are as vulgar from within as civilized from without (Au.).

81. Hasan al-Busri used to say when he passed over these verses that after describing the behavior of the believers during the day, Allah now describes how they behave at night (Qurtubi, Razi without naming Hasan).

Many scholars have said that whoever did some Qur’anic recitation at night will be counted as one who spent his night in prostration and standing. Others have said that whoever did two cycles after *Maghrib* and two after ‘*Isha*, will be counted among them (Qurtubi, Alusi and others).

82. Hasan has said, “They spent the day humble and the night wearied – in fear of the Fire of Hell” (Razi).

[65] And those who say, 'Our Lord! Avert from us the chastisement of Jahannum.'⁸² Surely, its chastisement is a grievous (ever-adhering) torment.⁸³

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ
جَهَنَّمَ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾

83. Mawdudi comments: "The worship of these sincere devotees to God does not make them proud. They do not suffer from the illusion that they are God's favorites and that Fire cannot touch them. On the contrary, in spite of their many virtues and their supplication and devoted worship, they tremble with fear lest any lapse on their part causes them to be condemned to punishment. They do not consider their piety as sure ticket to Paradise. Instead, conscious as they are of their human weaknesses, they deem it sufficient to be able to escape punishment."

(Literally, gharaam is for punishment, penalty, distasteful thing, something repulsive, etc.: Au.). Muhammad b. Ka'b, Hasan and Ibn Jurayj have said that the word leads to mean it will be a never-abating grievous punishment (Ibn Jarir).

But hope lingers in such hopeless situations too. Ibn Kathir quotes a tradition from Ahmed on the authority of Anas b. Malik. The Prophet said,

إِنَّ عَبْدًا فِي جَهَنَّمَ لَيُنَادِي أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ يَا حَنَّانُ يَا مَنَّانُ
قَالَ فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِجِبْرِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ اذْهَبْ

فَأْتِنِي بِعَبْدِي هَذَا فَيَنْطَلِقُ جِبْرِيلُ فَيَجِدُ أَهْلَ النَّارِ
مُكَبِّينَ يَبْكُونَ فَيَرْجِعُ إِلَى رَبِّهِ فَيُخْبِرُهُ فَيَقُولُ ائْتِنِي بِهِ
فَإِنَّهُ فِي مَكَانٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَيَجِيءُ بِهِ فَيُوقِفُهُ عَلَى رَبِّهِ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ يَا عَبْدِي كَيْفَ وَجَدْتَ مَكَانَكَ
وَمَقِيلَكَ فَيَقُولُ أَيُّ رَبِّ شَرِّ مَكَانٍ وَشَرِّ مَقِيلٍ فَيَقُولُ
رُدُّوا عَبْدِي فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ مَا كُنْتُ أَرْجُو إِذْ أَخْرَجْتَنِي
مِنْهَا أَنْ تَرُدَّنِي فِيهَا فَيَقُولُ دَعُوا عَبْدِي

"A man will cry out in *Jahannum* for a thousand years, 'Ya Hannan, Ya Mannan' (O the Affectionate, O the Munificent). Allah will say to Jibril: 'Go and bring Me this slave of Mine.' Jibril will go down but find the inhabitants of the Fire fallen (on their faces) weeping. He will return to his Lord and inform Him. Allah will say, 'Bring him to Me. He is in such and such a place.' So he will bring him and make him stand before Allah. He will ask, 'My slave, how did you find your station and place of rest?' He will answer, 'My Lord! Evil is the station, evil is the place of rest.' Allah will say, 'Take him back.' The man will say, 'My Lord! This is not what I expected when You got me out – that You will send

me back to it.' So Allah will say,
 'Let alone My slave.'"

As in Zawaa'id, the above *hadith* has been declared weak by some, but acceptable to others (Au.).

This Qur'anic passage is unique among religious Scriptures, the like of which is not found in non-Islamic traditions either. They portray the picture of the Companions, to whom the description fits most, and speak of a massive and miraculous transformation that the Prophet brought: a unique experience in the history of mankind whose echoes still last. They have not therefore, lost their impact entirely on those who normally look only from angles that can afford them opportunity to criticize (Au.).

Majid quotes a few involuntary statements from a spiritually dead West, preceding them with his own remark:

"Mark the miraculous change for the better that the Prophet of Islam had almost immediately brought about in his erstwhile ferocious, dissolute and irreligious countrymen: 'From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor ... The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty, and vice ... Thirteen years

before the Hijrat, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change those thirteen years had now produced! A band of several hundred persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of one God, and surrendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed a Revelation from Him; praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervour, looking for pardon through His mercy, and striving to follow through good works, almsgiving and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the omnipotent power of God, and of His providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their new-born hopes; and to Him they yielded an implicit submission.' (Muir, op. cit., p. 163). 'But a few years since sunk in superstition and practicing all sorts of vice, they now prostrated themselves five times a day in prayer to an invisible Allah, whom they had before known only imperfectly at best, and were honestly trying to follow the precepts that they believed had been sent directly from Him to them.' (Gilman, *The Saracens*, p. 153). 'Wine, women and war were the only three objects which claimed the love and devotion of the Arab.' (Kremer, *Contributions*

[66] Indeed, evil it is as an abode and as a place of rest.⁸⁴

إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] And those who, when they expend, do not act extravagant nor are niggardly⁸⁵ but rather hold a balance between them.⁸⁶

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا
وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

to the History of Islamic Civilization, Eng. tr. p. 156).”

84. Imām Razi raises a question, ‘What’s the difference between the textual *Mustaqarr* and *muqaam*?’ and answers that perhaps it is a *Mus-taqarr* in reference to the sinners who will leave it one day or the other, but a *muqaam* in reference to those who will abide therein forever.

85. There are several interpretations. Ibn ‘Abbas, Mujahid, Ibn Jurayj and others have said that whatever is spent in Allah’s disobedience – however little – is *israf*. On the other hand, whatever is held back from being spent in obedience of Allah – however little - is *iqtar*. Others have said that *israf* is to cross the bounds and spend more than required while *iqtar* is to spend less than what is absolutely essential – and piety lies between the two. Ibn Jarir is with this opinion (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Alusi).

The opinion of Ibn ‘Abbas is preserved in ‘Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim who

said that the believers are not such spendthrifts as to spend in the way of Allah’s disobedience nor so miserly as not to spend in Allah’s cause.

Are there clear lines demarcating the two: *israf* and *iqtar*? Ibn Jarir answers with an example. If you eat more than the essential, that which weakens your body and prevents you from devotion to Allah, it is *israf*. On the contrary, if you eat less, despite the availability, weakening your body and affecting your devotional acts to Allah, then that is *iqtar*. Yes, of course, you can always possess a little more. For example, one might keep an extra pair of clothes. This is following the Prophetic words,

مَا عَلَى أَحَدِكُمْ لَوْ اشْتَرَى ثَوْبَيْنِ لِيَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ سِوَى
ثَوْبٍ مِهْنَتِهِ؟

“What will harm one of you if he bought a pair of clothes for Friday apart from the pair for work?”

We have another report by Abu al-Ahwas, who reported his father that,

[68] And those who invoke not with Allah any other deity; and slay not such life as Allah has forbidden, except by right; and commit not fornication⁸⁷ – and, whoever did that, shall meet (the price of) sin.⁸⁸

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا

﴿٦٨﴾

عَنْ أَبِي الْأَحْوَصِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّهُ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي ثَوْبٍ دُونَ فَقَالَ لَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَلَيْكَ مَالٌ قَالَ تَعْمُ مِنْ كُلِّ الْمَالِ قَالَ مِنْ أَيِّ الْمَالِ قَالَ قَدْ آتَانِي اللَّهُ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ وَالْعَنَمِ وَالْحَيْلِ وَالرَّقِيقِ قَالَ فَإِذَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَلْيُرْ عَلَيْكَ أَثَرُ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَكَرَامَتِهِ

He went to the Prophet in shabby clothes. He asked him, “Do you have any wealth?” He said, “Yes, of all kinds.” He asked, “What sort of wealth?” He answered, “Allah has bestowed on me camels, sheep, horses, and slaves.” He said, “When Allah has bestowed wealth on you, then let the effects of Allah’s blessings, and generosity be seen on you.”

A part of the report is in Ibn Hibban, and Haythamiyy evaluated it *Sahih* (Au.).

Qurtubi quotes a *hadith* from Ibn Majah which reports the Prophet as having said,

إِنَّ مِنَ السَّرْفِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا اشْتَهَيْتَ

“It is extravaganza that you should eat all that you desire.”

Suyuti declared this *hadith* as weak although there is another version with Hakim who thought it is trustworthy as mentioned by Munawi, perhaps elevating it to the rank of Hasan (Au.).

86. Thus the textual *qawam* is explained as what lies between *israf* and *iqtar*, that is, justly balanced (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir quotes a *hadith* from *Musnad* about moderation in spending. The Prophet said,

مِنْ فَقْهِ الرَّجُلِ رِفْقُهُ فِي مَعِيشَتِهِ

“Moderate expending is a (sign) of a man’s understanding (of Islam).”

On the hand, Ibn Kathir quotes Hasan al-Busri as having said, “There is no extravaganza in any amount spent in the way of Allah.”

87. These are major sins in Islam. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud reportedly asked the Prophet about major sins, as in the *Sahihayn*. He answered,

أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِلَّهِ نِدًّا وَهُوَ خَلَقَكَ فَلْتُمْ أَيُّ قَالٍ تُمْ أَنْ
تَقْتُلَ وَلَدَكَ حَشِيَّةً أَنْ يَطْعَمَ مَعَكَ فَلْتُمْ أَيُّ قَالٍ
أَنْ تَزْنِيَ بِحَلِيلَةِ جَارِكَ

“That you should suggest an equal unto Allah while He alone created you.” He asked him, “Which one next?” He answered, “That you should kill your child in fear that he will share your food.” He asked him, “Which one next?” He answered, “That you should fornicate with the neighbor’s wife.”

And Allah revealed, “And those who do invoke not with Allah ..” to the end (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The Prophet also emphasized the evilness of fornication by saying, as in a report preserved by Ibn Abi Dunya,

مَا مِنْ ذَنْبٍ بَعْدَ الشِّرْكِ أَعْظَمَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ
وَضَعَهَا رَجُلٌ فِي رَحِمٍ لَا يَحِلُّ لَهُ

“There is no other sin more heinous in the sight of Allah after *shirk* than a drop of semen spilled into a womb that is unlawful unto him.”

He also said to a man, in a narrative recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْهَاكُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ الْمَخْلُوقَ وَتَدْعُ الْخَالِقَ، وَيَبْهَاكُ
أَنْ تَقْتُلَ وَلَدَكَ وَتَعْزُو كَلْبَكَ، وَيَبْهَاكُ أَنْ تَزْنِيَ بِحَلِيلَةِ
جَارِكَ

“Allah forbids you that you should worship His creations and ignore the Creator, and forbids that you kill your child but feed your dog, and also forbids that you fornicate with the neighbor’s wife” (Ibn Kathir).

Now, says Ibn Kathir, this verse appears to contradict that of *Surah al-Nisa'* which says (4: 93),

{ وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا
وَوَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا }
[النساء: ٩٣]

“And whoever killed a believer intentionally, then his reward is Jahannum, abiding therein forever.” When asked Ibn `Abbas explained that this *ayah* is Madinan while that of *Al-furqan* is Makkan (with a difference of 8 years between them) and so, the former annuls the latter. In fact, according to Ibn `Abbas this present *ayah* is referring to the unbelievers. Hence the *hadith* which says that once a group of pagans came to the Prophet and inquired whether there was any hope for them seeing that they had killed a lot and had committed several other kinds of transgressions. In response this *ayah* was revealed. Abu Hurayrah nevertheless held a different opinion. He said, “Once as I reached home I found a woman standing close by. I said salam to her and entered into my

house closing the door behind me. Then I began to Pray in my appointed place of Prayers. Then I heard a knock. I allowed her in. She asked, 'I have come to ask you whether there is repentance for me. I committed sin, became pregnant and then killed the child.' I replied, 'There is no blessing in you, nor any dignity.' She said in grief, 'Alas! Has this beautiful face been created for the Fire?' Then she went away. Next day I waited for the Prophet to be alone and then narrated the story to him. He said, 'Evil was that which you said. Have you not read this verse, 'Except for him who repented and did righteous deeds such then, Allah will change their evil (deeds) into good (ones).' I left him and then I did not leave a fort nor housing quarters but I went to it and announced, 'If you have a woman among you who went to Abu Hurayrah, then, let her come to me again and receive some good news.' And, there, as I returned from my night Prayers with the Prophet, she was standing at my door. I told her that I had raised the issue with the Prophet and he had said to me, 'Evil was that which you said.' And then he recited this verse, 'Except for him who repented and did righteous deeds such then, Allah will change their evil (deeds) into good (ones).'

The woman fell prostrate and then said, 'Allah be praised for having shown a way out through repentance. I shall free my slave-girl and her son in Allah's way. I repent what I have done'" (Ibn Jarir).

The above report is a weak one, there being narrators whose identities could not be established (Ibn Kathir).

See *Surah al-Nisa'*, n. 256 for a detailed discussion concerning the possibility of repentance after a premeditated murder of a Muslim.

An interesting report in Tabarani is worth quoting. There are three versions of it in Tabarani but Ibn Kathir quoted only one. It says that a person called Al-Mamdud went up to the Prophet and asked,

أَرَأَيْتَ رَجُلًا عَمِلَ الذُّنُوبَ كُلَّهَا، فَلَمْ يَتْرِكْ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا، وَهُوَ فِي ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَتْرِكْ حَاجَةً وَلَا دَاجَةً إِلَّا أَتَاهَا، فَهَلْ لَهُ مِنْ تَوْبَةٍ؟ قَالَ: "فَهَلْ أَسَلَمْتَ؟" قَالَ: أَمَّا أَنَا فَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: "نَعَمْ، تَفْعَلُ الْخَيْرَاتِ، وَتَتْرِكُ السَّيِّئَاتِ، فَيَجْعَلُكَ اللَّهُ لَكَ خَيْرَاتٍ كُلَّهَا"، قَالَ: وَغَدْرَاتِي وَفَجْرَاتِي؟ قَالَ: "نَعَمْ"، قَالَ: اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، فَمَا زَالَ يَكْبُرُ حَتَّى تَوَارَى.

"What do you say about a man who committed all sorts of sins leaving none uncommitted. In that situation (of sin) he left nothing – small or big – but he

did it. Is there any repentance for such a man?" He asked, "Have you embraced Islam?" He answered, "As for me, I bear witness that there is no deity save Allah and that you are Allah's Messenger." He said, "Do good deeds, give up the evil ones and Allah will change them into good ones." He inquired, "And my treacheries and debaucheries?" He answered, "Yes." He said, "Allah is Great." He kept repeating until he disappeared.

Haythami remarked that Bazzar also narrated it slightly differently and the narrators of Bazzar's report are all transmitters who were accepted by *Sahih* compilers except for Abu Nashit (through whom they did not narrate), who was trustworthy anyway (Au.).

88. The translation follows the literal explanation as offered by Zamakhshari who quotes a poetical piece to say that atham is the reward for ithm (sin). He does not close the door for other explanations. Majid writes: "Atham signifies 'the requital or recompense for ithm.'"

Ibn `Abbas however, along with `Abdullah ibn `Amr, Mujahid, `Ikrimah and others, is quoted by Ibn Jarir as having said that atham is

a vale in *Jahannum* wherein fornicators and adulterers will be locked up (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn `Amir said, "I went to Abu Umamah Sudayy al-Bahili and said, 'Narrate to me something you heard from the Prophet.' He invited me to have dinner with him after which he said,

لَوْ أَنَّ صَحْرَةَ زِنَةَ عَشْرٍ عَشْرَ عَشْرَاتٍ قُدِفَ بِهَا مِنْ شَفِيرِ
جَهَنَّمَ مَا بَلَغَتْ قَعْرَهَا حَمْسِينَ خَرِيفًا، ثُمَّ تَنَهَى إِلَى
عَيٍّ وَأَثَامٍ

'I heard the Prophet say that if a stone were to be dropped from the edge of Hell, it will not reach the bottom for fifty years until it ends at ghayy and atham. I asked him, 'And what are ghayy and atham?' He replied, 'Two wells right at the bottom of Hell to which flow down pus and blood of the inhabitants of the Fire. It is about these two that Allah spoke when He said (19: 59), "They wasted away the Prayers, followed lust and so will meet with ghayy," and "... and do not fornicate. And whoever did that will meet with athama" (Ibn Jarir).

Haythamiyy does not give full clearance to the report, nor does he reject it (Au.).

[69] Doubled shall be the punishment for him⁸⁹ on the day of Standing and he will abide therein disgraced.⁹⁰

يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيهِ مُهَانًا ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] Save him who repented, believed, and worked righteous deeds, such then, Allah will change their evil (deeds) into good (ones);⁹¹ for Allah is ever Forgiving, ever Merciful.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

89. Why doubled? The answer is, one for disbelief and the other for evil deeds (Razi).

90. One question: It is not expected of believers that they will suggest partners unto Allah, or kill or fornicate. How then do we understand the verse? The answer given by Hasan as quoted by Razi is that it is the unbelievers who have been addressed indirectly. It is as though being said to them, “True believers do not suggest partners, but you do. They do not kill, but you do. And they do not fornicate while you do. (Do you see the difference?)”

And hence the following verse: “Doubled shall be the punishment for him on the day of Standing and will abide therein disgraced,” which fits the unbelievers. Similar thoughts have been expressed by Alusi also (Au.).

91. One meaning, as expressed by Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id (b. Jubayr) Dah-

hak and others is that Allah will change the evil deeds of the pre-Islamic days into good ones of the after-Islam days – so that, their sin of association will be changed to belief in One Allah, their murder with cessation, and their fornication with chastity. A second opinion – such as that of Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib - is that evil deeds will be converted into good ones on the Day of Judgment. Ibn Jarir inclines to the first opinion.

The well-known *hadith* might be recalled here: that of the last man to be brought out of Hell-fire and the last to enter Paradise. His minor evil deeds will be recounted before him while the major ignored. He will be asked if he acknowledges them, which he will, since he would have no other option. In fact, he will be fearful that the major sins could be brought to discussion. But he will be told that for each of his sin he shall have a virtue. At that point he will cry out, “My Lord! I had committed

[71] And whoever repented and worked righteousness, surely he turns to Allah in (full) repentance.⁹²

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٧١﴾

[72] And those who witness not falsehood;⁹³ and (who), when they pass by the futile, pass by with dignity.⁹⁴

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ﴿٧٢﴾

some other evil deeds that I do not see here.” The narrator of this *hadith* of Muslim says, “I saw the Prophet smile so broadly that his teeth became visible” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

Abu al `Aliyyah was one of those who would say when he did not understand a thing, “I believe in all that Allah has revealed in His book.” And this is what he said over this verse and then recited (3: 30),

{يَوْمَ يَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمِمَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا }
[آل عمران: ٣٠]

“The day when every soul will find presented (before it) what it had done of evil and would wish that there was between itself and that (evil) a great distance.”

Alusi points out that the two verses can be reconciled; of course in several ways but which we will leave to the reader (Au.).

92. “And whoever repented and worked righteousness, surely he turns

to Allah in (full) repentance”: Imām Razi explains that there is no repetition of repentance. The first (*mun taaba*) is for repentance over the sin of Association and disobedience, while the second (*yatubu*) is the return to the Lord in hope of rewards, (since, linguistically *taaba* means to return, to turn to, etc.: Au.).

As for a proper understanding of *mataabaa*, the verse could be paraphrased as, ‘And whoever repents by performing good deeds, then it is surely such a person who repents in the true manner of repentance’ (Qurtubi).

93. Yusuf Ali remarks: “(These words have) .. two significations, both implied in this passage: (1) those who give no evidence that is false; and (2) those who do not assist at anything which implies fraud or falsehood.”

The textual *zur* is to believe in the goodness of a thing while it is otherwise. Hence the varying explanations offered by the *Salaf* as meaning

[73] And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord, fall not upon them deaf and blind.⁹⁵

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا
عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا ﴿٧٣﴾

shirk (sin of association), music, or falsehood (Ibn Jarir).

One report from Ibn `Abbas has it that the allusion is to the festivities of the polytheists (Qurtubi). Abu al-`Aliyyah, Ta'us, Ibn Sirin, Dahhak, Rabi` b. Anas and others have also held the same opinion (Ibn Kathir).

False testimony is one of the many possible connotations. A report preserved in the *Sahihayn* and quoted by Ibn Kathir says the Prophet asked,

أَلَا أُتَيْتُكُمْ بِأَكْبَرِ الْكِبَائِرِ ثَلَاثًا قَالُوا بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ قَالَ الْإِشْرَاكُ بِاللَّهِ وَعُفُوقُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَجَلْسَنَ وَكَانَ
مُتَّكِنًا فَقَالَ أَلَا وَقَوْلُ الزُّورِ قَالَ فَمَا زَالَ يَكْرِرُهَا حَتَّى
قُلْنَا لَيْتَهُ سَكَتَ

“May I not tell you of the greatest of the great (sins)?” He said that three times. Those present said, “Sure do, O Messenger of Allah.” He said, “To declare partners to Allah and to mistreat the parents.” Then he straightened himself up from the reclining position and said, “Lo! It is false testimony (*zur*). Lo! It is false testimony.” He kept repeating until the Companions wished he would stop.

94. *Al-laghw* is every word or deed that is of no profit to anyone, which, if the believers happen to encounter, they skirt themselves away from it. Therefore, some of the *Salaf* have included, by implication, sex talks in *Al-laghw* in which the believers do not indulge, but rather, leave the company graciously (*kiraam*). However, sometimes passing by in *kiraam* might involve an action. For example, if they see an undesirable act, they forbid it, or when they see an unlawful act being carried out, they prevent it, using force if required. (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that once Ibn Mas`ud passed by a futile thing but did not pause. The Prophet remarked, “Ibn Mas`ud turned a *karim*” (Ibn Kathir).

95. That is, they do not respond when they are reminded of Allah's signs as if they did not hear, see, or understand anything – Mujahid (Ibn Jarir).

Asad paraphrases from Kashshaf: “Explaining this verse, Zamakhshari remarks that the average run of the

[74] *And those who say, 'Our Lord! Grant us of our wives and offspring (such) as are a comfort to the eyes⁹⁶ and make of us a model to the God-conscious.'⁹⁷*

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا
وَدُرِّيَاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا
﴿٧٤﴾

people approach the divine writ with a mere outward show of eagerness, 'throwing themselves upon it' for the sake of appearances but, in reality, not making the least attempt to understand the message as such and, hence, remaining deaf and blind to its contents – the truly God-conscious are deeply desirous of understanding it, and therefore, 'listen to it with wide-awake ears and look into it with seeing eyes.'

The allusion is not, as many commentators have pointed out, to literally falling down. One says e.g., qama fulanan yabki, meaning he began to weep (lit., he stood up weeping); and qa`ida fulanan yeshtumuni, meaning, so and so began to reproach me (lit., he sat down reproaching me).

Furthermore, kharra has several connotations. Yusuf Ali comments: "Kharra may mean: to fall down, to snore, to droop down as if the person were bored or inattentive, or did not wish to see or hear or pay attention."

From the above, one can sense the beauty in the choice of words in the Qur`an. A single word covers a va-

riety of ways, and thus, a variety of meanings could be drawn (Au.).

Ibn Kathir adds a trustworthy report from Ahmed that once some people were sitting with Miqdad b. al-Aswad (the Companion) when somebody said, "Lucky of these two eyes which saw the Prophet." Miqdad reacted angrily. Then he explained, "Why should anyone say that about the past when he does not know how he would have behaved if he had been present. By Allah, the Prophet came and Allah hurled a people on their faces into the Fire because they refused to acknowledge him, but rather cried lies. Should you not be grateful to Allah that He brought you out of the wombs without knowing any other Lord save Allah, believing in Him, and saved you from the trials that the others went through?" (shortened).

96. Ibn `Abbas, Hasan, Ibn Jurayj and others have said that they see them involved in deeds pleasing to Allah, and so feel the coolness in their eyes (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[75] They (are the ones) who will be rewarded with lofty houses⁹⁸ for what they showed patience (and constancy), and shall receive therein salutation and peace.

أُولَئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْعُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا تَحِيَّةً وَسَلَامًا ﴿٧٥﴾

Mawdudi sums up the explanation offered by several commentators: “This is because a true believer does not draw joy for his eyes by the fact that his or her spouse and offspring are physically attractive, or from the mere fact that they are enjoying a life of ease and luxury. Instead, they are delightful if they are blessed with moral excellence ... It is noteworthy that at the time when these verses were revealed, there were none among the Makkan Muslims who would claim their close relatives were not unbelievers. If a husband was a Muslim, his wife was an unbeliever; and if a woman had accepted Islam, her husband was a non-Muslim. In like manner ... there were fathers who had become Muslims but whose grown up children were strongly attached to disbelief and Ignorance. Therefore, every Muslim was going through an intense spiritual torment. Their Prayers is best expressed in the present verse.”

In Hasan al-Busri’s effective words, “No by Allah! There is nothing that will cool the eyes of a believer but

that he should see his son or grandson or brother, or a close relative, as obedient to Allah” – Ibn Kathir.

97. Two meanings are possible. One, as in translation which is the understanding of Ibn `Abbas and Dahhak, and second, ‘make us those who followed the God-conscious (of the past and present).’ This was the opinion of Mujahid, but the former is more appropriate (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). Ibn Kathir also agrees with the former opinion.

An implied meaning is that since we are the Imāms of our progeny, make our progeny virtuous so that we feel happy at leading them in piety (Shafi’).

98. The translation of *ghurfah* as lofty houses agrees with Ibn Jarir’s understanding. However, Ibn Kathir (and earlier to him Razi in brief) notes that Ja`far al-Baqir, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Dahhak and Suddi expressed the opinion that the allusion is to Paradise, which is so called because of its heights.

[76] Dwelling therein forever - beautiful an abode and a place of rest.⁹⁹

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا حَسَنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] Say, 'What will my Lord do with you?'¹⁰⁰ - but for your invocation.¹⁰¹ But now, you have already laid the lie, so it shall surely be inevitable.¹⁰²

قُلْ مَا يَعْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا ﴿٧٧﴾

99. "Beautiful an abode and a place of rest": this is in contrast to the reward of the unbelievers, "Evil it is (*Jahannum*) as an abode and as a place of rest," but which does not mean that the believers will remain in Paradise for a short or, for that matter, a long while (Au., with a point from Razi).

Yusuf Ali sums up: "Let us recapitulate the virtues of the true servants of Allah: (1) they are humble and forbearing to those below them in spiritual worth; (2) they are constantly, by adoration, in touch with Allah; (3) they always remember the Judgment in the Hereafter; (4) they are moderate in all things; (5) they avoid treason to Allah, to their fellow-creatures, and to themselves; (6) they give a wide berth not only to falsehood but to futility; (7) they pay attention, both in mind and manner, to the Signs of their Lord; (8) their ambition is to bring up their families in righteousness and to lead in all good. A fine code of individual and

social ethics, a ladder of spiritual development, open to all."

100. This is a difficult phrase (Qur-tubi) that lends several meanings depending on how the articles are treated (Au.). 'Ab'a is at the root of the word ya'ba'u, which is for weight; and "ma" has been treated by some as negative while by others as interrogative (Shawkani and others).

This how Ibn Zayd and Mujahid understood these words (Ibn Jarir). This was the opinion of Farra' (Shawkani).

Ibn Kathir however explains them as meaning: He doesn't care whether they worship Him or do not, since He is in no need of them or their devotions. According to Zajjaj, the words "*ma a'ba'u bihi*" contain contempt, scorn and disdain (Razi). It is as if to say, "I don't care a bit for him" (Au.).

This is what Khalil thought. And the implication is that you are so unworthy that your existence and

non-existence are the same to Him (Shawkani).

In short, the verse can be paraphrased as, “What will my Lord do with you by punishing you? In fact, He would have done it but for your invocation. But the unbelievers among you have already cried lies to His message and so punishment shall be inevitable.” Or, alternatively, “My Lord does not care for you enough, otherwise He would punish you. However, the unbelievers have cried lies and so shall be inevitably chastised.”

101. That is, but for your invocation, He should have destroyed you. This of course is one of the several possible implications.

102. What will surely be inevitable? The great majority of the *Salaf* such as Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak, Qatadah and many others believed that the allusion is to the day of Badr when they were annihilated. That however, Allah did not wish to happen – why should He? – but they denied and it became inevitable (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others). ﷻ



Surah 26

Al-Shu`arā'

(The Poets)

Makkan¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE MERCIFUL

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Prefatory to the *Surah*

Asad writes: “The main purport of the this *surah* lies in its stress on the unchangeable character of man’s weakness and proneness to self-deception, which explains why the great majority of people, at all times in all communities, so readily reject the truth – whether it be the truth of God’s messages or of what is commonly described as ‘glory’, as well as a mindless acceptance of slogans and prevailing fashions of thought.”

Sayyid Qutb summarises the chapter in the following words: “The subject matter of this chapter is the same as the subject matter of all Makkan chapters: faith. Its main characteristics are, Oneness of Allah: ‘Therefore, evoke not along with Allah another deity or you will be of the chastised (213).’ Fear of the Hereafter: ‘And do not humiliate me on the Day they will be raised, the Day neither wealth

nor progeny will profit, except for him who came with a healthy heart (88).’ Testimony of Messengership: ‘And indeed, it is the sending down of the Lord of the worlds (that) Jibril has come down with, on your heart in order that you might be of those who warned (193).’ Then the threat of dire consequences in the form either of an immediate punishment that would annihilate the unbelievers, or the chastisement of the Hereafter that awaits the unbelievers: ‘They have denied, so soon the tidings of that which they use to mock at (6: 5).’”

Mawdudi has an elaborated prefatory which we reduce to few paragraphs: “The background of the *Surah* is that the disbelievers of Makkah were persistently refusing, on one pretext or the other, to accept the message of Islam. Sometimes they said he did not show them any sign to convince

them of his Prophet-hood; sometimes they branded him as a poet or a sorcerer and mock his message; and sometimes they ridiculed his Mission, saying that his followers were either a few foolish young men, or those of the lower strata of the society whereas, they argued, if his Mission had a substantial message, the nobles and the elders would have been the first to accept it. Thus, the disbelievers were never tired of stubborn defiance in ever new form (and the Prophet was ever afraid of Allah's scourge seizing them: Au.). This state of affairs was causing great anguish and grief to the Holy Prophet.

“It is in these conditions that this *Surah* was revealed. After this introduction, till verse 191, one and the same theme has been presented continuously, and it is said: The whole earth abounds in such Signs as can guide a seeker after truth to Reality, but the stubborn and misguided people have never believed in the past even after witnessing the Signs, whether these were the Signs of the natural phenomena or the miracles of the Prophets. Those wretched people stubbornly adhered to their erroneous creeds till the Divine scourge actually overtook them. It is to illustrate this that the history of seven of the ancient nations has been

told, who persisted in disbelief just like the disbelievers of Makkah. In this connection, the following point, among others, has been stressed: The mentality of the disbeliever has been the same throughout the ages; their arguments and their objections, and their excuses and subterfuges for not believing have been similar and ultimately the fates that they met have also been the same.

“Finally, the discussion has been summed up, saying: ‘O disbelievers, if at all you want to see the Signs, why don't you look into the Qur'an which is being presented in your own language? Why can't you see and judge Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and mercy) and his Companions? Can the revelations of the Qur'an be the work of a Satan or Jinn? Does the recipient of the Qur'an appear to be a sorcerer? Are Muhammad and his Companions no different from a poet and his admirers? Why don't you give up obduracy and search your hearts for the answers? When in the heart of your hearts you believe that the Revelations of the Qur'an have nothing in common with sorcery and poetry, then you should know that you are being cruel and unjust in rejecting it, and will certainly meet the end that awaits the cruel and the unjust.’”

[1] *Ta Sin Mim*²

طسم ﴿١﴾

[2] *These are verses of a clear Book.*³

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢﴾

[3] *Perhaps you will grieve yourself to death⁴ that they will not be believers.*⁵

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

﴿٣﴾

1. Except for the ending passage starting with the verse, "As for the poets, they are followed by..", the chapter is Makkah (Zamakhshari, Razi), which report comes to us from Ibn `Abbas, `Ata' and Qatadah (Alusi).

2. To repeat the repeated, writes Ibn Jarir, is to say that several opinions have been offered over these letters. For example Ibn `Abbas has said that Taa Seen Meem are Allah's names which He used here to swear. On the other hand, Qatadah said they are one of the several names of the Qur'an. Some others have said that it is the name of this *Surah*.

Imām Razi breaks the line to say, taa is for tarb (rapture of the Gnostics, seen for the suroor (delight) of the lovers, and meem for the munaajaah (secret talk) of the seekers (of Allah).

There are a few other opinions too (Alusi).

3. Or, the Book that makes (things) clear. Ibn Kathir combines both the meanings, Asad being close to it.

Mawdudi elaborates: "That is, the verses of this *surah* are from a clear and lucid Book. Everyone who reads or listens to this Book can understand, without any difficulty, what it is calling people to: what it enjoins and what it forbids; what it regards as Truth and what it condemns as falsehood. To believe or not to believe is a different matter, but no one has any valid excuse to say that he cannot understand the teachings of the Book or cannot ascertain what that Book would like him to follow and what it urges him to give up.

"To call the Qur'an a clear Book has another aspect too: that it is abundantly clear that the Qur'an is a Divine Book. Its language and diction, its subject matter and themes, the truth that it expounds and the circumstances in which it was revealed, all these testify that it is indeed the Book of the Lord of the Universe."

4. The textual word *baakhi`* is for killing oneself out of grief. It is rooted in al-bakh` which is for reaching

[4] Had We so willed, We could have sent down to them a sign out of heaven, so that their necks would stay humbled to it.⁶

إِنْ نَشَاءُ نُنزِّلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً
فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ ﴿٤﴾

up to the neck-bone (*al-bikhaa`*) with the knife during the slaughter of an animal (Zamakhshari, Razi, Alusi). Also see *Al-Kahf*, note 5 for another connotation.

The above explains the depth of the Prophet's anguish at the refusal of the Makkans to heed. He went beyond the limits of empathy and compassion to evoke these words from Allah (Au.).

5. Majid comments, "Tinged as it is, by antipathy and hostility, the testimony of a Christian writer is remarkable: 'In the materialistic commercial town of Mecca, where lust of gain reigned supreme, where women, wine and gambling filled up the leisure time, where might was right, and widows, orphans, and the feeble were treated as superfluous ballast, an unfortunate being Muhammad, if his constitution were sensitive, must have experienced most painful emotions..'"

It might be noted how accurately the above describes the state of the Western, and now close on heel the Eastern world of today (Au.).

6. If Allah did not do it, it is because, He wished that people choose to believe rather than be forced to do it (Ibn Kathir), "(which) would make them automata" (Majid).

The translation expresses the connotation forwarded by Ibn Zayd, otherwise, as Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Ibn Jurayj, and others said, 'they would hang their necks (and not commit any sin).' Yet others have understood a`naaq in the sense of the "chiefs (of the Quraysh)" [i.e., not an allusion, but as the meaning of the word].

Ibn Jarir quotes several poetic pieces followed by detailed discussions why the feminine form has been employed in zallat, and if, by a`naaq the allusion is to necks, then why khade`een is masculine. Zamakhshari, Imām Razi, Qurtubi and Alusi also discuss the issue on similar lines quite lengthy to reproduce.

Verses of this kind spread over the Qur`an also imply that Truth will never be manifested in such a manner as to leave no room for any doubt, which would mean no role for the free play of human will, and no trial

[5] But⁷ there comes not to them a fresh reminder from the All-merciful, except that they remain turning away from it.⁸

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ مُحَدَّثٍ
إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] They have already cried lies,⁹ therefore, soon there will come to them the tidings of that they were mocking at.¹⁰

فَعَدَّ كَذِبُوا فَسَيَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ
يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٦﴾

[7] Have they not considered the earth, how many of every kind¹¹ of beautiful¹² (vegetation) We have caused to grow therein?¹³

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ أَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾

of his inner good or evil. Thus, an element of doubt will always remain, for man to match this element with the mass of truth and reach rightful conclusions – if he stays honest. This is applicable to the whole message in question, as well as to its parts (Au.).

7. That is, since We do not force the people to believe, “there does not come ...”

8. The allusion is to the passages of revelations sent down to the Prophet following short or long intervals. But every fresh revelation was treated as cursorily and heedlessly as the previous one (Ibn Jarir, Razi). Ibn Kathir however believes that the address is to the humankind that whenever a new Messenger was raised and a new message given, people rejected (in the old manner).

9. That is, in a manner similar to the habits of the past, mankind has cried

lies to this message also (based on Asad).

10. Imām Razi draws our attention to various levels of disbelief. It starts with “turning away in heedlessness,” (v. 5) grows into “denial” (v. 6), which develops into outright “mocking” (also v. 6).

11. *Zawj* is (not necessarily for pairs but: Au.) for kinds and classes too (Alusi).

12. The textual *kareem* rendered as beautiful here has the backing of Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari and Qurtubi who cite examples of such usage in the Arabic language.

13. Sha`bi assumed the meaning of *kareem* as noble and commented: People are of the earth’s product. He who entered Paradise is *kareem* (noble), while he who entered Hell-fire is *la’eem* (ignoble) – Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir.

[8] Surely, in that is a sign. But most of them were not to be believers.¹⁴

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Surely your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.¹⁵

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

[10] And (recall) when your Lord called to Musa (saying), 'Go to the wrongdoing people.

وَإِذْ نَادَى رَبُّكَ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] The folks of Fir'awn.' Will they not fear?

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَلا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] He said, 'My Lord! I strongly fear they will cry me lies.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ
﴿١٢﴾

[13] And my breast will be constricted and my tongue will not move (fluently).¹⁶ So, make a Messenger of Harun.¹⁷

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ
إِلَىٰ هَارُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

The implied meaning is, adds Alusi, man is included in the allusion to "what Allah causes the earth to grow."

14. That is because, even before any revelation, they had already decided not to accept anything that would morally bind them and restrain their freedom. So, rejection was a fore-gone decision (Au.)

15. That is, as Ibn Jurayj said, He is All-mighty who destroyed the past rebellious nations and All-compassionate who rescued the believers in Him (Ibn Jarir).

Asad adds a note to verses 8 and 9: "The above two verses appear eight times in this *surah*. Apart from the present instance, they conclude, like

a refrain, each of the subsequent seven stories of earlier prophets, which – by means of their, in places, almost identical phrasing – are meant to stress the essential identity of the ethical teachings of all the prophets, as well as to illustrate the statement, in verse 5, that a rejection of God's message is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of mankind despite the fact that His existence is clearly manifested in all living creatures."

16. That is, if they cry lies to me, my breast would be straitened and my tongue will not move fluently (out of anger) – Razi and others.

However, reminds Qurtubi, we have noted in *Surah Taa Haa* that Musa had some kind of (eloquence) im-

[14] Besides, they have a crime against me,¹⁸
and so I fear they will kill me (instantly).¹⁹

وَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] He said, 'By no means. Proceed, both of
you, with Our Signs. Surely We are with you
– listening.²⁰

قَالَ كَلَّا فَادْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] So, go to Fir`awn and say, "We are indeed
Messenger(s)²¹ of the Lord of the worlds.²²

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] (With the message) that (says), 'Send
forth with us the Children of Israel.'"

أَنْ أُرْسِلَ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٧﴾

pairment (20: 22). He could be referring to it (rather than failure to communicate well because of anger).

17. Although literally "Send to Harun," a more appropriate meaning is, "Raise Harun as a Messenger" (Kashshaf, Razi, Alusi, Thanwi). He sought Harun's help and was not at all seeking excuse from the responsibility being placed on him (Qurtubi).

The *Torah* alleges (see Exodus ch.3) that Musa refused altogether to accept the responsibility of Messenger-ship to the extent of evoking God's anger (Au.).

18. He was referring to the inadvertent killing of a Copt at his hand at the time he was living among the Fir`awn royalties. It is described in detail in *Surah Qasas* (28: 15-20).

19. That is, even before I have delivered the message (Kashshaf, Alusi and others).

20. That is, Our help and support is at close quarters (Alusi), which will spring to action with the first word of threat pronounced against you (Au.).

21. Although the word rasool is singular, (because it has been used here as a masdar: Alusi), it covers the two: Musa and Harun (Au.). Alternatively, the expression could be translated as, "Each of us is a Messenger" (Alusi).

22. Fir`awn knew them as Musa and Harun; so they introduced themselves as Messengers of Allah, placing their personalities in the background (Au.).

[18] He (Fir`awn) said, 'Did we not raise you amongst us as a child,²³ and you stayed with us many years of your life?²⁴

قَالَ أُمَّ تُرَبِّتِكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَيْسَتْ فِينَا مِنْ
عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] 'And you committed a deed of yours that you committed,²⁵ and you are of the ungrateful.'²⁶

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنْ
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] He replied, 'I did it then while I was of the unguided.'²⁷

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

23. In these words Fir`awn mixed taunt with derision (Qurtubi).

Yusuf Ali adds: "There is a little play of wit on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the (Lord of the worlds), Pharaoh says: "Who cherished you? Did we not bring you up as a child?" (That is, who was your Lord then, if not we?)

24. It is said that Musa left Egypt when he was thirty, and was given Messengership when forty (Alusi).

25. The allusion was of course to the accidental killing of a Copt: a taunt Musa had well anticipated. Yusuf Ali adds: "Pharaoh .. taunts him, 'You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch .. to have killed one of the race that brought you up.'"

26. *Min al-kafirin*: Most commentators have explained that Fir`awn had no idea of what kufr is. He meant 'you were ungrateful that although we brought you up in our royal quarters, you killed one of our men.'

Nonetheless, some commentators have thought that it could mean, 'you aided one of your men, murdering one of ours – because,' as Hasan has said, writes Alusi: 'all along you had remained an unbeliever in our religion.'

27. The translation tries to closely represent the text. But Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others have said that it means, "I was of the ignorant" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Another meaning forwarded is, "I had forgotten" which is another connotation of the word "dalla."

[21] So I fled from you when I feared you.²⁸
But (now) Allah has granted me the Judgment,²⁹ and made me of the Messengers.

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي
حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] And, (is) this the favor that you taunt me with (as the reason) that you have enslaved the Children of Israel!?'³⁰

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي
إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Fir`awn asked, 'Alright! What is (this) Lord of the worlds?'³¹

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

28. That is, 'I was apprehensive that you'd punish me for the man's death while I did not deserve such a retaliation since I had never intended to kill him nor does anybody die of a single punch' (Razi).

Shabbir has another point. Musa intended to say, "Look! At one point I was so fearful that I fled. But now, here I am, right before you without any fear. Why? It is because now I am a Messenger."

29. With the backing of Suddi, Ibn Jarir believes that hukm is equivalent of nubuwah (Prophethood).

What Musa meant is, 'While you were planning to kill me, my Lord was so kind as to appoint me His envoy' (Razi).

30. That is, 'Do you enslave a whole nation, tyrannizing them, and taunt me that you brought me up – a mere individual? To what purpose? And, how can you taunt me when it was

your tyrannical system of killing the Israeli male children that brought me to your palace (Kashshaf, Alusi, Thanwi – with the backing of Qatadah).

Shabbir has the same point in slightly different words. Musa was trying to tell him, "It is true that you brought me up. But what kind of taunting is it? Wasn't such upbringing a result of your persecution of the Israelites? If you hadn't persecuted them, my mother wouldn't have been forced to sail me across in a basket to be picked up by your women!"

31. Unable to get any result out of the loose talk, a habit of all ignorant people, Fir`awn finally gets serious. They said they were "Messengers of the Lord of the Worlds." So he asked, "Whoever is this your Lord of the worlds?" (Au.).

Ibn Kathir has a meaning in mind that other commentators do not seem to subscribe: Fir`awn was not

[24] He replied, 'Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them,³² if you would be convinced.'³³

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] He said to those around him, 'Do you not hear?'³⁴

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] He (Musa) added, '(He is) your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers of old.'³⁵

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] He said, 'Verily, the Messenger who has been sent to you is truly mad.'³⁶

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ
لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

asking about the reality of the Supreme Deity, as to what He is made up of. But rather, when Musa said that he was sent by the Lord of the worlds, Fir`awn said, in effect, 'A deity other than me is not recognized in this part of the world, so what other God is it that you are talking of?' (Paraphrased).

Razi, Alusi and Thanwi however believe he was asking about the reality of the Supreme Deity; and Musa answered him that whenever He is described, it will be with the help of His Attributes and Works of creation.

32. Thus Musa answered him two questions. Who is the Lord? It is the Owner and Sustainer of all that there is. Next, what are these "worlds?" The answer is: all and everything that falls within the heavens and the earth (Au.).

33. The textual address is in plural, because, although Musa was talking to Fir`awn, he had his courtiers and attendants in mind (Au.).

34. That is, does not (this outlandish) talk amaze you? (Ibn Kathir)?

35. Thus, when Fir`awn made another attempt at digression by saying, "Do you not hear him?" – Musa tried to drag him back to the main point by saying, "(He is) your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers of old."

It is our appreciation at the sub-conscious level of the intellectual wrestling between the two that makes this short conversation enjoyable (Au.).

36. Fir`awn used the word "Messenger" out of utter derision and to press his point that Musa seems to be unable to talk intelligently in that, 'I say one thing, and he says another' (Alusi).

[28] He said, 'The Lord of the east and the west and what is between them,'³⁷ if you would think.³⁸

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] He said, 'If you took a deity other than me,'³⁹ I shall surely place you among the imprisoned (ones).⁴⁰

قَالَ لَنْ أَخَذْتُ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ
الْمَسْجُونِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

This was yet another attempt to divert the minds and change the topic. Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to talk to a little Fir`awn will realize how the conversation here mirrors that which is experienced with this class of people (Au.).

37. So Musa holds on to his own point. He will not be side-tracked. He tells him that Allah's kingdom extends beyond his little kingdom (Au.).

Thus Musa implied that even if Egypt belonged to Fir`awn where he could implement his command, and so, in a way he owned it, to whom belonged the East and the West where, and between which, appeared great many creations, in the earth and the heavens? (Ibn Kathir).

38. That is, why can't you use the brains you are so proud of? A question one might ask every atheist of every age (Au.).

Aren't you closer to being mad yourselves? (Alusi).

39. Majid offers us results of his vast readings: "Moses and Aaron 'had to present themselves before a king, who, by the long-established usage of the country, was looked upon as "a good god," and "the great god," and who inherited from his father the idea that he was actually on a par with the greatest of the recognized divinities.' (Rawlinson, Moses: His Life and Times, p. 88). 'Egypt is remarkable for the extraordinary realistic way in which it depicted the dogma that the Pharaoh was the visible-god, begotten by the god, and the divine begetter of his wife's children.' (UHW.I.p. 646). 'As the great Pharaonic State arose, the impressive figure of the sovereign profoundly influenced religion; the forms of the State passed over into human conceptions of the gods, and the Sun-gods, the greatest of them all, was received as a Pharaoh ruling other divinities.' (EBr. XII, p. 77). 'The Pharaoh was a god upon earth. Like the Incas of Pras, he belonged to

[30] He asked, 'Even if I brought you something clear (and convincing)?'⁴¹

﴿٣٠﴾ قَالَ أَوْلُو جِنَّتِكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ

[31] He said, 'Produce it then,⁴² if you are of the truthful.'

﴿٣١﴾ قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

[32] So he threw his staff, and lo, it was a serpent, manifest.⁴³

﴿٣٢﴾ فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

the solar race, and the blood which flowed in his vein was the ichor of the gods .. The supreme sovereign, the Pharaoh .. was veritable god on earth. To his subjects he was the source, not only of material benefits but of spiritual blessings as well. He was “the good god,” the beneficent dispenser of all good things. The power of life and death was in his hands, and rebellion against him was rebellion against the gods.’ (Sayce, pp. 42,44).”

40. When challenged to use reason, unwittingly Fir'awn threw away his gauntlet. At heart he knew that if he carried on, his shallow intellectual reasoning – at bottom mere nonsense - would not stand its ground. Furthermore, his threat was not only directed at Musa, but at his courtiers too, whose faces must have been reflecting the change of minds (Au.).

Defeated on the intellectual platform, Fir'awn, like tyrants of all

times, threatened to use force (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

Thus, at the intellectual level Musa won out. That is only possible if a caller stays cool and intellectually alert. It might also be noticed that the whole conversation is conducted by Musa alone, without a word from Harun, in fulfillment of Allah's promise when He said, “By no means” (verse 15) in reply to Musa's apprehensions that his anger might get the better of him and he would not be able to express himself powerfully if Fir'awn rejected the call (Au.).

41. Musa's magnanimity and kindness will not allow him lose hope. He will try with his miracles (with a point from Qurtubi).

42. Fir'awn has found a straw: “Produce it,” he says (with a point from Alusi).

43. That is, it was not a make-believe kind of thing - like those produced

[33] And he drew out his hand and lo, it was white to the beholders.⁴⁴

وَتَرَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] He said to the eminent ones around him, 'This indeed is a skilled magician.

قَالَ لِلْمَلَإِ حَوْلَهُ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] He plans to drive you out of your land by his magic.⁴⁵ So, what is it then that you would advise?⁴⁶

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] They said, 'Put him and his brother off (for a while), and send in the cities musterers -

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَبْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] To bring you every accomplished skilled magician.⁴⁷

يَأْتُونَكَ بِكُلِّ سِحَارٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] So the magicians were assembled at the appointed time⁴⁸ of a day well-known.⁴⁹

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

later by the magicians - but a very real serpent for anyone to be in any doubt thereof (with a point from Alusi).

44. That is, the onlookers were not repelled by the white spot on the palm. It did not resemble a leprous hand, but rather, something that caught the eyes of the beholders – like the face of the moon (Kashshaf and Alusi rephrased).

45. That is, he will deprive you of your political power (Ibn Kathir).

The verse also throws hint that the ruling Syksos were foreigners in the land, colonizers of Egypt (Au.).

46. The textual word allows for two possible meanings: one, as in translation (from mu'aamarah), another, command (Kashshaf).

Fir`awn wasn't of course waiting for a command from them or for advice. Perhaps by using such terms he aimed at beefing up their ego. He needed all of it to fight out Musa's influence (Au.).

47. The qualifying noun "every" (and "accomplished": Au.) was meant to attenuate the emperor's anxiety (Kashshaf).

48. The textual word "meeqat" covers both time and place of appointment, hence mawaaqit of ihraam which are

[39] And the people were asked, 'Will you assemble?!'⁵⁰

﴿٣٩﴾ وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ

[40] Haply we shall follow the magicians if they are the ones who overcome.'

لَعَلَّنَا تَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمْ الْعَالِيَيْنِ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] Then, when the magicians arrived they asked Fir`awn, 'Shall we indeed have a reward if we are the winners?'⁵¹

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَئِنَّا لَنَا لِأَجْرٍ إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْعَالِيَيْنِ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] He said, 'Of course. And, in that case, you shall surely be of those brought nigh.'

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] Musa told them, 'Throw down, whatever you are going to throw.'

قَالَ هُمْ مُوسَى أَفْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلقُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

for time as well as place (Kashshaf, Razi, Alusi).

49. The “well-known” day was the day of festivities (Zamakhshari).

It was actually Musa himself who had suggested that the appointed day be the day of festivities, as stated in Taa Haa, verse 59. And, initially, Fir`awn was hesitant about it but accepted in fond hope that his sorcerers will win out. Yusuf Ali wrote at that point: “Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses appointing a solemn day of public Festival, when there would be a large concourse and there would sure to be some people not in the Court clique, who might be critical of Pharaoh’s own sorcerers. But probably there was something more in their dark counsels, something unfair and wicked, to which

Moses refers in his speech in the next verse (which said, ‘So Fir`awn withdrew, got together his tricks and then came back:’ Au.)”

50. “(to witness the glory of State religion and the discomfiture of these pretenders)” – Majid.

Yusuf Ali adds: “.. the object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organization will win with their tricks against those amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.”

51. “There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were

[44] So they threw down their ropes and their staffs, and said, 'By the might of Fir`awn,⁵² it is we who will be the ones to overcome.'

فَأَلْقُوا جِبَاهَهُمْ وَعَصِيَّتَهُمْ وَقَالُوا بِعِزَّةِ
فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Then Musa threw his staff⁵³ and lo, there she was swallowing⁵⁴ what they had devised.

فَأَلْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا
يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] Consequently, the magicians were thrown prostrate.⁵⁵

فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by the further enrichment of themselves and their order" (Yusuf Ali).

52. It was an oath (Kashshaf, Alusi). Ibn `Atiyah however (as well as a few others) have thought that it was for the purpose of drawing benediction (*barakah*), and a way to honor their earthly deity Fir`awn (Alusi).

53. Majid comments: "The *Bible*, wrong and muddled as usual, attributes this miracle instead of Moses to Aaron. (Ex. 7: 9,10)."

54. The textual *talqafu* has the connotation of quick swallowing (Alusi).

55. The belief and involuntary prostration was due to the fact that the magicians – being skilled as they were, and masters of their time - knew better than anyone else that what had nullified their magic was not any magic, but a true miracle.

Also, they must have guessed that if what Musa presented was also magic, their own staffs and ropes would not have disappeared altogether. And the lesson is, expert knowledge serves you sometime, in some place (Razi and Alusi paraphrased).

Perhaps since the news of the nature of Musa's miracle had spread far and wide before the actual encounter, the magicians had come prepared with the same kind of magic in order to fitfully refute him. They hadn't brought, for example, apples that could become rabbits or rabbits to become bananas. So, when their only tools of magic: staffs and ropes, disappeared, they were left with nothing on hand to try something else. Their helplessness would have affected them to consider Musa's feat seriously, which, along with Allah's *tawfiq*, led them to declare their change of heart (Au.).

[47] Saying, 'We believe in the Lord of the worlds.'⁵⁶

قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] Lord of Musa and Harun.⁵⁷

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Said he, 'Have you believed before I granted you permission!? Why, he is your chief who taught you magic,⁵⁸ so you shall presently know. I will indeed cut off your hands and feet on the opposite sides and shall crucify you all.'

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرِكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ لَأَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا صَلِّبَتَكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] They said, 'No harm.⁵⁹ To our Lord indeed we are to return.

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] We do hope that our Lord will forgive us our errors for that we were first of the believers.⁶⁰

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطَايَانَا أَنْ كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] And We inspired Musa,⁶¹ 'Travel with My servants by night. You will surely be pursued.'⁶²

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبَعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

56. This demonstrates that Musa's message and mission were fairly well propagated by that time and so they knew what he stood for (Au.).

57. They added these words to disqualify Fir`awn (Kashshaf) who claimed Lordship, and to dispel any doubt about the identity of the Deity they had believed in (Au.).

58. Although Musa had been out of the kingdom for a decade, and hadn't had the chance to travel through the land teaching the sorcerers magic, Fir`awn knew this ploy would still work, for, such is the mental disposition of the masses. In our own times,

the American leaders work similar ploys on their masses with good success (Au.).

59. They did not mean that they could not or would not be put to any harm, but rather that the harm they would face was nothing in comparison with the blessings of the Hereafter (Razi).

60. That is, as a group from among the Copts.

61. That was said when Fir`awn and his people's intransigency showed no sign of change in opinion with regard to Musa and his Message (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[53] Then Fir`awn sent musterers to the cities. فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] 'These are but a small band.⁶³ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] And they are surely enraging us.⁶⁴ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لِعَائِطُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] But we are a vigilant multitude.⁶⁵ وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَازِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] Thus We brought them out of orchards⁶⁶ and springs.⁶⁷ فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٧﴾

62. Mawdudi notes: "The change in the Exodus story does not imply that right after the contest Moses was commanded to take the Israelites out of Egypt. The details of these years are mentioned (elsewhere in the Qur`an)."

63. The term "shirzimah" itself is for a small band, to which "qaleel" was added by Fir`awn to belittle Israelite efforts to escape (Razi).

64. That is, no time passes but they do things that makes our anger rise more and more against them (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

65. Some scholars have understood it as meaning, "We are ready with our arms and armies to destroy them all" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

66. It is said that throughout Egypt both sides of the river Nile were adorned with orchards and cultivated fields (Qurtubi, Alusi).

67. With reference to the use of the word springs, Qurtubi presents quite some detail about river Nile. He explains that the taxing system depended on how high the Nile arose. The higher it arose, the higher were the taxes. It is recorded that after Egypt fell to Muslims, once the water did not rise at all. The local Copt population informed the Governor `Amr b. al `Aas that their custom in such circumstances was to offer a human sacrifice. In times past they used to seek volunteer parents who would offer a virgin daughter of theirs. She was brought forth in the best apparel and jewelry and thrown into the remaining water. Usually the Nile arose. `Amr disagreed saying Islam did away wrong practices of the past. And when the populations showed readiness to migrate, he wrote to `Umar. `Umar wrote back that he was sending a letter to the Nile

[58] Treasures and an honorable position.⁶⁸

وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] Even so, and We bequeathed them upon the Children of Israel.⁶⁹

كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٥٩﴾

which was to be thrown into the river in place of the virgin. The letter said, "From a slave of Allah, leader of the believers, `Umar to the Egyptian Nile: After praises to Allah. If you flow following your own command, then you may stop. But if it is Allah, the Almighty by whose command you flow then we beseech Him that He make you flow." It was dipped in the Nile a day before the Copts had intended to dip the Cross (and the virgin). By the next day the Nile started rising. Qurtubi also quotes the *hadith* of Muslim which says, "Sayhaan, Jayhaan, Neel and Furaat are all springs of Paradise. The *hadith* of Isra' (the Nocturnal Journey) says that the Prophet (*saws*) saw four rivers in Paradise from which sprang forth two apparent springs and two in-apparent springs. He asked Jibril about them who told him that the in-apparent springs were those of Paradise and the apparent ones were Neel and Furaat (Nile and Euphrates). According to a report in Bukhari, he was told that two rivers in Paradise were the constituents of Neel and Furaat.

68. *Maqaam* of the text is both *masdar* as well as "a noun of place" (Zarf Makan). According to Nuhhas it is for "a place" as well as *Maqaamah* (pl. *Maqaamaat*).

69. That is, Fir'awn and his folks left these things – orchards, springs, treasure and lofty positions – behind them in this world and Allah bequeathed these favors upon the Israelites. As Allah said (7: 137),

{وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَعَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا} [الأعراف: ١٣٧]

"And We made those who were reduced weak by them inherit the easts of the earth and its wests in which we laid Our blessings" (Ibn Kathir).

Hasan and others have said however, that the Israelites returned to Egypt after the destruction of Fir'awn and his army (Qurtubi). Mawardi expressed similar opinion. It has also been said by some that not all of them went back to Egypt. Some did while the main party proceeded to Syrian lands along with Musa (Alusi). Western sources, after laughing their heart

[60] So they pursued them at sunrise.⁷⁰

فَاتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

out for a thousand years at the seeming Qur'anic error, have finally admitted that a section of the Israelites did go back to Egypt, although not recorded in the infallible *Torah*. Majid quotes: "When the national life of Israel in Palestine ceased, an important section of the people, carrying with them the prophet Jeremiah, wandered back to Egypt. Thus, for the second time, Egypt became the home of the Jewish race, and much of later Jewish history was upon its soil. To what importance the Jews attained here can best be inferred from legends concerning them, originating in other countries. An Ethiopic apocryphal book contains a legend respecting Jeremiah which narrates that in answer to a prayer of prophet Jeremiah, the reptiles of the dry lands and the crocodiles of the rivers were exterminated.' (JE., I.p. 255). 'Egypt, according to the testimony of Philo, was inhabited, as far as the borders of Libya and Ethiopia, by Jews whose numbers were estimated at a million.' (p. 226) During a still later period Egypt had become, as it were, a second holy land for Judaism.' (p. 227)."

See note 191, *Surah Al-A`raf* for further discussions (Au.).

70. The words "at sunrise," should not lead us to believe that Fir'awn and his forces caught up with the Israelites on the day which followed the night they had departed. But rather, as Thanwi has pointed out, since Fir'awn had sent musterers to the cities, it would have taken them a couple of days to gather together their forces before starting on the chase.

Musa (*asws*) had started off with the Israelites by night. But, he was reminded of Yusuf's will that his bones should be carried back to Syria. But the problem was no one knew where his grave was, except for an old woman, who took her price for the information. They dug his grave and carried his coffin-box with them (which delayed them) – Ibn Jarir.

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir narrate the whole story, as in Ibn Abi Hatim. It says that once the Prophet Muhammad alighted at a Bedouin's place. He proved a good host. So the Prophet suggested that the two enter into a covenant with each other. So

[61] And when the two groups sighted each other, said Musa's Companions, 'We will surely be caught up.'

قَلَّمَا تَرَاءَى الْجُمُعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ
مُوسَى إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] He said, 'No way. Surely, with me is my Lord. He will presently guide me (out).'⁷¹

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾

the Bedouin came and the Prophet asked, "What's your need." The man said, "A camel with its paraphernalia and a few goats that my wife can milk." The Prophet replied, "Are you weaker than that you should be like the old Israeli woman?" The Companions asked, "What's the story of the old Israeli woman, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "When Musa left with the Israelites he lost the way. He asked the Israelites, 'What's going on?' The Israelite scholars said, 'Let us tell you that when Yusuf's death approached him he took a promise from us that we shall not leave Egypt without his coffin.' Musa asked them, 'So which of you can lead us to Yusuf's grave?' They said, 'No one knows about it except an old woman of the Children of Israel.' So he sent for her and asked her to guide them to Yusuf's grave. She said, 'By God, I'll not do it until you have met with my demand.' He asked what it was. She replied that she should be in Paradise with him. Now, it looked as if that was a bit difficult for Musa.

So he was told by his companions, 'Give her what she asks.' (He gave her that promise) and she took them to a swampy pond. She asked them to remove its water. When they had done that she asked them to dig. When they dug they arrived at Yusuf's grave. As soon as they carried him with them, when, lo, the pathway was like during the day."

After quoting the *hadith* Ibn Kathir rules that this is a Munkar report. Albani however declared it trustworthy in his *Al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, H. no. 313, vol.1. Albani also points out that some versions use the word "bones" in place of "coffin" which he explains through similar usage in another *hadith* as meaning the whole body – since the body of the Prophets are not consumed by the earth (Au.).

71. Note the words "No way. Surely, with me is my Lord. He will presently guide me," in which Musa spoke in singular (i.e., instead, "With us is our Lord," and "He will show us the

[63] So We inspired Musa, 'Strike the sea with your staff.' So it split and each part was like a towering mount.⁷²

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ
الْبَحْرَ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ
الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] And there We brought the others on.

وَأَزَلَّفْنَا لِمَ الْأَخْرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] And We delivered Musa and those with him all together.

وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] Then We drowned the others.

ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] Surely, in that is a sign. But most of them were not to be believers.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] Surely your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.⁷³

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦٨﴾

way"). It is perhaps because the others had betrayed lack of trust in Allah when they said, "We will surely be caught up" (Alusi).

72. Qurtubi demonstrates through pre-Islamic poetry that tawd of the text was used in the sense adopted here.

73. Allah is All-Powerful in dealing with the unbelievers and All-merciful in dealing with the believers (Zamakshari).

"Thus we can see," writes Sayyid, "that although Musa's story has been narrated at several places in the Qur'an, e.g., in *Surah Al-Baqarah*, *al-Ma'idah*, *al-A'raf*, *Yunus*, *al-Isra*, *Al-Kahf* and *Taha*, each time the theme was different and the narra-

tion suited the context in which the story was narrated.

"The theme at this point is that of the Message, its denial and, consequences of the denial. The story as narrated here has several scenes as they unfold themselves: altogether seven: (in brief: Au.) first, that of the Call, second Musa's encounter with Fir'awn, third, the contest between Musa's truth and the magic of the sorcerers, fourth, the sorcerers' efforts to seek assurance if they are to be successful, fifth, the contest, the belief of the sorcerers and confrontation with Fir'awn, sixth: this has two parts, first the revelation to Musa to leave by night and second Fir'awn sending across musterers, and seventh their coming together at

[69] And recite to them the tidings of Ibrahim.⁷⁴

وَأَنذِرْ عَلَيْهِم تَبَأَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

the shore, Israelites crossing through, and the drowning of Fir`awn.

“Thus we notice that there is no repetition in the story of Musa despite its several occurrence in the Qur`ān. Everywhere it is a different context, following different themes, and hence filled with different details.”

74. That is, not the story of Ibrahim, but rather, the tidings, important news. This is how we are invited to look at the narratives of the past Prophets (Au.).

Sayyid Qutb looks at the previous mentions of Ibrahim to trace the various themes at different points: “The passage that touches upon Ibrahim’s life at this point deals with his message to his people and his discussions with them the questions of faith and belief. He disowns their several deities, invites them to the worship of one God, and reminds them of the Day of Judgment. This is followed by a scene fully representing the Day of Judgment when they will disown the false deities and regret over the Association with Allah that brought them to where they find themselves. Thereon the talk shifts to a discus-

sion of the constituents and formative elements of tawhid, decadence of polytheism and the destiny of the Associators on Judgment Day. These were the central points, which were dealt with in brief leaving out the detailed discussions for other occasions.

“Passages touching upon Ibrahim’s stories have appeared earlier in *Al-Baqarah*, *al-An`am*, *Hud*, *Ibrahim*, *al-Hijr*, *Maryam*, *al-Anbiya`*, and *al-Hajj*. At every point those aspects were touched upon that the various contexts demanded, presenting what of his life and struggle fitted the theme of the *Surah*.

“In *Al-Baqarah*, the Qur`ān presented such details as which dealt with the construction of the House at his and Isam`il’s hands. It mentioned there his supplication to Allah to make it a place of peace; his announcement that the inheritance and custody of the House will be for those who had submitted to Allah: those who would follow his religion – of submission – and will not be for those who merely claimed lineage to him. This was done in the backdrop of rejection of the true religion of the

Israelites, and, as a result, their rejection by Allah and their consignment to a curse.

“The chapter *Al-Baqarah* also presented the story of his encounter with a tyrant and debate over the powers of the true Deity: one who gives life and deals death, who brings the sun from the east. It ended when Ibrahim challenging the tyrant to bring it from the west, which left the unbeliever stunned.

“The Qur`ān also presented the story of Ibrahim’s request that he be shown how the dead will be resurrected. He was asked to slaughter four birds, place their parts on several mountains and witness them coming to him in speed, alive when beckoned.

“The chapter *al-An`am* presents us a few scenes from his search to find his Lord and ultimate guidance unto Him after some speculating thoughts on stars, the moon and the sun, and a few other natural phenomena. This was in a chapter that primarily dealt with faith and its tenets, Allah’s signs in the cosmos and the evidences therein of a Creator only One, with no partners.

“*Surah Hud* spoke of glad tidings to him of a son Is-haq. This was during the course of Lut’s story, the stopping over of the angels at Ibrahim’s house

on the way to the destruction of the towns inhabited by the Sodomites.

“*Surah Ibrahim* presented us the scenes of his supplications while settling his progeny in the uncultivable valley. He is also seen there thanking his Lord for bestowing on him, despite his old age, Isma`il and Is-haq. He is also seen supplicating that he and his progeny be made those who establish the Prayers; that his supplications be accepted; and that he, his parents and all those who submit to Allah be forgiven on the Day of Judgment. The whole of this *Surah* dealt with a single aspect of the message brought by the Messengers: Oneness of Allah. The unbelievers too reacted in a similar fashion: a long chain of rejection. The image was as if the Message was but a single tree that offered shadows in a wide expanse of desert.

“Passages in *Surah al-Hijr* were of the same genre as those in *Hud*, except for the additions of a few details. The theme was Allah’s compassion towards the believers and His chastisement of the rejecters.

“*Surah Maryam* portrayed his compassion for his father, while, in contrast, his father’s harshness in dealing with him. It also showed his severance of all relationship with his fa-

[70] When he said to his father and his people,
'What do you worship?'⁷⁵

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] They said, 'We worship idols and shall
remain cleaving to them.'⁷⁶

قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عَاكِفِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] He asked, 'Do they hear you when you
supplicate?'

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمُ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] Or, do they benefit you, or do harm?'

أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُمُ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] They said, 'Nay, but we found our forefa-
thers so doing.'⁷⁷

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

ther and his people. It also mentions the bestowal of Isma'il and Is-haq. It was in the background of Allah's special treatment of those of His slaves that He chose. The *Surah* had the atmosphere of compassion, love and lenience.

"In *Surah Al-Anbiya'*, another scene of his call unto his father and his people was unveiled. It also presents us his denouncement of the deities and smashing of the idols. We are presented with another scene of his being flung into the fire which was ordered to cool down to offer peace and comfort to him. It told us about his and his nephew's escape from his people to a land in which Allah placed His blessing: the Syrian lands."

75. The question was not raised for eliciting information. Ibrahim knew

well what they worshipped. It was rather meant to point out their folly, for he knew how they would answer (Alusi).

76. They could have simply said, "We worship idols." But their addition, "We shall remain cleaving to them," speaks of their intransigence, and pride in their deities (Zamakhshari, Razi, Alusi and others).

It has also been said that they used the word "nazallu" (which is for an action during the day), because they worshipped the idols during the day and stars and celestial objects at night (Zamakhshari and others).

77. They thus tacitly admitted that their deities were powerless and that they had no other reason for being devoted to them except that their forefathers had clung to them (Ibn Kathir, reworded). In *Shab-*

[75] He said, 'Have you then considered what you have been worshipping (all along)?⁷⁸

﴿٧٥﴾ قَالِ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

[76] You and your earliest forefathers?⁷⁹

﴿٧٦﴾ أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ

[77] Indeed, they are enemies to me, except the Lord of the worlds.⁸⁰

﴿٧٧﴾ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[78] Who created me, and therefore, it is He who guides me.

﴿٧٨﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ

bir's words, "We don't care a bit for the rationale of it. We have a reason stronger than a hundred reasons: our forefathers worshipped them. Were they fools?"

Asad comments: "The particle *bal* at the beginning of the sentence expresses astonishment. Thus, evading a direct answer to Abraham's criticism of idol-worship, his people merely stress in antiquity, forgetting – as Zamakhshari points out – that 'ancient usage and precedence in time are no proof of [a concept's] soundness.' Razi, for his part, states that the above verse represents 'one of the strongest [Qur'anic] indications of the immorality (*fasad*) inherent in [the principle of Taqlid]' i.e., the blind, unquestioning adoption of religious concepts or practices on the basis of one's uncritical faith in no more than the 'authority of a scholar or religious leader.'"

78. That is, Majid writes, "have they reflected on their nature, properties and attributes?"

79. By adding "your earliest forefathers," Ibrahim meant to say that falsehood is falsehood, no matter how ancient its history or how modern, and no matter how many are devoted to it, whether few or large number of people (Razi).

80. Ibrahim meant to send across the message that if they believed their deities were capable of benefiting or harming them, then, here he was, declaring his enmity to them. Let them cause him some harm (Shabbir).

This phrase tells us that the list of deities that the pagans of Ibrahim's times clung to, also included the Supreme deity, Allah. Ibrahim's words that he was enemy to all they were devoted to except for one Allah is indicative of this (Au.).

[79] He who feeds me and gives me drink.⁸¹

وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾

[80] And when I fall sick, it is He who cures me.⁸²

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] He who will deal me death, and then bring me back to life.

وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ ﴿٨١﴾

81. Through his supplicatory words, “He it is who feeds me and gives me drink,” Ibrahim demonstrated that just as we depend on Allah for religious guidance, we also depend, totally and entirely, on Him for our worldly needs, small or big, and, therefore, belittling the worldly blessings, or to show dispensability of them, as do some of the ignorant *Sufis*, is to act against the spirit of Islam (Thanwi).

82. Majid writes, “(and not any healing-god). Many polytheist peoples, like Greeks, have believed in the existence of a separate God of healing. For the religion of Asclepius see UHW. II. p. 1370.”

Note that Ibrahim (*asws*) attributes his illness to himself: “And when I fall sick,” while he attributes the cure to Allah: “it is He who cures me.” This is, comment, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi and others, out of reverence for Allah. Hence, Musa’s companion said (18: 63), “And I was not made to forget but by *Shaytan*” (and not, “Allah caused me to forget it”: Au.).

It is in the same vein that we do not attribute to Allah His anger when we say in *Surah al-Fatiha*, “and not of those that were angered upon” (and not “those You were angry with”). Or, the words of the Jinn (72: 10), “And, we do not know whether evil is meant for those on the earth, or their Lord has intended good for them,” where evil is not directly attributed to Allah (Ibn Kathir).

Also, adds Zamakhshari, illness ought to be attributed to human beings alone because it is they who resort to extremes (in food and drink) and in consequence, suffer disorders. Medical men say that most sicknesses are caused by overeating.

Today, obesity is the major cause of illness in the world (Au.).

Alusi adds: Ibrahim took care not to attribute illness to Allah, out of reverence. That logic does not apply to death which he directly attributed to Allah. That is because it is commonly understood that none deals death except Allah and that there is no

[82] He, on whom I fasten hope, that He will forgive me my faults on the Day of Reckoning.⁸³

وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ
الدِّينِ ﴿٨٢﴾

escape from it. Sickness in fact can sometimes be more difficult to bear. How many terminally ill persons are not there who prefer death to life? Further, death cannot be treated as a kind of punishment because everyone has to face it. On the other hand, illness is not the lot of everyone and hence, to attribute it to Allah would be a kind of impudence.

83. He was referring to the three incidents of his life viz., his words, 1) "I am unwell," 2) "Their chief did it" and, 3) "this is my sister" (Ibn Jarir from Mujahid, `Ikrimah and others). Zajjaj has said, adds Qurtubi, that Prophets and Messengers being humans, there remains the possibility of them committing errors or minor sins, but never a major sin. The "*khata'ah*" in his case was, explains Thanwi, the choice of the best of the two when confronted with two options.

See *al-Anbiya'*, note 77 for a detailed discussion.

But why did Ibrahim seek the forgiveness relating it to the day of Judgment? The answer is, say Za-

makhshari and Razi, the natural consequences of errors in this world will appear in the Hereafter. In this world they are hidden.

Further, Razi adds, it might be noticed that Ibrahim starts his supplications (that follow from here) after praises for his Lord. This is because the souls and the spirits of the humans are of the same origins as those of the angels. Therefore, the more a man's engagements in activities pertaining to the cognizance of Allah and His love, the closer he is to the world of Spirits; and more cognizant of the angelic spirit. He will also attain greater spiritual powers in this world. On the other hand, the closer a man to the activities pertaining to this world, and the more he dips into the darkneses of the material world, the closer he gets to animal spirit. Consequently, he will cause lesser impact on this world. Therefore, whoever wishes to supplicate, he must predicate his supplications with the praises of Allah, and His glory, in order to get closer to Allah, and closer to the angelic powers (Reworded).

[83] 'O my Lord! Grant me wisdom⁸⁴ and join me with the righteous.⁸⁵

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] Grant me a true reputation among posterity.⁸⁶

وَأَجْعَلْ لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

84. The textual *hukm* has been variously interpreted as knowledge (Ibn 'Abbas), intellect ('Ikrimah), Scripture (Mujahid), and Prophethood (Suddi) – Ibn Kathir.

85. What Ibrahim meant was, “guide me to such deeds as create good relationship with the righteous” (Kashshaf).

Thanwi however believes that Ibrahim, already a righteous person, was rather seeking close company of the righteous in this world. Another implication is: make me one of those whose example is followed by posterity, such as would cause increase in my reward.

Our own Prophet's words at the time of death were,

اللَّهُمَّ الرَّفِيقَ الْأَعْلَى

“O Allah, to the companions on high” – which, according to reports in the *Sahihayn*, he said three times (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi comments: It is said that through these words (“join me with the righteous”) Ibrahim sought the

power of action, such as would him help in organizing the affairs of life in the company of those who avoid major and minor sins. This supplication was preceded by the one earlier (viz., “Grant me wisdom”), because power of knowledge precedes power of action. It is possible that one has knowledge but fails to act by its light, but the reverse is not possible. (That is, it is not possible that one does the right thing without possessing its knowledge). Knowledge is a quality of the soul while action belongs to the body. And, just as the soul is superior to the body, so is knowledge to action. However, I am personally inclined to believe, adds Alusi, that by the first (*hukm*) it is both the power of knowledge as well as action that is meant, while by the second (*ilhaq bi al-saliheen*), the supplication is for the same status with Allah, as of the exemplary righteous, amounting to, in final analysis, asking for both knowledge and action that are acceptable to Allah.

86. The translation here follows the understanding of Ibn Jarir who

[85] And place me among the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss.⁸⁷

وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨٥﴾

quotes `Ikrimah and Ibn Zayd of the same opinion. Accordingly, the Jews believed in Musa but not in `Isa or Muhammad. The Christians believed in `Isa and Musa, but not in Muhammad. But all of them, including the pagans believed in Ibrahim as the great Patriarch. Thus Ibrahim's supplication was accepted. Allah however, severed the relationship of the Jews and Christians with Ibrahim because they refused to believe in Muhammad, but rather established his relationship with the followers of Muhammad by saying (3: 68),

﴿إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ [آل عمران: ٦٨]

"Surely, the nearest of the people to Ibrahim are those who followed him (in the past in his unadulterated faith) and this Prophet (Muhammad), and those who believe (in this new Prophet). And Allah is the Protector of the believers."

Qurtubi and Alusi note (Imām) Malik's opinion that there is nothing wrong in a man feeling happy if

praised for his good deeds, so long as his intentions remain unadulterated, purely for Allah. After all, Allah has said (19: 96),

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا﴾ [مریم: ٩٦]

"Surely those who believed and did good deeds, soon the Rahman will place for them love (in the hearts of the creations)." Ibn al-`Arabiyy said that the knowledgeable of the ascetics have said that there is no harm in coaxing the people to good deeds for reasons that people will refer to them in good terms.

87. This supplication rejects the attitude of some (ascetics) who say, "I ask neither for Paradise nor Hellfire" (Qurtubi).

That is, they believe that the Gnostics should seek nothing but Allah, and no other reward such as Paradise, nor should they be driven by any fear, such as that of Hellfire. This is incorrect as we have here a great Messenger Ibrahim supplicating for Paradise (Au.).

[86] And forgive my father, he has been of those astray.⁸⁸ وَأَغْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] And disgrace me not on the Day they are raised up.⁸⁹ وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

88. That is, forgive him his sin of initial rejection, and guide him to belief, as the rule that unbelievers will not enter Paradise, cannot be ignored in favor of anyone (based on Thanwi).

Bukhari has recorded that Ibrahim will meet his father with a dusty darkened face and say,

أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ لَا تَعْصِنِي فَيَقُولُ أَبُوهُ فَأَلْيَوْمَ لَا أَعْصِيكَ
فَيَقُولُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّكَ وَعَدْتَنِي أَنْ لَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ
يُبْعَثُونَ فَأَيُّ خَزْيٍ أَحْزَى مِنْ أَبِي الْأَبْعَدِ فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ
تَعَالَى إِنِّي حَزَمْتُ الْجَنَّةَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ يَا
إِبْرَاهِيمُ مَا تَحْتِ رِجْلَيْكَ فَيَنْظُرُ فَإِذَا هُوَ بِدَيْخٍ مُلْتَمِخٍ
فَيُؤْخَذُ بِقَوَائِمِهِ فَيُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ

“Did I not tell you not to disobey me?” He will reply, “Today I shall not disobey you.” So Ibrahim will supplicate, “My Lord! You have promised me that You will not disgrace me on the day they are resurrected?” Allah will say, “I have forbidden Paradise unto the unbelievers.” Then He will say, “Ibrahim, look down at your feet.” He will look down and find a hyena-like dirty creature. It will

be seized by its feet and flung into the Fire” (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali comments at an earlier point: “Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are. (1) He wants his own soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and (2) his heart and life filled with righteousness; (3) he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation: his view extends to all future generations; (4) and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance; but he is not content with this; for (5) he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgment.”

89. What is being of sound heart (*qalbin saleem*)? Generally speaking, it is a heart which is not sick as said Allah (2: 10),

[88] The day when neither wealth nor children shall profit.

﴿٨٨﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ

[89] Except for one who comes with a sound heart.⁸⁰

﴿٨٩﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

[90] And Paradise shall be brought near to the righteous.⁹⁰

﴿٩٠﴾ وَأُنزِلَتْ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

{ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ } [البقرة: ١٠]

“In their hearts is a sickness” – that is, of hypocrisy and disbelief (Qurtubi and others).

Muhammad b. Sirin said: A sound heart is that which knows that Allah is the Truth, that the Hour is approaching and that Allah will raise up those in the graves. Muslim reports the Prophet as having said,

يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ أَقْوَامٌ أَفْعَدْتُهُمْ مِثْلَ أَفْعَدَةِ الطَّيْرِ

“Some people will enter Paradise whose hearts would be like the hearts of the birds.”

He meant – although Allah knows best – that the hearts will be as clear of sins as the hearts of the birds, without any defect and such as those who have no experience in the affairs of the world. Another trustworthy report of the Prophet says that,

أَكْثَرُ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ الْبُلْهُ

“Most of the inhabitants of Paradise will be al-bulh.”

And bulh has been explained by Azhari as someone who is on the nature (on which he was created) completely unaware of evil (Qurtubi).

Qatadah said that it is a heart free of *shirk*, while Mujahid said that the allusion is to a heart that is free of any doubt. Ibn Zayd added that sins have no role (in determining the state of the heart), since there isn't anyone who does not sin (Tabari, Ibn Kathir). In short, write Zamakhshari and Razi, it is a heart that freed itself (*salima*) of *shirk*, achieved peace (*aslama*), is at peace with others (*saalama*), and has submitted to Allah (*istaslama*).

90. Since Paradise is already created, and cannot be moved from its place, it has been conjectured that perhaps the allusion is to the dwellers of Paradise being taken near to it, as the pilgrims say, e.g., “Makkah has neared,” (although it is they who have neared), or, alternatively, it could mean that the veils covering

[91] And Hellfire advanced for the deviants.⁹¹

﴿٩١﴾ وَبُرِزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ

[92] And it shall be said to them, 'Where are those you were worshipping?'⁹²

﴿٩٢﴾ وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

[93] Other than Allah? Can they help you or help themselves?'

﴿٩٣﴾ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ

[94] Then they will be flung headlong therein⁹³ – they and the deviant ones,

﴿٩٤﴾ فَكُذِّبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ

[95] And the forces of Iblis,⁹⁴ all together.⁹⁵

﴿٩٥﴾ وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ

it would be removed and Paradise will appear close, just as stars appear close, although they are at great distances from us (Alusi).

91. Qatadah expressed the opinion that by the textual term ghaawoon the allusion is to the *Shayateen* (Ibn Jarir).

It is a difficult term to explain, for it is loaded with several connotations. Primarily, as Raghib explains, *Gha-wa* is for “ignorance (*jahl*) springing from erroneous beliefs.” Another is, “corruption of one’s mode of life.” “Deviation from that which is right,” “to err,” “failure to achieve one’s desires,” “to labor in vain,” “ignorant conduct,” etc., are several other connotations offered by Lane.

92. Asad comments: “Whenever the relative pronoun *ma* (‘that which’ or ‘all that which’) is used in the Qur’ān with reference to false objects of

worship, it indicates not merely inanimate things (like idols, fetishes, supposedly ‘holy’ relics, etc.) or false deified saints, dead or alive, but also forces of nature, real or imaginary, as well as man’s ‘worship’ of wealth, power, social position, etc.”

93. The word in the text is *kubkibu*. Its origin is *kubb* and the present pattern (in which an additional *kaaf* has been inserted) suggests repetitive *kubb*, i.e., repetitive dipping or flinging into the Fire (Zamakhshari, Razi and others).

94. Everyone who follows Iblis, whether of his progeny, or of Adam, belongs to “the forces of Iblis” (Zamakhshari, Ibn Jarir and others).

95. “The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will be all involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and

[96] They will say, as they dispute therein,

﴿٩٦﴾ قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ

[97] 'By Allah! We were definitely in manifest error -

﴿٩٧﴾ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

[98] When we held you as equal to the Lord of the worlds.

﴿٩٨﴾ إِذْ نُسَوَّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[99] And, none led us astray but the criminals.⁹⁶

﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ

[100] So now we have no intercessors,⁹⁷

﴿١٠٠﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ

[101] Nor a loyal friend.⁹⁸

﴿١٠١﴾ وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ

[102] So, would that there was for us a second (chance into the world), we shall be of the believers.

﴿١٠٢﴾ فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblis or Satan” (Yusuf Ali).

96. Those, that laid the foundations of disbelief and played major role in misleading the common people (Thanwi, in effect).

“They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before. For who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment? How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them ac-

cept such obviously false guidance!” (Yusuf Ali).

97. This the unbelievers will say in all regret when they see believers being pulled out of Hellfire into Paradise through the intercession of the intercessors (Zamakhshari, Razi).

98. Friends have been specifically mentioned, explain Zamakhshari, Razi and Qurtubi, because the unbelievers will see friends of the believers helping out each other, whereas they themselves will be friendless; as Allah said (43: 67),

{الْأَخْلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ}
[الزخرف: ٦٧]

“Some of the close friends that day, will be enemies unto others, except the pious.”

[111] They said, 'Should we believe you even though the lowest (of us) have followed you?'¹⁰¹

قَالُوا أَتُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

[112] He said, 'What knowledge have I of what they do?'

قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

[113] Their account is upon my Lord alone, if you realize.¹⁰²

إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَيَّ رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

[114] And I am not going to drive away the believers.¹⁰³

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

Message, (3) bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of Allah, and not add anything of his own, and (4) not seeking any interest of his own" (Yusuf Ali).

101. "One of the arguments they advanced against Noah was that had there been any truth in Noah's claim, the chiefs, the notables, the religious leaders, the scholars and the wise men of the nation would have followed him. But none of them had accepted Noah's claim. Only a few people from the lower classes had become his followers. How, then, could people belonging to the upper strata of the society join the company of those lowly people?" (Mawdudi)

102. That is, I take them on face value. If someone is good in his appearances, I accept him as good; if evil, then evil. As for the realities be-

hind their appearances, it is for Allah to judge. Can you not see the reasonableness of this kind of attitude? (Tabari).

In Yusuf Ali's words, "The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraish leaders spoke in the time of the holy Prophet. 'We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'tag rag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be Eke them or to be classed with them?' His answer was: "I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to Allah; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

103. Yusuf Ali: "All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to Allah's Word and receive Allah's Mercy, whether they are pub-

[115] *I am naught, but a plain warner.'*

إِنَّا إِنَّا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

[116] *They said, 'If you do not desist O Nuh, you shall surely be of those stoned (to death).'*¹⁰⁴

قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهَ يَا نُوحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

[117] *He said, 'My Lord! Surely, my people have cried me lies.*

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿١١٧﴾

[118] *Therefore judge between me and them, a decisive judgment;¹⁰⁵ and deliver me and the believers that are with me.'*

فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَنَجِّنِي وَمَنْ
مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

[119] *So We delivered him, and those with him, in the laden ship.*

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ
﴿١١٩﴾

licans and sinners, 'Harijans' and low-caste men, men of 'superior' or 'inferior' races. The Prophet of Allah welcomes them all, as His Message has to shine before the whole world."

In addition to the generally accepted meaning that the so-called elites suffered superiority complex, and could not come round to accepting people of lower status equalized with them in faith, Asad has another pointer: "This is obviously a retort to the unbelievers' suggestion (elliptically implied here) that those 'abject' followers of Noah had declared faith in him, not out of conviction, but only in order to gain some material advantages. Noah's answer embodies a cardinal principle of Qur'anic ethics and, hence, of Islamic Law: No human has the right to sit in judgment on another person's faith or

hidden motives; whereas God knows what is in the hearts of men, society may judge only by external evidences (*az-zahir*), which comprises a person's words as well as deeds. Thus, if anyone says, 'I am a believer,' and does not act or speak in a manner contradicting his professed faith, the community must consider him a believer."

104. The translation represents the primary meaning. But *rajm* has other derived connotations such as, "to curse, revile, address with evil speech, the act of driving away, expelling, cutting off from friendly communion," etc. (Lane). Ibn Jarir says it means here, "we will address you in a coarse manner."

105. For this rendering we have the support of Qatadah, Ibn Zayd and others, as in Ibn Jarir.

[120] Then We drowned thereafter the rest.

ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا بَعْدَ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

[121] Surely, in that is a sign. But most of them were not to be believers.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾

[122] Surely, your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾

[123] `Aad rejected the Messengers.

كَذَّبَتْ عَادَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

[124] When their brother Hud said to them, 'Will you not fear?

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

[125] Verily, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger.

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾

[126] Therefore, fear Allah and follow me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٢٦﴾

[127] I do not ask you any wage for it. My wage falls only upon the Lord of the worlds.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

[128] Do you build on every elevation¹⁰⁶ a monument, committing vanity?¹⁰⁷

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

Thanwi points out that to supplicate against a people who cause harm to Allah's religion, is not against sabr and hilm (patience and forbearance).

106. The translation of "ri" as elevation expresses one aspect of its meaning. It covers every place which catches the eye because of its prominence, whether a high place, or low (Mujahid), whether a main road (Qatadah) or a mountain pass (Ikrimah and Mujahid) – Ibn Jarir.

107. That is, writes Alusi, monuments and landmarks that they stood

in no need of, but erected for show, pride and beautification. `Abath is an act that is of no material or spiritual benefit. It is prohibited in our religion also.

Mawdudi writes: "Hud chided his people for constructing grand buildings which had no utility, which fulfilled no genuine need and which were designed only to make a spectacular display of their affluence and grandeur."

Yusuf Ali points at the futility in another way: "Any merely material civi-

[129] And do you take buildings for yourselves,¹⁰⁸ as though you will abide forever!¹⁰⁹

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

[130] And when you seize, you seize like tyrants.¹¹⁰

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

lization prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places-monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few eenerations! Cf. Shelley's poem on Ozymandias: "I am Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair! Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

108. Masaani` is from sana`a which stands for a making which requires some effort. Here it has been explained as 'well-built houses and palaces' by Mujahid. Some others have interpreted the word as meaning "wells" (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir).

109. That is, your lofty monuments and colossal mansions seem to be built on the supposition that you will abide in the this earth for ever (Thanwi). The prohibition of course, wrote Alusi, might be extended to anything attempted which betrays belief in permanence. It is in this light that one might look at some

of the utterances of the Prophet or some of the *Sufis*.

It is said that when the Muslims began to build houses and plant trees in Ghotia (Syria), Abu Darda' stood up in their mosque and called out, "O people of Dimashq!" When they gathered he addressed them saying (after praises to Allah), "Are you not ashamed? Are you not ashamed? Do you gather together what you do not eat, build what you will not live in, fasten hopes that you will not attain. There were generations before you who gathered together and hoarded, built on hopes of living in them, fastened hopes and prolonged them. But their hopes turned into deceptions, their savings into destruction, and their houses into graves. Lo! `Aad possessed the area between `Adn and `Umman, horse riders and footmen. But who will buy from me today for two Dirhams what they left behind them?" (Ibn Kathir).

110. Asad explains, "The term jabbar, when applied to man, as a rule denotes one who is haughty, overbear-

[131] Fear Allah then, and follow me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٣١﴾

[132] Fear Him who has helped you with what you know.¹¹¹

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

[133] Helped you with livestock and offspring.

أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

[134] Gardens and springs.

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٣٤﴾

[135] Verily, I fear for you the chastisement of a Great Day.'

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٣٥﴾

[136] They said, 'It is equal unto us whether you admonish us, or be not of those who admonish.'¹¹²

قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَضْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

[137] This is naught but the custom of the ancients.¹¹³

إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

[138] And we shall never be chastised.'

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

ing, exorbitant and cruel, and does not submit to any moral restraints in his dealings with those who are weaker than himself. Sometimes (as, e.g., in 11: 59 or 14: 15) this term is used to describe a person's negative ethical attitude, and in that case it may be rendered as 'enemy of truth.' In the present instance, however, stress is laid on the tyrannical behaviour of the tribe `Aad, evidently relating to their warlike conflicts with other people..."

111. "The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material. 'All that ye know' includes not only material things, but knowledge and the

faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined. 'Cattle' means wealth generally, and 'sons' means population and manpower. 'Gardens and Springs' are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man" (Yusuf Ali).

112. "The form of the words implies," writes Majid, "We have had plenty of admonishers like you."

113. Explanations for the textual *khuluq* have varied. Ibn `Abbas understood it as "deen", while Qatadah said it meant the "ways of the ancients who lived and died in simi-

[139] Thus they rejected him. So We destroyed them. Surely, in that is a sign.¹¹⁴ But most of them were not to be believers.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

[140] Surely, your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٤٠﴾

[141] Thamud rejected the Messengers.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

[142] When their brother Saleh said to them, 'Will you not fear?'

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

lar manner.” ‘Tales of the ancients’ is another interpretation that has come down from Ibn Ibn `Abbas. Ibn Jarir quotes one or two others but thinks “custom” comes closest. Imām Razi points out that the word also has the connotation of fictitious tales.

Asad comments: “The noun *khuluq* denotes one’s ‘nature’ in the sense of ‘innate disposition’ (*tabi’ah*) or moral character (*Taj al-`Arus*); hence the use of the term to describe ‘that to which one clings’, i.e., one’s ‘innate habit’ or ‘custom’, and, in a specific sense, one’s religion (*ibid.*)”

Mawdudi adds: “This statement can be interpreted in two ways: (i) that in their view there was nothing new in what they were doing; their forefathers had done the same for centuries. Their religion, their culture and moral values were all the same, and yet their ancestors had not been subjected to any calamitous punish-

ment. Why should they fear, then, that they would be severely chastised? How could they be punished when their predecessors had not? Had their been anything too wrong with their way of life, they contended, God’s Wrath and punishment, with which they were being constantly threatened, would have seized them long ago. (ii) That regardless of what was being said to them then, it was appropriate to remember that many religious fanatics and moral purists had earlier said much the same. Yet the world had gone on as ever before. As far as they were concerned, just because some were overly obsessed with morality, this did not mean that the world would come to a standstill or suffer a monumental disaster.”

114. Asad writes, “The message (or sign: Au.) referred to here is contained in verses 128-130, which point out the three cardinal sins re-

[143] Verily, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger.

﴿١٤٣﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

[144] Therefore, fear Allah and follow me.

﴿١٤٤﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

[145] I do not ask you any wage for it. My wage falls only upon the Lord of the worlds.

﴿١٤٥﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[146] Will you be left in peace amid what is here?

﴿١٤٦﴾ أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ

[147] In gardens and springs?

﴿١٤٧﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

[148] Sown fields and date palms with tender swathes.¹¹⁵

﴿١٤٨﴾ وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلَعَتْهَا هَضِيمٌ

[149] And, do you skillfully¹¹⁶ hew houses out of mountains?

﴿١٤٩﴾ وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَارِهِينَ

[150] Therefore, fear Allah and follow me.

﴿١٥٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

sulting from man's inordinate striving for power: worship of anything apart from God, self-admiring search for 'glory', and cruelty or harshness towards one's fellow-men."

115. "Tender swathes" is how Mujahid understood the terms "*talhuha hadim*" where "tender" is for "*hadim*" and "swathes" for "*talh*" (Ibn Jarir), or, "ripe and rich" as expressed by Ibn `Abbas (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir), or, "near breaking point" because of its being heavily laden, as interpreted by Dahhak and as preferred by Ibn Jarir.

Yusuf Ali comments: "The date palm flowers on a long spathe: when the

flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit. The Thamud evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra."

116. The rendering reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas and Dahhak. Another opinion that came down from Ibn `Abbas is that the textual "*fareheen*" stands for "artfully" or "with artistic skill". Suddi said it meant "through coercion" or "with forced labor." Of course, the different meanings are reconcilable (Ibn Jarir).

[151] *And follow not the bidding of the boundary exceeders.*¹¹⁷

وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُتَسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

[152] *Those who spread corruption in the land, and carry out no reform.'*

الَّذِينَ يَفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Mawdudi offers the following, “Some of the buildings of the Thamud are still intact, and I did, indeed had the opportunity to see them for myself in December 1959. The place itself is located between Tabuk and Madina, lying a few miles to the north of al-‘Ula (called Wadi al-Qura at the time of the Prophet – peace upon him). Nowadays, this is known as al-Hijr and Mada’in Salih. As far as al-‘Ula is concerned, it is still located in lush green surroundings in the midst of springs and orchards. An ominous atmosphere, however, surrounds al-Hijr. Not only is it very sparsely populated, but it is a ruined place which gives a feeling of doom and decay. The few who live there do so in an area devoid of greenery and vegetation. Of the few wells that remain, one is identified by the local populace as that from which Salih’s she-camel used to drink. Now, this well is inside a former military barracks dating back to the Turkish period, and is dry...

“We also saw buildings of the type constructed by the Thamud at al-

Hijr in Midian along the Gulf of ‘Aqabah and at Petra in Jordan. As regards Petra, the buildings of the Thamud and the Nabateans stand side by side; their carvings and designs are so dissimilar that even a layman can positively say that they belong to two different periods and to two different nations. The English Orientalist Charles Doughty (d. 1926), the author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (published in 1888), attempted to prove that the Qur’ān was false on the grounds of his theory that the buildings at al-Hijr were not constructed by the Thamud but rather by the Nabateans. However, the difference between the architectural design of the people of Thamud and Nabateans is so clear that only someone who is altogether blind could suggest such a theory.”

117. “They are told: ‘All your skill is very well; but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men’s powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence; that

[153] They said, 'You are only one (of those) that are bewitched.'¹¹⁸

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

[154] You are naught but a man like ourselves. So bring forth a sign, if you are of the truthful.'

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بِآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

[155] He said, 'Here is a she-camel: to her a drink and to you a drink, on a day appointed.'¹¹⁹

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبٌ يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾

[156] And touch her not with malice, lest the chastisement of a Great Day seizes you.'

وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾

[157] But they hamstrung her; and then became regretful.'¹²⁰

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

[158] So the chastisement seized them. Surely, in that is a sign. But most of them were not to be believers.

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

[159] Surely, your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

makes mischief: but the door of repentance is open: will you repent?" - Yusuf Ali.

Another possibility, says Shabbir, is that he was addressing the common folk, warning them against blind following of the elites: they are a corrupt lot.

118. The translation is the common understanding of the word "musahharin." Ibn `Abbas however was of the opinion that the meaning is: "created." That is, they meant to say, "You are one of the created, who eats and drinks like us." Ibn Jarir prefers

this opinion and presents a verse by Labid in support.

Razi adds: "Sahr" is for the upper part of the stomach; and, according to Farra', everything that has a stomach is "musahhar."

119. That is, each had an appointed day for drink: a day for the camel, another for the people. The day the camel drank, the people were not supposed to draw water, and the day they drew, the camel was not given a drink from the well (Ibn Jarir).

120. But, once a people have seen the chastisement approaching them,

[160] *The people of Lut rejected the Messengers.*

﴿١٦٠﴾ كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

[161] *When their brother Lut said to them, 'Will you not fear?'*

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

[162] *Verily, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger.*

﴿١٦٢﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

[163] *Therefore, fear Allah and follow me.*

﴿١٦٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

[164] *I do not ask you any wage for it. My wage falls only upon the Lord of the worlds.*

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

[165] *Of all (people) do you approach males of the world¹²¹*

﴿١٦٥﴾ أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

[166] *And leave what your Lord created for you of your mates.¹²² Nay, you are a people transgressing (all limits).'*

﴿١٦٦﴾ وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجِكُمْ

their remorse is not worthy of acceptance (Zamakhshari, Razi and others).

Feelings of regret and remorse are natural feelings arising out of wrong actions. They are automatically generated by the inner self. Of value in the sight of Allah are acts of true repentance. But the Thamud showed no sign of these, they remained disbelieving to the end (Alusi and Thanwi, reworded).

Yusuf Ali further clarifies the issue: "Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given to them in the she-camel, which their prophet Sa-

lih had put forward as a test-case. Would they, through that symbol, respect the law' of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature? They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end."

121. The textual construction offers two possible meanings. One, "Of the people of the world, you are the only ones to commit this crime;" two, "you have opted for the males of the world to commit this crime" (Razi).

122. Mujahid said that the implication hidden in the words as in the

[167] They said, 'If you desist not O Lut, you shall be of those driven out.'¹²³

قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهَ يَا لُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الْمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

[168] He said, 'I am indeed a detester of your deed.'¹²⁴

قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْقَالِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

[169] 'My Lord! Deliver me and my family from the things they do.'

رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

[170] So we delivered him and his family all together.

فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

[171] Except for an old woman – among those who lingered.¹²⁵

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

Qur'an (lit., "do you leave that of your women which your Lord created for you") is that the nation of Lut sodomized their women also (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi).

123. Majid quotes, "Banishment ... is the punishment of expelling an offender from his native land ... the easiest way, short of summary execution, to rid the state of an evil-doer was to expel him from its boundaries. We find the recurrence of this in the record of all nations." (ERE. II. p. 346).

But Yusuf Ali has another view. He writes, "Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to

escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received."

124. "He was only among them from a stem sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings" (Yusuf Ali).

125. Another possible meaning, as said by Shawkani, is: "of those who remained in the punishment."

Asad explains: "... the old woman was Lot's wife – a native of Sodom – who chose to remain with her own people instead of accompanying her husband, whom she thus betrayed (cf. also 66: 10)."

[172] Then We destroyed the others.

ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

[173] And showered upon them a shower. So, evil was the shower of those that were warned.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

[174] Surely, in that is a sign. But most of them were not to be believers.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

[175] Surely, your Lord - He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-compassionate.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧٥﴾

[176] The dwellers of the Thicket¹²⁶ rejected the Messengers.

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾

[177] When Shu`ayb said to them, 'Will you not fear?

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

[178] Verily, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger.

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

[179] Therefore, fear Allah and follow me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٧٩﴾

[180] I do not ask you any wage for it. My wage falls only upon the Lord of the worlds.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

126. Literally, "the Companions of the Wood."

Commenting on the story of Shu`ayb and his people, Asad wrote at 7:85, "The region of Madyan – the Midian of the *Bible* – extended from the present-day Gulf of Aqabah westward deep into the Sinai Peninsula and to the mountains of Moab east of the Dead Sea; its inhabitants were Arabs of the Amorite group of tribes."

The textual "aykah" is in singular and means a thick, tangled tree. Its plural is "ayk" (Ibn Jarir).

Majid writes, "Aykah signifies 'The thicket, or collection of tangled trees, or the tangles of luxuriant, or abundant and dense trees.'"

However, a report coming from Ibn `Abbas tells us that he thought "aykah" was for wood, or woods, (i.e., a forest: Au). He also said that by "as-hab al-aykah," the allusion is

[181] Give full measure and be not of those who cause loss.¹²⁷

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾

to the people of Madyan. Some have read it as “laykah” (Ibn Jarir).

Nafi`, Ibn Kathir (not the commentator: Au.) and Ibn `Amir were among those who read it as “laykah.” Some others have thought that “Laykah” was the name of a town, but which sounds doubtful (Shawkani). Qurtubi also doubts the opinion.

Earlier, while discussing v.85 of *Al-A`raf*, Shawkani reported Suddi and `Ikrimah of opinion that Shu`ayb was indeed sent to two different peoples, one after another. Their opinions have been preserved by Ibn `Asakir and Ibn Is-haq.

Ibn Kathir reports some authorities as of opinion that Aykah and Madyan were two different places, and that Shu`ayb was an exception in that he was sent to two different peoples. In fact, `Abdullah b. `Amr even reports a *hadith* to this effect. But, in Ibn Kathir’s opinion, the *hadith* is weak, and is perhaps `Abdullah b. `Amr’s own statement. According to such scholars, Shu`ayb, was first sent to Madyan, to whom he belonged. Its inhabitants refused and were destroyed by a huge cry.

Thereafter he was sent to the people of Aykah – to whom he did not belong. Nevertheless, they too rejected and were destroyed under the shadow of a cloud. But Ibn Kathir differs with this opinion and thinks the two nations were one, who lived in Madyan. They worshipped a Tree to which they were attributed when it was said “As-hab al-Ay kah,” and which is the reason why Allah did not refer to Shu`ayb as their brother. Although their brother, because he was one of them, Shu`ayb was not referred in those words (as against, “their brother Hud, their brother `Aad, etc.: Au.), because Allah chose to refer to his people as the “Tree-worshippers.” (In contrast, when Allah did not mention Shu`ayb in reference to their worship of the Tree, he referred to Shu`ayb as their brother, as in *al-A`raf*: 85 – Au.).

However, there does not seem to be an agreement between the commentators over the issue. For further discussions see notes under verse 85 of *al-A`raf*.

127. That is, there are three ways of weighing: justly balanced, the scale

[182] And weigh with an even balance.¹²⁸

وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ﴿١٨٢﴾

[183] And defraud not the people of their commodities,¹²⁹ nor act corruptly in the earth, spreading mischief.¹³⁰

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

tilting down in favor of the buyer, and, third, the scale tilting down in favor of the seller. With the words, “And weigh with an even balance,” Allah exhorted them to weigh evenly, and with the words, “And diminish not the goods of the people,” He exhorted them that if they could not tilt the balance in favor of the buyer, then, they should not at least tilt it in their own favor. The hidden implication of the passage that follows is that if somebody did not tilt down in favor of the buyer, but rather, balanced justly, he committed no sin (Zamakhshari, Razi).

128. Alternatively, weigh justly, because Mujahid and Qatadah were of opinion that “qistas” is a word of Roman origin meaning just, or justice (Ibn Kathir).

129. A literal rendition would be, “And diminish not the goods of the people.” See note 125 of *Surah* al-A`raf, and note 105 of *Surah* Hud for various implications of the term bakhs.

130. The allusion is to highway robbery which they committed (Ibn Kathir). For other implications see notes 127, 128 and 129 of *al-A`raf* of this work.

Asad refers to the earlier discussion of a similar passages at Hud, *ayah* 84, where he wrote: “Some commentators assume that the people of Madyan were of a particularly commercial bent of mind, and given to fraudulent dealings. It is obvious, however, that the purport of this passage and of its sequence goes far beyond anything that might be construed by a purely ‘historical’ interpretation. What this version of Shu`ayb’s story aims at is – as always in the Qur`an – the enunciation of a generally applicable principle of ethics: namely, the impossibility of one’s being righteous with regard to God unless one is righteous – in both the moral and social sense of this word – in the realm of human relationships as well. This explains the insistence with which the above prohibition is re-stated in a positive form, as an injunction, in the next verse.”

[184] *And fear Him who created you and the earlier peoples.*¹³¹

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِيلَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٨٤﴾

[185] *They said, 'You are only one (of those) that are bewitched.*

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

[186] *You are naught but a man like ourselves. Indeed, we think you are of the liars.*

وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَتُّنُكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

[187] *So cause to fall upon us fragments of the sky, if you are of the truthful.*¹³²

فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

[188] *He said, 'My Lord knows best what you are doing.'*¹³³

قَالَ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

[189] *But they gave him the lie.*¹³⁴ *So the punishment of an overshadowing day seized them.*¹³⁵ *That indeed was a chastisement of a dreadful day.*

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٨٩﴾

131. Our translation of “jibillah” as peoples (or, alternatively, creations or generations) has the support of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Ibn Zayd as in Tabari. Suddi, Sufyan b. `Uyaynah and Zayd b. Aslam were also of the same opinion (Ibn Kathir).

132. Lit., *sadiqeen* means men of truth, or in simpler words, truth-tellers.

133. Shu`ayb purported to say in reply to their demand for fragments to fall on them, that Allah knows best your deeds. If they cross a certain level of tolerance that He has determined, He might punish you. I on my part do not have that knowledge

and hence cannot predict whether the punishment will follow or not (Zamakhshari, in effect).

134. That is, they continued to reject him and give him the lie (Alusi).

135. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak, Qatadah, Ibn Zayd and others have explained that the allusion by “zullah” (overshadowing) is to the cloud that overshadowed them after a few hot days. The people of Aykah (Madyan) assembled under the cloud seeking relief from the blazing heat. As they were drowsing, a huge noise overtook them and they all lay dead. (Although Ibn `Abbas figures as one of those who held the above

[190] Surely, in that is a sign.¹³⁶ But most of them were not to be believers.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

[191] Surely, your Lord - He indeed is the Almighty, the All-compassionate.¹³⁷

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٩١﴾

[192] This indeed is a Revelation of the Lord of the worlds.

وَإِنَّهُ لَنَزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

opinion), he is also reported to have said that whosoever of the scholars explained what the punishment of the Zullah was, could be given the lie (Ibn Jarir).

We can not be sure in exactly what sense Ibn 'Abbas made the above statement. But he used an uncommon word: 'Ulama' (scholars). Since the learned of his time were not referred to as 'Ulama', one wonders if he was alluding to the Jewish scholars (Au.).

According to some others, a fire descended and burned them all to ashes. The two statements are reconciled by Qatadah who said that the people of Aykah were destroyed by the Zullah while those of Madyan by a terrific noise produced by Jibril (Qurtubi).

Thus, Zamakhshari and Ibn Kathir add, they had asked for a piece of the heaven to fall upon them, and a piece of the heaven they were given.

And, (according to a report in Durr al-Manthur, Muhammad b. Ka' b al-Qurazi said (Ibn Kathir), that three elements were used to destroy them. First a quake shook them so that they all came out of their homes. Then Allah let loose intense heat upon them. When that had sufficiently roasted them, He sent a piece of cloud (that hung over their fields). It offered them such cool that everyone gathered under its shade. A huge cry overtook them and they all lay dead (Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani, and others).

136. In this particular case, the complete annihilation of a great power of the time carries a sign for the posterity (Au.).

137. Asad comments, "With this refrain ends the cycle of seven stories showing that spiritual truth in all its manifestations - whether it relates to an intellectual realization of God's existence, to a refusal to regard power, wealth or fame as real values,

[193] Brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit.¹³⁸

تَزَلَّ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾

[194] Upon your heart,¹³⁹ so that you might be of the warners.

عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

[195] In a clear, Arabic tongue.

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

or to the virtues of compassion and kindness towards all that lives on earth – has at all times been unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of mankind, and has always been submerged under the average man's blindness and deafness of heart. The very repetition of phrases, sentences and situations in all of the above stories – or, rather, in the above versions of these oft-narrated stories – tends to bring home to us the fact that the human situation as such never really changes, and that, in consequence, those who preach the truth must always struggle against human greed, power-hunger and proneness to self-adulation.”

138. Authorities like Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Ibn Jurayj and Dahhak have explained the textual Ruh al-Ameen as alluding to Jibril (Ibn Jarir). In fact, there is no difference in opinion among the scholars that Ruh al-Ameen is Jibril (Ibn Kathir).

Asad, who has his point to add, however, sums up the classical view:

“According to almost all the classical commentators, the expression ar-ruh al-amin (lit., ‘the faithful [or ‘trustworthy’] spirit’) is a designation of Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, who, by virtue of his purely spiritual, functional nature, is incapable of sinning and cannot, therefore, be other than utterly faithful to the trust reposed in him by God.”

139. What is the difference between sadr, fu`ad and qalb. Imām Razi writes: Sadr is obvious. It is the chest that houses the fu`ad and qalb. Fu`ad is for the whole of the heart: its main part, arteries and all. Qalb in contrast is that part which can be called as the seat of emotions, affections, memory and understanding.

The point is, the Qur`ān was first revealed to a trustworthy angel Jibril. He brought it down to reveal and leave an imprint directly on the heart of Prophet Muhammad, so that there was never a chance of corruption during the process of revelation (Au.).

[196] Truly, it is in the (revealed) Books of the earlier (peoples).¹⁴⁰

وَأِنَّهُ لَفِي زُجُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

140. What is in the revealed Books of the ancients? Imām Razi answers that the allusion could be to any of the following: the news, the Qur`ān, the Prophet's mention, as well as, the warning.

How could the Qur`ān be in the holy writ of the ancients, seeing that it is in the language of the Arabs, Arabic? It will be surprising to those who have been carried away by the Jewish propaganda that as against the propaganda, Hebrew is actually of a later origin than Arabic, and has its root in Arabic (Au.).

Majid writes, "Which (i.e., Arabic) has also been the language of the holy patriarchs and of the ancient Hebrews. 'One might, assume, as some scholars have done, that the Israelites' language in patriarchal times was Aramaic. Hommet maintains that Aramaic was but an Arabic dialect; and that originally the Israelites spoke Arabic.' (JE.VI. p. 307). 'The Arabic language is upon the whole nearest the primitive Semitic speech as it is by far the oldest and purest of all living tongues and its speakers in Arabia belong to the oldest and purest of races.' (DB. V. p. 87)

Asad adds: "That the message of the Qur`ān is, nevertheless, universal and has been stressed in many of its verses (e.g., 7: 128 or 25: 1). The other prophets mentioned in the Qur`ān who 'preached in the Arabic tongue' were Ishmael, Hud, Salih and Shu`ayb, all of them Arabians. In addition, if we bear in mind that Hebrew and Aramaic are but ancient Arabic dialects, all the Hebrew prophets may be included among 'those who preached in the Arabic tongue.'"

Some commentators, such as Zamakhshari, Alusi, and others have pointed that Imām Abu Hanifah used this verse to adduce that recitation of the translation of the Qur`ān in the Prayers, by someone who does not know Arabic should suffice in lieu of its obligatory recitation in Arabic. But there seems to be some confusion over the issue. At all events, it is reported that the Imām faced the question of tens of thousands of men and women (especially in the Persian region) who had become Muslims but neither knew Arabic, nor any part of the Qur`ān. What were they to do in their Prayers? So, he allowed

[197] And, has it not been a sign to them that the learned among the Children of Israel recognize it?¹⁴¹

أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٩٧﴾

[198] And, had We sent it down upon one of the non-Arabs,

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

it as a temporary measure, but withdrew when Arabic learning caught on (Au.).

141. According to Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others, the allusion by “the learned of the Children of Israel” was to scholars such as `Abdullah b. Salam and others (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali offers the rejoinder that Mukhayriq was also a Jewish scholar and a man of property who left his wealth for Islam.

Asad adds: “.. for instance, `Abd Allah ibn Salam, Ka`b ibn Malik and other learned Jews of Medina in the lifetime of the Prophet. Ka`b al-Ahbar the Yemenite and a number of his compatriots during the reign of `Umar, and countless others throughout the world who embraced Islam in the course of centuries.”

A great enemy of Islam and the Prophet, Muir admits that the scholars of the Children of Israel knew that Muhammad could not have been

but a Prophet. Majid comments and quotes him: “Some amongst the Jews not only encouraged the Prophet ‘in the idea that he might be’ but ‘even affirmed that he was that Prophet whom the Lord their God should raise up unto them of their brethren.’ (Muir, op. cit. p. 98).”

One might ask: Does the drawing of evidence from the Scriptures of old mean that they are authentic and trustworthy? Thanwi answers that the fact that mention of this Scripture and he who brought it remains in their Scriptures, despite their alterations, only strengthens the argument.

The statement here that the “learned of the Children of Israel know it” is a self-evident and unconditional one. The learned of the Children of Israel were mentioned in particular because it is they alone in those times who knew the holy writs. Their own common folk were as ignorant of their literature as the Arabs were of Judeo-Christian literature. With the

[199] *And he recited it upon them, they would not have been believers in it.*¹⁴² فَرَأَاهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾

dawn of the modern times, the holy literature that was so carefully concealed from the masses for centuries has come to be exposed through mass publication. Today, anyone can gain mastery over them and be referred to as the learned of the Scriptures of the Children of Israel. Any and any such person will testify that the Qur'an adds on to the good things stated in the holy writs, but is without any of the foul, and even filthy, material that adorn them (Au.).

142. That is, had this Qur'an, which is at the highest level of eloquence, been revealed to one of the non-Arabs, and so a self-evident miracle in that a non-Arab should be able to recite a highly rhetoric and eloquent Qur'an, even then the Makkans would not have believed in it. Such was the level of their intransigence (Thanwi, Shabbir).

Another possible meaning is that had the Qur'an been revealed in the tongue of one of the non-Arabs, the Makkans would have rejected it outright, no matter what qualities it bore. Another hidden implication is that a non-Arab would have

only conveyed the voice, that is, the words and sentences as pronounced. But you, O Prophet, you are able to appreciate it fully, being an eloquent Arab yourself and at the same wavelength, so to say, at the heart-level, as your countrymen (Razi).

Who is an 'ajamiyy anyway? Is it any non-Arab? The answer is, generally speaking yes. But strictly speaking it is for anyone who does not have proficiency in the Arabic language, even if he is an Arab (Ibn Jarir). Qurtubi states that an Arab who does not speak pure Arabic can be referred to as an 'ajamiyy, while a non-Arab is always an 'ajamiyy, even if he can speak pure Arabic. (In all cases, it is not a derogatory term, although many of the 'ajam among the Arabs use it that way: Au.).

Another meaning of a 'ajamiyy is animal. Hence 'Abdullah b. Muti' once pointed to his camel and said, "Had it come down upon this camel of mine, and, had it recited it upon the Quraysh, they would have still not believed in it because of their extreme aversion to Islam" (Ibn Jarir). According to other reports, it was

[200] That is how We have threaded it into the hearts of the criminals.¹⁴³

كَذَلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ
الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

[201] They will not believe in it, until they see have seen a painful chastisement.

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّىٰ يَرُوا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ
﴿٢٠١﴾

[202] But it will come upon them suddenly, while they perceive not.

فَيَأْتِيهِمْ بَعْتَةٌ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

[203] Then they will say, 'Shall we be respited?'

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنظَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

[204] What, do they seek to hasten Our chastisement?

أَفِعْذَابِنَا يُسْتَعْجَلُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

[205] Do you see then? If We gave them enjoyment for years!

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

[206] Then came to them that which they were promised!

ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

[207] Of what avail¹⁴⁴ to them the enjoyment that they were given?¹⁴⁵

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُمْتَعُونَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾

`Abdullah ibn Mas`ud who said that pointing to his camel (Alusi).

143. What does the article "it" stand for? The answer is, it is for denial. In other words Allah means to say, "That is how We have made the denial (disbelief, or polytheism) enter into the hearts of the criminals." That is how Hasan explained it (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). That is, when those people made a firm decision about never acknowledging the truth, then, in consequence, Allah drove it down their heart to reside their for good (Au.). In Asad's words, "As re-

gards God's 'causing' this to happen, see *Surah 2*, note 7.." And which we reproduce herewith, "a reference to the natural law instituted by God, whereby a person who persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to listen to the voice of truth gradually loses the ability to perceive the truth, 'so that finally, as it were, a seal is set upon his heart.'"

144. A few have understood the "maa" at the start of the verse as negative. But the majority understood it as interrogative.

145. That is, if Allah extended them with all the luxuries of life, but followed them up with a chastisement, will those luxuries be of any profit? Would they be able to prevent the chastisement from descending, or allowed respite to enjoy the bestowals? A *hadith* in *Musnad* Ahmed says,

يُؤْتَى بِأَتْعَمِ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
فَيُقَالُ : اغْمِسُوهُ فِي النَّارِ عَمْسَةً فَيُعْمَسُ فِيهَا ، ثُمَّ
يُقَالُ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ ، هَلْ رَأَيْتَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ
بِكَ نَعِيمٌ قَطُّ ؟ فَيَقُولُ : لا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ مَا رَأَيْتُ
خَيْرًا قَطُّ ، وَلا قَرَّةَ عَيْنٍ قَطُّ وَيُؤْتَى بِأَشَدِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
ضُرًّا وَبَلَاءً كَانَ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَيُقَالُ : اغْمِسُوهُ عَمْسَةً
فِي الْجَنَّةِ ، فَيُعْمَسُ فِيهَا عَمْسَةً ، فَيُقَالُ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ
آدَمَ ، هَلْ رَأَيْتَ بُؤْسًا قَطُّ ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ شِدَّةٌ قَطُّ
؟ فَيَقُولُ : لا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ ، مَا مَرَّ بِي بُؤْسٌ قَطُّ ،
وَلا رَأَيْتُ شِدَّةً قَطُّ

“The most luxurious man of the world - destined to be in the Fire – will be brought on the Day of Judgment and said, ‘Dip him a single dip in the Fire.’ Then he will be asked, ‘Son of Adam. Have you ever experienced any good? Did any blessing pass by you?’ He will reply, ‘No, my Lord, I have never experienced any good, nor any cool of the

eyes.’ And a believer who had left a most miserable life in the world will be brought and said, ‘Dip him into Paradise once.’ So he will be given a single dip into it and asked, ‘Son of Adam. Did you experience any hardship? Did any misery pass by you?’ He will reply, ‘No by my Lord. No misery ever pass by me, nor have I ever experienced any hardship’” (Ibn Kathir).

A version close to this is in Muslim also (Au.).

It is said that Maymun b. Mahran longed to see Hasan (al-Busri). He chanced upon him during a Tawaf. He requested him for admonition. Hasan recited these verses to him, “Do you see then? If We gave them enjoyment for years, then came to them that which they were promised; of what avail to them the enjoyment that they were given?” Maymun told him, “You couldn’t have advised me in better words (Zamakhshari). It is reported that every morning `Umar b. `Abdul `Aziz would hold his beard and recite these lines.

[208] And never did We destroy a town but it had warners.

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنذِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

[209] A reminder! And never have We been unjust.

ذِكْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

[210] The Devils have not brought it down.¹⁴⁶

وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢١٠﴾

[211] It does not behoove them, neither are they able.¹⁴⁷

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٢١١﴾

146. Unable to explain the phenomenon of revelation, the Makkans said that probably a Jinn whispered these magical words into the Prophet's ear. Early in his mission when revelation was delayed, a woman said to the Prophet, "Perhaps, your Devil has abandoned you" (Thanwi, Shabbir and others).

In Asad's words, "During the early years of his prophetic mission, some of Muhammad's Meccan opponents tried to explain the rhetorical beauty and persuasiveness of the Qur'an by insinuating that he was a soothsayer (kahin) in communion with all manner of dark forces and evil spirits (*shayateen*)."

Some scholars have assumed Hasan as erring when he said that the text must be read as Shayatoon, rather than *Shayateen*, since there is no causative agent to change Shayatoon to *Shayateen*. *Shayateen*, the critics have pointed out, is the plural of

Shaytan just as Basateen is the plural of Bustan. But Qurtubi reports Yunus b. Habeeb hearing from a Bedouin:

دَخَلْنَا بسَاتِينَ مِنْ وِرَائِهَا بسَاتُونَ

Zamakhshari, Qurtubi and Alusi present one or two other reasons to demonstrate why reading the text *Shayateen* as Shayatoon could be justified.

147. "How is it possible that devils should have anything to do with a Book so lofty in its conception, so perfect in its execution, and so excellent in its teaching?" (Majid)

Mawdudi expounds: "Did they (the Quraysh) ever hear that a Satan summoned people to God through a soothsayer? Or asked people not to worship idols? Or warned them about retribution in the Hereafter? Or asked them to stop being unjust and to mend their immoral behavior? Did any Satan ever call people

[212] Indeed, far from hearing are they removed.¹⁴⁸

﴿٢١٢﴾ إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُولُونَ

[213] So, invoke not along with Allah any (other) deity, lest you should be one of those chastised.

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٢١٣﴾

to righteous deeds, to truthful and honest ways of living, to a fair and appropriate behavior with God’s creations? Clearly, all this goes against the very grain of every Satan’s nature. A Satan’s nature is to divide people against one another and to call them to evil deeds. Furthermore, people tend to go to those soothsayers whom they believe to have connections with Satans and not to learn about God and piety.”

148. Thus Allah gave three reasons why the Devils could not have brought down the Qur’an: They are unfit and inappropriate for the task for, they are of corrupt nature, misguided, and misguiding. In contrast, the Qur’an is noble, and guides to the noble prohibiting the wrong and enjoining the right. They are dark matter while the Qur’an is Light. The two then stand in contrast. Secondly, they are not capacitated to bear such a burden. It had to be a powerful personality, like that of Jibril, to carry it down. Finally, they were prohibited from listening to any part

of it, in fact, from picking one of its words. Such measures were taken to safeguard the Qur’an to such perfect degree as to allow for no doubt about its purity to surface up. Allah reported to us the situation of the Shayatin just before the Qur’anic revelations were to begin in words (72: 8-10),

{وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مَلِيًّا خَرَسًا شَدِيدًا
وَشُهْبًا (٨) وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَتَعَدُّ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ
يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَصَدًا (٩) وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي
أَشَرُّ أَرِيدَ يَمْنَنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا }
[الجن: ٨ - ١٠]

“And we touched on the heaven but found it filled with powerful guards and burning flames. And, we used to sit there in positions to (steal) a hearing but whoever listens now will find a burning flame lying in wait for him. And we do not know whether evil is intended for those on the earth or whether their Lord intends for them a right course” (Ibn Kathir, reworded).

Alusi however has his own arguments to demonstrate that when the Qur’an said, “Indeed, they are banished from (its) hearing,” it meant

[214] And warn your clan, the nearest kinsmen.¹⁴⁹

﴿٢١٤﴾ وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

that the Devils are barred from eavesdropping on what the angels talk between themselves. Following this interpretation, a reworded translation would be, "Indeed, they are banished from hearing."

149. Al-`Asheerah (clan) falls last in the genealogical group-listing of the past Arab times, as understood by some scholars. The listing has six groups, each headed by a renounced figure, a male descendant of the group above, and a progenitor of the group below: Al-Sha`b (e.g., `Adnan, Qahtan, etc.), al-Qabeelah (e.g., Rabi`ah, Mudar, etc.), al-`Imarah (e.g., Quraysh, Kinanah, etc.), al-Batn (`Abd Munaf, `Abd Makhzun, etc.), al-Fakhz (Banu Hashim, Banu Umayyah, etc.), and al-Faseelah or al-`Asheerah (Banu `Abbas, Banu `Abd al-Muttalib, etc.). Below this is no grouping and no one is left except a man and his progeny (Alusi).

The fact is not lost upon the non-Muslims that the Prophet was able to convert some of his nearest men and women to the faith he had brought while we know that the closest are the last to be impressed by any ex-

traordinary person of theirs. Majid quotes, "What is very striking in the religious career of Muhammad, at the beginning of his activity, is that the first converts were among the members of his own family and relatives. I believe that he is the only founder of religion who had the privilege of gaining to his cause those nearest to him either through blood or through close connection. (Edouard Monter, quoted in Zaki Ali's Islam in the World, p.5). 'The missionary spirit of Islam is no after-thought in its history; it interpenetrates the religion from its beginning,' says another Christian scholar. 'As soon as the Prophet was convinced of his divine mission, his earliest efforts were directed towards persuading his own family of the truth of the new doctrine .. The first convert was his faithful wife Khadijah... Among the earliest believers were his adopted children Zayd and `Ali, and his bosom friend Abu Bakr.' (Arnold, Preaching of Islam, pp. 11-12)."

hadith literature has several reports that tell us about how the Prophet reacted when he received these verses.

One transmitted to us by Ibn `Abbas says that he climbed Mount Safa and called out,

« يَا بَنِي فَهْرٍ ، يَا بَنِي عَدِيٍّ » . لِبُطُونِ قُرَيْشٍ حَتَّى اجْتَمَعُوا ، فَجَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ إِذَا لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ يَخْرُجَ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولًا لِيَنْظُرَ مَا هُوَ ، فَجَاءَ أَبُو هَبِّبٍ وَهَرَيْشٌ فَقَالَ « أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَحْبَبْتُمْكُمْ أَنَّ حَيَلًا بِالْوَادِي تُرِيدُ أَنْ تُغَيِّرَ عَلَيْكُمْ ، أَكُنْتُمْ مُصَدِّقِيَّ » . قَالُوا تَعَمْ ، مَا جَرَّيْنَا عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا صِدْقًا . قَالَ « فَإِنِّي نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ » . فَقَالَ أَبُو هَبِّبٍ تَبَّ لَكَ سَائِرَ الْيَوْمِ ، هَلْهَذَا جَمَعْتَنَا فَتَرَكْتَ (تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي هَبِّبٍ وَتَبَّ

“O the sons of Fihir, the sons of `Adiyy, calling out to the Quraysh” So the people gathered. Either a man came by himself or sent someone across to find out what the matter was. Some of the Quraysh, among them Abu Lahab came. The Prophet addressed them in words, “What will you say if I said that there is a cavalry at the foot of this mountain ready to launch an attack on you? Will you believe me?” They said, “Yes. We have not experienced a lie from you.” He said, “(Let me tell you that) I am a warner unto you in the face of a severe chastisement.” At that Abu Lahab said, “Perish be you the day long. Did you gather us just for this?” So Allah revealed, “Perished be the hands of Abu Lahab, and perish be he” (Ibn Jarir).

The report is in in Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad (Ibn Kathir).

Another narrative comes down through Abu Hurayrah. It says that when this verse “And warn your nearest kinsmen” was revealed, the Prophet invited the Quraysh, all of them, generally and specifically (to his house). He said,

يَا بَنِي كَعْبِ بْنِ لُؤَيٍّ أَنْقِدُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ
يَا بَنِي مِرَّةَ بْنِ كَعْبٍ أَنْقِدُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ يَا
بَنِي عَبْدِ شَمْسٍ أَنْقِدُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ يَا بَنِي
عَبْدِ مَنَافٍ أَنْقِدُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ يَا بَنِي هَاشِمٍ
أَنْقِدُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ أَنْقِدُوا
أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ يَا فَاطِمَةُ أَنْقِذِي نَفْسِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ
فَإِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا غَيْرَ أَنَّ لَكُمْ رَحِمًا
سَأَبُلُّهَا بِبِلَالِهَا

“O the sons of Ka`b b. Lu`ayy, save yourselves from the Fire. O the sons of Murra b. Ka`b, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of `Abd Munaf, save yourselves from the Fire. O the sons of Hashim, save yourselves from the Fire. O sons of `Abd al-Muttalib, save yourselves from the Fire. O Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, save yourself from the Fire. By Allah, I cannot avail you at all against Allah except that you have kindred rights which I shall try to deliver you in full” (Ibn Jarir, Razi).

Muslim has preserved this *hadith* (Qurtubi). It is also in Tirmidhi and Ahmad (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Ibn Jarir has another long report narrated by `Ali that speaks of how the Prophet got prepared dinner for his kindred, (some thirty to forty of them) when a small amount of food sufficed them all, although, each of them a devourer of great amounts. But Abu Lahab cut short the Prophet's effort to address them at the end of the dinner, saying, "The man has worked magic on you" – referring to a small amount of food proving sufficient for so many. So, he invited them a second time and then a third time when he succeeded in addressing them. He told them, "O sons of `Abd al-Muttalib, I do not know of any young man among the Arabs who brought them better than what he brought them. I have brought you the best of things of this and the next world. And I have been commanded to invite you to it. So, who will support me in this on promise that he will be my brother .." No one responded except `Ali.

Ibn Kathir however points out that the chain of narration has one name `Abd al-Ghaffar, about whom most scholars have distrusted while `Ali b. al-Madini accused him of lies. How-

ever, the report seems to echo in others of similar nature, although not as long. One is in Ahmad, transmitted by `Ali himself that "when the above verse was revealed, the Prophet got his clansmen gathered together in his own house over dinner. After they were well fed and drunk – but the food and drink as if they had not even been touched – he addressed them in words, 'O children of `Abd al-Muttalib. I have been sent to you in particular and the people in general. You have heard of this verse. So, who will pledge his hand that he will be my companion in Paradise?' No one stood up in response. So I stood up, although the youngest among them. He told me, 'Sit down.' He appealed three times and every time it was I alone who responded. He would say, 'Sit down.' Until, at the third time he struck his hand on mine." (That is, took the pledge) – Ibn Kathir.

It is a fair guess to say that the Prophet invited several of them at several times to warn them over the dinner.

Way into the practical world, Ibn Kathir warns how sometimes a man's kindred can be the last one's to accept his message. `Abd al-Wahid Dimashqi reported, "Once I saw Abu Darda' delivering lessons to the people and offering the question-

[215] And lower your wings to those of the believers who follow you.¹⁵⁰

وَإخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾

[216] But if they disobey you,¹⁵¹ say, 'I am free of responsibility for what you do.'

فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ
﴿٢١٦﴾

[217] And place your trust¹⁵² in the All-Mighty, the All-Merciful.¹⁵³

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٢١٧﴾

ers his judicial opinions. While that was going on, some members of his household (perhaps his others) were busy chatting among themselves in another corner of the mosque. I said, 'What's the matter that the people are eager to receive knowledge from you, but your own kith and kin are right here, engaged in pleasantries?' He replied, "That is because I have heard the Prophet say, "The most ascetic with reference to this world are the Prophets, and the most difficult on them are their kindred."

150. That is, treat them mildly (Ibn Jarir). To connect it with the previous verses: 'Warn thy kin; which would require some amount of plain speaking, or, as they would term, some harsh words, but once they have submitted to Allah, then, act kindly towards them.'

Also see note 74 under *Surah* al-Hijr of this work (Au.).

151. That is, those of your kindred who refuse to obey you (Ibn Jarir).

152. What is tawakkul? Zamakhshari tries one-liners: It is said that tawakkul is "a man's entrusting of an affair unto someone who has power over that affair and is able to harm or benefit." [That is, he knows that the man he is trusting has the ability to harm or benefit him, yet, he trusts Allah more, and entrusts an affair to him, fearless of his ability to do harm: Au.]. Another definition is, "Mutawakkil is someone who when surprised by an affair, does not try to defend himself by means of that which is forbidden by Allah." In other words, if a man is visited by a misfortune, and he asks someone to help him out, then he did not cross the boundaries of tawakkul, for he did not employ sinful ways to overcome it.

153. That is, place your trust in One who is Mighty in dealing with His

[218] Who sees you when you stand (in Prayer).¹⁵⁴

الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ﴿٢١٨﴾

[219] And your movements amongst the prostrate.¹⁵⁵

وَتَقَلُّبِكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٢١٩﴾

[220] He indeed, He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

[221] Shall I tell you upon whom the Devils descend?

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن تَتَرَلُّ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢٢١﴾

enemies, and Merciful towards those who turn to Him and do not disobey Him (Ibn Jarir).

154. While Ibn `Abbas and Dahhak said the meaning is, “He sees you when you arise,” `Ikrimah and Qatadah said, “He sees you when you stand in Prayers.” Hasan (al-Busri) however thought it means, “He sees you when you are alone in Prayers, as He sees you when you are in a group.” This was also the opinion of `Ikrimah, `Ata al-Khurasani and Hasan al-Busri (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

155. The meaning forwarded by Ibn `Abbas and `Ikrimah is that He sees your movements of standing, bowing down and prostrations in Prayers performed in the congregation, but Mujahid said that the implication is that the Prophet saw those who Prayed behind him, as he saw anyone in front of him. (This does not

sound like a strong opinion: Qurtubi). A third meaning offered by Ibn `Abbas is that Allah sees the Prophet when he moves about among those devoted to His worship (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi).

Mujahid’s interpretation is in the *Sahihayn* (though not in explanation of this verse: Au.). They report severally that the Prophet said,

أَقِيمُوا صفوفكم ؛ فَإِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ مِنْ وَّرَاءِ ظَهْرِي

“Straighten up your rows for I can see you from behind my back” (Ibn Kathir).

A kind of esoteric interpretation comes from an unexpected quarter. Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir (the latter from Bazzar and Ibn Abi Hatim) report that Ibn `Abbas said in explanation of the words, “And your movements amongst those who prostrate themselves” that the allusion is to his (the Prophet’s) movements from

[222] They descend upon every sinful liar.¹⁵⁶

تَنْزَلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ آفَاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

the back of one Prophet to the back of another Prophet until He (Allah) brought him out as a Prophet. This report is also in Tabarani and Abu Nu'aym's *Dala'il* (Shawkani). In other words, the term "sajideen" has been understood to be alluding to "Prophets."

Alusi adds that although some have used this verse to prove that the Prophet's parents were believers, as is the position of most of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, and although he fears kufr on the part of him who spoke of them disparagingly, yet, he does not think this verse can be used in evidence.

Shabbir quotes Abu Hayyan from his *Tafsir*, that the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbas about the belief of the Prophet's parents is a fabrication of the Shi'ah. Yet he also reports the opinion of Ibn Hajr as in his *Zawaa-jir* that, "Allah honored our Prophet by raising his parents who declared their faith in him." He quotes Ibn 'Abideen explaining how this can be reconciled with the reports that

speak of his father being in the Fire, or Allah's refusal to supplicate for his mother. See *Fath al-Mulhim*, v.2, p. 535-6).

Haythami says in *Majma'* that the attribution to Ibn 'Abbas is trustworthy since all the narrators are those of the *Sihah* works, except for one who was trustworthy too (Au.).

Although *Zamakhshari* does not state directly, but seems to imply that the allusion is to the Prophet's eagerness to know how his followers were conducting themselves at the best time of devotion viz., the hours before dawn. It is reported that when Prayer in the depth of the night (*tahajjud*) was declared non-obligatory, he went around the houses in the following nights to check how they were conducting themselves. To his gladness, he found the houses buzzing like bee-hives, with supplications, prayers and recitation of the *Qur'an*.

156. The word *Ifk* of the text is used for a dirty lie.

[223] They give the ear,¹⁵⁷ but most of them
are liars.¹⁵⁸ يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْتَرُهُمْ كَاذِبُونَ

﴿٢٢٣﴾

157. The words *yulqun as-sam`a* have also been interpreted to mean, “they pass on the hearing” (Zamakhshari). The choice of words seems to lend both the meanings at a time. Hence, Mujahid has explained (as in Ibn Jarir) that the Devils drop what they pick up from the heaven into the ears of every sinful dirty liar. Ibn Kathir has similar explanation.

158. `A'isha is reported to have said that the Devils add up to what they steal of the words, a hundred lies and pass on to every sinful liar (Ibn Jarir).

`A'isha is also reported in Bukhari as transmitting,

سَأَلَ أَنَسُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الْكُهَّانِ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُمْ لَيْسُوا بِشَيْءٍ فَقَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهُمْ يُحَدِّثُونَ بِالشَّيْءِ يَكُونُ حَقًّا قَالَ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تِلْكَ الْكَلِمَةُ مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَخْطُفُهَا الْجِنُّ فَيَقْرُؤُهَا فِي أُذُنِ وَلِيِّهِ كَقَرْقَرَةِ الدَّجَاجَةِ فَيَخْلُطُونَ فِيهِ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ مِائَةِ كَذِبَةٍ

“The Prophet was asked about the fortune-tellers. He said, ‘They are worthless.’ They said, ‘Messenger of Allah, sometimes they say things that come out true.’ He replied, ‘That is the true

word that a Jinni picks up which he then mutters, like the muttering of a hen, into the ears of his friends. They then add up to it more than a hundred lies.”

Bukhari also preserved a narrative of Abu Hurayrah which reports the Prophet as having said,

إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ الْأَمْرَ فِي السَّمَاءِ صَرَبَتْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِأَجْنِحَتِهَا خُضْعَانًا لِقَوْلِهِ كَأَنَّهُ سِلْسِلَةٌ عَلَى صَفْوَانٍ فَإِذَا {فَرَّغَ} عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا {لِلَّذِي قَالَ {الْحَقُّ} وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ} فَيَسْمَعُهَا مُسْتَرْتِقُ السَّمْعِ وَمُسْتَرْتِقُ السَّمْعِ هَكَذَا بَعْضُهُ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ وَوَصَفَ سَفِيَانٌ بِكَفِّهِ فَحَرَفَهَا وَبَدَدَ بَيْنَ أَصَابِعِهِ فَيَسْمَعُ الْكَلِمَةَ فَيُلْقِيهَا إِلَى مَنْ تَحْتَهُ ثُمَّ يُلْقِيهَا الْآخَرَ إِلَى مَنْ تَحْتَهُ حَتَّى يُلْقِيهَا عَلَى لِسَانِ السَّاحِرِ أَوْ الْكَاهِنِ فُرُبَمَا أَدْرَكَ الشَّهَابُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُلْقِيهَا وَرُبَمَا أَلْفَاهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يُدْرِكُهُ فَيَكْذِبُ مَعَهَا مِائَةَ كَذِبَةٍ فَيَقَالُ أَلَيْسَ قَدْ قَالَ لَنَا يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَكَذَا وَكَذَا فَيُصَدِّقُ بِتِلْكَ الْكَلِمَةِ الَّتِي سَمِعَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

“When Allah decrees a thing in the heaven the angels beat their wings, like chains on rocks, in fear and humility to His command. When fear recedes from their hearts they ask, ‘What did your Lord say?’ They say, ‘The Truth. He is the Lofty, the Great.’ That is heard by those who try

[224] As for the poets, it is the deviated ones who follow them.¹⁵⁹

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

to steal a hearing: this way, one upon another – [Sufyan demonstrated with his hands by spreading the fingers of his hand and placing the other hand on them]. So he hears the word and passes it on to the one below him. The other passes it on to the one below him, until they put into the ears of a magician or soothsayer. Sometimes a flame strikes him before he can pass it on. At other times he is struck after he has passed it on. Then he (the magician or soothsayer) adulterates it with a hundred lies. Then it is said (when he predicts, and it comes out true), ‘Did he not say to us on such and such a day?’ He is testified became of the true word heard from the heaven.”

Muslim also has a similar report. `A'isha also reports in Bukhari from the Prophet,

الملائكة تُحَدِّثُ فِي الْعَنَانِ - وَالْعَنَانُ : الْعَمَامُ -
بالأمر يكون في السماء ، فتسمع الشياطين الكلمة ،
فتَقْرؤها في أذن الكاهن كما تَقْرُ القَارُورَةُ ، فيزيدون
معها مائة كذبة

“The angles discuss between themselves in the clouds earthly

affairs. The *Shayateen* pick up a word and pore it in the ears of a soothsayer – like (water poured into) a bottle. In turn they add a hundred lies to it” (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi conjectures that it cannot be a matter of surprise that just as the Devils pick up a word, the soul of one of the righteous should occasionally picks up a true word (from the first firmament). His opinion is strengthened by his personal experience. When he was five, he was told to do some revision of his text-book. He told his mother he was not going to do any such thing because the Minister was to be killed tomorrow. No one of course took it serious – not even himself. But next morning the Minister was killed by his own retinue.

Also see *Surah* al-Hijr, note 18 of this work for connected details (Au.)

159. This was in refutation of the allegation by the Quraysh that since there was rhyme and rhythm in many parts of the Qur`an, it was a poetic composition, and that the Prophet was a poet. But others have said that what they implied was that

[225] *Have you not seen that they wander distracted in every valley?*¹⁶⁰

أَمْ تَرَأَيْتُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهيمُونَ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

the Prophet had come up with some quite imaginative talk, in the manner of the poets (Alusi).

To condemn the poets in such summary terms was only possible because it was Allah who revealed these verses. They held such power and influence in the pre-Islamic world, that to attack them was attacking scientists or journalists of today. Who could have after the European Renaissance condemned Homer and Virgil, Sophocles and Aeschylus, Dante and Milton, Keats and Shelley? Anyone who did that would be dismissed outright as a lunatic. But poets in Arabia enjoyed greater influence, and Revelation offers us its own tests. Majid offers us some quotes: "The poets, when under inspiration, were believed to be under the power of Jinn. This gave them great distinctions. They were, before Islam, often the leaders and representatives of those tribes. Honour was accorded them not from appreciation of intellectual endowment or of artistic genius but because of their uncanny connection with the supernatural." (ERE. X. p. 135) The poets, in Arabia, 'were the

men of knowledge for their people. Their incantations held good as oracles, first of all for their several tribes, but no doubt extending their influence often beyond their own particular sept.' (De Boer, History of Philosophy in Islam, p.2). 'As his office developed the poet acquired a variety of functions. In battle his tongue was as effective as his people's bravery. In peace he might prove a menace to public order by his fiery harangue. His poems might arouse a tribe to action in the same manner as tirades of a demagogue in a modern political campaign. As the press agent, the journalist, of his day his favour was sought by princely gifts, as the records of the courts of al-Hira and al-Ghassan show. He was at the time the moulder and the agent of public opinion. Qat` Al-lisan (cutting off the tongue) was the classical formula used for subsidizing the poet and thus avoiding his satires.' (Hitti, op. cit., pp. 94-95)."

160. That is, Ibn `Abbas explained, they indulge in every foolish talk. Mujahid said that the meaning is: they employ every art to bewitch

others (Ibn Jarir). Ibn `Abbas said the same thing, who is also reported to have understood the verse to mean, "They engage in every kind of verbal art" (Ibn Kathir).

Asad adds: "The idiomatic phrase *hama fi widyan* (lit. he wandered [or roamed] through valleys) is used, as most of the commentators point out, to describe a confused or aimless – and often self-contradictory – play with words and thoughts. In this context it is meant to stress the difference between the precision of the Qur`ān, which is free from all inner contradictions ... and the vagueness often inherent in poetry."

Majid further elaborates, "I.e., always indulging in fancies and phantasms divorced from real life. The Arab poets very often painted a vicious thing so vividly and alluringly as to excite passions and to darken the intellect. Poetry unless kept under control by reason or Revelation, is apt to lead to mental unbalance and hysteria, and is the fountain-head of false values."

Had Majid not named Arab poets, we would have thought he was talking about modern-day pop-music and the poetry that goes with it. These produce greater devastating effects on modern man (Au.).

Mawdudi writes: "Arabic poetry at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave vent to lasciviousness and eroticism, wine-bibbing, tribal prejudice, pride and vanity, vituperation and eroticism, bragging and eulogy, sycophancy and obscenity, and polytheistic superstition."

It was such poetry that the Prophet censured (Au.).

Ibn `Umar is preserved in Bukhari as reporting that the Prophet and a few Companions passed by a poet reciting poetry. The Prophet said,

خذوا الشيطان - أو أمسكوا الشيطان - لأنَّ يَمْتَلِيءَ
جَوْفُ الرَّجُلِ قَيْحًا يَرِيهِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ يَمْتَلِيءَ شِعْرًا

"Seize your Devil, or, hold your Devil. It is better for a man to fill the inside of his body with puss than to fill it with poetry" (Ibn Kathir).

The second part of the report is found in all the Sihah works as noted in Fayd al-Qadir. But obviously, it applied to the man perhaps because he did not qualify the next verse (Au.)

Shawkani presents a report from Qurtubi which reports the Prophet as having said,

الشِّعْرُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْكَلَامِ، فَحَسَنُهُ كَحَسَنِ الْكَلَامِ، وَقَبِيحُهُ
كَفَبِيحِ الْكَلَامِ

[226] And that they say what they do not do.¹⁶¹

[227] Except those who believed and worked righteous works,¹⁶² remembered Allah much,¹⁶³ and defended after they were wronged.¹⁶⁴ And soon will the wronging ones know what vicissitude they will turn.¹⁶⁵

وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٢٦﴾
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَانْتَصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
ظَلَمُوا وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ
يَنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

“Good poetry is like good prose and bad poetry is like bad prose.”

(The above report has been treated as *Sahih* by Albani: S. Ibrahim).

Muslim has another report. `Amr bin Shareed reports his father:

رَدِفْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- يَوْمًا فَقَالَ
« هَلْ مَعَكَ مِنْ شِعْرِ أُمَيَّةَ بْنِ أَبِي الصَّلْتِ شَيْئًا .
قُلْتُ نَعَمْ قَالَ « هَيْه ». فَأَنْشَدْنَاهُ بَيْتًا فَقَالَ « هَيْه
». ثُمَّ أَنْشَدْنَاهُ بَيْتًا فَقَالَ « هَيْه ». حَتَّى أَنْشَدْنَاهُ
مِائَةَ بَيْتٍ .

“Once I shared a camel’s back with the Prophet. He asked, ‘Do you know any poetical works of Umayyah b. Salt?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘Let’s have it.’ So I recited a verse. He said, ‘More.’ So I recited another. He said, ‘More,’ until I recited a hundred verses.

Qurtubi thinks it was Shareed himself and not his father who shared the camel’s back with the Prophet; and that the Prophet listened to that length because Umayyah’s poetry was filled with wisdom.

161. Abu Zayd has said that the allusion was to the unbelieving poets (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi wrote: “This is another common trait of the poets ... They might be eloquent about generosity but be utterly stingy themselves. They might lavish their rhetoric on courage but be cowardly themselves. They might extol dignified indifference to the rich, give expression to contentment with one’s portion in life and to feelings of self-respect and honour, but themselves be steeped in greed and avarice. They might also be critical of others though their own lives be a catalogue of serious misdeeds.”

162. It is reported that when the verse condemning the poets was revealed, Hassan b. Thabit, `Abdullah b. Rawaha and Ka`b b. Malik went to the Prophet weeping. They said, “Allah had known when He revealed this verse that we are poets.” The Prophet replied with the verse

that follows: "Except those who believed and worked righteous works, remembered Allah much, and defended themselves after they were wronged." Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, `Ikrimah and many others believed that this verse "Except those who believed .." offers an exception to the general indictment expressed in the earlier verse, "As for the poets, it is the deviated ones who follow them" (Ibn Jarir).

163. That is, Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Zayd said, remembered Allah much in their poetry (Ibn Jarir).

164. Whom did they defend? Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others have said that the allusion is to the defense of Islam against the poets.

Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others quote from the *Sahihayn* and other works: The Prophet said to Hassan b. Thabit,

اهْجُهُمْ فَإِنَّ جِبْرِيْلَ مَعَكَ

"Satirize them, Jibril is with you."
(In fact, he had got erected a platform for Hassan in his mosque, as reported by Ibn Hisham: Alusi).

On the authority of Ka`b, as in *Musnad* of Ahmad, when Allah had re-

vealed what He revealed in connection with the poets, the Prophet said,

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يُجَاهِدُ بِسِنْفِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ
لَكَأَنَّ تَرْمُوتَهُمْ بِهِ نَضْحَ النَّبْلِ

"A believer fights with his sword and with his tongue. And, by Him in whose Hands is my soul, as if what you shoot at them (of poetry) are showers of arrows" (Ibn Kathir).

Haythami treated this report of Ahmad as *Sahih* (S. Ibrahim in Shawkani).

Thus, writes Qurtubi, there is good poetry and there is bad poetry. It is bad poetry that is the object of criticism here. The Prophet never discouraged good poetry. How could he when he would hear it recited to him, and men like Abu Bakr said their own poetry? The reports that speak of it in disparaging terms are aimed at bad poets, like the Bedouin whom he called 'the Devil', who was probably singing some uncouth words. Throughout history scholars have never criticized poetry per se. Far above that, most of the renowned figures among the Companions either said poetry, quoted it, or heard and appreciated it. The Prophet is reported by Abu Hurayrah as saying on the pulpit of the mosque, "The

most truthful of words – or he said poetry – that an Arab said was that of Labeed who said,

أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَا خِلاَ اللهُ بَاطِلٌ

“Lo! Everything, save Allah, is false.”

Muslim added to the above version the following words of the Prophet,

وَكَادَ أُمَيَّةُ بْنُ أَبِي الصَّلْتِ أَنْ يُسْلِمَ

“Umayyah b. Abi Salt was very near to becoming a Muslim.”

It is reported of Ibn Sirin sang out some poetry. Somebody from among the people around him protested, “Does a man like you recite poetry?” Ibn Sirin told him, “You silly man. Is poetry any different from prose? Both have the good and bad of them.”

As example we could cite the words of `Abbas who said in praise of our Prophet,

مِنْ قَبْلِهَا طَبَّتْ فِي الظَّلَالِ وَفِي

مُسْتَوْدِعٍ حَيْثُ يُخَصِّفُ الوَرْقُ

تَمَّ هَبَطَتْ الْبِلَادَ لَا بَشَرٌ

أَنْتَ وَلَا مُضَعَّةٌ وَلَا عَلَقٌ

بَلْ نُطْفَةٌ تَرَكَّبَ السَّفِينِ وَقَدْ

أَلَجَمَ نَسْرًا وَأَهْلَهُ الْعَرَقُ

تَثْقُلُ مِنْ صَالِبٍ إِلَى رَجِمٍ

إِذَا مَضَى عَالَمٌ بَدَأَ طَبَقُ

Earlier you had stayed pure in darknesses and in the

Storehouses where the leaves were patched on

Then you came down to the earth, not a man

Nor a chewed flesh nor leech-like

But rather a drop that rode the boat as

Nasr was tamed while its people drowned

Transported from the back into the womb

When the heavens began to be laid up in layers.

The Prophet said, “May Allah break not your teeth;” which is another way of saying, “May you never get too old.”

To give another example,

إِنِّي رَضِيْتُ عَلِيًّا لِلْهُدَى عِلْمًا

كَمَا رَضِيْتُ عَتِيقًا صَاحِبَ الْغَارِ

وَقَدْ رَضِيْتُ أَبَا حَفْصٍ وَشَيْعَتَهُ

وَمَا رَضِيْتُ بِقَتْلِ الشَّيْخِ فِي الدَّارِ

كُلُّ الصَّحَابَةِ عِنْدِي قُدُوءٌ عِلْمٌ

فهل عليّ بهذا القول من عارٍ

إن كنت تعلم إني لا أُحِبُّهم

إلا من أجلك فاعتقني من النار

I am satisfied with `Ali, a symbol
of true guidance

As I was satisfied with `Ateeq,
the Companion of the cave

And I was satisfied with Abu
Hafs and his people

Nor I was ever happy with the
murder of the Old man in his
house

Everyone of the Companions
are to me models, symbols

Is there then upon me for this
statement any blame?

If you know that I do not love
them

But for You, then free me from
the Fire.

Another example is in the famous
lines of Ka`b b. Zuhayr (that he re-
cited before the Prophet). They are
loaded with allegories of all sorts.
They also demonstrate that a poet
can in rhapsodies break rules and
cross some boundaries:

بانثُ سعادُ فقلبي اليومَ متبولُ

متيمٌ إثرها لم يُفدَ مكبولُ

وما سعادُ غداةَ البينِ إذ رحلوا

إلا أغرَّ غضبُ الطرفِ مكحولُ

تجلو عوارضَ ذي ظلمٍ إذا ابتسمتُ

كأنَّه منهلٌ بالراحِ معلولُ

Su`ad has departed and my heart
is love-sick

In thrall to her, unrequited,
bound with chains

And what Su`ad when she came
forth on the morning of depar-
ture

Was, but as a gazelle with bright
black downcast eyes

When she smiles, she lays bare a
shining row of side-teeth

That seem to have been bathed
in fragrant wine.

Musa b. `Uqbah has stated in his
Maghazi that Ka`b b. Zuhayr recited
the poem praising the Prophet inside
the mosque. When he reached the
lines:

إنَّ الرسولَ لسيفٌ يُستضاءُ بهِ

مهتدٌ من سيوفِ الله مسلولُ

في عصبةٍ من قريشٍ قال قائلهمُ

ببطنِ مكَّةَ لما أسلموا زولوا

Truly the Messenger is a light
whence illumination is sought

A drawn Indian sword, one of the swords of Allah.

Amongst a band of Quraysh, whose spokesman said,

When he professed Islam in the valley of Makkah, 'Depart ye.'

The Prophet signaled to the people outside that they could enter to hear him.

Commenting on the above, Sa'aati wrote: "Abu Bakr b. al-Anbari has said that when Ka`b b. Zuhayr reached the words:

Truly the Messenger is a light whence illumination is sought

A drawn Indian sword, one of the swords of Allah

.. the Prophet cast his cloak on him." (Hence the title of the poem Qasidah Burdah. (Seerah by Dr. Mahdi Rizqallah, p. 604; and the translation of Ka`b's poetry is by A. Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad, with minor variations: Au.)).

Hassan b. Tbahit said at the death of the Prophet,

فَبَكَى رَسُوْلَ اللهِ يَا عَيْنُ عَبْرَةٍ
وَلَا أَعْرِفُنَاكَ الدَّهْرَ دَمْعُكَ يَجْمَدُ
وَمَالِكٌ لَا تَبْكِيْنَ ذَا النِّعْمَةِ الَّتِي
عَلَى النَّاسِ مِنْهَا سَابِغٌ يَتَغَمَّدُ

فَجُودِي عَلَيْهِ بِالذَّمْعِ وَأَعْوِي

لِفَقْدِ الَّذِي لَا مِثْلَهُ الدَّهْرُ يُوْجِدُ

وَمَا فَتَدَّ الْمَاضُونَ مِثْلَ مُحَمَّدٍ،

وَلَا مِثْلَهُ، حَتَّى الْقِيَامَةِ، يَفْقَدُ

So cry O eyes for the Messenger of Allah copiously,

May I never discover you with your tears dried!

Why should you not weep the kindly one?

Whose bounteous robe covered all men?

Be generous with your tears and cries

At the loss of one whose equal will never be found.

Those gone by never lost one like Muhammad

And one like him will not be mourned till the day of Judgment.

[Source: Seerah by Dr. Mahdi Rizqallah, p. 695: Au.].

It is also reported, Qurtubi continues, that once `Umar was going on his rounds at night when he found a lit hut. A woman was spinning wool inside and singing:

على محمد صلاة الأبرار
 صلى عليه الطيبون الأخيار
 قد كنت قواما بكاء بالأسحار
 يا ليت شعري والمنايا أطوار
 هل يجمعني وحببي الدار

Upon Muhammad prayers of
 peace from the righteous

The best of the purified send
 peace to him

You stood in Prayers and cried
 close to dawn

How I wish, while destiny has its
 own ways

Whether it will assemble me and
 my beloved in the House?

Umar sat down there weeping.

Shawkani mentions the follow-
 ing: Ibn Sa`d has preserved a report
 which says that when Abu Sufyan
 lampooned the Prophet, Ibn Rawa-
 ha stood up and sought the Prophet's
 permission to retaliate. He allowed
 him and he said a few lines. One of
 them said:

ثَبَّتَ اللهُ مَا أَعْطَاكَ مِنْ حُسْنٍ
 تَثْبِيَتَ مُوسَى وَنَصْرًا مِثْلَ مَا نُصِرَا

May Allah confirm the bestowed
 the beauty on you

Like the confirmation of Musa
 and the helper in the manner the
 two were helped.

Then Ka`b. (b. Malik) stood up and
 sought to respond in a similar fash-
 ion. The Prophet allowed him. He
 said,

هَمَّتْ سَخِينُهُ أَنْ تُغَالِبَ رَبَّهَا
 وَلَيُعْلَبَنَّ مُغَالِبُ الْعَالِبِ

The Quraysh has tried to over-
 power its Lord

But the All-overpowering will
 overpower all.

Then Hassan b. Thabit sought to re-
 spond to Abu Sufyan's satire, prom-
 ising that he will do it with skill. The
 Prophet told him to first consult Abu
 Bakr, who held mastery in genealogy,
 so that Hassan did not end up lam-
 pooning those he did not intend. He
 promised him that Jibril was with
 him.

It is also reported that once Hassan
 was reciting poetry in the mosque
 when Umar passed by. Umar
 looked at him angrily. Hassan said, "I
 used to recite poetry here in the pres-
 ence of someone better than you."
 Then he turned to Abu Hurayrah
 and asked, "I adjure you by Allah,
 did you hear the Messenger of Allah
 say, 'Respond on my behalf. O Allah,

help him with Ruh al-Quds?" Abu Hurayrah replied, "Yes."

And Ibn Abi Shaybah preserved on the authority of Ibn Mas`ud that the Prophet said,

إِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ سِحْرًا ، وَإِنَّ مِنَ الشِّعْرِ حِكْمَةً

"Surely, some poetry is wisdom and some talk magic" (Quote from Shawkani ends here].

Hassan's story is in Muslim also, while Sakhawi and Albani treated the report of Ibn Abi Shaybah as trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

Qurtubi continues: Now, since we allow a poet to exaggerate and cross certain bounds, is he to be punished for what he admits in his poetry? The answer is a no to major punishments. But they might be restrained in other ways (except of course if they attempt character assassination, in which case they will be punished: Au.). It is said that Nu`man b. `Adiyy b. Nadla was one of the governors of `Umar. He said a poem which had the following lines:

مَنْ مُبْلِغُ الْحَسَنَاءِ أَنْ حَلِيلَهَا
يَمِيسَانُ يُسْقِي فِي زُجَاجٍ وَحَنَمٍ
إِذَا شَتُّ عَنِّي دَهَاقِبُ قَرِيَةٍ
وَرَقَاصُهُ بَجْدُو عَلَى كُلِّ مَنْسِمٍ
فَإِنْ كُنْتَ نَدْمَانِي فَيَا لَكَبْرٍ أَسْقِنِي

وَلَا تَسْقِنِي بِالْأَصْعَرِ الْمَتَلِّمِ

لَعَلَّ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَسُوءُهُ

تَنَادُمْنَا بِالْجَوْسِقِ الْمَتَهَدِّمِ

Who will take the word to Hanaa' that her husband?

Is in Maysaan, offered drinks in glasses and goblets

When I wish, village girls sing for me

And a dancer curved on every (body) joint

If you want to redden me then pass on large draughts

And give me no drinks from broken small pitchers

Maybe the Amir al-Mu'mineen will be displeased by

Our drinking in the ruins of the palaces

When the lines reached `Umar, he asked him to report to him and when he went he said, "Yes, by my Lord, they displease me." Nu`man said, "O leader of the faithful, that was just boastful talk. I have not done any such thing as I mentioned. Has not Allah said, 'Have you not seen that they wander distracted in every valley? And that they say what

they do not do?” `Umar said, “That absolves you of any punishment but you are relieved of the post for what you said.”

165. A straightforward verbal translation would be, “to what destination will they turn” as expressed by Ibn Jarir.

It is said that Hasan (al-Busri) passed by the bier of a Christian. He recited this verse (which supports our translation), “And soon will the wronging ones know what vicissitude they will turn.”

And it is said of Safwan b. Muhriz that when he recited this verse, he cried so much that it was thought his chest will break up.

The *ayah*, however, is commonly applicable to every wrongdoer. Ibn Abi Hatim reports that `A'isha said, “My father wrote following two lines in the will he left:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ، هَذَا مَا أَوْصَى بِهِ أَبُو بَكْرٍ
بْنِ أَبِي قُحَافَةَ، عِنْدَ خُرُوجِهِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا، حِينَ يُؤْمِنُ
الْكَافِرَ، وَيُنْتَهِي الْفَاجِرَ، وَيَصْدُقُ الْكَاذِبَ: إِنِّي
اسْتَخْلَفْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ، فَإِنْ يَعْدِلْ
فَذَاكَ ظَنِي بِهِ، وَإِنْ يَجْرُ وَيَبْدُلْ فَلَا أَعْلَمُ
الْغَيْبِ، { وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ }
{

“In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Merciful. This is what Abu Bakr ibn Quhafa wrote as his will at the time he was leaving this world: at a moment when an unbeliever turns believer, the corrupter gives up, and the liar speaks the truth. I am leaving behind me `Umar as my successor. If he administers justice, then, that's what I assume and hope of him. But if he oppresses, or alters (the commandments), then, I have no knowledge of the Unseen: ‘And soon will the wronging ones know what vicissitude they will turn’” (Ibn Kathir, Alusi). هَاتِنَا



Surah 27
*Al-Naml*¹

(The Ant)

Makkan²



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] *Ta Sin. These are verses of the Qur'ān, and a clear Book.*³

طس تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾

[2] *A guidance and glad tidings to the believers.*

هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾

1. A few lines from Yusuf Ali's introduction to the *Surah* could be quoted here: "The Fire, the White Hand, and the Rod, in the story of Moses; the speech of birds, the crowds of Jinns and men pitted against a humble ant, and the hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba, in Solomon's story; the defeat of the plot of the nine wicked men in the story of Salih; and the crime of sin with open eyes in the story of Lot; - lead up to the lessons of true and false worship and the miracles of Allah's grace and revelation."

2. Except for a few verses, the rest of the *Surah* is Makkan (Alusi).

3. Mubin has the dual meaning of being clear as well as making something clear. Mawdudi comments: "*Kitabun Mubin*," a Clear Book, means the following: (i) That this Book expounds its teachings, instructions and commands in clear terms. (ii) That it clearly indicates the difference between Truth and falsehood. (iii) That it is also clear in that it is evidently the Book of God. Anyone who reads it with an open mind can see that it is not something that Muhammad (peace be on him) could have authored."

[3] Those who perform the Prayer (assiduously and spiritedly), give out the Zakah and in the Hereafter – they firmly believe.⁴

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ
وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُؤْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

4. So the Qur'an is a composition of clear verses which are a guidance and a glad tiding to those who possess the qualities stated in this verse (Ibn Jarir).

Yusuf Ali expounds this a little more: "Revelation is here presented in three aspects: (i) it explains things, the attributes of Allah, our own position, and the world around; (ii) it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil; (iii) to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation."

Sayyid adds: "All that the Qur'an consists of, by way of the systems, laws, and morals, are all based on faith. Therefore, he whose heart does not believe in Allah, who does not receive this Qur'an with the belief that it is from Allah, and that what it presents is the way that Allah wishes for him ... he who does not have this kind of faith, will not be guided by the Qur'an, nor will he obtain any benefit from the good tidings mentioned therein.

"The Qur'an consists of treasures of guidance, knowledge, and a way. But faith is the key to these treasures. These treasures will never open up without the key of faith. Those in the past who believed in this Qur'an in the manner that it should be believed in, perceived the supernatural with its help. But when this Qur'an became a book whose verses are to be sung in a lyrical manner, then it reaches the ears but does not reach the hearts. It provides no benefit, but remains a treasure without a key.

"This *Surah* presents the qualities of those believers who find the Qur'an a guidance and a glad tiding: 'Those who perform the Prayer (assiduously and spiritedly), pay the *Zakah* and in the Hereafter – they firmly believe.'

"These believers then, who remember Allah, are faithful to His commandments, who are fearful of being questioned in the Hereafter, who hope to gain Allah's approval, these are the ones whose hearts open up for the Qur'an. They find it a guidance, and a glad tiding, a Light in their souls, and something that urges them to action in their lives. It be-

[4] Surely those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have decked out fair for them their works, they are therefore wandering blindly.⁵

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[5] They are those for whom awaits an evil chastisement,⁶ and in the Hereafter – they are the greatest losers.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي
الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] And surely, you are receiving the Qur'ān from One All-wise, All-knowing.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ
عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾

[7] When Musa said to his family, 'I perceive a fire; I shall forthwith bring you tiding from it⁷ or bring you a flaming brand that you may warm yourselves.'⁸

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا
سَأْتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آتِيكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ
قَبَسٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

comes their provision which helps them achieve their goals.

“As for those, ‘who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have decked out fair for them their works, they are therefore wandering blindly.’”

5. “Those who reject Allah and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else. As they have rejected Allah’s (*swt*) guidance, they are allowed to hug their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly” (Yusuf Ali).

6. The painful chastisement as alluded to here, unfolded itself at Badr, when the best of their men were slaughtered, leaving the rest of the Makkans in grief (Zamakhshari, expanded).

7. Or, bring back information about the way they had lost (Ibn Kathir).

8. Musa (*asws*) was on his way to Egypt from Madyan and it was a cold night (Ibn Jarir).

Significantly, as he had wished, writes Ibn Kathir, Musa brought back both: a great news (that he was appointed a Messenger) and a great flaming fire, i.e., the *Nur* of guidance.

[8] But when he came to it,⁹ he was called thus,¹⁰ 'Blessed is he who is in the fire¹¹ and he who is around it;¹² and glory to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

قَلَمًا جَاءَهَا نُودِي أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ
وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

9. When he came to the tree, Musa faced a most amazing sight. The fire was engulfing a green tree. It seemed to be increasing in its intensity while the tree grew greener. And, as he raised his eyes to look above, he perceived that the *Nur* was rising up from the tree all the way to the clouds (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

10. "According to *Surah al-Qasas*, this voice came from a tree in the hallowed ground. It seems that there was something burning somewhere towards one end of the valley, but nothing was on fire, nor was there any smoke. It was a strange kind of fire within which there stood a green tree from where, suddenly, this voice emanated" (Mawdudi).

11. A variety of interpretations have come from the earliest scholars. Ibn `Abbas thought that the allusion by the words, "Blessed is he who is in the fire" is to Allah Himself. It was He who was there and the fire was his *Nur* (Light). That was also the opinion of Sa`id b. Jubayr (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

He did not mean of course, that Allah was there, in Person, in the sense in which pagans assume, who believe in hulul. On the contrary, as we know, nothing can contain Allah, nor the fire before Musa could contain Him. Perhaps Ibn `Abbas alluded to *tajalli*. Yet, we must caution, even *tajalli* could not have been in the sense in which the word is commonly understood, that is, in the sense of manifestation – the sense in which Allah denied Musa when He denied him the Beatific Vision (7: 143). Had, in that instance, Allah's own *tajalli* been there in the fire, Musa would not have later asked that he be allowed the Vision. The *tajalli* then, if it was there in the fire, was *tajalli al-mithali* (Representative Manifestation) and not *tajjali al-dhati* (Personal Manifestation) – Mufti Shafi`.

Hasan and Qatadah however thought that the allusion was to *Nur*. It was Allah's *Nur* which was blessed. But Mujahid thought that it was the fire itself which was blessed. Ibn `Abbas also figures in this opinion. A fourth opinion was that of Muhammad b.

Ka`b who said that the allusion by the *Nur* of this instance is to Allah Himself (Ibn Jarir). Ibn `Abbas also seems to have shared this view (Qurtubi).

Qurtubi also writes: The interpretation (of the opinions of Ibn `Abbas and others) is that He is manifested in every deed which leads to the Doer of the deed. That is to say, blessed was the power and dominion that was there in the fire. It is also said that blessed was the command of Allah that was there in the fire which Allah placed as a sign for Musa. To this context belongs the *hadith* recorded by Muslim as well as Ibn Majah whose version runs as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنَامُ وَلَا يَبْغِي لَهُ أَنْ يَنَامَ ، يُخَفِّضُ الْقِسْطَ
وَيَرْفَعُهُ ، يُرْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ عَمَلُ النَّهَارِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ اللَّيْلِ ،
وَعَمَلُ اللَّيْلِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ النَّهَارِ ، حِجَابَهُ النُّورُ ، لَوْ
كَشَفَهُ لَأَخْرَجَتْ سُبُحَاتُ وَجْهِهِ مَا انْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ بَصَرُهُ
مِنْ خَلْقِهِ

Abu Musa said, “The Prophet (*saws*) stood up among us and spoke of five things. He said, ‘Allah does not sleep, nor does it behoove Him to sleep. He raises the Scale and lowers it. The night’s deeds are raised to Him before the deeds of the day and the day’s deeds before the deeds of the night. *Nur* is His veil. (Ac-

ording to Abu Bakr’s narration, Fire). If He unveiled it, the Blaze of His Face would burn down everything that it reached of His creation.” Abu `Ubaydah – the narrator – then recited this *ayah*, “Blessed is he who is in the fire and he who is around it, and glory to Allah, Lord of the worlds].”

In the above *hadith* the textual words *kashafahu* mean to say, “if He removed the veils from the eyes of the creations.” As for the hijab, they are, as Ibn Jurayj said, seven: *Hijab al-Izzah* (the veil of Might), *Hijab al-Mulk* (the veil of Dominion), *Hijab al-Sultan* (the veil of Power), *Hijab al-Nar* (the veil of Fire), *Hijab al-Nur* (the veil of Light), *Hijab al-Ghamam* (the veil of Clouds) and *Hijab al-Ma`* (the veil of Water). In other words, concludes Qurtubi, Allah (*swt*) is not veiled, but, on the contrary, the creations are veiled.

Qurtubi also quotes Sa`id b. Jubayr’s opinion that “It was Fire there. Allah (*swt*) made him hear His Speech from its side and showed him His powers from that side.” It is in the same vein, adds Qurtubi, as it is written in the *Torah* (Deut. 33: 2), “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Se`ir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and

he came with ten thousands saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them.” In this verse of the Tawrah, the allusion by the “Lord’s coming from Sinai” is to Musa, by “rising up from Se’ir” it is to `Isa (*asws*), and by “shining forth from mount Paran” it is to our Prophet (*saws*).

The translation of the above verse is from The King James Red Letter Bible, Florida Publication, dateless. It took this writer quite some effort to locate this familiar verse because, for no apparent reason, the index shows several entries for the word Paran. They are all in proper order: except this verse. The reference to it is placed out of order, second last, almost tucked out of sight! Is it considered crucial by the Jews and Christians? (Au.)

Ibn Kathir does not report Ibn `Abbas’ opinion that it was the Lord of the Worlds who was alluded to when it was said, “Blessed is he who is in the fire” but quotes his other opinion also that it was the *Nur* of the Lord of the worlds.

Zamakhshari points out that the allusion is not to the spot where the fire was, but rather to a *buq`ah al-mubarakah*, as alluded to in verse 30 of *Al-Qasas*. It says,

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ
الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ [القصص: ٣٠]

“He was called from the fringe of the valley on the right in the *buq`ah mubarakah*.”

Alusi uses the occasion to demonstrate that the attribution of the concepts of *hulul*, *ittihad*, or *tajsim* to the *Sufis* is incorrect. But rather, the *ayah* leads us to believe that Allah (*swt*) manifested His *tajalli* in the fire which is very different from what we understand as *hulul*. A person’s image in a mirror for example, is not the person himself and cannot be said to have attained *hulul* with the mirror. (Does anyone believe that the sun’s image in the mirror is the whole sun in its true size? - *Shabbir*). Hence, it was immediately added, “Glory to Allah, Lord of the worlds,” to deny all that can be falsely and foolishly attributed to Him. Allah cannot be reduced to any human level of understanding. He manifests Himself as He wills. A trustworthy report says,

سبحانك حيث كنت

“Glory to You, wherever (or whatever) You be.” (Slightly reworded).

And the *hadith* that Alusi quotes is in *Tabarani* which says, “Allah has an angel who, if he was told to swallow

[9] O Musa! Verily, it is I, Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.¹³

يَا مُوسَى إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

[10] Now, throw down your staff.' But when he saw it quivering, as if a snake,¹⁴ he turned about, retreating, and turned not back. 'O Musa, fear not. Truly, Messengers fear not in My presence.'

وَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَا مُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

all that is there in the seven heavens and earths in one gulp, he could do it. His chanting of praise is,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى مَلَكًا لَوْ قِيلَ لَهُ التَّقِيمَ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ
وَالْأَرْضِينَ بِلُغْمَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ لَفَعَلَ تَسْبِيحُهُ سُبْحَانَكَ
حَيْثُ كُنْتُ

The report has been preserved by Tabarani in his Kabir as well as in his Awsat. Haythami however remarked that he could not trace the biography of one of the narrators. In short, to him it is not a very strong narrative, although meaning wise, it cannot be contended (Au.).

12. According to Ibn 'Abbas and Hasan, the allusion by "he who is around it" is to angels (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Kathir reports 'Ikrimah, Sa'id b. Jubayr and Qatadah also of this opinion.

Muhammad b. Ka'b thought that Musa was also included (Ibn Jarir).

Zamakshari thinks that by "around it" the allusion could be to the whole

of the Syrian lands about which Allah has said that it is a blessed patch of land.

Sayyid writes: "Who was in the fire? And who was around it? The preferred opinion is that it was not a fire of the kind that we use. It was a fire whose origin was the higher world... A fire lit by the pure souls of the angels, constituting the great guidance... It was (perhaps) the presence of those pure souls that made it look like fire. It was said, "Blessed is he who is in the fire" to announce of the blessings of the upper world on the angels within the fire and those around it, and Musa was of those who were around it."

13. To the question, who called? One suggestion is it was, "Verily, it is I, Allah, the Mighty, the Wise" (Qurtubi).

14. Jaann is that small snake which slithers very fast (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

[11] Save him who wronged, then substituted a good after an evil, then I am All-forgiving, All-compassionate.¹⁵

[12] And thrust your hand in your pocket. It will come forth shining white without any blemish – among nine signs to Fir`awn and his people. Surely they are a rebellious people.

[13] But when there came to them Our visible signs,¹⁶ they said, 'This is plain magic.'

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ
فَلِيَّ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضًا
مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ
وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا
سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Musa's reaction should be of no surprise. A snake is a snake. It has been observed that when it enters into a cave in a cold night, other animals, including the ferocious ones, quietly vacate the cave. Further, could Musa be sure in that dark night that it was not his own staff? Or, is it possible that in the dark cold night he thought he was all along holding a stiff snake that came alive when thrown into the warmth of the fire? (Au.)

The Prophet (*saws*) has, (according to a *hadith* in the *Sahihayn*: H. Ibrahim) prohibited that the domestic Jann be killed (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Scholars explain that the prohibition applied to his time, and to the city of Madinah alone. It is said that during the time of the Prophet Jinns trying

to learn about Islam visited Madinah in the form of snakes. One was spotted under the bed of a Companion, but he prevented it from being disturbed (Au.).

15. How is the verse to be understood if the words "Save him who wronged" are understood to be alluding to the Messengers? One explanation is that the allusion is to their minor errors, committed by such Prophets as Adam (*asws*), Yunus (*asws*), Da'ud (*asws*), Sulayman (*asws*) and others, not to forget Musa (*asws*) who had unintentionally punched the Copt to death (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi and others).

16. The textual mubsirah should be better translated as "those that make visible" or "light-giving" or "illuminating" (Ibn Jarir).

[14] And they rejected them, though their inner selves were convinced thereof - wrongfully and out of pride.¹⁷ See then what was the end of those given to corruptions!

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ
ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] Indeed We gave Da'ud and Sulayman knowledge.¹⁸ The two said, 'All praise to Allah who preferred us over many of His believing bondsmen.'

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ
عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

17. That is, if it is asked, "why was it that they rejected the signs after their hearts were convinced?" the answer is, "out of transgression and pride" (Ibn Jarir).

18. The nakirah form of `ilm suggests a special knowledge, not given to others (Au.). Ibn Jarir writes: The allusion is to such knowledge as was given to Sulayman, e.g., language of birds and animals (Ibn Jarir), to Da'ud that of how to handle the metals (Qurtubi and Alusi).

Mawdudi adds: "The *Bible* does not mention that Sulayman was given the knowledge of the speech of birds and animals though Israeli traditions do specifically refer to it. (See Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. xi, p. 439)."

Yusuf Ali comments: "Knowledge' means such knowledge as leads up

to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgments, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfill their mission in life. They were both just men and prophets of Allah (*swt*). The *Bible*, as we have it, is inconsistent: on the one hand it calls David 'a man after God's own heart' (I Samuel, xiii. 14, and Acts xiii. 22); and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice. About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge."

[16] Sulayman inherited Da'ud¹⁹ and said, 'O people. We²⁰ have been taught the language of birds and we have been given of everything.²¹ This indeed, is the clear bounty.'²²

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُودَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ
عَلَّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾

19. That is, Sulayman inherited knowledge and sovereignty over the land from Da'ud (Ibn Jarir). He could not have meant any worldly possession since he had nineteen sons and the kingdom left by Da'ud should have been divided equally between them. (Of all the sons) Sulayman was specifically mentioned because of the knowledge and Prophethood that he inherited from Da'ud. Our Prophet has said,

إنا معشر الأنبياء لا نُورِثُ مَا تَرَكَنَا فَهُوَ صَدَقَةٌ

“We the family of Prophets do not leave wealth behind us. Whatever we leave behind is charity”
(Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report is also in *Sahih* of Ibn Hibban (Au.).

Another report in Abu Da'ud and Tirmidhi has Abu Darda' narrating from the Prophet,

إِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ إِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورِثُوا دِينَارًا
وَلَا دِرْهَمًا إِنَّمَا وَرِثُوا الْعِلْمَ فَمَنْ أَحَدَ بِهِ أَحَدًا بِحِطَّةٍ وَافِرٍ

“Scholars (of Islam) are inheritors of the Prophets, and Prophets do not leave behind Dinar or

Dirham, but rather, they leave behind knowledge. So whoever obtained it, obtained a great blessing.”

These reports should be enough to refute the Shi'ah opinion, as reported by Tabrasi that it was wealth that Sulayman inherited (Alusi, Shafi').

The Shi'ah are desperate for such opinions because their disapproval of the Companions in general, and Abu Bakr and `Umar in particular, rests on one of the two principal points of grief: one, `Ali did not become a *Khalifah* immediately after the Prophet, and two, Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, was denied Fadak orchard, the inheritance supposedly due from her father (Au.).

The verse demonstrates, write the commentators, the importance of knowledge and the superior position held by the scholars. But, they should be modest about it and never imagine a higher position for themselves over others. We should not forget how (when an old woman objected to `Umar's intention to limit

the mahar [marriage gifts] in an open assembly, saying it went against the Qur'an: Alusi), 'Umar admitted that he had erred and quipped, "Everyone seems to know more than 'Umar." Nevertheless, Alusi adds, there is no harm in acknowledging oneself as a scholar as an expression of gratitude and humility to Allah. He might even say, 'I am a scholar.' This is reported of 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas and some others of the Companions. As for what has become famous as a *hadith* viz., "He who said I am a scholar is an ignorant man," it is not an authentic statement of the Prophet.

20. The 'we,' says Majid, "is a plural of majesty and does not imply that there were others besides Solomon who knew the language of birds."

21. That is, 'We have been given every imaginable good thing' (Ibn Jarir), that is necessary for establishing a kingdom (Shafi'), but the allusion is to prophethood, wisdom, judgment, and blessings of the like (Razi).

22. Mawdudi points out that the scholars of old seem to have exaggerated the extent of Sulayman's kingdom.

Majid leads us to the sources of influence: "His realm is described by

the Rabbis as having extended ... over the upper world inhabited by the angels and over the whole of the terrestrial globe with all its inhabitants, including all the beasts, fowls, and reptiles as well as the demons and spirits.' (JE. XI, pp. 439-440). 'Solomon was rewarded with riches and an unprecedented glorious reign.' (JE. XI, p. 439). 'He developed commerce, and the products of other countries, Egypt, Arabia and lands beyond, passed through Israel and brought the Hebrews increased wealth ... He sent a fleet to Ophir, in the south, which brought back gold and other rare and precious products. Solomon also cultivated the arts, particularly literature, architecture ...' (VJE., p.610). 'Even allowing for the exaggeration of a later age, ... he was clearly a ruler over a larger territory than any other Israelite monarch. His court was splendid and he was allied by marriage to the Egyptian royal house. Trade was fostered and was made possible by the comparative peace of his reign. The country was thoroughly organized and a large civil service administered the affairs of the land.' (UHW, II, p. 816). 'Solomon ... sought not imperial expansion but material wealth; and wealth accumulated under his long rule has become proverbial.' (I,

[17] And marshalled before Sulayman were his forces of Jinn, men, and birds, duly distributed (in order and ranks).²³

وَحْشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودَهُ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ
وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] At length, when they came upon the valley of ants, an ant said,²⁴ ‘O ants. Get into your homes, lest Sulayman and his forces crush you, being unaware.’²⁵

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِي النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ
نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ
لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا
يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

p. 677). ‘The king’s annual revenue is stated as 666 talents of gold, which would perhaps be 5,000,000 Pounds of our money. This did not include the profits of his commerce, whether derived from “merchantmen” ... or from the tribute of the subject people; or from all the kings of the mingled people, or the government of the provinces.’ (Farros, Solomon, His Life and Times, pp. 127-128).”

23. Sayyid comments: “So that was the retinue of Sulayman, comprising of the Jinn, men and birds. We know about mankind. As for the Jinn, we do not know anything about them except for what the Qur’an has taught us, viz., they are created from the flames of fire, that they see the humankind but humankind do not see them, (“he sees you, he and his tribe, while you see them not” - 7: 27); and that they are capable of inciting humans to evil and inspire sins in them, although we do not know

how; and that a group of them had believed in the Prophet ... and that a group of them were made submissive to Sulayman who built for him niches, statues, and huge pots for cooking, who dived into the sea for him – following his command, doing Allah’s will.

“Allah had subjugated for Sulayman a group of the Jinn and birds, just as He subjugated a group of men for him. And, just as not all the people of the world constituted the forces of Sulayman, since his kingdom did not go beyond the areas known as Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq up to the banks of river Euphrates, in similar manner all of the Jinn or birds would not have been subjugated to him. It was only a group of them that was subjugated to him.”

24. It is said that when Qatadah came to Kufa, people flocked around him eager to learn. He said, “Ask what you will.” Abu Hanifah was

also present. He was a teenager then. He suggested to them to ask Qatadah about Sulayman's ant. Was it male or female? (Since adds Razi, "namlah" - like "shatah" or "hamamah" - is the name of a species which can either be male or female: Au.). Qatadah was quiet. Abu Hanifah said it was female. They asked him how he knew it. He said because Allah had said, "qaalat" (Zamakhshari, Razi, Alusi).

Qurtubi must have had an eye. He reports, a finding presented in modern biology works, that ants are so clever that they slice a seed into two so that it doesn't sprout and, since slicing a coriander seed does not prevent it from sprouting, the ants slice them into four! Alusi adds that the ants slice a lentil seed also into four.

"The anthropoid apes no doubt approach nearer to man in bodily structure than do other animals, but when we consider the habits of ants, their social organization, their large communities and elaborate habitations, their roadways, their possession of domestic animals, and even, in some cases, of slaves, it must be admitted that they have a fair claim to rank next to man in intelligence." (DB. I. 103)." – Majid.

25. Alusi presents various opinions about the ant's ability to speak and Sulayman's ability to hear. One is the obvious opinion that he could hear the animals' speech just as our Prophet (*saws*) heard a few animals' speech to him. Another is that Sulayman heard her from a distance of three miles. Alusi does not rule out that the winds could have carried the ant's voice to Sulayman's ear from that distance, but adds another opinion that he did not hear the voice of the ant, but rather, her speech was relayed to him by Allah through revelation. But, he also adds, one can not see why we need to deny that the animals have power of speech. We have the example of a dabb (lizard like desert animal, but large in size) speaking to the Prophet (*saws*).

Alusi's allusion is to the *hadith* in *Tabarani's Al-Saghir* as well as his *Awsat*, which, in the judgment of Haythami, has – but for one narrator - a chain accepted by the *Sihah* compilers as trustworthy.

In sum, writes Shafi`, Qur'anic deliberations lead us to understand that animals possess the power to reason, in some measure or the other, perhaps of the kind that is enough for organizing their simple lives, although not enough for them to be

charged with observation of revealed Law.

Ibn al-Qayyim adds the following story: "Hisham b. Hassan narrates that Ahnaf b. Qays's clan was greatly inconvenienced by ants. Ahnaf b. Qays ordered a chair placed between two of their nests. He sat down in it, recited praises to Allah and then said, "If you will not desist, we will set you on fire." It is said that they vacated the area (Bada'i').

Jewish sources also accept the Qur'anic version. Majid quotes, "While sailing over a valley where there were many swarms of ants, Solomon heard one ant say to the others, 'Enter your houses; otherwise Solomon's legion will destroy you' (JE. XI. P. 440)."

However, Jewish sources also leave a dark patch on Solomon's character. Mawdudi explains and quotes, "The event in question is mentioned in Israelite traditions but the last part of their account is contrary to its Qur'anic version... to quote from the Israelite tradition, 'The king greatly angered (at the speech of the ant), threw her down, saying, Dost

thou know who I am? I am Solomon, the son of David! She (the ant answered), I know that thou art created of a corrupted drop; therefore, thou oughtest not to be proud' (The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 440).

"Amazingly (Mawdudi continues), these are the traditions, according to Orientalists' claims, from which the Qur'an has drawn its content."

We might close the topic by pointing out that advances in audio technology have enabled scientists to discover that the ants routinely talk to each other in their nests. The ants rub segments of their abdomen to produce a sound that is understood by others. They change the rhythm to produce different kinds of communications. Insertion of miniaturized microphones and speakers into the ant nests has resulted in recording instructions by the queen. When the recorded queen's instructions were replayed within the nest colony, the worker ants responded by standing motionless in rapt attention. The noise they produce sounds like clattering of the teeth or croaking of the frogs, but without the chorus (Au.).

[19] He smiled, laughingly²⁶ at her words and said, 'My Lord! Dispose me that I may be grateful to You for the blessings wherewith You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do good deeds (that are) pleasing to You. And admit me by Your grace amongst Your righteous slaves.'²⁷

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ
أُورِغْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ
عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا
تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ
الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

26. That is, it was a show of happiness between a smile and laughter (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi). Qurtubi suggests that dahikan could be interpreted as “bemused” since, not every smile is a result of happiness.

27. This refutes the Jewish and Christian charge that, writes Majid, “(Solomon) had become ungodly in the later part of his life.”

A Prophet’s rank is above that of the awliya’ and salihin. Why then, do they supplicate that they be placed amongst the salihin? It is because a kamil salih (perfectly righteous) is someone who never disobeys Allah in the slightest. Even the thought of sin does not occur to him. Accordingly, we find the Qur’an narrating to us the prayer-words of several Prophets and Messengers to the effect that they be joined with, or placed amongst the salihin (Razi).

Ashraf Ali Thanwi demonstrates that “Salih” is a status of which there are several levels, the highest belongs

to Prophets and Messengers, and the lowest to ordinary believers in Paradise (Au. from Ashraf al-Tafasir, vol.1).

In this context Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir report from Muslim who has a report on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saws) said,

أَنَّ نَمْلَةً قَرَصَتْ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ فَأَمَرَ بِقَرْيَةِ النَّمْلِ
فَأُخْرِقَتْ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ أَنِّي أَنْ قَرَصْتِكَ نَمْلَةً
أَهْلَكَتُ أُمَّةً مِّنَ الْأُمَمِ تُسَبِّحُ

“One of the Prophets was bitten by an ant. He ordered that the anthill be burnt down. It was done. Allah revealed to him, ‘Is it for a single ant’s bite that you destroyed a nation (of ants) that used to chant Glory? Why not a single ant?’” That is, why did you not kill a single ant?

It is also reported in the *hadith* literature, such as in Ibn Abi Hatim that,

خَرَجَ النَّبِيُّ سُلَيْمَانَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَسْتَسْقِي ، فَمَرَّ
بِنَمْلَةٍ مُسْتَلْقِيَةٍ رَافِعَةٍ قَوَائِمَهَا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ تَقُولُ :

[20] And he reviewed the birds and said,²⁸
 'How is it with me that I do not see the hoopoe?²⁹ Or is he among the absent?'³⁰

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ
 أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا مِنْ خَلْقِكَ لَيْسَ لَنَا غِنَى عَنْ سَقِيَاكَ
 وَرِزْقِكَ ، فَإِمَّا أَنْ تَسْقِنَا وَتَرْزُقَنَا ، وَإِمَّا أَنْ تُهْلِكَنَا .
 فَقَالَ : ارْجِعُوا فَقَدْ سَقَيْتُمْ بِدَعْوَةِ غَيْرِكُمْ

Sulayman (*asms*) went out with his followers to supplicate for rain. He found an ant fallen on its back, with its forearms raised toward the heaven saying, "O Allah, we are a creation of the many of Your creations. We cannot do without Your water and food. So, either You send down rain and feed us, or destroy us." He said, "Return. You will be sent the rains by the supplication of (someone) other than you" (Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* is also in Ahmad, Daylami and Hakim, the last of whom declared it trustworthy, and Dhahabi gave his approval. See Jami` Saghir, h. no. 3906 (Au.).

Qurtubi further reports that one of the Prophets harbored some doubt about the destruction of a town inhabited by unbelieving transgressors but which also had a few righteous people. The same Prophet was once sleeping under a tree when he

was woken up by an ant's bite. He ordered the nest burnt down. Allah reminded him of his doubt over the destruction of a town the majority of whose dwellers were transgressors. (This is not a *hadith*: Au.). Nevertheless, Qurtubi concludes, punishment through burning must have been permissible in the *Shari'ah* of that Prophet. In our *Shari'ah* it is disallowed. The Prophet has specifically prohibited it.

28. It is said that not every bird, but one of every kind used to be present when asked to assemble (Alusi).

29. Shabbir and Mawdudi refute the misinterpretation by some so-called contemporary rationalist writers that Naml and Hudhud were names of individuals. To this author, these modern-day rationalists are not worthy of any attention. Library shelves refuse to yield any worthwhile work that this class of Muslims have produced (Au.).

According to a report in Ahmad, Abu Da'ud and Ibn Majah, through Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet (*saws*) prohibited the killing of four animals: ants, bees, hoopoe and sparrow-

hawk. The *hadīth* is in Abu Da'ud and is trustworthy (Qurtubi).

According to very reliable reports, writes Shabbir, hoopoe is known for its ability to spot a worm under the surface of the earth. Sometimes it digs half a foot deep to pull out a worm.

Sayyid comments on an important aspect, "From the fact that Sulayman felt the absence of hoopoe, we can surmise that it must have been a few birds that were subjugated to him. Had it been all the hoopoes in the world, millions of them, he wouldn't have been able to spot the absence of a particular one. It is possible that of the species of hoopoe this particular one was required to be there as a representative of the lot. This is strengthened by the fact that the hoopoe in question was a particularly intelligent one."

30. Since we do not have a trustworthy report explaining why Sulayman missed the hoopoe, we can only say that for some reason he looked for it but did not find it (Ibn Jarir).

Shafi' points out that the "am" at the start of the verse is in the sense of "bal" meaning, "but rather." That is, Sulayman said to himself that his eyes had not erred in not finding the

hoopoe, but rather, he was surely absent.

Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said that the hoopoe was responsible for searching for water whenever Sulayman went out on a campaign. This particular one was capable of scanning the surface of the earth, locate water below the surface, and then point to the spot where the Jinn could dig. Once they ran short of water but when Sulayman looked for the hoopoe he could not find him.

Once when Ibn 'Abbas was narrating this, when Nafi' b. Azraq – one of the Khawarij who denied Qada' and Qadr – protested. He said, "Look! Even a little boy is able to trap a hoopoe into a net. And here you are speaking of its ability to locate water!?" Ibn 'Abbas replied, "When destiny descends, eyes turn blind, and all precautions vanish into thin air." The Khariji promised that he wouldn't dispute with him ever thereafter, over the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). The report is in Ibn Abi Shaybah, 'Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Hakim. And Hakim declared it trustworthy (Shawkani).

Ibn 'Abbas is also reported to have remarked, "Consider, O clever man, how hoopoe can see below the sur-

face of the earth, but fails to notice the net when it falls into it” (Qur-tubi, Shafi`).

That animals are endowed with some incredible qualities is very well known by the biologists. Instances can be seen in most biological works of general nature. Our Prophet has informed us that some of them can see angels and devils. A *hadith* of Bukhari says,

إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ صِيَاحَ الدِّيَكَةِ فَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ،
فَإِنَّهَا رَأَتْ مَلَكًا ، وَإِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ هَيْقَ الْحِمَارِ فَتَعَوَّدُوا
بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ ، فَإِنَّهُ رَأَى شَيْطَانًا

“When you hear a rooster’s crowing, ask for Allah’s bounty, for it has seen an angel. And when you hear a donkey braying, seek Allah’s refuge for it has seen a devil” (Au.).

In connection with the ability of Sulayman’s hoopoe to see below the surface of the earth, Ibn Kathir has a strange story to narrate. It is in Ibn `Asakir’s work (Tarikh) who mentioned it under the biography of Abu `Abdullah al-Barazi. He was from Barzah, (a village) in Ghota, Dimashq. He was a pious man who would fast every Monday and Thursday. He was some eighty years old and was one-eyed. Ibn `Asakir reported through Sulayman b. Zayd that he asked him the reason for being one-

eyed. But he wouldn’t explain. But he persisted for several months and so, finally he agreed to open up. He said two men had come from Khurasan and he received them in his house in Barzah on a Friday. They asked him to lead them to a nearby valley, and he complied. There –at the valley - they brought out their incense pots and threw in so much incense that the whole valley was filled with smoke. All kinds of snakes began to gather around them. But they paid no attention to any one of them until a snake – a meter long – came up. Her eyes were shining like a Dinar coin. They were very glad to see her. They said, “By Allah’s grace, we did not waste a year’s journey.” Then they broke down the braziers and caught the snake. They thrust a kohl-needle into her eyes and applied it, kohl-like, to their own eyes. “I asked them to apply the kohl to me also but they refused. I insisted and promised to give them (a piece of land). So they applied the kohl to my right eye; and I began to see below the surface of the earth as you can see through glass. Then they said to me, walk awhile with us. I began to walk with them, while they kept talking between themselves until we were quite a distance away from the village. Then they pounded upon

[21] Assuredly, I will chastise him with a painful chastisement or I will slaughter him,³¹ unless he brings me a clear authority.³²

لَأَعَذِّبَهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَهُ أَوْ لِيَأْتِيَنِي بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾

me and bound me up. Then one of them thrust his finger into my eye, removed the eye-ball and threw it away. Thereafter, they walked away. I lay there until a passerby untied me.”

As regards hoopoe’s ability to locate water, we have nothing to comment since modern biologists do not study phenomena of this sort, despite the fact that it has been often reported that the animals get restive before earthquakes; dogs start to bark, and so on. Are they seismic-sensitive? We do not know. But we do know that there are people who can locate water up to a depth of 100 feet. In India, they are commonly hired to indicate the most promising spot before drilling is commenced. During severe droughts even the government hires them to help locate promising water-spots. At our own farmlands we have used them with success. One needs them when several attempts fail, in and around your land. When asked, they are reported to say that they go by the vibrations under their feet, which, according to them, anyone could learn with some patience (Au.).

31. The jurist in Qurtubi speaks out when he says that this verse gives us the rule that punishment has to be in accordance with the size of the crime and not according to the size of the criminal, (meaning, his age, social position and financial status, which should not affect the judgment: Au.).

32. That is, unless he can offer a good reason for his absence (Ibn Jarir).

This *ayah* implies that it is allowable to punish animals within moderate limits for their misdoings (Shafi’).

Before any misanthrope animal rightist has tears in his eyes over punishment to mute animals, we may point out that they do seem to have some sense, although crude, of right and wrong. There is a marked change in their behavior, such as of cats and dogs, after they have committed what is generally considered as wrong. For instance, when a cat is fed by its master, it shows its fangs when somebody tries to take its food away from it. But, when it is surprised by its master eating from a dish, it runs away. It does not show up for quite some time thereafter.

[22] But he (hoopoe) tarried not too long when he said, 'I have encompassed that which you did not encompass.³³ I have come to you from Saba'³⁴ with true tiding.³⁵

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا
لَمْ مَحِطُ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَأٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ
﴿٢٢﴾

This also refutes the biological theory that animals are sort of pre-planned (by whom?), and act entirely by instinct (Au.).

Imām Razi conjectures that perhaps hoopoes of Sulayman's time were given intellectual power, which has been withdrawn from them since that time. Alusi does not agree with him and believes all animals have been given enough intelligence for the limited activities of their lives. Some of their activities leave us spell bound, which speak strongly of their intelligence. In fact, their abilities have led some people to the extent of believing that the animals are also required to follow a *Shari'ah* of their own. However, such people might have their arguments, but the majority opinion is that messengers of their own species or kinds have not been sent to them.

33. This demonstrates in a definite manner that Prophets did not possess knowledge of the unseen (Shafi').

34. *Saba'* was also known as Ma'arib in Yemen, three nights' journey away

from San'a' (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others).

Majid supplies historical details: "Sheba of the *Bible*. The Sabaens were 'the ancient dwellers in South-west Arabia, in the part now called Yemen, Hadramaut, and Asir ... The land produced spices and incense and was a stage on the trade road from India, Malay archipelago and Africa... Marib, 100km. east of San'a, was its capital.' (EBr. XIX, pp. 784, 785). Recent researches 'which have disclosed elaborate architectural remains, and brought to Europe hundreds of inscriptions, the work of Sabaens more than confirms the ancient fame of Sheba, and vindicates its claim, not only to wide commerce and a productive soil, but to an influential empire as well.' (DB. V. p. 85)."

Mawdudi adds: "Their (Sabaens) capital city was Ma'arib, located 55 miles north-east of San'a, the present capital of Yemen. The Sabaens rose to power after the decline of the Minaean kingdom around 1100 B.C. and for about one thousand

[23] I found a woman ruling over them,³⁶ and she has been given of everything.³⁷ And she has a mighty throne.³⁸

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

years they remained predominant in Arabia. Then, around 115 B.C. they were replaced by the Himyarites, another renowned people of southern Arabia who ruled Yemen and Hadramawt in Arabia and Abyssinia in Africa.

“The Sabaens controlled the trade between East Africa, India, the Far East and Arabia with Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome, a fact which explains their affluence. Greek historians have called them the richest nation of the world. In addition to their trading skills, another reason accounting for their prosperity was their excellent irrigation system which dotted the length and breadth of the country with dams. Their land was unusually fertile and lush. This is also mentioned by Greek historians and the Qur’ān alludes to it too in *Surah Saba’* 34: 15.”

35. If it is asked, how come a knowledgeable person and a Prophet like Sulayman did not know the existence of Bilqis and her kingdom? Zamakhshari answers that perhaps Allah (*swt*) kept the knowledge secret from him for reasons of His own,

just as He did not inform Ya`qub about Yusuf’s whereabouts.

A minority opinion is that these are the words of Sulayman who tarried for a while, to visit *Saba’* and then was quickly back.

36. It is attributed to the Prophet that he said that one of the parents of Bilqis was a Jinn. But the attribution is incorrect.

Once the people of Yemen wrote to Malik that there was a man who claimed to have a Jinn as his wife! Imām Malik wrote back that he did not see why a human could not marry a Jinn, but he would not approve of it because of the fear that a woman carrying a child (out of adultery) could claim that she was made pregnant by a Jinn. This story is in *Al-Ashbah wa al-Nada’ir* of Ibn Najim. However, when the subject came up before Hasan (al-Busri), as in Ibn `Asakir, he remarked that intermarriage between the two, Jinn and human, proves sterile. They cannot produce progeny.

Hasan (al-Busri) must have known good amount of modern biology

[24] I found her and her people prostrating themselves to the sun,³⁹ apart from Allah. Shaytan has decked out fair their deeds to them and has thus prevented them from the Path, and, therefore, they are not guided.

وَجَدْتُهُمْ وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ
فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] (And) so they do not prostrate themselves to Allah who brings forth the hidden in the heavens and earth?⁴⁰ and knows what you conceal and what you reveal.

أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا
تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

which tells us that interbred progenies of two species is always sterile (Au).

37. That is, she was given all kinds of worldly things (Ibn Jarir, Razi), or, we might say, writes Qurtubi, all that was required to successfully administer her kingdom.

38. “Here is a Jewish version of the story. ‘One day, the king, observing that the mountain-cock or hoopoe was absent, ordered that the bird be summoned forthwith. When it arrived it declared that it had for three months been flying hither and thither seeking to discover some country not yet subjected to Solomon, and had at length found a land in the East, exceedingly rich in gold, silver, and plants, whose capital was called Kitor, and whose ruler was a woman, known as the Queen of Sheba.’ (JE. XI. p. 443).”

Zamakhshari and Razi (reworded) issue the warning that while dealing with the exaggerated and excited descriptions of the hoopoe, one might not forget that after all it was a bird.

39. “Ancient Arabian traditions also say the same thing. Ibn Is-haq quotes genealogists while stating that the people of *Saba*’ were descendants of ‘Abd Shams (‘the Servants of the Sun’)” – Mawdudi.

40. “The hidden”: such as the rain in the heaven and the seed in the earth (Ibn Jarir).

Shabbir quotes Shah ‘Abdul Qadir (Muwadhhdih al-Qur’ān) that hoopoe does not feed on grains, seeds or fruits. It feeds on worms, hidden beneath the surface of the earth, their natural habitation. Is there a connection then, he asked, between its strange ability to pull out hidden

[26] Allah, there is no deity save He – Lord of the Magnificent `Arsh.⁴¹

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] He said, 'We shall presently see whether you told the truth or you are of the liars.'⁴²

قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

worms, and his description of Allah's power, "who brings out the hidden?"

41. According to Ibn Zayd, hoopoe's words end at this point (Ibn Jarir).

42. Do animals lie that Sulayman should have said, "We shall presently see whether you told the truth or you are of the liars?" The answer is that we do not know the language of the birds to be able to say yes or no. But biologists, bird-watchers and ornithologists report quite incredible things about birds. Their finding is that the birds do deceive each other, in fact, they even commit theft (Au.).

Ibn al-Qayyim reports that someone narrated the following story: "It so happened that an ant came out of its nest and encountered a locust carcass. She tried to carry it to the nest but could not. So she retreated and brought back a group of ants to carry it. But, as I saw them coming, I lifted the carcass off the ground. They came, encircled the ground and, not finding anything, retreated. I replaced the locust. She came back

and tried to carry it but could not. So she went back and once again brought back a group of ants to help her. But I lifted it off the ground once again. Once again, not finding anything they retreated. I replaced the locust and back she was after a while trying to drag it to the nest. But failing, once again, she went back to the nest, and I did my trick. I did this several times. Finally, when she brought her mates and they did not find anything, they surrounded her and cut her up to pieces" (Bada'i` al-Tafsir). When this was mentioned to the Sheikh (Ibn Qayyim perhaps means Ibn Taymiyyah) he remarked that by nature ants abhor lies.

Ants

Significantly, the Qur'an has made mention of such animals which have evoked human interest to this day. In our times, the ant is studied as a subject by hundreds of scientists and amateur researchers over the world. There are scientists who have obtained doctorate degrees in ant relat-

ed subjects, while others study their genetics to determine their behavior.

An ant has three parts to its body, six legs and a pair of antennae which are also used for sense of smell. It can run very fast. If a man were to run as fast as an ant runs for its body-size, he would have to run as fast as a race horse. It has two stomachs, one for digesting its own food, and the other for food to be shared with other ants, e.g., nest workers and the larvae. It has no lungs. Touching of antennae seems to be one of the ways of communicating with each other. It has the largest brain size among all animals in terms of body size, (altogether some 250,000 brain cells). It has strong limbs and is ordinarily capable of lifting a weight 20 times its own weight. (No other animal can lift the weight that ants can lift. Humans can ordinarily lift half their body weight). The likeness of a leaf cutter ant's weight carrying capacity is to a man carrying 250 kg for a distance of one km in 2.5 minutes. An ant has been photographed tenaciously holding on to a lizard thousands of times its own weight, clinging to the bottom of a thick branch while the lizard hung. It held on for several hours waiting for help before dropping it down. The Arabs knew of the strength of ant's joints. A proverb was struck:

مَعَ أَنَّ النَّمْلَةَ يُضْرَبُ بِهَا الْمَثَلُ فِي الْقُوَّةِ فَيَقَالُ
أَقْوَى مِنَ النَّمْلَةِ لِأَنَّهَا تَحْمِلُ مَا هُوَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ جِزْمِهَا
بِأَضْعَافٍ

A proverb is struck by the ant and said, 'He is stronger than an ant,' because she can carry weights several times larger than her own weight.

Ants live in colonies comprising of thousands to millions of individuals. A colony starts when a female ant flies off followed by male ants. (Although most nests have a single queen, among some species, such as fire ants, a single ant colony can have as many as 500 queens. Ants in such colonies seem to work cooperatively for the interest of the entire group). After mating the ant settles in some place, making a little hole where she starts to lay eggs. As they hatch, the colony grows. The queen keeps laying eggs, until its death some 10-14 years later.

There are tens of thousands of ant species. But members of one species are not accepted by another. If they try to enter, the soldier ants tear them apart. However, if eggs are placed in their nests, they bestow equal care on them and accept them as their own when the larvae hatch out. Some species raid nests of other ants and steal their pupae. When

these foreign pupae hatch, they are employed as slaves within the colony. Some species are migratory. They are known as Army Ants or Driver Ants. They number up to 700,000 and are always on the move just like nomads, carrying their eggs and pupae with them – always moving in a column.

A biologist writes his personal account: “As an adult in Panama I have stepped aside and contemplated the New World equivalent of the driver ants that I had feared as a child in Africa, flowing by me like a crackling river, and I can testify to the strangeness and wonder. Hour after hour the legions marched past, walking as much over each others’ bodies as over the ground, while I waited for the queen. Finally she came, and hers was an awesome presence. It was impossible to see her body. She appeared only as a moving wave of worker frenzy, a boiling peristaltic ball of ants with linked arms. She was somewhere in the middle of the seething ball of workers, while all around it the massed rank of soldiers faced threateningly outwards with jaws agape, everyone ready to kill and to die in defence of the queen. Forgive my curiosity to see her: I prodded the ball of workers with a long stick, in a vain attempt to flush out the queen. Instantly, 20 soldiers

buried their massively muscled pincers in my stick, possibly never to let go, while dozens more swarmed up the stick causing me to let go with alacrity.” (Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 108, 1996, W.W. Norton and Company).

Not all ants bite, but some bites can be dangerous, even fatal. The ubiquitous black large ant in the Gulf can be fatal to some. A man bitten by one of them can have bobs all over his body in ten minutes, within which time his body throws out the entire store of the sperm. A girl had to be hospitalized after being bitten by a black ant of this class. The doctors warned her that she might not survive another bite. Sadly, they proved correct. In India a female farmer coming back to her shack found her little one killed by thousands of ants tenaciously clinging to the child’s body.

The nest grows in size as the population increases. Its size is limited by the number of eggs laid by the queen, and by the water level of the land. Some nests go as deep as 7-8 meters and are equally as wide. A nest contains a labyrinth of tunnels, neatly cut through, with myriad of branches, resembling brain nerves. Amazingly, they start boring tun-

nels from opposite sides advancing towards each other from two ends to arrive perfectly face to face with each other when the two holes open into each other.

Adjacent to the tunnels there are chambers with beautiful curved ceilings, breeding houses of special shapes, stockyards, large work stations, processing plants, and, in case of leaf-cutter ants, plantation fields, harvesting areas, and pits for decomposing waste. The nest and its pathways are efficiently designed for the heat rising from chemical processes to find its way out into the atmosphere and to be replaced by cool oxygen-rich air allowed in through side tunnels. Maintenance of a constant temperature is an important factor in the development of the pupae. The entrances can be successfully sealed off in case of rains, severe cold, or attacks.

At the social level, there are various castes among the ants, but always headed by a queen. In actual fact the queen is no queen. Much larger in size than others, it is merely an egg-laying apparatus. No one lays eggs except the queen. She coats her eggs with a pheromone – a hydrocarbon blend – that helps their identification as queen-laid eggs. In experi-

ments, when the queen-laid eggs were removed, the worker ants began to lay their own eggs. But more surprisingly, when queen-laid eggs were brought back, the ants destroyed the worker-laid eggs. The eggs hatch into varieties of ants: soldier ants, worker ants, male, female, etc. Somehow the ratio is maintained. In experiments, when soldier ants of a colony were destroyed, the eggs that had already been laid hatched more soldier ants. And when worker ants were destroyed, the eggs that had already been laid, produced more of the worker ants. The eggs somehow knew what was happening outside.

The nest usually consists of patrol ants, maintenance ants, worker ants, (of several varieties, normally determined by size and age), soldier ants, a few males, and of course, at least one queen. But the basic mystery about these ant colonies is that neither is there any hierarchy, nor management, nor a central control. Yet everyone seems to know its function, and does it pretty efficiently, in the quickest time possible, without receiving orders, and without reporting work performance. Duties can change from hour to hour, day to day, and from situation to situation. The worker ants for example, perform a myriad of activities: food

gathering, processing, stockpiling, nest cleaning, larvae-care, and several others, such as, in case of leaf-cutter ants, de-fungi-ing the leaves, cultivation, harvesting, storage, and waste disposal. But, although no command is ever issued to anyone of the tens of thousands, sometimes even millions of ants, yet, as a whole the nest functions like a perfectly organized kingdom.

Ibn al-Qayyim seems to have known about the absence of central command. He writes what modern biologists have learnt after decades of painstaking research: “Ants do not have any leader or commander assigning them tasks as is the case with the leaders among bees to whom the message of food is first passed on, and who in turn send a host of bees in the direction of food. In case of ants, every one of them seems to be working for the benefit of the colony, without any regard for their own likes and dislikes” (Bada’i’).

Ant activity begins with the patroller ants popping their queer heads out of the nest entrance early in the morning. For some time they eye the area around the nest. With “all’s well” message passed on, the patroller ants come out in good numbers and head in different directions in search of food. The directions differ from day

to day. The patrollers are very sensitive to predators. Writes a researcher, “Collecting patrollers (for laboratory research: Au.) was completely different. Even the most careful of aspirating of only a few patrollers, well apart from each other, could cause the whole colony to shut down. The nest maintenance workers and other patrollers would go back into the nest, and later the foragers (food collectors: Au.), would not come out at all .. What puzzled me most about this observation was the rapidity of the patrollers’ reaction. When some patrollers outside the nest disappeared, the rest of the patrollers sometimes headed back into the nest immediately, within seconds – long before there was time for anyone to go back into the nest and assess the rate at which the patrollers were returning” (Ants at Work, Deborah Gordon, p. 152, The Free Press, 1999).

With the patrollers’ return to the nest, foragers or food collectors pour out. They head straight in the directions the patrollers took. They go back and forth the nest several times carrying food, collecting only that which the patrollers had encountered in the morning. What the patrollers ignored, the collectors also ignore. If the food is too heavy, an ant goes back to fetch others. When

she re-emerges, she has an army behind her, which moves in a column and never as a crowd.

Leaf cutter ants first cut leaves of manageable transport size. They drop them at the first level chambers in the anthill. There other ants (smaller than the ants that went out) spray the leaves with a sort of antibiotic. That assures that no bacteria will escape death. After that other ants, (normally smaller than the ones that did their work at the upper chamber), cut the leaves to smaller pieces and lay them in another area. Within 48 hours the leaves turn into fungus. At the fourth level of activity, harvesting is done. Then come in other ants, the smallest, to collect the leftovers and prepare the field for the next harvest. During plantation they use caterpillar faeces as manure.

Some ants take care of the larvae of aphids or other insects. The reason is that these insects release a sweet sap, and the ants seem to be raising them to obtain a supply of the sap rather than eating them. As long as these insects are being cared for by ants, they are protected from other enemies and the ants collect their honey.

When the sun is in the middle of the sky, the forager ants retreat and attend to tasks within the nest. In-

side, they care for the larvae and pupae, attend to cleaning, dig the nest deeper in response to the queen laying more eggs, carry back sand to the top, thus creating the mount or the anthill, and perform several other tasks. Sometimes by evening, if the weather is not good, the mouth to the nest is closed with sand. With compound eyes, they seem to have infrared capabilities, which explains how they can work in the dark tunnels. Ants have also been seen collecting food at night, but that seems to be related to good quality food. For instance, a cockroach which has recently been dead, draws them out in the dark. However, within the nest, the ants work at night also. They move the eggs and larvae deep into the nest to protect them from the cold. During daytime, they move the eggs and larvae of the colony to the top of the nest so that they can be warmer.

Nothing seems to ever go wrong in a nest for the decade and a half of its life-cycle, although individual ants live for anything between a month and a half, which is normal, to a year, which is the case for some species. But the queen lives for, averagely, 15-20 years, although in some rare species, up to 50 years. And, as soon as the egg-laying machine dies, it is

[28] Carry this my letter and drop it before them;⁴³ then draw back and see what shall they respond.'

اذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ
عَنْهُمْ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

the end of the others also. Instead of adopting a new queen, they give up their ghosts, no one knows why, and the nest is turned into a vast graveyard. A close parallel of this is the cells of the human body. Each cell functions, apparently without any central command, producing the kind of proteins required, hour to hour, without ever failing in its specific functions: depending on where the cell is - liver, intestine, nails or knee cap. Each cell somehow knows what it has to do. Like an ant colony members, individual cells do not live out the whole life that the body does. Cells come and go, like ants in a nest, but the body goes on, for sixty-seventy years. Then the queen dies and that is the end of the individual ants. Similarly, the human body dies, and that is the end of the hundred trillion cells. Scientists are unable to explain how the cells know that it is time for them to die, altogether, at one time. Interestingly, a 400,000 ant colony of ants collectively has the same sized brain as humans.

It is ants and their sister species termites who bring down what man builds. From the very first day that man completes his proud construction, these littlest of Allah's creatures begin their work of removing the foundation, grain by grain, to one day bringing down the entire structure! In the Arabian Gulf region, it has been found that the effects of deterioration caused by the ants on concrete buildings are visible within one week of the finish of construction (Au).

43. "The use of birds as letter-carriers need not surprise the modern mind. 'The use of homing pigeons to carry messages is as old as Solomon and the ancient Greeks, to whom the art of training the birds came probably from the Persians, (they) conveyed the names of Olympic victors to their various cities by this means. Before the electric telegraph this mode of communication had considerable vogue amongst stockbrokers and financiers.' (EBr. XVII. p. 921)." – Majid.

[29] She (the queen) said, 'You chiefs, a letter worthy of respect has been delivered to me.'⁴⁴

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ
كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] Verily, it is from Sulayman and verily it is, "In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Compassionate."⁴⁵

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] (Saying) Rise up not against me, but come to me in submission."⁴⁶

أَلَّا تَعْلُوا عَلَيَّ وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

44. "The letter was important to Queen Sheba for several reasons: (i) It had arrived in an unusual fashion; delivered and dropped in front of her by a bird. (ii) It was from Solomon the magnificent, the ruler of Palestine and Syria. (iii) It commenced with the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful, even though this formula was not used anywhere in the world for diplomatic state correspondence. (iv) To write a letter in the name of Almighty God in disregard of all deities was something uncommon for them. (v) The letter contained a clear message to Queen Sheba to give up defiance, to commit her allegiance to Solomon and to go to him in the state of submission 'as a Muslim.'

"To come as 'Muslim' can have two meanings: (i) to come in the state of submission, or (ii) to accept Islam and come to him in that capacity" (Mawdudi)

45. Following this Qur'anic lead, it is desirable to commence any piece of writing with the basmalah. However, if one fears that one's writing might be discarded, and Allah's name desecrated, then it is better to merely pronounce the basmalah at the start of the writing, and not write the words (Shafi').

46. Alluding to the briefness of the letter, Qatadah has pointed out that this is how Prophets wrote letters: no loose talk, no verbiage, just plain truth. (Our own Prophet's letters were as brief: Au.). And, the invitation was to submit to the Lord One God (Ibn Jarir). In Shabbir's words, "Rarely such a brief, terse, and to the point letter was ever written."

It was from Sulayman, full stop. Was there any need for any further introduction? It started in the name of the Kind and the Compassionate. Sulayman was His envoy and had His

[32] She said, 'You chiefs, give me your opinion concerning (this) my affair. I am not used to deciding a matter until you are present (with) me.'⁴⁷

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا
كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] They said, 'We possess power and own great fighting (prowess). However, the affair rests with you. So, consider what you will command.'

قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُوا قُوَّةً وَأُولُوا بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ
وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] She said, 'Kings, when they enter a country, they despoil it and render the noblest of its people the most abased. That is what they do.'⁴⁸

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا
وَجَعَلُوا أَعزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] I am going to send them a gift and see with what do the envoys return.'⁴⁹

وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَاظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ
الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

power and authority behind him. Therefore, there was no point in rising up against him. Hence, 'submit yourself to the Lord God of the world without much ado' (Au.).

47. There are quite a few reports of Jewish origin about the number of chiefs that Bilqis consulted. Alusi scoffs at them and considers them nearer to lies than truth.

48. Her chiefs had comforted her that they commanded great power and fighting skill. But she knew the reality and told them indirectly that if they faced Sulayman's forces, they would have a different story to narrate after the fiasco (Au.).

49. That is, if Sulayman accepted the gifts and spared her and her kingdom, it would mean he was a mere king who could be resisted. But if he did not accept the gifts, it would mean he was a Prophet who could not be resisted (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). There are no few reports on what those fabulous gifts constituted, but, once again in the words of Alusi, nearer to lies than to truth. The Jewish encyclopedia for instance says she sent several vessels of treasures along with 6000 boys and girls of the same age as gift (Majid).

50. Yusuf Ali comments: "Poor Bilqis! She thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify

[36] But when they (the envoys) came to Sulayman he said, 'Will you extend riches to me?, while what Allah has given me is better than what He gave you. But rather, it is you who rejoice in your gifts.⁵⁰

قَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ
فَمَا آتَانِي اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا آتَاكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ
بِهِدْيِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] Go back to them. We will assuredly come against them with a force they have no power (to resist), drive them out from there disgraced, and they will be humbled.'

ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ
بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ
﴿٣٧﴾

[38] He asked, 'You chiefs. Which one of you will bring me her throne before they come to me surrendered?'⁵¹

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا
قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] Said one of the powerful ones⁵² of the Jinn, 'I will bring it to you before you rise from your place.⁵³ Surely, I am strong, trustworthy.'

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ
أَنْ تَقُومَ مِن مَّقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ
أَمِينٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

her warlike subjects. But the effect of the embassy with such presents was the very opposite. Solomon took it as an insult that she should send him presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say, 'Let these baubles delight your own hearts! Allah (*swt*) has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, viz., His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that?'"

51. It is narrated that when Bilqis came to know that her gifts were re-

jected, she started off to see Sulayman. It was when she had arrived close to his capital that he ordered her throne brought to him (Ibn Kathir).

52. Literally, the word `ifrit is used for a rebellious ruffian (Alusi), but here it is understood as a giant and a mighty one of them, as in Ibn Kathir.

53. Maqamik: i.e., from the seat of Justice that Sulayman occupied every day until noon, administering justice.

[40] Said he who possessed knowledge of the Book, 'I will bring it to you before even your glance returns to you.'⁵⁴ When he saw it firmly placed⁵⁵ before him he said,⁵⁶ 'This is by the grace of my Lord that He may test me whether I give thanks or am I ungrateful. And, whosoever is grateful, surely he is grateful only for himself, while whosoever is ungrateful, then, surely, my Lord is All-sufficient, All-generous.'⁵⁷

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رآه مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي أَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّيَ عَنِّي كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

54. Ibn Is-haq as well as some others have reported that the one who said these words was a friend of Sulayman and he knew Ism al-A`zam by whose power he was able to place the throne before Sulayman in a moment (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Another opinion is that it was Sulayman himself who brought the throne with Allah's help (Zamakhshari, Razi).

55. The use of the term "*Mustaqarr*" implies that it could have been a fairly large throne (Au.).

56. Ibn Jarir has several reports that describe who brought the throne and how. But, in the absence of any *hadith*, either weak or strong, the details do not carry any scholarly weight. As Ibn Kathir notes, there is no way we can check the authenticity of these reports since they are most

probably of Jewish origin, and hence ignoring them is the best course.

Mawdudi comments: "It may well be asked how the throne was carried over the distance of 1500 miles, appearing in Solomon's court within the twinkling of an eye. In this regard it must be stated that our notions of time and space, of matter and motions, based on our limited observation and experience, are applicable only to us and not to God... God can cause anything... When we are talking of God... what difficulty is there in believing that a throne was carried up to a distance of a few thousand miles within the twinkling of an eye? ... After all, the same Qur'an contains the statement that one night God took His servant Muhammad (peace be on him) from Makkah to Jerusalem and brought him back, all within one night."

[41] He said, 'Disguise her throne for her. We will see whether she is guided or will she be of those who are not guided.'⁵⁸

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ
تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] So when she came, it was said, 'Is your throne like this?' She said, 'As if it is it.'⁵⁹ 'And we were given the knowledge before her, and were submitted.'⁶⁰

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ قَالَتْ
كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا
مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

For those familiar with modern science, it should not present any difficulty in understanding how the throne could have been brought in a second. The distance between Yemen and Palestine is no more than about 2500 km. It means the carrier would have traveled at the speed of about 5000 km. per second. How does it compare with the speed of light which is 300,000 km a second – roughly the speed at which the universe is now expanding?!

57. "If Solomon had been ungrateful to Allah, i.e., if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of `Ifrit to add to his worldly strength and glory. Instead he uses the higher magic of the Book, - of the Spirit - to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good of her subjects, by the divine Light. He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude

to Allah (*swt*) for the Grace He had given him" (Yusuf Ali).

58. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, and Wahb b. Munabbih have opined that the meaning of this *ayah* is, 'Will Bilqis be rightly guided in recognizing her throne as her own?' And the presentation of the throne was to test whether she was intelligent enough (to recognize Allah's powers) - Ibn Jarir.

59. "Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better. And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by Allah (*swt*), by which they recognized Allah's prophet in Solomon (*asws*), and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul." (Yusuf Ali).

60, The dominant opinion is that of Mujahid who said that these are the

[43] But what she had been worshipping besides Allah had prevented her. She was of an unbelieving people.⁶¹

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] She was told, 'Enter the palace.' But when she saw it, she thought it was a vast pool of water⁶² and bared her shanks. He said, 'It is indeed a palace paved smooth with glass.'⁶³ She said, 'O my Lord, I have indeed wronged myself, and now submit myself with Sulayman to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'⁶⁴

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ
لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنِ سَاكِنِهَا قَالِ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ
مُرْدٌ مِنْ قَوَارِيرَ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ
نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

words of Sulayman meaning, he had knowledge of these things much before her arrival, and, was a believer (Baghawi, Ibn Kathir).

61. "The purport is that her continuance in paganism was not specially a fault of her own, but due to her family upbringing and to her vicious associates" (Majid).

The opinion of Mujahid, Sa`id and Hasan was that the words, "And we were given the knowledge" ... until "she was of an unbelieving people" are those of Sulayman (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

62. The textual *lujji* is for a vast amount of water.

63. Majid quotes from several Jewish sources. One is as follows: "In the Second Targum on the Book of Esther we read that Solomon received the queen seated on a throne upon

a floor of glass. She thought he was sitting in the midst of water.' (Farros, Solomon: His Life and Times, p. 135)."

64. After her throne had been found with Sulayman, this glass construction was the second proof to Bilqis of Sulayman's extraordinary powers which were certainly not human, but supernatural, those that only the Lord God of the worlds could have bestowed on him. Consequently, Bilqis announced, "I submit myself together with Sulayman to Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (Sayyid).

We may present in sum and substance the commentaries of Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir and others: There are a number of reports, perhaps of Jewish origin, why Sulayman got a palace constructed out of glass. But the most plausible one is that it was to impress upon Bilqis that in

comparison to her own kingdom, that of Sulayman's was materially much more advanced and that those under his control, men, Jinn and animals, were capable of performing miraculous feats: the palace was one example. Its floor was paved with glass. Water flowed below it in currents as in a stream, complete with fish and other sea animals swimming around. The work was so exquisitely done that Bilqis thought she would be stepping into water. The efficient artwork convinced her of Sulayman's special powers, and that he could have only got it done with the help of supernatural powers. And, since he was apparently a man of high moral integrity too, his claim that he was a Prophet stood its test. Accordingly, she declared her belief in Allah who had raised him as a Prophet.

Shawkani points out that the stories of Sulayman (*asws*) ultimately marrying Bilqis are of Jewish origin and not trustworthy. That is true also of several other fibs that have been narrated in the context of this Qur'ānic passage. As to the Jewish origin, Majid confirms by quoting: "Every legitimate reguson negust, or king of kings, traces his descent from the union of king Solomon with the Queen of Sheba. The substance of the claim is supported by the pres-

ence today of some 70,000 Jews in the southern provinces of Abyssinia.' (UHW. VI. p. 3404)"

Before moving on we might point out to the sceptics that if there was any thoroughgoing editor and redactor of the *Bible*, it was perhaps Prophet Muhammad. There isn't a story, not merely in the *Bible*, but also in Talmud (ever out of print since before the Prophet's times), or a few other ancient Rabbinical literature, that the Prophet doesn't seem to have known, mastered and then presented a wonderfully edited version that stands above any reproach or criticism. How could he have done it? Or, is it Revelation? (Au).

Mawdudi, and before him Majid, quote profusely from Jewish sources for comparison. To pick up a passage from Mawdudi: "A major difference is that in Rabbinical traditions we find no reference to Solomon's Tawhid and God-consciousness and the worst detraction is the allegation that Solomon slept with the Queen of Sheba and begot an illegitimate child and that it was in this illegitimate lineage that Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, who would destroy Jerusalem, was born. (See The Jewish Encyclopaedia, vol. XI, p. 443).

[45] Aforetime We sent to Thamud⁶⁵ their brother Saleh that, 'Worship Allah.'⁶⁶ But at once they were two parties disputing (with one another).⁶⁷

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنِ
اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ
﴿٤٥﴾

“The truth is,” Mawdudi continues, “that a group of Jewish scholars have harboured enmity towards Solomon (peace be on him). They have accused him of violating the Commandment of the *Torah*, of his arrogance on account of his kingdom, of pride in his wisdom, of being a hen-pecked husband, of a luxuriant life-style and even of polytheism and idol-worship. (See The Jewish Encyclopaedia, vol. XI, pp. 439-41). Because of such propaganda, the *Bible* presents Solomon (*asws*) as a king rather than as a Prophet and that too as a king who, in violation of God's commands, loved several polytheistic women, and whose heart turned to other gods. (See Kings 11: 1-11).”

See also Majid's note in this connection in *Surah Al-Baqarah*, no. 206.

65. The story of Bilqis – of the south – that portrayed her humbleness before the truth and submission to it when it dawned upon her, is now contrasted with two stiff-necked na-

tions of the north (with a point from Asad).

66. “Saleh's mission is summarized at this point in a few words. This is the message that has been the central part of any message that was ever sent down from the heavens to the earth: a single message, sent to every nation, in every epoch, and through every Messenger. This, despite the fact that everything that there is around man in this universe, and everything that their selves conceal within themselves, cries loudly this, one reality. Humanity has moved on, generations after generations, through epochs after epochs, encountering this reality, but has been rejecting it, denying it, if not sometimes mocking it. It remains evading this eternal truth to this day, inclined to any other path, except the path of its Lord, One God” (Sayyid).

67. That is, Mujahid said, they divided themselves into believers and unbelievers (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[46] He said, 'O my people! Why do you seek to hasten on the evil before good?⁶⁸ If only you sought Allah's forgiveness; haply so you may be shown mercy.'

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ
الْحَسَنَةِ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] They said, 'We augur ill omen of you and those that are with you.'⁶⁹ He said, 'Your ill omen is with Allah.⁷⁰ But rather you are a people who will be tested.'⁷¹

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَعَكَ قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

68. That is, Mujahid said, 'Why do you ask chastisement to be brought down instead of seeking Allah's mercy?' (Ibn Jarir).

Zamakhshari explains what it means to ask for evil before good. Saleh's people used to say, in their ignorance, that 'we shall repent to God if the chastisement that Saleh promises comes to pass. We shall seek forgiveness as it arrives and shall be forgiven.' They assumed that repentance at such a time would ward off the punishment. They also thought that, 'if the chastisement does not come, we shall remain on what we are.' So, Saleh spoke to them following their suppositions and ended by suggesting that they should seek forgiveness before evil comes: "haply you will be shown mercy."

69. That is, "Your luck, your future, and your destiny" are all in Allah's hands" (Sayyid).

It seems that any problem or calamity Saleh's people faced after his advent, was attributed to him and his mission. He became to them a symbol of bad omen (Au.).

For explanation of "tiyarah" see *al-A`raf*, n. 180-182. Sayyid adds here, "To this day we can observe among such people as who reject belief in Allah and refuse to place their trust in Him, falling into the same foolish error, despite their advancement in every discipline of knowledge. You will see them drawing ill omen from number 13, or from a black cat cutting across their path, and so on."

70. Saleh's people alleged that the troubles that they faced in life, or were likely to face, were because of him and his followers. He reminded them that their real troubles were with Allah. Chastisement could descend upon them if they did not mend their ways (Au.).

[48] And in the city there was a group of nine⁷² who spread corruption all over the land⁷³ and would not reform.⁷⁴

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] They said, 'Swear to each other by Allah that we shall attack him and his family by night and then say to his heir, 'We did not witness the destruction of his family and that we are truthful.'⁷⁵

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ
لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا
لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Thus they plotted a plot and We plotted a plot, but they perceived not.

وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا
يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] See then how was the end of their plot - that We destroyed them and their nation, all together.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ أَنَّا
دَمَّرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

71. The words, "But rather you are a people being tested" could also mean, writes Zamakhshari, that seeking of omen are of those acts by means of which Satan puts them to troubles and tribulations.

72. Raht is for a group of men numbering between three and ten (Zamakhshari) without a woman in it (Jawhari).

73. That is, their corruption was not limited to their own land Hijr, but spilled beyond it into other lands (Alusi).

Apart from other things, one of their corrupt practices was to chip off silver and gold from Dirham and Dinar coins (Qurtubi), which our own

Prophet has also prohibited (Ibn Kathir).

74. That is, totally corrupt, without any good coming out of them, in contrast to those who are less corrupt through whom some good works flow out at some time or the other (Zamakhshari).

75. Ibn `Abbas said that the allusion is to the nine who later hamstringed the camel. According to a report in Ibn abi Hatim, when they were promised chastisement within three days, they said they'd rather finish off Saleh before the expiry of the time promised. But, as they arrived to attack him by night, they were overtaken by Allah's chastisement and they all lay dead. By morning their

[52] *Yonder there are their homes in ruin,⁷⁶ because they (indulged in) wrongdoing. Surely, in that is a sign for a people who know.*

فَبَلَكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ حَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا إِنَّ فِي
ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] *And We delivered those who believed and were fearful (of Allah).*

وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] *And Lut, when he said to his people, 'Do you commit the indecent while you are seeing?'*⁷⁷

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَبْصُرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] *What, do you approach men lustfully rather than women? Nay, but you are a people behaving ignorantly.*⁷⁸

أَفَأْتِكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ
النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ بَّحِيلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

nation too was destroyed (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

76. "Yonder there" because, when the Makkans traveled to the Syrian regions, they passed by Wadi al-Qura' which has the remains of their habitations (Shabbir).

77. That is, you can see with the inner eye that these practices are abominable (Kashshaf). They could also see with their physical eyes that propagation of every biological species depends on the male going into the female. Could they see any practice among any biological organism contrary to this? Weren't they the only pervert exception? (Sayyid)

As these lines are being written – April 2004 – the situation in the

West is that due to homosexual practices and pedophilic activities spreading wide and deep in the society, marriage between homosexuals (both between male and male, as well as between female and female) has been legalized in the United States of America. Across the continent, in Britain, the dominant Christian sect is allowing homosexuals to enter into priesthood (Au.).

78. Jahalah is not merely ignorance, but rather, in the extreme sense, a state of mind that reflects the qualities of 'knowing very well but refusing to acknowledge,' 'deliberately acting against what is right,' combined with intransigence, argumentativeness, insolence, and total disregard for people's censure (Au.).

[56] His people had no answer except to say, 'Drive out Lut's family from your town. They are indeed men who make themselves out to be pure.'⁷⁹

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا
أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ
يَتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] So We delivered him and his family, except his wife; We destined her to be of those who tarried.

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَا مِمَّن
الْعَابِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] And We rained down on them a rain. So evil was the rain for those who were warned.⁸⁰

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ
﴿٥٨﴾

[59] Say, 'All praise to Allah and peace on His slaves whom He has chosen.⁸¹ What, is Allah better or that which they associate (with Him)?'⁸²

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ
اصْطَفَىٰ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

79. It was a derisive, sarcastic statement.

80. Shah `Abdul Qadir commented on the three episodes here: Sulayman had promised that he would bring a force which they would not be able to resist. This came true for our own Prophet, who brought a force to Makkah that the unbelievers could not resist. The gang of nine promised each other that they would attack Saleh by night; but he was rescued by Allah. Similarly, the Quraysh surrounded the Prophet's house by night in an attempt to do away with him by morning. But Allah (*swt*) rescued His Messenger. And Lut's people threatened him with expulsion, but instead, he was ordered to leave, after which they met with their de-

struction. Similarly, the Makkans had threatened the Prophet (*saws*) with expulsion. But he left the place on his own (and their chiefs were destroyed at Badr: Au.) – Shabbir.

81. Ibn `Abbas and Sufyan al-Thawri believed that the allusion by those that Allah chose is to the Companions of the Prophet (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Zayd b. Aslam's opinion was that the allusion is to the Prophets and Messengers. It is they who were chosen by Allah (Ibn Kathir).

Allah teaches us that this is how we should commence our talks and speeches (Alusi).

82. "Who is better: Allah or the gods that they associate with Him as His partners?' The polytheists

[60] Or, He who created the heavens and the earth,⁸³ and sent down for you out of heaven water⁸⁴ – then We caused to grow therewith delightful gardens;⁸⁵ it was not (possible) for you to cause their trees to grow – is there a god with Allah? But rather, they are a people who swerve away (from the truth).⁸⁶

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ
بَهْجَةٍ مَّا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا أَلَيْسَ
مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلٌّ لَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

did not have the courage to face the question in this manner, for even the most hardened among them would not say that the deities were better than God. And if they accepted that God was better, the very foundation of their religion would be undermined and it would be unreasonable for them, thereafter, to say that they preferred what was inferior to that which was superior. By posing this question the Qur'an immediately disarms its opponents" (Mawdudi).

83. There is a little bit of ellipsis (ijaz) involved here. When it is said, "Or, He who created the heavens and the earth..," it is as if being asked, "Is Allah better who created the heavens and the earth .. or the deities you suggest?" (Au.).

84. When we consider the fact that living organisms, topped by the humans, inhabit only the earth, and that none of the other ten to eleven planets, nor their dozens of moon-like satellites, some of them as large

as the earth, have been graced with water, then, the true meaning of, "And sent down for you out of heaven water" dawns upon us (Au.).

85. In comparison to bustan, had-iqah is that orchard which has a fence around it (Ibn Jarir).

So, there is creation: "created the heavens and the earth," regulation: "sent down for you out of heaven water," sustenance: "caused to grow therewith," and finally, beauty, "delightful gardens" (Au.).

86. That is, they are a people who swerve away from the truth (Ibn Jarir).

The words could also be translated as, "they are a people who assigns equals (to Allah)."

Majid comments: "In Vedic religion, for instance, 'both Heaven and Earth are regarded as the parents of gods (deva-gods) even though they are said to have been generated by gods. Sometimes one god – Indira,

[61] Or, He who made for you the earth a resting place,⁸⁷ and set amidst it rivers, and assigned for it pegs, and placed between the two seas a barrier⁸⁸ – is there a god with Allah? But rather, most of them do not know.

أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلالَهَا
أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِي وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ
الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا أَلَيْهَ مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] Or, He who responds to the distressed when he appeals to Him and removes the evil,⁸⁹ and makes you successors in the earth⁹⁰ – is there a god with Allah? Seldom it is that you keep (this) in mind.

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ
السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ أَلَيْهَ مَعَ
اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

or Agni, or Rudra, or Soma – sometimes all the gods together, are said to have generated or created heaven and earth, the whole world (ERE. IV. p. 156).”

فَقَرِّ دَعْوَتَهُ رَدِّ عَلَيْنِكَ وَالَّذِي إِنْ أَصَابَتْكَ سَنَةٌ فَدَعْوَتُهُ
أَثَبَتْ عَلَيْنِكَ .

87. That is, a mass of matter that does not shake, convulse or quiver. When it does, as during an earthquake, it causes devastation (Au.).

A man of Balhujaym said, “Messenger of Allah! What’s your call?” He answered, “I am calling unto One Allah who relieves you when you call Him in distress, who leads you back if you call Him when you are lost in the wilderness, who makes your crops grow when drought strikes and you appeal to Him.”

88. See *Surah Al-furqan*, ayah 53 for notes..

(The above has been shortened in view of the next that follow).

89. Accordingly, Abu Saleh reports that “when Ta’us visited me in my sickness, I said to him, ‘Pray for me.’ He replied, ‘Pray for yourself for, He responds to the distressed when he calls Him.” Imām Ahmad has a report that,

According to Albani, the report above is trustworthy: S. Ibrahim.

Ahmad has another report coming from Jabir b. Sulaym al-Hujaymi.

عَنْ رَجُلٍ مِنْ بَلْهَجِيمٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِلا مَ
تَدْعُو قَالَ « أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ وَخِذْهُ الَّذِي إِنْ مَسَّكَ
ضُرٌّ فَدَعْوَتُهُ كَشَفَ عَنْكَ وَالَّذِي إِنْ ضَلَّتْ بِأَرْضِ

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سُلَيْمِ الْهَجِيمِيِّ قَالَ أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
- صلى الله عليه وسلم - وَهُوَ مُحْتَبٍ بِشَمْلَةٍ وَقَدْ

وَفَعَّ هُدُبُهَا عَلَى قَدَمَيْهِ فَقُلْتُ أَيُّكُمْ مُحَمَّدٌ أَوْ رَسُولُ
 اللَّهُ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - فَأَوْمَأَ بِيَدِهِ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ
 فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي مِنْ أَهْلِ الْبَادِيَةِ وَنِيَّ جَفَاؤُهُمْ
 فَأَوْصِنِي. فَقَالَ « لَا تَحْقِرَنَّ مِنَ الْمَعْرُوفِ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ
 أَنْ تَلْقَى أَحَاكَ وَوَجْهَكَ مُنْبَسِطٌ وَلَوْ أَنْ تَفْرَعَ مِنْ
 دَلْوِكَ فِي إِنَاءِ الْمُسْتَسْقَى وَإِنْ امْرُؤٌ سَتَمَكَ بِمَا يَعْلَمُ
 فِيكَ فَلَا تَشْتُمُهُ بِمَا تَعْلَمُ فِيهِ فَإِنَّهُ يَكُونُ لَكَ أَجْرُهُ
 وَعَلَيْهِ وَزُرُّهُ وَإِيَّاكَ وَإِسْبَالَ الْإِزَارِ فَإِنَّ إِسْبَالَ الْإِزَارِ مِنَ
 الْمَخِيلَةِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمَخِيلَةَ وَلَا تَسْبِئَنَّ
 أَحَدًا ». فَمَا سَبَبْتُ بَعْدَهُ أَحَدًا وَلَا شَأَةً وَلَا بَعِيرًا.

He said, "I went to see the Prophet. He was sitting with his head-gear wrapped around his feet. Its end had fallen on his feet. I said, 'Which of you is Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah?' He pointed to himself. I said, 'Messenger of Allah, I am of the desert and I discover hard-heartedness in myself. So, admonish me.' He said, 'Do not belittle any good deed; even if it is just meeting your brother with a smile; and even if you can empty your bucket in the water-seeker's pot. And, if someone taunts you over something that he knows is in you, you do not taunt him back over what you find in him. You will have a reward for it while the sin will be on him. And beware! Let not your trousers hang below the ankles, for letting down the trousers is a thing of pride, and

Allah does not approve of pride. And do not curse anything.' (The Hujaymi said), "I never cursed anyone or anything after that, neither a goat nor a camel." The *hadith* is also in Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i and is better reported in those books (Ibn Kathir).

We might note in the above that the man had complained of the hardness of his heart, and therefore, all that the Prophet (*saws*) suggested to him would have gone into softening his heart if he put them to practice. Unwittingly, the man acknowledged the effect of the counsel on him by saying, "I never cursed anyone or anything thereafter, neither a goat nor a camel." Could any other ordinary man's words have had the same effect upon a hard-hearted rugged Bedouin? (Au.)

In the context of Allah helping the distressed, Ibn Kathir has two stories, both of which are in Ibn 'Asakir's work. The first reports Muhammad b. Da'ud al-Daynouri - better known as Daqi *Sufi*. He narrated from another man who said, "I used to rent my mule's back to people wishing to travel to other towns. Once I took a man with me and as I was outside the town, he asked me to take an unknown direction. I said

I was unfamiliar with that route. He said he knew it well enough and that it was a shortcut. But, as we reached a desolate place with lots of human remains in a valley, the man alighted. He gathered his clothes, brought out a knife, and began to advance towards me as if he wanted to kill me. I tried to run away but he caught up with me. I told him he could keep my mule and all that it carried. He said they were his anyway and that nothing but my life would satisfy him. When I saw that I couldn't escape, I asked to be allowed to pray two cycles. He told me to do it fast. But when I tried to recite the Qur'an, not a word would come to my mind and I stood there in silence. He was urging me to get over with it quick. Finally, the following words came to my mind:

{أَمْ مَنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ}
[النمل: ٦٢]

No sooner had I said these words that a horseman began to approach through the mouth of the valley. He had a spear which he hurled at the man striking him in his chest. In a moment he lay dead. I asked the horsemen who he was. He said, 'I am sent by Him who responds when a distressed person calls upon Him.'"

Another story has it that there was a man whose horse spoke to him during a battle against the Romans, to the effect that it was being mistreated by his syce. The story spread and people would visit him just to hear the story directly from him. The news reached the Romans whose ruler said that if there was such a man among them they wouldn't be able to overcome the Muslims. So he sent an apostate to kidnap the man. He came pretending having embraced Islam anew in all earnestness, and became friendly with him. One day, as they were going together somewhere, another man appeared. It was clear that they had pre-planned to kidnap him. When the man saw that he was overpowered, he supplicated, "O Allah, You know they have deceived me. So help me in whatever way You will." Two wild beasts appeared and devoured the two men.

Quote from Ibn Kathir ends here.

90. That is, one generation of men succeeds another (Ibn Jarir).

Had Allah willed, He could have brought out all the people He wished to create till the end of Time, at once, at one time on the earth. But rather, He willed that they should appear one generation after another,

[63] Or, He who guides you through the dark-nesses of the land and sea, and who sends the winds as heralds of his forthcoming mercy⁹¹ – is there a god with Allah? Exalted High is Allah, above that which they associate (with Him).⁹²

أَمَّن يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ
وَمَنْ يُرْسِلَ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ
أَلِلَّهِ مَعَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] Or, He who originates the creation,⁹³ then repeats it, and provides you out of heaven and earth – is there a god with Allah? Say, ‘Bring your evidence if you are truthful.’⁹⁴

أَمَّن يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَمَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنْ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَلِلَّهِ مَعَ اللَّهِ قُلْ هَاتُوا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

one nation after another, and so on (Ibn Kathir).

91. The allusion is to the cool, fragrant winds that precede rains (Au.).

92. Majid comments on how multiple deities find their place in human society: “Once an erring humanity has formed conception of a multiplicity of gods, there is no end to god-manufacturing. ‘It is the first step that costs: once you have got the idea of a god fairly evolved, any number of gods may be invented or introduced from all quarters. A great pantheon readily admits new numbers to its ranks from many strange sources ... The Romans, indeed, deified every conceivable operation of nature or of human life: they had gods or goddesses for the minutest details of agriculture, of social rela-

tions, of the first years of childhood, of marriage and domestic arrangements generally’ (Allen, Evolution of the Idea of God, p. 21).”

93. Majid offers us a comparison: “Contrast this with the openly polytheistic teaching of the NT, ‘Giving thanks unto the Father ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son ... Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creation: For by him were all things created, that are in heavens, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist ... For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell’ (Col. 1: 12-19).”

Origin of the World

After three centuries of intense research, experimentations, observations, and theoretical speculations, the scientists are now in a vicious circle of their own making. They are in the same position which the Prophet (*saws*) had predicted, but without the solution that he offered. He said, as in reports of Bukhari, Muslim and others, “*Shaytan* comes to one of you and asks, ‘Who created such and such a thing? such and such a thing?...’ until he asks, ‘who created your Lord?’ When he reaches this (stage of thought), let him seek Allah’s refuge and stop thinking further.” One does not need to be extraordinarily intelligent to conclude that if he did not stop, he will remain within the circle.

Science has simple facts at the bottom. Hence, a good scientific theory is one which, according to most scientists, is simple. (In most cases also beautiful). One of the simple statements of science is that every cause has an effect. If it is said, therefore, that such and such a thing happened by Allah’s will, directly, following His command, then, according to the scientists, one has not spoken science. Science wants something material, specific, demonstrable, and

that which follows physical laws. So, according to them, for anything to happen there has to be a physical cause. Applied to the universe, it can be said safely that today’s universe is the effect of the causes of yesterday. One may go on backward to a point when it would have started. But, as one travels backward to the other end, as the scientists attempt, once again he enters into the circle.

As is generally known, the Universe is expanding. Yesterday’s universe was smaller than today’s. We go way back some 15 billion years, when it was infinitesimally small in size - to be precise 10⁻³² cm across - and was all energy, highly compressed, and no matter. Why not lesser than that? Because calculations fail below this size and below a point in time 10⁻⁴² seconds after the start of the event of creation, or at the event of the Big Bang. (These are known as Planck’s constants). It was at that point that, according to the theoreticians, time, space, the forces of nature, and laws came into being. Who caused the Big Bang? No answer. What caused it? No answer either. From where did the universe get its time, space, the four forces of nature, and laws that govern it? No answer. Now we are in a circle. Timothy Ferris, an emeritus

professor at the University of California sums up:

“The first paradox may be stated: There can be no effect without a cause. Whatever events transpired near the outset of time, each must have been caused by some prior event. So we can never attain an account of the very beginning.”

“The second paradox: You can’t get something from – or for – nothing. The ‘origin’ of the universe, if that concept is to have any meaning, must create the universe out of nothing. Therefore there can be no logical explanation of genesis.”

“The third, and most telling cosmogonic paradox holds that: Regardless of its net energy, the universe must have originated from another system, and that system must in turn have an origin of some sort. And so we are caught in infinite regress.”

The author then proceeds to demonstrate, over several chapters, how these paradoxes can be resolved. In his words,

“Examining their thrown bones suggests that each has the potential of being resolved by shifting from a classical to a quantum paradigm. Attaining a quantum perspective is difficult. Living in a macroscopic

world where quantum phenomena are rarely manifest, we humans came upon classical physics first, and tend to think of quantum physics as a special case. Nevertheless, it’s beginning to look like the universe is fundamentally a quantum system” (The Whole Shebang, Timothy Ferris, p. 246-48, Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1997).

To put it in simpler words what the above means is that when classical physics and cosmology (of Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus and Newton), fail to resolve the above paradoxes; quantum physics (that of Neils Bohr, Maxwell, Weinberger and Max Plank) rescues the situation. The universe at large gives no clue of its origin. Every theory that has been advanced in this regard has its own disadvantages and fails to answer the questions that arise if assumed as true. Furthermore, the explanations fail below Max Planck constants. That is, equations start to fail when taken beyond the Planck Time of 10^{-42} seconds after the big bang event, and below the size 10^{-32} cm. Below these levels, the problem has to be handed over to the world of quantum physics.

But, as explanations are launched in subsequent chapters of the book,

it comes to light, to the discomfiture of the scientists, that quantum physics is fuzzy. At that level, sub-atomic particles seem to be endowed with contradictory qualities. E.g., they can both be particles as well as waves. They can be in two places at one time, crossing the limit set by Einstein's equations, which suggest that nothing can travel at speeds greater than that of light. How will a particle behave, whether as a wave or a particle depends, amazingly, on the observer. If it is not observed, it behaves like a particle, but when subjected to observation it begins to behave as a wave. Of course, if science did not have experimental proofs, it would have been thought that they were taking the people for a ride. The sub-atomic particles behave in such inexplicable and unpredictable ways that their behavior is now referred to as weird. One another weird qualities of sub-atomic particles is that they seem to know what's happening at the other end of the universe!

So the theories that explain the universe at the quantum level cannot be advanced in a straightforward logical manner. They need a few – almost philosophical – turns. They need some “ifs”, “perhapses”, “assumptions”, “suppositions” and words of this class to stand on their own.

Hence the careful choice of words in the above statement. Note for example: “Examining their thrown bones suggests,” (note the words ‘suggests’), “that each has the potential” (note the words ‘has the potential’) “of being resolved by shifting from a classical to a quantum paradigm. Attaining a quantum perspective is difficult.” (So do not worry yourself about it. Just take it as true). “Living in a macroscopic world where quantum phenomena are rarely manifest, we humans came upon classical physics first, and tend to think of quantum physics as a special case.” (Note the words, “tend to think”). “Nevertheless, it's beginning to look like the universe is fundamentally a quantum system” (note the words, ‘it's beginning to look like’).

To be sure, studies and experiments at the quantum level have neither been able to, nor give hope of, the removal of ambiguities, anxieties and uncertainties. Some scientists have begun to make statements similar to what Darwin made when asked about how life began. He remarked that it was a meaningless question.

To our relief, not every scientist subscribes to the view that the world's origin has a perfect scientific explanation. In the words of Ferris him-

[65] Say, 'None knows the Unseen in the heavens and the earth except Allah.' And they do not know when they will be resurrected.⁹⁵

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ

﴿٦٥﴾

self, (who places this piece of writing at the beginning rather than at the end of the discussion),

“Science as we know it is built on cause and effect, space and time. How can it comprehend as uncaused effect that, by definition, could not have occurred within a preexisting framework of space and time? Many scientists think it can't. ‘Ultimately, the origin of the universe is, and always will be, a mystery,’ writes the astronomer Stuart Bowyer’. Says the physicist Charles Townes, ‘I do not understand how the scientific approach alone, as separated from a religious approach, can explain an origin of all things. It is true that physicists hope to look behind the “big bang,” and possibly to explain the origin of our universe as, for example, a type of fluctuation. But then, of what is it a fluctuation and how did this in turn begin to exist? In my view, the question of origin seems always left unanswered if we explore from scientific view alone.” (The Whole Shebang, p. 245-46) - Au.

94. Asad comments, “The implication being that most people who profess belief in a multiplicity of divine powers, or even in the possibility of One God’s ‘incarnation’ in a created being, do so blindly, sometimes only under the influence of inherited cultural traditions and habits of thought, and not out of a reasoned conviction.”

95. Accordingly, `A'isha has said that whoever said that he – the Prophet – knew what tomorrow held, fastened a lie upon Allah, for Allah Himself said, ‘None knows the Unseen in the heavens and the earth except Allah’ (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir).

In fact, the Prophet himself objected to being referred to as someone who knew what tomorrow held in store. On the authority of Rabi` bint Mu`awwaz, she said,

عَنْ الرُّبَيْعِ بِنْتِ مُعَوِّذٍ قَالَتْ دَخَلَ عَلَيَّ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَدَاةَ بَنِي عَلِيٍّ فَجَلَسَ عَلَيَّ فِرَاشِي
كَمَجْلِسِكَ مِنِّي وَجَوَازِيَاتِ بَصْرَيْنَ بِالذُّفِّ يَنْدُبِينَ مِنْ
قَبْلِ مَنْ أَبَائِهِنَّ يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ حَتَّى قَالَتْ جَارِيَةٌ وَفِينَا نَبِيٌّ
يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي عَدِّ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا
تَقُولِي هَكَذَا وَقُولِي مَا كُنْتِ تَقُولِينَ

[66] *But rather, their knowledge failed⁹⁶ as to the Hereafter; nay, they are in doubt thereof; nay, they are blind thereunto.⁹⁷*

بَلِ ادَّارَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَلٌ هُمْ فِي
شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا بَلٌ هُمْ مِنْهَا عَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] *Said those who have disbelieved, 'When we and our forefathers have become dust, shall we indeed be brought out?'*

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاءُنَا
أَنَّا لَمُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] *We have been promised this in the past (also) - we and our forefathers; this is nothing but tales of the ancients.'*

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ إِن
هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

“The Prophet (*saw*s) entered upon me the day I was being prepared (for marriage). He sat down on my bed as you (the next narrator) are sitting down now. Young girls were beating a tambourine and singing in praise of those of their fathers who had been martyred at Badr; until one of them sang out, ‘And amongst us is a Prophet who knows what tomorrow holds.’ The Prophet (*saw*s) interrupted, ‘Do not say this. But rather say what you had been saying earlier’” (Au.).

And Qatadah has said in a trustworthy report, “Ignorant people have ascribed effects to stars. They say, ‘He who married according to such and such stars ..., he who traveled when such and such stars ..., he who was born by such and such star ...’ and such other things, whereas neither do the stars, nor animals, nor birds

know anything about the Unseen. Allah has decreed that no one shall know what is in the Unseen except He, and they do not know when they will be raised up” (Ibn Kathir).

96. Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Zayd said that the meaning is, “they missed its meaning.” There have been other alternative readings of the term “id-daraka” and hence as many interpretations (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Shawkani). A few other meanings forwarded are, “their knowledge about it is equal.” That is, they are equally ignorant. Or, their knowledge about the Hereafter will only be complete when they are actually raised in the Hereafter. Another interpretation is, “Their knowledge stops short of knowing when it will be” (Ibn Kathir).

97. Yusuf Ali comments on the hopeless state in which the deniers are: “The Unbelievers are generally

[69] Say, 'Go about in the land and see how was the end of the criminals.'⁹⁸

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] And, grieve not over them, nor be in any distress at what they contrive.

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُن فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا
يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] And they say, 'When shall this promise be, if you should be truthful?'

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] Say, 'Maybe some of what you seek to hasten on could be right behind you (in close pursuit).'⁹⁹

قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ رَدْفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ
الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] Surely, your Lord is full of grace for the people, but most of them do not give thanks.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] And surely, your Lord knows what they conceal in their bosoms and what they reveal.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا
يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] And, there is not a thing away (and hidden) in heaven and earth, but it is in a clear record.

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي
كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual Light makes them blind altogether to the next world."

Asad adds: "I.e., (they are) blind to its logical necessity within God's plan of creation. For, it is only on the premise of a life after death that the concept of man's moral responsibility and, hence, of God's ultimate judgment can have any meaning: and if the absence of choice is taken

for granted, all differentiations between right and wrong become utterly meaningless as well."

98. Asad explains, "I.e., those who denied the reality of a life after death and, hence, of man's ultimate responsibility for his conscious doings... the unavoidable consequence of this denial is the loss of all sense of right and wrong: and this, in its turn, leads to spiritual and social chaos, and so to the downfall of communities and civilizations."

99. To the Arabs of that time, the use of the term "radifa" should have had

[76] Indeed, this Qur'ān narrates to the Children of Israel most of that over which they disagree.¹⁰⁰

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يُفْصِّلُ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] It is indeed a guidance and mercy unto the believers.

وَإِنَّهُ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

[78] Verily, your Lord will decide between them by His judgment; He is the All-mighty, the All-knowing.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُم بِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] So place your trust in Allah. You are assuredly on a self-evident truth.

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ
﴿٧٩﴾

strong suggestions of the likelihood of the promised chastisement riding right behind them on their beasts (Au.).

100. There is not a thing over which they do not disagree between themselves, including who is Yahweh and what is His exact relationship with the Jews (Au.). Zamakhshari wrote: They differed over Masih (*asws*) dividing themselves into sects and groups to the extent that some of them cursed others.

Yusuf Ali comments on the divisions among the Jews: “The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, e.g., the Samaritans, who had a separate Taurat of their own: they hated the other Jews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following

may be mentioned: (1) the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses; (2) the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrines of Resurrection and of the Hereafter; (3) the Essenes, who practiced a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage. About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Qur'ān, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the attributes of Allah and the nature of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.”

One can see some resemblance between Jewish sects of the past – Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Es-

[80] Surely, you cannot make the dead hear,¹⁰¹ nor make the deaf to hear the call if they turn away in retreat.¹⁰²

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ
الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] Nor are you going to guide the blind out of their error. You cannot make any to hear but he who believes in Our signs and so they surrender.

وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ
إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ
مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

senes and others— and many active groups among the Muslims of our day (Au).

Asad adds: “The term children of Israel comprises here both the Jews and the Christians (Zamakhshari) inasmuch as both follow the Old Testament, albeit in a corrupted form. It is precisely because of this corruption, and because of the great influence which Jewish and Christian ideas exert over a large segment of mankind, that the Qur’an sets out to explain certain ethical truths to both these communities. The above reference to ‘most’ (and not all) of the problems alluded to in this world, and not on ultimate, metaphysical questions which – as the Qur’an so often repeats – will be answered only in the hereafter.”

101. That is, the unbelievers are spiritually dead and so cannot hear anything pertaining to the truth. They are alive only to what is base and fleeting (Au.).

102. An exception was the Badr incident when the Prophet went up to the bodies of the pagans that were dumped into a deep pit to ask them,

يَا فُلَانُ بنِ فُلَانٍ وَيَا فُلَانُ بنِ فُلَانٍ ، وَدِدْتُمْ أَنْكُمْ
كُنْتُمْ أَطَعْتُمْ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ، فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ
حَقًّا فَعَدَّ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا ، قَالَ عُمَرُ :
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَ كَلِمَةُ أَعْجَسَاءَ لَا أَرْوَاحَ فِيهَا ؟ قَالَ :
وَالَّذِي تَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ مَا أَنْتُمْ بِأَسْمِعَ لِمَا أَقُولُ مِنْهُمْ

“O so and so, so and so .. we have found that what our Lord promised us came true. Have you also found what your Lord promised you as true?” `Umar asked anxiously, “Messenger of Allah, are you speaking to bodies that have no soul?” The Prophet replied, “By Him in whose hands is Muhammad’s life, you do not hear them any better than they hear me now.”

According to a version in Bukhari,

إِنَّهُمْ الْآنَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ مَا كُنْتُ أَقُولُ لَهُمْ حَقًّا

“At this moment they know that what I used to tell them was true.”

From the concluding words we can deduce that it was not an address meant for the unrepentant living pagans, in order to drive fear into them, or teach them a lesson, but that, as Qatadah has said, Allah had sent back the souls to the dead pagans so that they could hear him (Qurtubi).

Shanqiti, places a long discussion here over the issue. By and large he echoes the view that Ibn al-Qayyim offered in his *Kitab al-Ruh*. The latter maintained that the dead are able to hear the voices of the living. At the start he mentions `Aisha's opinion who, basing her opinion on the Qur'an, believed that the dead cannot hear. But following that, he presents evidences that confirm that they do. A *hadith* apparently supporting this is in Bukhari. The Prophet (*saws*) said, “When a slave is placed in the grave and his companions retreat, until he hears the noise of their retreating footsteps; then come the two angels ...” to the end of the *hadith*. Another narrative in Muslim reports `A'isha as saying:

كُلَّمَا كَانَ لَيْلَتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَخْرُجُ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ إِلَى الْبَيْعِ فَيَقُولُ: «السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ دَارَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَتَاكُمْ مَا تُوَعَدُونَ

عَدَا مُؤَخَّلُونَ ، وَإِنَّا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ لَاجِفُونَ. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِأَهْلِ بَيْعِ الْعَرْقَدِ»

“(Whenever it was her turn for Allah's Messenger to spend the night with her), he would go out towards the end of the night to Baqi` graveyard and say, ‘Peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the believers. That will come to you tomorrow that had been promised, without delay, and, Allah willing, we shall join you soon. O Allah, forgive the inhabitants of Baqi` al-Gharqad.’”

Another report, thought to be trustworthy by Ibn `Abd al-Barr, has the following words of the Prophet (*saws*),

مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يَمُرُّ بِقَبْرِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ يَعْرِفُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَيَسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا رَدَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ رُوحَهُ حَتَّى يُرَدَّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

“There is no man who passes by another man's grave whom he used to know in this world, and greets him, but Allah returns the man's soul to him so that he can return the greeting.”

Ibn al-Qayyim also argues with a report in Muslim which says that when death approached `Amr b. al-`Aas, he instructed the people around him in words,

فَإِذَا أَنَا مِتُّ فَلَا تَصْحَبْنِي نَائِبَةً وَلَا نَارَ فَإِذَا دَفَنْتُمُونِي فَشُئُوا عَلَيَّ التُّرَابَ شَيْئًا تَمَّ أَقِيمُوا حَوْلَ قَبْرِي قَدْرَ مَا

تُنَحَّرُ جُرُورٌ وَيُقَسَّمُ لَحْمُهَا حَتَّىٰ اسْتَأْنَسَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْظُرُ
مَاذَا أُرَاجِعُ بِهِ رُسُلَ رَبِّي.

“When I am dead, let no lamenting woman accompany my coffin, nor carry any light. When you have buried me, throw some dust on me but tarry around my grave for as long as it takes to slaughter a goat and distribute its mutton, so that I might draw strength from you and decide how I should respond to the messengers of my Lord (who will arrive to question him).”

In fact, Shanqiti continues, Nawawi wrote in his *Rawd al-Talibin*, in effect: It is desirable that the dead should be encouraged immediately after the burial. One might say,

يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّةِ اللَّهِ أُذَكِّرُ مَا خَرَجْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ
الدُّنْيَا : شَهَادَةٌ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ
اللَّهِ ، وَأَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ حَقٌّ ، وَأَنَّ النَّارَ حَقٌّ ، وَأَنَّ الْبَعْثَ
حَقٌّ ، وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا ، وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بَعَثَ
مَنْ فِي السُّبُورِ ، وَأَنَّكَ رَضِيتَ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا ، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ
دِينًا ، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيًّا ، وَبِالْقُرْآنِ إِمَامًا ، وَبِالْكَعْبَةِ قِبْلَةً
، وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِخْوَانًا ،

“O son of a slave of Allah, O son of Allah’s maidservant, recall the words you said at the time you left the world: the testimony la ilaha illa Allahu, wa Muhammadur Rasul Allah. Recall that Paradise is true, the Fire is true,

the Resurrection is true, that the Hour has to come and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves; and that you were happy with Allah as your Lord, with Islam as your religion, with Muhammad as the Prophet, with the Qur’ān as your guide, with Ka’bah as your *Qiblah* and with the believers as your brothers.” This, says Nawawi, has been reported of the Prophet (*saws*).

These *ahadith*, concludes Shanqiti, do not contradict the Qur’ān. These reports are merely saying that the dead cannot hear the kind of hearing that can be of any profit to them. Thus the Qur’ān does not deny this when it says they cannot hear. The term “sima’” then, has to be understood in a specific sense.

Ibn al-Qayyim also argues, says Shanqiti, with the story of `Awf b. Malik who saw Al-Sa`b Juthama in his dream. The latter instructed him to pay off 10 Dinars out of the money he had left to a certain Jew from whom he had borrowed, but could not pay back. `Awf executed the will taking off 10 Dinar from what Al-Sa`ab had left, before distribution among the heirs could take place. We have another incident of the same class. It involves a man like

Abu Bakr who saw Thabit b. Shamas in his dream. Thabit requested him to pay back loans on him and free such and such a slave. Abu Bakr acted accordingly. Now, argues Ibn al-Qayyim, if the dead can appear in someone's dream, then why not the other way around, viz., the dead hearing the living? [Strangely, Ibn al-Qayyim quotes some weak reports and then says that they acquire strength from the fact that Muslims of many regions have adopted them for practice: Au.].

Shanqiti then adds his remark that he is aware that this opinion of Ibn al-Qayyim has not been accepted by other scholars who have said that the evidences are not strong enough and that Imām Ahmad practiced no such thing. Furthermore, they say, it is only Muslims of the Syrian regions who seem to practice it.

Shanqiti's discussion ends here.

There is another *hadith* which says,

حَيْثُ مَا مَرَرْتَ بِقَبْرِ كَافِرٍ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِالنَّارِ

“Whenever you pass by the grave of a pagan, give him glad tidings of the Fire.”

Nevertheless, a careful study suggests that in all such cases as above, Allah returns the souls of those dead that

He wills, at the time they are addressed. This seems to apply even to our Prophet. He said, according to a *hadith* in Abu Da'ud and others, which Ibn Hajr declared trustworthy, the Prophet (*saws*) said,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ أَيَّامِكُمْ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ فِيهِ خُلِقَ آدَمُ ،
وَفِيهِ قُبِضَ ، وَفِيهِ النَّفْحَةُ ، وَفِيهِ الصَّعْقَةُ ، فَأَكْتَبُوا
عَلَيَّ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ فِيهِ ، فَإِنَّ صَلَاتَكُمْ مَعْرُوضَةٌ عَلَيَّ ،
قَالُوا : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَكَيْفَ نَعْرُضُ عَلَيْكَ صَلَاتِنَا
وَقَدْ أَرَمْتَ ؟ يَقُولُونَ قَدْ بَلَيْتَ ، قَالَ : إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ
عَلَى الْأَرْضِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ أَجْسَادَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

“The best of your days is Friday. Therefore send peace unto me as much as you can during its day and night, for, your peace formula is presented to me.” They (those around) asked, “How can our peace formulae be presented to you when you would have been reduced to dust?” He replied, “Allah has forbidden that the earth should eat the bodies of the Prophets.”

It might be noticed here that the dead are reduced to dust in their graves, and therefore, if peace is sent to them, they cannot receive them unless Allah so wills. The majority of scholars are therefore of the opinion that ordinarily the dead cannot hear from their graves, especially after the first initial hours (Au.).

[82] And when the Word is fulfilled against them,¹⁰³ We shall bring forth for them a beast out of the earth, that will speak to them that the people would not believe in Our signs.¹⁰⁴

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Mufti Shafi` calls our attention to the fact that in all, there are three places in the Qur`an where hearing by the dead has been referred to (at this point, at 35: 22 and at 30: 52), and at all places it said that they cannot be made to hear, implying it is not in our power to make them hear. But It should not be concluded that Allah cannot make them hear, when He wishes them to.

103. We can look into a possible general meaning before going into the specific. Asad writes: "I.e., when the truth becomes obvious to them against all their expectations, and thus confounds them utterly: an allusion to the approach of the Last Hour, Resurrection and God's Judgment, all of which they were wont to regard as 'fables of the ancient times.'"

And now for the specific: In the opinion of Ibn `Umar and `Atiyah, this will happen when the Muslims give up enjoining the good and prohibiting the wrong (Ibn Jarir).

According to other reports `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud said that it will happen with the death of scholars, the loss of knowledge, and withdrawal of the Qur`an. He also said, "Recite the Qur`an often before it is withdrawn." He was asked, "These written copies could be withdrawn, but what about what is in the hearts?" He replied, "A night will pass over them and by morning they will find themselves without it. They will forget the testimony 'la ilaha ..' and will resort to poetry and sayings of the *Jahiliyy* period. That will be the time when the Word will come true against them." According to another opinion however, the allusion by the Word coming true against them is to "chastisement."

A third opinion is that it will happen when the situation will be the same as it was when it was said about the nation of Nuh (11: 36),

{ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ } [هود: ٣٦]

“Indeed, none of your people will ever come to believe, except for him who has already believed.”

That is, just as chastisement became necessary at that point, it will also become necessary at the time of the emergence of the Beast. Hence the Prophet’s words as in Muslim,

ثَلَاثٌ إِذَا حَرَجْنَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا طُلُوعُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا وَالذَّجَالُ وَدَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ

“Three there are, after whose appearance, no one’s belief will be of no benefit to a man, if he had not believed earlier, or had earned good in its belief: sunrise from the West, Dajjal, and the Beast of the earth” (Qurtubi).

Ibn `Umar is also reported to have thought that the beast in question will appear in Makkah (Ibn Jarir). But the reports are unconfirmed (Au.).

104. It was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Hasan and Qatadah that the said Animal will speak to the people (in the manner of men’s speech) – Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir.

In fact, `Ali believed that it will converse with people. `Ata’ al-Khurasani opined that it will say (the Qur’anic words), “that the people would not believe in Our signs.” Ibn Jarir has

adopted this opinion, but, personally I feel, writes Ibn Kathir, it needs a second consideration.

A second opinion of Ibn `Abbas has been that “tukalli-muhum” is actually “takli-muhum” meaning “tujri-huhum”, i.e., it will injure them (perhaps meaning brand them: Au.). A third opinion from him is that it will do both, speak to them [the believers] as well as injure them [the unbelievers] – Qurtubi. This opinion is in `Abd b. Humayd, Ibn Marduwayh and Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani).

Hasan also expressed this opinion. Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two (Ibn Kathir).

Dabbah

hadith and other religious literature have several mentions of this Animal. A *hadith* in Ahmad, Muslim and other books reports Usayd al-Ghifari,

لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَشْرُ آيَاتٍ : الذَّجَالُ ، وَالذَّحَانُ ، وَطُلُوعُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا ، وَدَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ ، وَيَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ ، وَثَلَاثَةٌ حُسُوفٍ : حَسَفٌ بِالْمَشْرِقِ ، وَحَسَفٌ بِالْمَغْرِبِ ، وَحَسَفٌ بِجَزِيرَةِ الْعَرَبِ ، وَنَارٌ تَخْرُجُ مِنْ قَعْرِ عَدْنِ أَبِي تَسْلُوقِ النَّاسِ إِلَى الْمَحْشَرِ ، تَنْزِلُ مَعَهُمْ إِذَا تَرَلُّوا ، وَتَقِيلُ مَعَهُمْ إِذَا قَالُوا

“The Prophet (*saw*) arrived upon us when we were discussing the Hour. He said, ‘It will not come

forth until you have seen ten signs: Sunrise from the West, Smoke, the Animal, appearance of *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj*, 'Isa ibn Maryam's appearance, Dajjal, and three cavings-in (of the earth): in the West, in the East and in the Arabian Peninsula, and, finally, a Fire that will start from the depths of 'Adan (Eden) that will drive the people (to the Field of Resurrection – Syria: Au.), halting with them where they halt (for the night), and taking a siesta with them where they take siesta.”

Another report in Muslim is on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr who said,

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ الْآيَاتِ خُرُوجًا طُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا
وَمُخْرُوجَ الدَّابَّةِ عَلَى النَّاسِ ضُحَى وَأَيُّهُمَا مَا كَانَتْ
قَبْلَ صَاحِبَيْهَا فَلَا تُحْرَى عَلَى إِثْرَهَا قَرِيبًا

“I have remembered three words from the Prophet (*saws*) that I will never forget. I heard the Messenger of Allah say, “The first of the signs in appearance is sunrise from the West and the appearance of the Animal for the people by the noon. So, whichever of the two happens earlier than its companion, the other will be on its heels.”

Muslim has yet another *hadith*. Abu Hurayrah reports the Prophet (*saws*),

بَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ سِتًّا طُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا أَوْ
الدُّخَانَ أَوْ الدَّجَالَ أَوْ الدَّابَّةَ أَوْ خَاصَّةَ أَحَدِكُمْ أَوْ
أَمْرَ الْعَامَّةِ

“Hasten up with deeds before six: Sunrise from its West, Smoke, Dajjal, the Beast, the happening of one of you, and the common affair” (Ibn Kathir).

In the above report the words “the happening of one of you” have been interpreted by scholars such as Nawawi and Munawi to mean “death;” (i.e., death of one of you, or, maybe, death of one of your favorites); while the words “common affair” have been interpreted by Munawi as meaning the Day of Judgment (Au.).

There is another report in Ahmad, Ibn Majah and Abu Da'ud Tayalisi which says the Animal will carry Musa's staff and Sulayman's ring, who will stamp the people as believers and unbelievers, so that people will address one another as, “O so and so an Unbeliever,” and “O so and so a Believer.” But the narrative is weak. Its shorter version has also been declared weak by Tirmidhi as well as Suyuti with Munawi's agreement. Then there is one in Hakim's Mustadrak,

عن أبي الطفيل قال : كنا جلوسا عند حذيفة فذكرت الدابة فقال حذيفة رضي الله عنه : إنها نخرج ثلاث خرجات في بعض البوادي ثم تكمن ثم تخرج في بعض القرى حتى يذعروا و حتى تحريق فيها الأمراء الدماء ثم تكمن قال : فبينما الناس عند أعظم المساجد و أفضلها و أشرفها حتى قلنا المسجد الحرام و ما سماه إذ ارتفعت الأرض و يهرب الناس و يبقى عامة من المسلمين يقولون : إنه لن ينجينا من أمر الله شيء فتخرج فتجلو وجوههم حتى تجعلها كالكوكب الدرية و تتبع الناس جيران في الرباع شركاء في الأموال و أصحاب في الإسلام - هذا حديث صحيح على شرط الشيخين ولم يخرجاه - تعليق الذهبي في التلخيص : على شرط البخاري ومسلم - المستدرک

Abu Tufayl reported, “We were seated with Hudhayfa (b. al-Yaman) when the Animal was mentioned. He said, ‘It will have three appearances in some of the valleys and disappear. Then it will appear in some of the villages that will scare (the people) and the rulers will shed blood. Then it will disappear. Then, as the people will be near the largest mosque, the superior most and the most honored’ – until we said, “(Perhaps) the *Masjid al-Haram*” but he did not name it – “when (Hudhayfa continued) the earth will rise and the people will flee; only the common Muslims will remain saying, ‘Nothing will rescue us from Allah’s command.’ It will reappear

and brighten their faces to the extent of making them bright as stars. It will follow the people who will be neighbors in the apartments, sharing the wealth and companions in Islam.” (Dhahabi evaluated it as on the same footing as those of Bukhari and Muslim) - Au..

Ahmad and Ibn Marduwayh have recorded on the authority of Abu Umamah recounting the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

تُخْرِجُ الدَّابَّةَ فَتَسِمُ النَّاسَ عَلَى خَرَاطِيمِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعْمُرُونَ
فِيكُمْ حَتَّى يَشْتَرِيَ الرَّجُلُ الْبَعِيرَ فَيَقُولُ مِمَّنْ اشْتَرَيْتُهُ
فَيَقُولُ اشْتَرَيْتُهُ مِنْ أَحَدِ الْمُخَطَّمِينَ

“The Animal will emerge and stamp on their noses. Thereafter they will go about amongst you until a man will purchase an animal and when asked, ‘Whom did you buy it from?’ he will answer, ‘From one of the stamped one’ (Shawkani).

The narrators of this report are all those whom the *Sahih* authors used except for one, `Umar b. `Abdul Rahman, who was in any case trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

Alusi refutes the opinions that there will be several such Animals, as he also refutes the opinion that it will actually be a human being. This is

supported by Muhammad b. Ka`b al-Qurazi's untrustworthy narrative that when `Ali was asked about it he remarked that it will not have a tail but a beard. (But many animals have beards: Au.). Alusi also refutes the belief among some of the Shi`ah that it was `Ali himself who was the Dabbah. They seem to have several reports to this effect. One of them says that somebody asked `Ammar b. Yasir, "Abu Yaqzan! An *ayah* of the Book disturbs my heart." He asked, "What *ayah* is it?" The man said, "When the Word is fulfilled against them.. What Dabbah is it?" `Ammar said, "By Allah! I will not sit down, will not eat, nor will I drink until I have shown it to you. Then `Ammar proceeded with the man to the Amir al Mu'muninin `Ali, may Allah honor his face. He was eating dates with butter. He said, "Come in O Abu Yaqzan!" So `Ammar sat down and began to eat. His companion was surprised. When they came out he asked, "Glory to Allah. Didn't you tell me that you will not sit down, will not eat nor drink until you have shown it to me?" `Ammar replied, "I have shown it to you if you have any sense." Alusi adds that this story has been reported through Abu Dharr also; but all such reports are false. In fact, one or two reports tell us that

`Ali himself had rebuffed the idea. Ibn Abi Hatim has it through Nazzal b. Saburah that `Ali was asked, "Some people say that you are the Dabbatu al-Ard!" `Ali denied it.

The last report could not be checked for authenticity. Further, there has been a tendency among some of the contemporaries to treat the allusion as allegorical. In the words of one of them, "The 'creature brought forth out of the earth,' is apparently an allegory of man's 'earthly' outlook on life – in other words, the soul-destroying materialism characteristic of the time preceding the Last Hour." Earlier commentators have also encountered this idea and have refuted the tendency, such as Qurtubi (Au.).

Mawdudi writes in defense: "As for the question of an animal talking to human beings in their language: this is one of the manifestations of God's Power. God can grant the power of speech to whomsoever He wills. Before the Day of Resurrection, He will grant this power to a beast, but after the Resurrection, He will grant this power to the eyes, ears and skins of human beings and they will call out: 'And the Day when the enemies of Allah will be gathered to the Fire, and will be sorted out until when they reach it, their ears and their

[83] The day We shall muster together out of every community a troop that cried lies to Our signs, and then they will be arranged (in ranks).

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِمَّنْ
يُكَذِّبُ بآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] Until, when they have all come, He will say, 'Did you deny My revelations although you did not comprehend them in knowledge?¹⁰⁵ Or what was it that you were doing?'

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ
تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمْ آذًا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ
﴿٨٤﴾

[85] And the Word will be fulfilled against them because of their wrongdoing, then they will not speak.

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا
يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] Have they not observed that We have made the night so that they can repose in it, and the day sight-giving? Surely, in that are signs for a people who will believe.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لَيْسَكُنُوا فِيهِ
وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] And, the Day the Trumpet is blown, then, terrified will be whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth - excepting whom Allah wills; and every one will come to Him humbled.

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَعْرِعُ مَنْ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ
اللَّهُ وَكُلٌّ أَتَوْهُ دَاخِرِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

eyes and their skins will bear witness against them concerning what they were doing” (41: 19, 20).

It is also significant to note that this *Surah*, and this one alone, informs us of the ability of some animals to hear (such as the ant and hoopoe) and the ability of some humans to hear their talk, although both share a world in which many humans are spiritually dead. It also mentions, and no where else in the Qur'an, that an animal

will not only hear, but even talk to the people (Au.).

105. The verse tells us by implication that one should not speak out his opinion in matters that one does not understand well. This is also applicable to some of the things that the Gnostics say, that not everyone is able to understand. Silence in the face of such statements is the best course of action (Thanwi).

[88] You will see the mountains and think that they are firmly fixed but they would be moving, like the movement of the clouds.¹⁰⁶ Allah's making, who gave perfection to everything.¹⁰⁷ He is well aware of what you do.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ
مَرَّ السَّحَابِ صُنْعَ اللَّهِ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ
شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

106. We have the same thing described elsewhere. Allah (*swt*) said (52: 9-10),

{يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا (٩) وَتَسِيرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا}
[الطور: ٩، ١٠]

“The Day when the heavens will shake with a tremendous shaking and the mountains will move in a wondrous manner.” In another place (18: 47),

{وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشْرْنَاهُمْ
فَلَمَّ تَغَادَرُ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا} [الكهف: ٤٧]

“And the Day when We shall move the mountains and you will see the earth raised up” (Ibn Kathir).

107. With the advancement of science, perfection in Allah's creation is becoming more visible than ever. In fact, as the probe goes deeper, it is more the order, the intricate connections, and the perfection – both in animate as well as inanimate objects - which the scientists increasingly encounter, rather than what could be put to good human use. This of course is a vast subject. We shall have to contend ourselves with

a few generalities and that too at the macro level rather than micro, which is all the more intricate and hence difficult to cover in a short passage. We shall presently look at merely the fine balance present at the cosmological level, which is only one aspect of the perfection in creation. We quote from a recent scientific publication which is not at all sympathetic to religion or religious ideas, in fact which rejects the anthropic principle: “(The gravitational constant is expressed in equation as $G = 6.67259 \times 10^{-11} \text{ m}^3\text{kg}^{-1}\text{s}^{-2}$)... we might compare gravity's strength with that of the three other fundamental forces. Doing so, we find that gravitation is remarkably weak. The weak nuclear force is 1028 – ten billion billion billion – times stronger than gravity. Electromagnetism is one hundred billion times stronger than that, and the strong nuclear force is a hundred times stronger than electromagnetism...

“Imagine what would happen were gravity a little stronger. The con-

sequence, it turns out, would be dire. Cosmic expansion would have halted and the universe would have collapsed long before life could have evolved anywhere. Even if expansion somehow continued, the stars would burn out too rapidly to incubate intelligent life on anything like a terrestrial timescale. The sun, for instance, would have lasted only about a billion years. (It is now estimated as 5 billion years old: Au.). Planets might not even exist. A planet represents a balance between the gravitational force that seeks to collapse it and the electromagnetic force that prop up its molecules. Were gravity stronger, planets would light up and become stars, or further collapse to become white dwarfs, neutron stars, or black holes. So life probably could not exist in a stronger gravity universe. If, on the other hand, we decrease the strength of gravity, we find that the primordial material of the big bang simply dissipates, like hot air from a blown tire, before the gravitational fields can gather it into planets, stars and galaxies. Life seems unlikely in that universe, too. So we've learned something interesting about gravity

– that if it didn't have just about exactly the strength it does, we wouldn't be here to inquire into the matter.

“Similar arguments can be applied to many other aspects of nature. Why is the universe so old? Because living creatures need carbon (the basis of terrestrial life) as well as other metals (which is why a good multivitamin pill contains minerals), and for a planet to have abundant carbon and iron it had to have formed from material that had been processed through precedent stars, all of which take billions of years. Why are neutrons slightly more massive than protons? Because if protons were just one percent heavier they would spontaneously decay into neutrons, in which case hydrogen atoms could not exist, nor stars shine: No stars, no life as we know it. Why does space have three dimensions rather than two or four? Because the knots and tangles of genetic material in living cells and the walls of organs can exist only in three dimensions” (The Whole Shebang by Timothy Ferris, Touchstone Publication, New York, 1995pp. 297, 298) - Au.

[89] Whoever brought good (deeds), for him will be better than it; and they will be secure from the terror of that day.¹⁰⁸

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَهُمْ مِّنْ
فَرَجٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

108. Ibn Kathir offers the following in connection with this verse:

عُرْوَةُ بْنُ مَسْعُودٍ سَمِعَتْ رَجُلًا قَالَ لِعَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو
إِنَّكَ تَقُولُ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ تَقُومُ إِلَى كَذَا وَكَذَا قَالَ لَقَدْ
هَمَمْتُ أَنْ لَا أَحْدِثْكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّمَا قُلْتُ إِنَّكُمْ سَتَرُونَ
بَعْدَ قَلِيلٍ أَمْرًا عَظِيمًا كَانَ تَحْرِيقَ الْبَيْتِ قَالَ شُعْبَةُ
هَذَا أَوْ نُحُوهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَخْرُجُ الدَّجَالُ فِي أُمَّتِي فَيَلْبِثُ
فِيهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ لَا أَدْرِي أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا أَوْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً أَوْ
أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً أَوْ أَرْبَعِينَ شَهْرًا فَيَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَأَنَّهُ عُرْوَةُ
بْنُ مَسْعُودٍ التَّفْغُفِيُّ فَيَطْهَرُ فَيَهْلِكُهُ ثُمَّ يَلْبِثُ النَّاسُ
بَعْدَهُ سِنِينَ سَبْعًا لَيْسَ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ عِدَاوَةٌ ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ
اللَّهُ رِيحًا بَارِدَةً مِنْ قِبَلِ الشَّامِ فَلَا يَبْقَى أَحَدٌ فِي قَلْبِهِ
مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ إِيْمَانٍ إِلَّا قَبَضَتْهُ حَتَّى لَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَهُمْ
كَانَ فِي كَبِدِ جَبَلٍ لَدَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَيَبْقَى شِرَارُ النَّاسِ
فِي خِفَةِ الطَّيْرِ وَأَحْلَامِ السِّبَاعِ لَا يَعْرِفُونَ مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا
يُنْكِرُونَ مُنْكَرًا قَالَ فَيَسْتَمْتَلُ هُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَيَقُولُ أَلَا
تَسْتَعِجِبُونَ فَيَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْأَوْثَانِ فَيَعْبُدُونَهَا وَهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ
دَارَةٌ أَرْزَاقُهُمْ حَسَنٌ عَيْشُهُمْ ثُمَّ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا
يَسْمَعُهُ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَصْعَى لَهُ وَأَوَّلُ مَنْ يَسْمَعُهُ رَجُلٌ
يَلُوطُ حَوْضَهُ فَيَصْعَقُ ثُمَّ لَا يَبْقَى أَحَدٌ إِلَّا صَعِقَ
ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ أَوْ يُنْزِلُ اللَّهُ قَطْرًا كَأَنَّهُ الطَّلُّ أَوْ الظِّلُّ
تُعْمَانُ الشَّاكُ فَيَنْبِثُ مِنْهُ أَجْسَادُ النَّاسِ ثُمَّ يُنْفَخُ فِيهِ
أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ قَالَ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ يَا أَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ هَلُمُّوا إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْتَوْفُونَ قَالَ ثُمَّ
يُقَالُ أَخْرِجُوا بَعَثَ النَّارَ قَالَ فَيَقَالُ كَمْ فَيَقَالُ مِنْ
كُلِّ أَلْفٍ تِسْعَ مِائَةٍ وَتِسْعَةَ وَتِسْعِينَ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَبْعَثُ
الْوَالِدَانُ شِيبًا وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ

Someone told `Abdullah ibn `Amr: “What is this *hadith* that you narrate to the effect that the Last Hour will arrive at such and such a time?” He replied: “Hallowed be Allah, there is no god but Allah (or words to this effect). I have decided that I will not narrate anything to anyone from now on. I had only said that after some time you will see an important event - that the (sacred) House (Ka’ba) would be destroyed and such and such things will happen, surely they will.” Then he added, Allah’s Messenger said: “Dajjal will appear in my *Ummah* and remain for forty.” [I cannot say whether he meant forty days, forty months, or forty years]. “Allah will then send Jesus son of Maryam who will resemble `Urwah b Mas`ud. He will chase Dajjal and kill him. Then the people will live for seven years in such a state that there will be no ill-feeling of any kind between them. Thereafter Allah will send a cold wind from the Syrian region that none on the

[90] As to he who brought evil,¹⁰⁹ their faces will be dipped into the Fire. Are you being recompensed but for what you were doing?

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي
النَّارِ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

earth who has a speck of good in him will survive. So much so that if one of you entered the innermost part of a mountain, the wind will reach that place and seize him.' I heard this from Allah's Messenger." He also said, "Only the most wicked will survive and they would be as nimble as birds with the characteristics of beasts. They will neither appreciate the good nor condemn the evil. Then Satan will go to them in human form and say: 'Will you not respond?' They will ask, 'What do you want us to do?' He will command them to worship idols. But, in spite of this, they will receive abundant sustenance and lead comfortable lives. Then the Trumpet will be blown and no one would hear it but would bend his neck to one side and raise it from the other side (trying to hear: Au.). The first to hear the Trumpet would be a person who will be busy repairing the water trough for his camels. He will swoon and the rest of

the people will also swoon. Then Allah will send rains like dew and there would grow thereby bodies of the people. Then The Trumpet will be blown a second time and they will stand up and begin to look (around). It will be said: 'O people. Proceed to your Lord.' Further on, they will be stopped and questioned. Then it will be said: 'Bring out a group meant for the Fire.' It will be asked: 'How many?' It will be said: 'Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand for the Fire.' That will be the day which would turn the children grey-haired because of terror and that would be the day about which it has been said (68: 42): 'The Day when the shank is uncovered'" (Ibn Kathir).

109. Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, Anas b. Malik and many of the followers have unanimously said that the allusion by "good" is to the testimony "la ilaha .." and by "evil" to *shirk* (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

[91] I have been indeed commanded that I should worship the Lord of this land¹¹⁰ which He has declared sacred. And to Him belong all things. And I have been ordered that I should be of those who have submitted.

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ
الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ
أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

[93] And that I should recite the Qur'ān. So whosoever is rightly-guided, is rightly-guided for his own self; and he who goes astray, then (unto them you) say, 'I am only of the warners.'

وَأَنْ أَتْلُو الْقُرْآنَ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا
يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا
مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] And say, 'Praise belongs to Allah. In time He will show you His signs, and you shall recognize them;¹¹¹ and your Lord is not unaware of what you do.'

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا
وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

110. The city is Makkah (and its surroundings: Au.), and the words "Lord of this land" are for expressing honor for the city and for demonstrating divine care for it (Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali further elucidates: "The Lord of this City. This was spoken in Makkah say about the 5th year before the Hijrat, when the holy Prophet (*saws*) and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Makkah. So far from being against the true spirit of the holy City of Makkah, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraish. They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Makkah itself,

the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this City, but Lord of the Worlds, 'to Whom belong all things'. It is a universal message; but how sad it would be if the Makkans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?"

111. As Allah (*swt*) said elsewhere (41: 53),

{ سُرِّيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ
لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ } [فصلت: ٥٣]

"We shall surely show them signs in the horizons and in their own selves until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth" (Qur-tubi, Ibn Kathir). مَقْتَضَىٰ

Surah 28
Al-Qasas
 (The Stories)
 Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE MERCIFUL

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. Ibn `Abbas and Qatadah have said that this chapter is Makkan except for a verse which came down in Juhfah during the *Hijrah* journey. The verse in question is no. 85: "Surely He who ordained the Qur`ān upon you, will surely bring you back to the place of return." Muqatil however said that verses 52 to 55 are Madinan.

Ma`dikarab says, "We went to `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud and asked him to recite to us *Surah Ta Sin Mim*, the two hundred. He said, 'I do not have it. But rather, you should take it from someone who took it directly from the Prophet, say Khabbab b. al-Art.' So I went to Khabbab b. al-Art and asked, 'How did the Prophet recite? Was it *Ta Sin Mim*, or *Ta Sin*?' He answered, 'The Prophet used to recite them all' (Qurtubi).

The report is in Ahmad, Tabarani and Ibn Marduwayh, about which Suyuti has said that it has a good

chain (Shawkani). Haythamiyy also mentioned it and approved the chain as in Ahmad (S. Ibrahim).

As is usual with the *hadith* masters, they are primarily concerned with the chain of narratives, leaving out the meaning of the text, or its criticism, to other experts. With reference to the above report, we could not find a proper explanation of the ending words. Perhaps by saying "recite them all" Khabbab meant "he used to recite them both ways." Again, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud was an authority on the Qur`ān. What did he mean when he said he did not have the *Surah*? Did he mean he did not take it directly from the Prophet, but rather, Khabbab did?

Connection

Alusi reports from Suyuti that the Qur`ān mentioned a few incidents from the life of Musa in *Al-Shu`ara*, such as Fir`awn said, in v.18-19,

{ قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ
سِنِينَ (١٨) وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ
الْكَافِرِينَ } [الشعراء: ١٨، ١٩]

"Did we not raise you amongst us as a child, and you stayed with us many years of your life? But you committed a deed of yours that you committed, and you are of the ungrateful," to which Musa replied, in v. 20-21,

{ قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذًا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٢٠) فَفَرَرْتُ
مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُمْكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ
الْمُرْسَلِينَ } [الشعراء: ٢٠، ٢١]

"I did it then while I was of the unguided. So I fled from you when I feared you." Then in the next Surah, Al-Naml, what happened from that point onward in Musa's return journey was revealed. It said, v.7,

{ إِنِّي أَنَسْتُ نَارًا } [النمل: ٧]

"I perceive a fire."

The Qur'an did not state at those places what happened in the intervening gaps. It picks up the story now in this chapter to fill in the gaps. Considering a few other verses of this and the last two chapters, which, according to Ibn 'Abbas were revealed in this sequence, one can say that what was presented in brief in the previous two chapters, was expanded upon in this one, while what was detailed in the previous two, received brief attention in this one.

We are indebted to Asad for pointing out the special characteristic of the story of Musa as it appears in this chapter. He writes: "It is noteworthy that most of this story depicts the purely human aspects of his life – that is to say, the impulses, perplexities and errors which are part of the human condition as such: aspects which the Qur'an stresses in order to counteract any possible tendency on the part of the pious to attribute 'superhuman' or, in the least resort, semi-divine qualities to God's apostles. Appropriately, the *Surah* ends with a sonorous evocation of the truth that 'there is no deity save God', and that 'everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Self.'"

He adds: "The presentation of Musa's story in this chapter begins with his birth. Nowhere else in the Qur'an has his story started from this point although his stories are spread over several chapters in the Qur'an. This is because the first episode in Musa's life, the difficult conditions prevailing at his birth, his isolation at birth from every power, the weakness of his people and their humiliations at the hands of Fir'awn .. all these go to serve the principal objective of this chapter and brings out the powerful, open, and challenging hand that works without any veil covering it

[1] Ta. Sin. Mim

[2] These are verses of a clear Book.²

[3] We recite to you a part of the story of Musa and Fir`awn in truth – for a people who believe.

[4] Indeed Fir`awn rose up in the land³ and divided its inhabitants into factions,⁴ weakening a group of them, slaughtering their sons and keeping their women alive.⁵ Indeed, he was of the corrupters.⁶

طسم ﴿١﴾

تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢﴾

تَتْلُوَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَبِيِّ مُوسَى وَفِرْعَوْنَ

بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا

شِيْعًا يَسْتَضْعِفُ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ يُدَبِّحُ

أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ

الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤﴾

and directly strikes at tyranny and oppression when humans become incapable of doing so, helping those weak ones who have no power to turn to and establish the persecuted ones who have no authority and no security. That was the meaning that the weak ones at Makkah were in the need to receive, to be reassured with, and which the rebellious, oppressive, and overwhelming majority pagans at Makkah were in the need of learning.”

2. “Mubeen” has several connotations: a Book clear in itself, clearly depicting the truth, showing a clear path, as well as, clarifying its message, leaving no doubt about its intents and purposes, so that if somebody chooses a path other than that it shows, he shall not have the excuse of ambiguity of the text at his disposal. This is a proof of Qur`anic au-

thenticity, which every other Scripture lacks (Au.).

3. That is, writes Zamakhshari, the land of Egypt and Syria, (and elsewhere), Madyan excluded.

4. I.e., “.. undoubtedly referring to the division of people into ‘high’ and ‘low-born’ (Asad) a practice now widely prevalent among all kinds of people (Au.).

5. Reports (and not *ahadith*: Au.) say that it was Ibrahim (*asws*) who had predicted that one day an Israelite will bring down the power and rule of the Fara`inah. The Children of Israel had been passing the tradition from generation to generation, which finally reached the ears of the Copts (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

According to Suddi, the Fir`awn contemporary to Musa dreamed that a fire had started from Jerusa-

[5] Whereas We wished to confer favor upon those who were weakened in the land⁷ and make them leaders,⁸ and make them the inheritors.

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] And establish them in the land, and show Fir`awn and Haman⁹ – and their forces – that which they were dreading.

وَمَكِّنْ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِي فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

lem that reached the Egyptian lands which burned down houses of the Copts but spared those of the Israelites. The dream was interpreted by the Egyptian priestly class to mean that someone was to rise from the Israelites who would destroy Egypt. So Fir`awn ordered that every new-born male child was to be killed at birth and the general Israelite public to be put to hard and meanly labor. This was the division that Allah (*swt*) spoke of in this *ayah* (Tabari, Razi, Qurtubi).

Qurtubi notes Zajjaj as commenting on the intelligence of the unbelievers, examples of which are reported to us on a daily basis from the elitists of the unbelievers in reference to Islam and Muslims: Consider Fir`awn's idiocy. If the soothsayers had predicted that a man was to rise from among the Israelites who would destroy his kingdom, then there were two possibilities. Either, they were right in their interpretation, (which meant

it would happen no matter what you did), in which case there was no point in killing the new-born males, or they were wrong, in which case too there was no point in killing the new-born (Au.).

6. The *Salaf* understood the “`ard” of this occurrence as meaning, lands of Egypt and Syria.

7. “.. an allusion to the historical fact that the Hebrews were the first to accept monotheistic creed in a clear, unequivocal formulation..” (Asad).

8. See *Surah Ta-ha*, note 33 for explanation.

9. Majid discusses the identity of Haman. He writes: “Haman does not seem to be a personal name, but on the analogy of Pharaoh, it may well be only an official designation. That there was a great Egyptian god by the name of Amon admits of no doubt. ‘He was originally the local divinity of Thebes, but on the accession of the eighteenth dynasty, became the su-

preme ruler of the Egyptian Pantheon, and official god of the empire.’ (JE. I. p. 526). ‘Amon became the great god of the most important age of Egypt – the XVIIIth-XXth dynasties.’ (ERE. V. p. 247). ‘Later, Amon obtained pre-eminence and, with the rise of Thebes, became the official chief god of Egypt (EBi. C. 3429). And it is quite likely that the official acting as the high priest, in the king’s absence, of Amon’s temple may have borne a title closely akin to what in Arabic pronouncement is known as Haman.’ This is the more probable when we remember that it was impossible for the Egyptian king, who was the responsible head of a highly complex system of government, to exercise his high-priestly functions except on rare occasions, he accordingly was obliged to depute them to the heads, or higher members, of the various local priesthoods.’ (ERE. X. p. 294). Haman is here coupled with Pharaoh, as the latter, next to the king, was the highest dignity of the state. The Theban High Priest of Ammon, was recognized beyond dispute the chief of the sacerdotal order, and the next person in the kingdom after the king.’ (Rawlinson, Ancient Egypt, p. 289).”

Asad’s own research confirms Majid’s. He writes: “This Haman, who is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān as Pharaoh’s chief advisor, is not to be confused with the Persian Haman of the Old Testament (The Book of Esther iii ff.). Most probably, the word ‘Haman’ as used in the Qur’ān is not a proper noun at all but the Arabicized echo of the compound designation Ha-Amen given to every high priest of the Egyptian god Amon. Since at the time in question the cult of Amon was paramount in Egypt, his high priest held a rank second only to that of the reigning Pharaoh. The assumption that the person spoken of in the Qur’ān as Haman was indeed high priest of the cult of Amon, is strengthened by Pharaoh’s demand (mentioned in verse 38 of this *Surah* as well as in 40: 36-37) that Haman erect for him ‘a lofty tower’ from which he could ‘have a look at [or ‘ascend to’] the god of Moses’: which may be, among other things, an allusion to the hieratic purpose of the great pyramids of Egypt and to the function of the high priest as their chief architect.”

[7] So We sent inspiration to Musa's mother¹⁰ (to the effect): 'Suckle him. Then, when you fear for him, place him into the river;¹¹ and fear not, nor grieve. We shall restore him to you and shall make him (one) of the Messengers.'¹²

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فِإِذَا
خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي
وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ
الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧﴾

10. Although the term used is "awhayna," the revelation was not the type that is sent to Messengers, but rather, as Suddi has said, inspiration placed in the heart (Ibn Jarir).

There is consensus of opinion among the scholars of Islam that she was not a Prophetess. It is possible that an angel was sent to her just as an angel was sent to test three men: the blind, the bald and the leper. Angels also greeted `Imran although he was not a Prophet (Qurtubi). See *Surah Al `Imran* note 76 of this work.

11. The precedence of the words "suckle him" suggest that she was not asked to place the infant into the sea the day of his birth, but rather, resort to it whenever she feared the inspectors' visit (Tabari).

The textual word "yamm" is used for any large amount of water, applicable both to river as well as sea.

12. As Ibn Zayd said, these words were said at a time when she had placed the casket containing Musa into the Nile but had forgotten to tie up the rope to a peg. The casket floated away (Ibn Jarir).

Asma`ee said that once he praised a bedouin girl for her poetry. She replied, "Is that any eloquence in comparison to 'Suckle him. Then, when you fear for him, cast him into the river; and fear not, nor grieve; We shall restore him to you and shall make him one of the Messengers!?' In this short verse Allah mentioned two commands, two prohibitions and two promises (Qurtubi).

Two commands: Suckle him, and, cast him into the river

Two prohibitions: Fear not, and, grieve not

Two promises: We shall restore him, and, make him a Messenger (Au.).

[8] Then the household of Fir`awn picked him up¹³ to be an enemy to them and a cause of grief. Verily, Fir`awn, Haman and their forces were of the erroneous ones.¹⁴

فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا
وَخَزَنَةً إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا
خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Said Fir`awn's wife, 'Comfort of the eyes, for me and for you. Kill him not;¹⁵ perhaps he will profit us,¹⁶ or we will adopt him as a son' - and they perceived not.¹⁷

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ
لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ
وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

13. The allusion by the words, "Fir`awn's folks" is to the slave girls of Fir`awn's wife who were bathing in the Nile. Another opinion is that Fir`awn and his courtiers used to assemble by evenings at the bank of the river Nile with Asiyah at his side. It is his courtiers who had picked up the casket (Tabari).

14. Literally, those who commit mistakes. Hence Zamakhshari's comment: They committed mistakes in everything that they did, although "sinning" is another permissible connotation.

15. In keeping with the practice of killing off all male offspring of the Israelites, Fir`awn wished to do away with Musa too, having recognized him as of Israeli origin. But Asiyah bint Muzahim argued him out of his intention (Ibn Kathir).

16. Ibn `Abbas said that when Asiyah said, "Perhaps he will benefit us," Fir`awn remarked dryly, "Maybe you, but not me." The turn of events proved his words true. Musa benefited Asiyah, who believed in him when he returned from Madyan as a Messenger, but not Fir`awn who refused and was drowned (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

This verse tells us by implication that one ought to interpret events occurring presently as foreboding good and, consequently expect good to unfold itself in the future.

17. That is, as Mujahid and Qatadah said, they perceived not that their destruction would be at his hands (Ibn Jarir).

[10] And the heart of Musa's mother became void.¹⁸ She wellnigh disclosed him, had We not fortified her heart – that she should be of the believers.¹⁹

وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَى فَارِعًا إِنْ كَادَتْ
لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَنْ رَبَطْنَا عَلَى قَلْبِهَا
لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] She said to his sister, 'Follow him.' So she observed him from a distance while they perceived not.²⁰

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّبِهِ فَبُصِّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ
جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] Now We had forbidden him aforetime (all) wet nurses.²¹ So she suggested, 'Shall I direct you to a household that will take care of him and will be his sincere well-wishers?'

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ
هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ
وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

18. Anyone who lost a dear one knows what it feels like in the heart for the first few days: it is as if there is a void where the heart used to be, or, as if within the heart there is a place vacant (Au.).

Although there are one or two other interpretations, the preferred meaning is that her heart became empty of everything except the remembrance of Musa. She could not think of anything or talk about anything except him. The pronoun in "bihi" then is for Musa's remembrance which reached such levels that it was feared that she would reveal the birth and loss of child to his enemies. This is the interpretation offered by Ibn `Abbas (Ibn Jarir). This interpretation is in Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi

Hatim, and Hakim, with the latter declaring it trustworthy (Alusi, Shawk ani).

19. That is, a believer in Allah's promise when He said to her, "We shall restore him to you" (Qurtubi).

20. Another possible meaning is that she spotted Musa from a distance while he was being picked up, though she herself was not within their sight. Alternatively, as some reports suggest, she spotted Musa outside the palace gates as the attendants were looking for someone who could nurse the child. For a few other details see *Ta-ha*, note 33.

21. The word "maradi'" could also mean the place of suck, or, breasts (Zamakhshari, Alusi).

[13] Thus We restored him to his mother that she might be comforted, and not grieve; and that she might know that Allah's promise is true but most of them know not.²²

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ
وَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] Then, when he had reached puberty and attained full strength,²³ We gave him judgment and knowledge.²⁴ Thus do We reward those who do good.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا
وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

22. Several commentators discuss in detail how it all happened that ultimately Musa was restored to his mother. But since the reports have not been checked for their authenticity, we ignore them. Nevertheless, one or two points could be discussed, e.g., did it not occur to Fir`awn's attendants how Musa's mother could have milk without giving birth to a child? The answer given is that Musa's mother explained by saying that she had a son to suckle, Harun, who was born the year before, which was another reason, it has been said, why she said she could not move into the Palace, when asked to do so. There was perhaps another stronger reason, which the commentators do not point out, as to why Musa's mother could not be identified as his mother: he was pretty dark, as in *Sahih ahadith*, (but carefully concealed by Jews and Christians), while she was most probably fair. This author has

known an extremely dark person, although none in the extended family was any worse than light brown (Au.).

23. This is how Ibn Jarir explains "Istawa." Zamakhshari writes that it is that stage in life after which no further physical development is possible.

Sayyid adds: "(At this point we enter into a new phase of Musa's life). As for what happened after he was restored to his mother, how was he brought up in the royal Pharaonic palaces, what kind of relationship existed between him and his mother after the suckling period was over, what was Musa's status in the palaces and outside them after he had grown up, what were his beliefs, while he was being readied under Allah's own eye .. these are all details that the Qur'an did not discuss, but rather, we are taken straight to the next stage in his life and to the next episode."

[15] And he entered the city at a time when its people were inattentive.²⁵ He found there two men fighting: this from his own faction and this from among his enemy. Now the one that was of his faction appealed to him against the one who was from among his enemy. Musa struck him²⁶ and finished him off.²⁷ He exclaimed, 'This is one of Satan's doing. Surely, he is a misguiding, manifest enemy.'

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

24. "This implies that he was pious and righteous from early manhood, and was at no time of his adult life an unbeliever" (Majid).

25. It was perhaps midday, the markets were closed, and so there weren't any people around in the streets (Ibn Jarir).

26. "Wakaza-wakz" is to fold the fingers and assault with the hand (Zamakhshari), what is known as a punch or a box today (Au.).

27. Although Musa did not intend to kill him (Ibn Jarir).

But how could a punch cause death? Today's medical science explains it as the result of Commotio Cordis. Examples of sudden death on the field are recorded of players:

Commotio Cordis is a

primary arrhythmic event that occurs when the mechanical energy generated by a blow is confined to a small area of the precordium (generally over the left ventricle) and profoundly alters the electrical stability of the myocardium, resulting in ventricular fibrillation

The impact occurs within a millisecond ۳۰-۱۰ specific portion of the cardiac cycle. This period occurs in the ascending phase of the T wave, when the ventricular myocardium is repolarizing, during the transition from systole to diastole (relaxation). This small window of vulnerability makes commotio cordis a very rare event. ([http:// ۰.۵/۲.۱۰./lifeinthefastlane.com \(/commotio-cordis](http://۰.۵/۲.۱۰./lifeinthefastlane.com (/commotio-cordis)

[16] He said, 'O my Lord! Surely I have wronged my soul. Therefore, forgive me.' So He forgave him. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful.²⁸

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي
فَعَفَّرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦﴾

28. Alusi comments on why Musa had to seek forgiveness for an unintended murder. First he points out that the Prophets of Allah never commit a major sin at any time in their lives. So, Musa was blameless on that account. However, he was remorseful because after the man died, he might have analyzed his behavior. Did he over-react? Should he not have merely pushed the man away instead of punching him? Yes he could. He had indeed proven hasty which was unbecoming of a man of his status. Hence he said, 'O my Lord! Surely I have wronged my soul. Therefore, forgive me.' And he was forgiven. He sought forgiveness because commitment of an unintentional wrong by the pious is considered a sin by those who are closer to Allah.

Mufti Shafi` emphasizes the illegality of a Muslim killing a non-harbi pagan, or confiscating his property. He quotes Ibn Hajr as writing in his *Sharh al-Bukhari* as follows, "The

fact of pagans and Muslims living together in peace, makes their life and property unlawful unto the Muslims. Thanwi's opinion is close to this, writes Mufti Shafi`, and was the last of his legal opinions that he heard from him on the 2nd of Rajab 1362 A.H., Thanwi succumbing to his prolonged illness, breathing his last on the 16th of Rajab the same year.

Mufti Shafi` perhaps thought it wise to emphasize - in view of the prevailing situation in the Indian sub-continent, where Muslim life and property is constantly under attack the question arise: should they retaliate in a similar manner, or sit back doing nothing? The answer is, so long as the state does not consider attacks against them as legal, they might defend themselves by whatever means possible, but not retaliate in the manner in which they are attacked, such as, indiscriminately killing any non-Muslim, or destroying property, as their enemies do (Au.).

[17] He said, 'My Lord! For the favor You have bestowed on me, I shall never be a helper to the criminals.²⁹

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] Thus he did his morning in the city in fear, watchful, when behold, the one who had sought his help the previous day was calling after him. Musa told him, 'You are indeed an evident deviant one.'³⁰

فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِحُهُ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَعَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] Then, as he tried to lay his hand on the one who was an enemy to both,³¹ he cried out, 'O Musa! Do you intend to kill me as you killed a man yesterday?³² You do not wish but to be a tyrant in the land, and do not wish to be one of those who set things right.'

فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَهُمَا قَالَ يَا مُوسَى أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

29. Hence, Ata' has said that it is not lawful for anyone to help an oppressor, or be his writer, or even accept his company. It is reported that Dahhak was asked by Sulayman b. Muslim (an early Abbasid: Ibn Kathir in Tarikh) to go up to Bukhara and distribute some state funds among the people there. He declined. Sulayman made repeated requests but Dahhak emphatically refused. He was asked the reason. He replied tersely, "I do not wish to be a helper to any wrongdoing person in any way." 'Ata' b. Rabah was asked, "I have a brother who earns his livelihood with his pen. He keeps the accounts, entering, deducting, etc. He

has family and children. If he gives up, he will have to live on loans." He asked, "Who employs him?" He was told, "Khalid b. 'Abdullah al-Qasra" (an Umayyad: Ibn Kathir in Tarikh). He remarked, "Have you not read what a pious person (of the past) had to say?: 'My Lord! For the favor You have bestowed on me, I shall never be a helper to the criminals!'" (Zamakhshari in part, Qurtubi, Alusi and Mawdudi).

30. For, you are the one who led me to yesterday's killing (Alusi and others).

31. That is, Musa (*asws*) did not wish to strike him. He merely tried to restrain the Copt (Au.).

[20] Then came a man from the farthest end of the city, hurrying, and said, 'O Musa! The chiefs are conferring over you, to kill you.³³ Therefore, depart. I am indeed one of your sincere advisers.'

[21] So he departed therefrom in fear, watchful saying, 'O my Lord! Save me from the wrongdoing people.'³⁴

[22] Then, as he turned his face towards Madyan, he said,³⁵ 'I do hope that my Lord will guide me to the right way.'³⁶

وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى
قَالَ يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ
لِيُقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ

﴿٢٠﴾

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي
مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلَفَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي
أَنْ يَهْدِيَني سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٢٢﴾

32. He wrongly perceived the threat from Musa's words of alarm, "Indeed, you are an evident deviant one" (Alusi and others).

33. The intervening events are left out, viz., reports carried to Fir'awn that Musa was the one who had killed the Copt the previous day, and the discussions amongst the ruling elite as to what action was to be taken against Musa, the majority insisting that he be put to death in retaliation, etc. Their decision also implies that although Musa was brought up among the royals, he was never accepted as one of the royalty or even as one of the Copts, to be spared for accidentally killing one of them. Muslims who try to integrate themselves with the non-Muslims, and go a long way to please them, should

perhaps make note of this historical reality (Au.).

34. Yusuf Ali tries to figure out Musa's state of mind: "Moses saw that his position was now untenable, both in the Palace and in the City, and indeed anywhere in Pharaoh's territory. So he suffered voluntary exile. But he did not know where to go to. His mind was in a state of agitation. But he turned to Allah (*swt*) and prayed. He got consolation, and felt that after all it was no hardship to leave Egypt, where there was so much injustice and oppression."

35. Various commentators, especially Majid and Mawdudi, have speculated the route Musa could have taken when leaving Egypt: none perhaps wholly accurate. We reproduce one possibility from Yusuf Ali,

not for its certainty, but for its brevity: "East of Lower Egypt, for about 300 miles, runs the Sinai Peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Suez, and on the north by what was the Isthmus of Suez, now cut by the Suez Canal. Over the Isthmus ran the highroad to Palestine and Syria, but a fugitive could not well take that road, as the Egyptians were after him. If he could, after crossing the Isthmus, plunge into the Sinai desert, east or south-east, he would be in the Midianite territory, where the people would be Arabs and not Egyptians. He turned thither, and again prayed to Allah for guidance."

"Here," Mawdudi adds a useful point, "the *Biblical* account is in agreement with the Qur'anic one in that both state that after leaving Egypt, Moses went to Midian. The Talmud, however, relates the absurd story of Moses fleeing to Abyssinia and becoming a great favourite of the king there.. Moses was then (at the time of departure from Abyssinia: au.) 67 years old (as stated by Polano, though not Talmud. See also

The Jewish Encyclopaedia, vol.9, p. 48: ed.)." Or perhaps this story needs to be connected with another, viz. Musa & Israelites had gone back to Egypt after the drowning of Fir'awn. May be there is a mix-up in the sequence of events. See note no. 191 of *Surah* no. 7 for further details.

36. The translation reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas who said that Musa did not know the way to Madyan and hence prayed in these words (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Razi and others). Sa`id b. Jubayr mentioned that the journey (on foot) between Egypt and Madyan was eight days long (Kashshaf, Razi, Ibn Kathir and others).

Majid adds: "And because the public roads were watched, he took the flight through the desert through a route his enemies could not suspect he would travel.' (Ant. II, 11: 1). 'The route he took was probably very much the same as that by which he afterwards led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. It avoided the Egyptian parts and settlements.' (Rawlinson, Moses, His Life and Times' p. 186)."

[23] Then, when he arrived at the waters of Madyan he found there a crowd of people watering (their flocks) and apart from them he found two women holding back (their flocks).³⁷ He asked, 'What is the matter with you two?' They said, 'We may not water (our flocks) until the shepherds drive off (theirs); and our father is a very old man.'³⁸

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْكُفُونَ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءَ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

37. That is, restraining their flock from rushing towards the well.

38. So, they had to wait until everyone had left by the end of the day, and be content with whatever water was left at the bottom of the well (Au.).

Although, a more becoming behavior on the part of those who are endowed with nature's good qualities was that the girls should have been allowed to draw water first and drive away their flock before men would start (Sayyid).

Yousuf Ali beautifully fills in the gaps that the verses leave: "Here is a pretty little idyll, told in the fewest and most beautiful words possible. Moses arrives at an oasis in the desert, weary and travel worn, with his mind full of anxiety and uncertainty owing to his recent experiences in

Egypt. He was thirsty and would naturally seek water. At the well or spring he found shepherds (or perhaps goat-herds) watering their flocks. As a stranger it was not for him to thrust himself among them. He waited under the shade of a tree until they should finish. He noticed two damsels, also waiting with their flocks, which they had come to water. His chivalry was roused. He went at once among the goat-herds, made a place for the flocks of the damsels, gave them water, and then resumed his place in the shade. They were modest maidens, and had given him in three Arabic words the key of the whole situation. 'abu-na shaikhun kabirun' our father is a very old man, and therefore cannot come to water the flocks; we therefore do the work; we could not very well thrust ourselves among these men.'

[24] So he watered (their flocks) for them,³⁹ then he turned aside into the shade and said, 'My Lord! Verily, whatever You send down to me of a good (thing), I am in need thereof.'⁴⁰

فَسَقَىٰ لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّىٰ إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ
إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

39. This demonstrates that “perfection” (kamiliyyah) does not negate services to the people (Thanwi), in fact, it is a sign of perfection by itself (Au.).

Most commentators report that Musa drew water from the same well from which the shepherds were drawing. A few say that upon inquiry he was led by the girls to another well that had a huge rock on its mouth. Musa removed it, watered their flock and replaced the lid (Shawkani). The report is in `Abd b. Humayd and Ibn al-Mundhir (Alusi).

40. No human mind could ever think of expressing in such a short sentence, in such absolute sense, the extreme privation that Musa was suffering (Au).

It is said that Musa was in such a state that all that he wished by his

supplication was a simple meal (Ibn Jarir).

His supplication demonstrates that the “perfect” are never tired of seeking Allah’s blessings, big or small, as against the “pseudo perfect” who evince total independence of material needs, in fact, spurn them when sent their way (Thanwi).

It is reported of Ibn Mas`ud: “I rode on my camel for two days until I was in Madyan. I inquired about the tree under which Musa had rested. I found it a lush green tree full of leaves. My hungry camel rushed to it and began to feed on it, which it did for an hour, and then vomited. I prayed for Musa and moved on” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). In fact, it is reported that Ibn Mas`ud also visited the tree (at Toor) from which Allah had spoken to Musa (Ibn Kathir).

[25] Then came to him one of the two walking bashfully.⁴¹ She said, 'My father invites you that he may reward you with the wage for that you watered for us.'⁴² Then, when he came to him,⁴³ and narrated to him the story, he said, 'Fear not. You have escaped from an oppressive people.'⁴⁴

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ
قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ
مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ
الْقِصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

41. The Qur'an has no romantic tales. But a little phrase, "tamshee `ala-istihya'" throws open several avenues of thought to those who have had the experience of watching simple men and women of the countryside living out their lives in complete innocence and supreme natural joy. Gone into oblivion are those days and those scenes that Wordsworth drew in his pastoral poems, perhaps never to return. Among the commentators, Yusuf Ali stands alone in courage and imagination, to fill the colors in the Qur'anic sketches. The reader is advised to read all the notes of this context in his work.

`Umar (ra) is reported to have said (in a *Sahih* report: Ibn Kathir) that the girl had gone to Musa covering her face with her shirt-sleeve, bashful, unlike the forward and fearless women who are ever ready to dash out of their homes into the streets: on any pretext or no pretext (Ibn Jarir).

42. This demonstrates that acceptance of wages, that were not intended for a good deed, does not nullify a good intention, especially when such acceptance is a means of preventing ill consequences (Thanwi).

A man of keen sentiments, Yusuf Ali could not fail to feel like several characters of the story must have felt at the time the episode took place. He writes, boldly, but cautiously: "Nothing could have been more welcome than such a message, and through such a messenger. Moses went of course, and saw the old man. He found such a well-ordered patriarchal household. The old man was happy in his daughters and they in him. There was mutual confidence. They had evidently described the stranger to him in terms which made his welcome a foregone conclusion. On the other hand Moses had allowed his imagination to paint the father in something of the glorious colours in which his daughters had

[26] Said one of them, 'O my father, hire him; surely, the best one you can hire is a strong, trustworthy (person).⁴⁵

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ
مَنْ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ﴿٢٦﴾

appeared to him like an angelic vision. The two men got to be friends at once. Moses told the old man his story, - who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes had made him quit Egypt. Perhaps the whole household, including the daughters, listened breathlessly to his tale. Perhaps their wonder and admiration were mingled with a certain amount of pity - perhaps with some more tender feeling in the case of the girl who had been to fetch him. In any case the stranger had won his place in their hearts. The old man, the head of the household, assured him of hospitality and safety under his roof. As one with a long experience of life he congratulated him on his escape. 'Who would live among unjust people? It is as well you are free of them!'"

43. Although some of the earliest commentators have identified this person with Shu`ayb the Prophet, (but not Ibn `Abbas: Razi), it is very unlikely that the two were one in view of the fact that Shu`ayb the Prophet appeared at least four hundred years before Musa. Further, the

Qur`an did not name the person as Shu`ayb in this context. As for the *ahadith* that speak of him in such context, none of them is trustworthy (Ibn Kathir).

"I have earlier expressed my opinion that it must or could have been Shu`ayb, but now I am convinced that it was not Suh`ayb the Prophet for, Shu`ayb's people were destroyed. It is only those who believed in him that were spared. But, the behavior of the shepherds at the well, who did not allow the girls to water their flock first, is not something expected of the first generation of believers" (Sayyid).

44. Fir`awn's kingdom did not include Madyan lands (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*).

45. Brief and precise, the sentence cannot be improved upon: all you need when you hire a man is strength (ability to perform), and honesty. The two qualities assured, you can entrust your work and forget all about it (Zamakhshari).

It has been said, by Ibn `Abbas and others, that this was said by one of

[27] He said,⁴⁶ 'I intend to wed one of these my two daughters to you⁴⁷ on (condition) that you serve me eight years.⁴⁸ But if you complete ten, then, that will be (as a favor) from you.⁴⁹ And I do not wish to press hard on you. You shall surely find me, Allah willing, of the righteous.'⁵⁰

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَنْكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَانِي حَجَّجَ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

the two (daughters) whose flocks Musa had watered. "What makes you think he is strong and trustworthy?" her father asked. She replied that she judged his strength from the manner in which he had drawn the water and his trustworthiness from the fact that he had never looked at them twice and had asked her to walk behind him when she had gone to fetch him. Some others have said that she judged his strength from his feat of lifting the rock off the mouth of the well which only a group of men could ordinarily do (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Kashshaf).

The arrangement between the two was that if Musa strayed as they walked down to her house, she would throw a stone to indicate the right direction (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali does not rule out another implication: "Strong and trustworthy: Moses had proved himself to be both, and these were the very quali-

ties which a woman most admires in the man she loves."

46. It should not be imagined that the entire conversation, from the time Musa met Shu'ayb, to this point, took place in one session (Au.).

47. In his re-portrayal of the scene, Yusuf Ali fills in the gaps with details that most readers would agree could be the missing links, "A little time passed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. It was not for the fugitive to suggest a permanent tie, especially when, in the wealth of this world, the girl's family was superior, and they had an established position, while he was a mere wanderer. The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked, ten years, but the longer term was at his option. If he brought no dower, his service for that period was more than sufficient in lieu of dower. The particular girl

intended was no doubt tacitly settled long before, by the mutual attraction of the young hearts themselves. Moses was glad of the proposal, and accepted it. They ratified it in the most solemn manner, by appealing to Allah. The old man, knowing the worth of his son-in-law, solemnly assured him that in any event he would not take advantage of his position to be a hard task-master or to insist on anything inconsistent with Moses's interests, should a new future open out to him. And a new and glorious future was awaiting him after his apprenticeship."

Sayyid echoes the words of Qurtubi in essence when he elaborates: Thus, in this simple and frank manner that is devoid of any twist of the tongue, the man proposed his daughter to Musa: without any fuss, or feelings of shame or awkwardness. For, he is proposing the building up of a husband-wife relationship and establishment of a home. It is not something that has room for hesitation, vacillation, or far-fetched gestures nor the kind of artificiality that is to be found in societies that have lost their naturalness, having accepted false values and traditions. Such societies prevent the father or custodian from proposing to someone with whose religion, morals and person-

ality he feels satisfied as matching with those of his daughter or sister. They prescribe that it is the man or his representative alone who should make the proposal to the girl's father or custodian and it should never be done from the girl's side. The deviation to be noted in such societies is that its young men and women mix together freely, talk freely, and move about freely without any intention of marriage; but when it comes to marriage, then suddenly a pall of unnatural embarrassment descends, and a wall of artificiality is erected, preventing a clear and frank discussion of the proposal.

In contrast, at the time of the Prophet, fathers offered their daughters for marriage to those they approved. Sometimes, even a woman offered herself for marriage. And the affairs were conducted in perfect frankness, cleanliness, and good manners, unimpaired by the thoughts of shame or dishonor. `Umar offered his daughter to Abu Bakr, then to `Uthman, and then complained to the Prophet perhaps hoping that Allah might decree a husband for his daughter better than the two he had proposed. A woman offered herself to the Prophet – who refused – and then she left it to him to find a suitable match for her."

48. He was to serve him looking after his flocks and attend to related works (Ibn Jarir and others).

“In patriarchal society it was not uncommon to have a marriage bargain of this kind conditional on a certain term of service. In this case the episode conveys two lessons. (1) A man destined to be a messenger of Allah is yet a man, and must pass through the ups and downs of life like any other man: only he will do it with more grace and distinction than other men. (2) The beautiful relations in love and marriage may themselves be a preparation for the highest spiritual destiny that may await a Messenger of Allah. A woman need not necessarily be a snare and a temptation: she may be the understanding help-mate that the Lady Khadija was to the holy Prophet (Yusuf Ali).

This kind of marriage, in which wages are offered by the male as mahr is allowed among the Hanafiyyah (Shabbir), but on certain conditions (Shafi'). There is a close example of this in the *hadith*. A man had nothing to offer as mahr, so the Prophet (*saws*) told him to teach the bride some verses of the Qur'an in lieu, to which the woman agreed (Qurtubi). Abu Hanifa's personal opinion however, was that such an agreement is

not allowable in Islam now. Further, this Qur'anic precedence cannot be quoted since in this case, Musa actually promised to serve Shu'ayb, while the mahr is a woman's own right, and not that of her father (Shafi').

A contemporary commentator thinks however, that the whole debate as conducted by the scholars of the *Ummah* over the issue, is, in his words, “meaningless.” He lets his imagination loose, and constructs a scenario, which he perhaps thought could not have occurred to others before him. In the heat he failed to notice the clear implications of the verse in question, viz. service to the father-in-law was a clause of the marriage contract (Au.).

49. Although all of them weak, but severally they strengthen the report that of the two terms, Musa completed what was more becoming of him, that is, ten. We do not have a trustworthy *hadith* in this context, but this was the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, as reported in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir). Mujahid however maintained that altogether he served twenty years (Ibn Kathir, Alusi). If Musa was in his early twenties, which seems to be probable, then, it is quite likely that he stayed twenty years before thinking of returning to a land, where

[28] He said, 'Be that between me and you. Whichsoever of the two terms I fulfill, there will be no injustice to me. And Allah is a Witness⁵¹ to what we say.⁵²

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ
فَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا
تَقُولُ وَكَيْلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

dangers lurking for him must have fizzled out over this long period of absence. Indeed, it is possible that he might have heard that the Fir`awn who had brought him up was dead and that another had taken his place (Au.).

In this there is close affinity with our own Prophet's mission. He left Makkah in fear, but came back eight years later to subdue it (Shabbir), and emptied it of pagans, just like Egypt was emptied of the pagans in ten years time (Muwaddih).

50. "Here again," writes Mawdu-di, "the Israelites have done woe-ful injustice to their most illustrious Prophet, their greatest benefactor and hero.. According to another Jew-ish tradition, mentioned in The Jew-ish Encyclopaedia: 'On his arrival at Midian Moses told his whole story to Jethro, who recognized him as the man destined to destroy the Egyp-tians. He therefore took Moses pris-oner in order to deliver him to Pha-raoh .. Moses was imprisoned in a deep dungeon in Jethro's house, and received as food only small portions

of bread and water. He would have died of hunger had not Zipporah, to whom Moses had before this captiv-ity made an offer of marriage by the well, devised a plan by which she no longer went out to pasture the sheep, but remained at home to attend to the household, being thereby enabled to supply Moses with food without her father's knowledge. After ten (or seven) years, Zipporah reminded her father that he had at one time cast a man into the dungeon, who must have died long ago, but if he were still living he must be a just man whom God had kept alive by a miracle. Je-thro went to the dungeon and called Moses, who answered immediately. As Jethro found Moses praying, he really believed that he had been saved by a miracle, and liberated him ... and gave him the virtuous Zipporah as his wife.'" (Vol.9, pp. 48-9).

51. Literally, Trustee (Au.).

52. With this example of Musa be-fore him, how can any Muslim, re-duced to a state of discomforts, after the plenty he once possessed, com-plain of the vicissitudes of time? Or,

[29] Then, when Musa had completed the term,⁵³ and was journeying with his family,⁵⁴ he perceived a fire in the direction of the Tur. He said to his family, 'Wait. I have indeed perceived a fire. Perhaps I will bring to you some information from there, or a burning firebrand that you may warm yourselves.'⁵⁵

قَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ
 آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ
 امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا
 بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

agree to live among an oppressive or un-Islamic people, for reasons of a materially rich, but spiritually barren life? One may also note the goodness in the heart of a future Prophet. Just out of the palace, he marries a plain Bedouin shepherdess without any qualms, in order to be able to follow, as commentators have pointed out, a virtuous life, and to demonstrate that the love of the world had not touched the heart of someone brought up in luxuries (Au.).

53. What term was it? Was it the term of the marriage contract? Sayyid has an entirely different perspective in mind. Could it be the term of training and preparation? He elaborates: "Life in palaces is spent in a special kind of environment where it follows its own customs. The milieu there leaves a certain kind of impression on the heart, no matter how well a soul is possessed of knowledge, understanding, and purity of heart. But Messengership is in the service of all

kinds of people. Among them are the rich and the poor, the possessed and the deprived, the pure and the impure, the cultured and the coarse, the good and the bad, the strong and the weak, the patient and the grumbling ones, and so on. Moreover, the poor have their own manners of eating, drinking, dressing and conducting their affairs. Their way of understanding the affairs, their notions concerning this life, their way of talking and moving, and their way of expressing feelings, are those that are a bit hard for those to appreciate who have been brought up in the comforts of palaces. Little chance the latter have of even seeing the life of the lowly ones, far from attempting to reform them – no matter how good the hearts of the poor ones, and how ready for improvement they are. The basic problem is that their lives and manners are something to which the residents of palaces do not open their hearts.

[30] When he came to it he was called from the edge of the valley on the right side,⁵⁶ in a hallowed (piece of) ground, coming from a tree, 'O Musa. Verily I, I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds.⁵⁷

قَلَمًا أَتَاهَا نُودِي مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِي
الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ
أَنْ يَا مُوسَى إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

﴿ ٣٠ ﴾

“Messengership on the other hand, means discomforts, some ruggedness, and of course requires some hard work, while the hearts of those who live in palaces, however prepared for sacrifices, however used to humbleness and equanimity, cannot bear long in patience when faced with deprivations, hardships, and difficulties of sorts in a life of very different settings and atmosphere than those they are used to.

“Allah wished then – who was moving Musa’s steps – that he should descend down from what he was used to, into the company of shepherds, and to make him realize the blessing there is in shepherding a flock of sheep, having found, after hunger and hardships, a refuge and provision ... and that he should root out from his inner self any repugnance there could have been for poverty, and the poverty-stricken, ... root out the feelings of any revulsion against their ways and manners, their rustic ways and simplicity, their ignorance, poverty and shabbiness. He was

forced deep into the wide sea, before he was ready to face its waves at the shore ... all this in order to train him in the burden of Messengership that he was destined to bear...

“Thus we see, how Musa was prepared by Allah, under His own supervision, and how he was readied for the hardships he was about to face as he started on this in his way”

54. Some of the *Salaf* have said that Musa had with him his wife and two children (Au.), which is also reported in the *Bible* (Majid).

55. As mentioned earlier, it was a dark, rainy and cold night in which Musa (*asws*) had lost his way (Ibn Kathir and others).

56. Most scholars have understood this to mean, “from the right side of Musa.” Nonetheless, there is room to believe that the word “ayman” has been used in the sense of “hallowed” (Ibn Kathir, Asad and others).

57. Mahdawi has said that Allah (*swt*) spoke to Musa from above His

[31] And that, 'Cast your staff.' Then, when he saw it quivering as if a snake,⁵⁸ he turned back in retreat and did not retrace his steps. 'O Musa, come forward and fear not, you are of those who are secure.

وَأَنَّ أَلْقَى عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا
جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَا مُوسَى أَقْبِلْ
وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْأَمِينِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] Thrust your hand in your pocket,⁵⁹ it will come forth (shining) bright without any blemish. And draw your hand to your side against any fear.⁶⁰ These are two proofs⁶¹ from your Lord unto Fir`awn and his chiefs. Indeed, they have been a people given to transgression.'

اسْتَلْكُ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيِّضًا مِنْ
غَيْرِ سُوءٍ وَاضْمُمِ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنْ
الرَّهْبِ فِدَانِكَ بُرْهَانَانِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى
فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ
﴿٣٢﴾

'*Arsh* and made him hear His voice from the tree. Allah should not be attributed with movements that are the attributes of His creations. Abu Is-haq on the other hand said that Allah created a meaning within Musa's mind with the help of which he was able to grasp the words of Allah when He spoke to him – His speech being a specialty to Him (Qurtubi).

Al-Ash`ari and Imām Ghazali maintain that Musa heard Allah's own Eternal Voice, which was devoid of any sound, and devoid of any words.

58. "Jann" according to most commentators, though not all, is a little snake, fearsome for its swift movement. Tho`ban used elsewhere in the Qur`ān, is for a large, and hence slow moving snake, a python, whereas "hayyah" is a common noun for snakes. It has been explained that,

firstly, it took several shapes, suitable to the occasions, and secondly it evinced all qualities of snakes at once, i.e., even when it became a python, it moved as swiftly as a thin little snake, stirring great panic in the crowds (Au.).

59. This is how Ibn Jarir understands the textual word "jayb."

60. That is, 'whenever fear or terror strike you, press your hand to your side, you will be cured of it.' That is how Mujahid and Qatadah understood it (Ibn Kathir and others).

Literally, 'Draw thy wing close to thy side, (away) from fear'. When a bird is frightened, it ruffles its wings and prepares to fly away, but when it is calm and composed, it sits with its wings drawn close to its sides, showing a mind secure from danger (Yusuf Ali).

[33] He said, 'My Lord! I have indeed killed one of their men. So I fear that they will slay me (instantly).'⁶²

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ
أَنْ يُقْتَلُونِ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] And my brother Harun, he is more eloquent than I in speech, therefore, send him with me as a support, to corroborate me.⁶³ I am indeed afraid they will lay the lie on me.

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا
فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ
أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾

The following we quote to demonstrate the decency among the *Salaf* and to show the extent to which their minds were filled with the Qur'an, to come to fore at a moment when you would expect an ordinary person to betray a smile. Qurtubi reports that once wind escaped a secretary of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz. He felt embarrassed, threw down his pen in disgust and stood up. 'Umar told him, "Take your pen, draw your hand to your side, and do away with any embarrassment for I have not heard it from anyone more than I heard it from myself."

61. That is, the staff which turned into snake, and the hand which turned shiny white when brought out of the pocket (Ibn Kathir and others).

62. That is, "before I get time to deliver the message" (Majid).

63. Musa did not mean when he said, "to corroborate me" that when

he claimed Messengership before Fir'awn, Har un would attest and confirm his claim, but rather he would use his eloquent tongue to offer convincing arguments on his behalf (Zamakhshari, Razi).

'It is not that Moses is not reassured from all fear on account of the apparent snake which his rod had become, or from the sacred and unfamiliar surroundings in which he found himself. On this point his heart has been completely assured. But he is still new to his mission, and the future is obscure to his mind. Pharaoh was after him, to take his life, and apparently with good cause, because one of Pharaoh's men had been slain at his hands. And now he is commanded to go to Pharaoh and rebuke him and his Chiefs. The inner doubts and difficulties of his human mind he frankly lays before his Lord, and asks for a little human and visible support, which is granted him at once, viz.; the help of his brother Aron (Yusuf Ali).

[35] He said, 'We shall surely strengthen your arm with your brother⁶⁴ and shall vouchsafe unto you both an authority,⁶⁵ so that they shall not be able to reach you:⁶⁶ with Our signs, you two, and those who followed you, shall be the overcomers.'⁶⁷

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] Then, when Musa came to them with Our clear signs, they said, 'This is nothing but faked magic, we have not heard of this among our fathers of old.'

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرَىٰ وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾

64. That is, 'We shall strengthen your cause through your brother.' This was done by making Harun (*asws*) a Prophet, for which Musa had prayed. Hence some of the *Salaf* have said that no one did a brother greater good than Musa to Harun when he prayed for his Prophethood. See 19: 53 (Ibn Kathir).

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ }
[المائدة: ٦٧]

"O Messenger, proclaim what has been sent down to you by your Lord. If you did not, you would not have delivered His message. Allah will protect you from the people" (Ibn Kathir).

65. The *Bible* has a twist here. It reports (Ex. 7: 1), "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." Thus Musa became a god unto Fir'awn and Harun his, and not Allah's, prophet (Au.).

67. As Allah said (58: 21),

{ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ }
[المجادلة: ٢١]

"Allah has written that He and His Messengers shall overcome."

66. That is, they will not be able to do you any harm (Zamakhshari, Razi).

He also said (40: 51),

{ إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا }
[غافر: ٥١]

"Surely We shall help Our Messengers and those who followed them in the life of this world" (Ibn Kathir).

This is similar to what was said to our own Prophet (5: 67),

[37] Musa said, 'My Lord knows best who has brought guidance from Him, and for whom will be the ultimate Abode. Surely, wrongdoers will not prosper.'

وَقَالَ مُوسَى رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَى
مِنْ عِنْدِهِ وَمَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ
لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] Fir`awn said, 'O chiefs. I do not know of any other deity for you besides me.⁶⁸ Therefore, kindle for me O Haman, (a fire) upon clay⁶⁹ and build for me a tall edifice that I may have a look at Musa's god.⁷⁰ Surely I think he is of the liars.'

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ
لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَا هَامَانَ
عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ
إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ
﴿٣٨﴾

[39] And he waxed proud in the land – he and his forces – without right, and thought that they will not be returned to Us.

وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ
الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ
﴿٣٩﴾

68. What this implied on Fir`awn's part is that he had no evidence that God existed; and, according to him, that which lacked evidence did not exist: an error commonly committed by many people (Razi).

This trend is most common among the atheists, and, surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, among the scientists who know it as the first scientific principle, viz. what they do not have evidence for, can neither be rejected nor accepted. One should observe complete neutrality in such matters. But most often they take sides against some perennial and, in some cases, self-evident, truths (Au.).

A few details of the denial are given elsewhere in the Qur'an. Allah said (79: 23-24),

{فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَى (٢٣) فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى}
[النازعات: ٢٣، ٢٤]

"Then he gathered (his people) and cried aloud, saying, 'I am your Lord, the supreme'" (Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi writes: "By saying so, Pharaoh obviously did not mean that he was their creator and the creator of the heavens and the earth... Nor did it mean that they worshipped no other God besides Pharaoh because it is well known that they worshipped many gods and Pharaoh, himself, had been raised to the status of god-

head in his capacity as the incarnation of Ra, the sun-god. The Qur'ān itself provides a definite testimony in this regard, for it mentions that Pharaoh worshipped many gods: 'The elders of Pharaoh's people said, "Will you leave alone Moses and his people to spread mischief in the land, and forsake you and your gods" (*Al-A'raf* 7: 127).'

"Hence the word 'god' used here by Pharaoh for himself was not to claim that he was their creator and their sole object of worship. He rather used this word in the sense that he was the lord and master of Egypt where his command was executed; where he was considered to have full authority, and where people considered themselves bound to obey him, and where he was the absolute sovereign whose orders were carried out, and where he was in a position to decide what was good and what was evil, and where no one else had the authority to issue any commands. In this context, Pharaoh wondered what the locus standi of Moses was."

Although there is perhaps much truth in the above statement, but perhaps lesser in what follows thereafter in the original work, yet the fact remains that Pharaoh did assume some kind of divinity, and

was considered invested with divine qualities, sounds obvious from the Qur'ānic statements in this regard, here, and elsewhere (Au.).

Majid gives us the historical background to give us an idea of the somewhat ambiguous position Pharaoh held vis-à-vis, godhead, and which comes closer to explaining the Qur'ānic expressions: "Pharaoh-worship was very much akin to Mikado-worship, and the 'divinity' of the ancient Egyptian Imperious House bore close resemblance to that of the present-day Japanese Imperial House. The Pharaoh was a veritable Incarnate Deity. 'The king in that first monarchy was the visible god upon earth. The only thing like it that has been since seen is the deification of the Roman emperor. No pure monotheism would for a moment have been compatible with such an intense exaltation.' (Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, Intro p. xxxvi) 'It is a well-known fact that the Egyptians, from the earliest traceable period of their history, believed their kings to be embodied forms of certain gods ... The reigning king was regarded as "Horus" (the national god of lower Egypt in pre-historic times, and, later, of the whole kingdom) ... The reigning king was styled "the good god," or at an earlier day, "the

great god.” (ERE, VI, p. 647). Pharaoh ‘was not merely looked upon as the earthly representative of the god Horus ... but he was actually regarded as a form or manifestation of that god. The king was therefore a god, and indeed was commonly spoken of as the “good god.” Moreover, by the time of the Vth dynasty the king was believed to be the physical son of the sun-god, the State-god of Egypt.’ (X. p. 294).”

69. The translation is literal, otherwise, the meaning is, “manufacture bricks for me” (Ibn Jarir). Nonetheless, either we believe our Prophet was a veritable encyclopaedia of knowledge, the like of whom did not appear earlier or later, or accept him as a Messenger of Allah. How did he, for instance, know such architectural details as Majid brings to our notice? Majid writes: “Note that brick, rather than stone was the general building material used in ancient Egypt, and the Egyptians were well-known for brick-making. ‘The true countries of brick-makers were Egypt and Mesopotamia ... Egyptian bricks were usually twice the size of our modern ones. Many of them (from dynasty 18 onwards) were stamped with the name of a king, to show that they belonged to public buildings ... Stamps as well as moulds have been

preserved up to the modern times, and bricks with the name of Ramses II, “the Pharaoh of the oppression,” are shown in our museums.’ (EBi. C. 609). ‘Egypt has yielded numerous examples of brick, manufactured in the earliest and subsequent dynasties.’ (EBr. IV. P. 111).

70. There is no way to establish whether the edifice was built or not. Common sense tells us that it was not built. As for the stories that have been narrated concerning the edifice that was built, they only serve to open doors for attack by the adversaries of the Qur’ān (Razi).

Elsewhere in this work, we have mentioned the Soviets trying to locate God in the skies. Mawdudi comments a little bit in detail on this point: “This mindset is similar to that of the Communists of the former Soviet Union. They launched sputniks ... and then glibly claimed that their spaceships had found no God up there in the sky... This only shows that the reasoning of ignorant people has not changed over the last 3,500 years. What idiocy to believe that God is sitting somewhere up there in the sky waiting to be observed by anyone who can soar high enough. What idiocy to believe that if He cannot be so found, this is

[40] So We seized him and his forces, and flung them into the sea.⁷¹ See then, how was the end of the wrongdoers.

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ فَاظْهَرَ
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] We made them leaders inviting to the Fire;⁷² and, on the Day of Standing, they shall not be helped.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَيَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And We made a curse to follow them in this world,⁷³ and, on the Day of Standing they will be of the loathed ones.

وَأَتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] We did give Musa the Book⁷⁴ after We had destroyed the earlier generations:⁷⁵ insights to men,⁷⁶ a guidance and a mercy,⁷⁷ haply that they will receive admonition.⁷⁸

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِن بَعْدِ
مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

proof enough that He does not exist.”

71. The choice of words, [“flung them”] is to express the worthlessness of the man and his army, flung away, (like they were no more than a dead lizard: Au.) – Zamakhshari, Razi.

72. In the words of Asad, “archetypes inviting to the fire.”

That is, they became examples for the evil-minded people of all times, who could take lessons of the failure of tyranny and injustice from them (Alusi and others).

73. That is, (although cursing is generally disallowed), cursing Fir`awn and his forces has been made lawful to the believers.

74. Yahya b. Sallam said that Tawrah was the first Book ever revealed that had commandments pertaining to the lawful and unlawful (Qurtubi). Abu Hayyan held the same opinion (Alusi).

Asad points to the significance: “By virtue of its being the first instance of a divinely-inspired Law, the *Torah* inaugurated a new phase in mankind’s religious history.”

75. Abu Sa`id al-Khudri is reported to have said, “After the revelation of the Tawrah, Allah (*swt*) did not destroy any nation through a heavenly chastisement, except for transformation of some people into apes and swine. Read if you will, ‘We did give Musa the Book after We had de-

stroyed the earlier generations” (Ibn Jarir). In fact, according to a version, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri reports this as the Prophet’s own words (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

And Shabbir gives us the *raison de`tre* for the escape of the non-believing rebellious nations from wholesale destruction: *Jihad* was instituted.

That is, *Jihad*, instituted after the revelation of Tawrah, and put into action immediately after Musa (cf. the extensive military campaigns of Joshua) helped remove the leaders of disbelief from the way of the common people, who gained their freedom to accept the true religion of their time. In consequence, they escaped the divine punishment which they would have faced because of their disbelief. Allah was not going to tolerate disbelief for long. This should also explain why Muslim scholars have termed, surprisingly for many, the Islamic *Jihad* as a mercy, and why our own Prophet has promised that wholesale destruction of this *Ummah* will not happen because a group from among Muslims will continue fighting in the way of Allah until the Hour (Au.).

76. How do we reconcile the Qur`anic qualification of earlier revelations as affording insight (*basa`ir*),

with the *hadith* of `Umar? `Umar was once reading the *Torah* in the Prophet’s presence. When he raised his head he found that the Prophet’s face had become red with anger. He said, “By Allah, if Musa was here today, he would have had to follow me.” Qurtubi answers after raising the question that firstly, *Torah* and Injil were at one time sources of insight, but, with interpolations and corruptions, no more. That of course, does not mean that they are totally devoid of any ability to offer insight now. But the Prophet had to respond so harshly to make sure that during his own time the people read nothing but the Qur`an. Once they had dwelt deep in to the Qur`an, they could, especially the discerning ones among them, profit from some parts of *Torah* and Injil.

In other words, writes Shafi`, the prohibition against *Torah* and Injil is not unconditional. Accordingly, we find some of the Companions quoting from the *Torah* and Injil during the time of the Companions, to which no one ever objected. Ka`b al-Ahbar was one of those who quoted from Jewish and Christian scriptures without earning any reproach from the Companions. That is because, by then the Qur`an and *Sunnah* and the message they impart had taken firm

[44] And you were not at the Western side when We decreed the commission to Musa,⁷⁹ nor were you of the witnesses.⁸⁰

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَى
مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

﴿٤٤﴾

root among the Muslims, and it was not feared that they would be misguided by the corrupted portions of the previous Books. Thus, there is no harm at all if they are read by people who are well-versed in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, can make the difference between corrupted and uncorrupted portions of Tawrah and Injil and remove chaff from the grain. Common people should stay away from them.

77. "The first thing that happens to the seeker of truth (when he finds the truth) is that his understanding improves. This is the insight (*basa'ir*) of this occurrence. Next, he accepts the precepts and injunctions wholeheartedly for practice. This is guidance (*hidayah*) of the verse. Finally, he harvests the fruits of guidance, which is mercy (*rahmah*)" - Thawni.

78. "After the destruction of the Pharaonic Tyranny and other similar Tyrannies before them, Allah began a new age of Revelation, the age of Moses and his Book. Humanity began as it were with a clean slate again. It was a full Revelation (or *Shari'at*) which may be looked at from three

points of view: (1) as Light or Insight for men, so that they should not grope in darkness; (2) as a Guide to show them the Way, so that they should not be misled into wrong Paths; and (3) as a Mercy from Allah (*swt*), so that by following the Way they may receive Allah's Forgiveness and Grace. In vi. 91, we have a reference to Light and Guidance in connection with the Revelation of Moses, and in vi. 154 we have a reference to Guidance and Mercy in the same connection. Here all three are combined, with the substitution of Basair for Nur. Basair is the plural of Basirat, and may also be translated as Proofs (Yusuf Ali).

79. That is, 'you were not, O Prophet, present there when Musa was being addressed, for you to be narrating it now (and in such details, as if you were standing right there observing every minute detail: *Shabbir*). But rather, it is by Our mercy that We narrate to you these stories for the admonition of those who believe in you.' Stories of the Prophets, Messengers, and nations of the past then,

as narrated in the Qur'an, are proofs of authenticity of the Prophet's Messengership.

Similarly Allah said, writes Ibn Kathir (3: 44),

{ ذَلِكْ مِنْ أَتْبَاءِ الْعَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ
إِذْ يُنْفِقُونَ أَفْلا مَهُمْ أَيْهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ
إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ } [آل عمران: ٤٤]

"These are a part of the tidings of the past that We reveal unto you (O Muhammad) for, you were not there with them when they were casting their quills to decide by lot which of them shall have charge of Maryam, nor were you there with them when they were disputing."

Or He said (11: 49)

{ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَتْبَاءِ الْعَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا
أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ } [هود: ٤٩]

"These are the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal unto you (O Muhammad). You did not know about it, nor your people before this. So be patient. Surely the (good) end is for the righteous."

Asad has a useful point: "The term al-amr ... is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew word *Torah* ('law' or

'precept'), the commonly-accepted title of the revelation granted to Moses."

80. Ashraf Ali sums up the Qur'anic argument neatly. He writes: 'Following Our practice, We made you (O Muhammad) a Prophet.' Now, of the various evidences of the Prophets authenticity, one is his narration of Musa's story in such detail. To narrate any story with such accuracy, one has to follow one of the four ways: (i) Make use of one's own intellect. But intellect is of little use in matters involving news of the past. (ii) Re-narrate a report heard earlier. But the channels to this were closed for the Prophet because of the early appearance of antagonism between him and those who were the sources of knowledge (i.e., the Jews and Christians). They would not divulge any information to him. (iii) The Prophet should have been personally there at the time the events took place, which of course was not the case. Thus we are left with the fourth option alone, namely (iv) Revelation from Allah.

[45] But rather We raised (several) generations, and long periods passed over them;⁸¹ nor were you a dweller among the people of Madyan, to be rehearsing upon them Our revelations,⁸² but rather, We were to send the Messengers.

وَلَكِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ
وَمَا كُنْتَ تَأْوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] Neither were you there at the side of (Mount) Tur when We called (to Musa); but rather a mercy from your Lord, so that you might warn a people to whom no warner came before you, haply that they will receive the admonition.

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ
رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِّن
نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] If it was not (for the fact) that had a calamity struck them because of what their hands forwarded, they (would have) said, 'O our Lord! Had you only sent us a Messenger, so that we could have followed Your revelations and been of the believers.'⁸³

وَلَوْلَا أَن تُصِيبَهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ
أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا
رَسُولًا فَتَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٤٧﴾

81. That is, you came to know, O Prophet, because We decided to raise you and send a fresh revelation, which had become due as a long time had elapsed since the previous revelation (Razi).

82. That is, Muqatil said, You were not there with the people of Madyan to be rehearsing their story to the Makkans now (Razi).

Shabbir looks at it in another way. He writes: 'The verse seems to be saying, 'You are now, O Prophet, rehearsing the affairs that took place in Madyan in such details as if you were a Messenger unto those people

at that earlier time, and were reciting these verses to them. This of course is not the case, but rather, Allah has now raised you, and reveals these stories to you, in such precise manner, that you might warn your contemporaries and save them from a destruction of the kind the previous nations met with.'

Indeed no one, not even the Jews knew anything about the people of Madyan at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an (Au.).

83. In other words, The Prophet was sent in order to remove any excuse they could have had, if no Messen-

[48] But when there came to them the truth from Us, they said, 'Why is he not given the like of what Musa was given?'⁸⁴ Had they not disbelieved in what Musa was given earlier?⁸⁵ They said,⁸⁶ 'A pair of sorceries,⁸⁷ mutually supporting each other.⁸⁸ And they said, 'As for us, we are disbelievers in each one of them.'⁸⁹

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا
أُوتِيَ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوْ لَمَّا يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا
أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا
وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

ger was raised, but punished for idol-worship. The same thing is differently worded elsewhere in the Qur'an (4: 165),

{لَيْلًا يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ}
[النساء: ١٦٥]

"... so that the people might have no argument against Allah after the Messengers."

It must be noted however, that Allah did not say, "If they had not said this, we would not have sent a Messenger" (Razi).

84. Asad places a note here which, as it terminates, correctly portrays the mind of the atheists which have worked similarly throughout the ages, including our own. He writes: "As the Qur'an frequently points out, the basic ethical truths enunciated in it are the same as those of earlier revelations. It is this very statement which induced the opponents of Muhammad (*saws*) – in his own time as well as in later times –

to question the authenticity of the Qur'an: 'If it had really been revealed by God,' they argue, 'would so many of its propositions, especially its social laws, differ so radically from the laws promulgated in that earlier divine writ, the *Torah*?' By advancing this argument (and quite apart from the question whether the text of the *Bible* as we know it today has or has not been corrupted in the course of time), the opponents of Muhammad's message deliberately overlook the fact, repeatedly stressed in the Qur'an, that the earlier systems of law were conditioned by the spiritual level of particular people and the exigencies of a particular chapter of human history, and therefore had to be superseded by new laws at a higher stage of human development... However, as is evident from the immediate sequence – and especially from the last sentence of this verse – the above specious argument is not meant to uphold the authen-

ticity of the *Bible* as against that of the Qur'ān, but rather, aims at discrediting both – and, through them, the basic religious principle against which the irreligious mind always revolts: namely, the idea of divine revelation and of man's absolute dependence on and responsibility to God, the Ultimate Cause of all that exists.”

85. It is reported that the Jews had coaxed the Makkans into asking the Prophet to produce similar miracles as Musa (*asws*) had done. Hence it is the Jews that Allah addressed when He said, “Had they not disbelieved in what Musa was given earlier?” (Ibn Jarir, *Kashshaf*, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali expounds: “When a Revelation is sent to them, in the Qur'ān, adapted to all their needs and the needs of the time they live in, they hark back to antiquity. The holy Prophet (*saws*) was in many respects like Moses, but the times in which he lived were different from the times of Moses, and his age did not suffer from the deceptions of sorcery, like that of Moses. The remedies which his age and future ages required (for his Message was universal) were different. His miracle of the Qur'ān was different and more permanent than the Rod and the Radiant-White Hand of Moses. But supposing that

the Quraish had been humoured in their insincere demands, would they have believed? Did they believe in Moses? They were only put up by the Jews to make objections which they themselves did not believe in.”

86. To whom is the allusion by the pronoun “they”? There are several answers. Imām Razi's opinion is that the allusion is to the Makkans, who refused to believe in any Prophet or any heavenly message. This leads to the acceptance of the following word “*sihran*” as alluding to Tawrah and the Qur'ān; which in turn is explained by the *ayah* that follows, “As for us, we are disbelievers in each one of them.”

87. A variant reading has been “*sahiran*” meaning, the two magicians. Following this reading, Ibn `Abbas said that the allusion is to the two Prophets Musa and Muhammad. But Mujahid thought the allusion is to Musa and Harun. (This is Ibn Kathir's preferred meaning, if the variant reading is accepted). But most have read the word as it now appears in the Qur'ān, viz., “*sihran*” meaning the two sorceries. Hence we have a second opinion of Ibn `Abbas which says that the allusion by two sorceries is to Tawrah and the Qur'ān. Dahhak and Qatadah said

the allusion is to Tawrah and Injeel. Ibn Jarir is with this last opinion.

If we accept the reading as “sihran,” writes Ibn Kathir, then the preferred meaning is that the allusion is to Tawrah and the Qur’ān. This is strengthened by another verse of the Qur’ān wherein Allah (*swt*) reports the Jinn as saying (46: 30),

{ إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنزِلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ } [الأحقاف: ٣٠]

“Indeed we have heard a Book sent down after Musa, confirming that which came before it.”

And, Warqah b. Nawfal had said, (when the Prophet read out to him the first ever revelation he had received), “This is the same Namus (message) that had been revealed to Musa.”

Those who are endowed with knowledge, continues Ibn Kathir, know instinctively that out of the Books that Allah sent down from the heaven unto the Prophets, there is no other as noble, eloquent, complete and perfect as the Book revealed to Muhammad, viz., the Qur’ān. What comes next in nobleness and greatness, is the Book that was given to Musa, viz., Tawrah.

88. “A contemptuous allusion,” comments Asad, “on the one hand,

to Old Testament predictions of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (*saws*) ... and, on the other, to the oft-repeated Qur’ānic statement that this divine writ had been revealed to ‘confirm the truth of earlier revelations.’”

89. Mujahid said that when they said, “we disbelieve in each one of them,” they meant that they disbelieved in the Qur’ān; (which was their primary concern). Although Ibn ‘Abbas and Dahhak thought the allusion was to Tawrah and Injeel (Ibn Jarir). Imām Razi is of the opinion that their allusion was to every Revelation that was ever sent, whether the Tawrah, the Qur’ān, or any other Book. This means the pronoun in “We” is for the Makkans. Hence Allah said, “Say, ‘Then bring a writing from Allah which is a better guide than the two.’”

Shah Abdul Qadir commented: The Makkan unbelievers asserted that had the Prophet (*saws*) brought such miracles as Musa did in his own time, they would have unhesitatingly accepted him. However, when they discussed the affair with the Jews, and found that the Tawrah also contained some of what the Qur’ān was rehearsing, namely, idol-worship is tantamount to disbelief, Resurrec-

[49] Say, 'Then bring a writing from Allah which is a better guide than the two,⁹⁰ so that I might follow it, if you are truthful.'⁹¹

[50] But if they do not respond to you, then know that they only follow their caprices. And who can be more misguided than he who followed his caprice, devoid of guidance from Allah? Verily, Allah does not guide a transgressing people.

قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

فَإِن لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بَعِيرٍ هُدًى مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

tion and Reckoning are true, carrion is unlawful, and that a final Messenger is to appear, etc., then they declared that both the Tawrah and the Qur'an are sorceries, and both Musa and Muhammad were sorcerers (and hence the words, "We disbelieve in each one of them") - Shabbir.

90. Ibn Zayd said that the allusion by "the two" is to the Tawrah and the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir). Asad adds: "The Gospel is not mentioned in this context because, as Jesus himself had stressed, his message was based on the Law of Moses, and was not meant to displace the latter."

91. We might perhaps attempt to paraphrase verses 47 to 49: "If it was not (for the fact) that had a calamity struck them (the Makkans) because of what their hands forwarded, they (would have) said, 'O our Lord! Had

you only sent us a Messenger so that we could have followed Your revelations and had been of the believers.' But when there came to them the truth from Us, they said, (prompted by the Jews), 'Why is he not given the like of what Musa was given?' (The answer to the Jews is), had they not disbelieved in what Musa was given earlier? (The Makkan attitude is no different). They said, '(Tawrah and Qur'an) are a pair of sorceries, mutually supporting each other (since, in a nut-shell, they seem to carry the same message). And they (the Makkans also said), 'As for us, we are disbelievers in each one of them.' Say (O Muhammad), 'Then bring a writing from Allah which is a better guide than the two, (Tawrah and the Qur'an) so that I might follow it, if you are true'" (Au.).

[51] We have indeed (exhaustively) conveyed⁹² the Word to them,⁹³ haply that they will receive admonition.

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] Those to whom We gave the Book before this, they are believers in it.⁹⁴

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

92. The parenthetical remark is prompted by the additional connotations that the textual “wassala” yields over the sense of merely conveying (something). Zamakhshari explains the associate meanings as, “the Qur’ānic revelations came in close succession, with promises and threats, narratives and examples, admonitions and advices, so that they might draw lessons. Additionally it could mean they came down uninterrupted, one linked to the other.”

Mujahid on the other hand explained “wassala” as meaning, “explained in detail,” Suddi said it means, “made it clear” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

93. Rifa`ah al-Qurazi (a former Jew) said that this and the next two verses were revealed in reference to ten men of whom he was one (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi). The report is also in Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir). Shawkani traces the report as found in Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abu ‘l Qasim Baghawi, Tabarani and Ibn Marduwayh, and

thinks that the chain of narrators is strong enough.

However, reports do not mention names of the other nine (Au.).

94. Mujahid, Qatadah and Dahhak held the opinion that this and the following few verses were revealed in reference to a group of followers of a previous Book. They believed in their Prophet, were persecuted, but observed patience and so were rewarded twice (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi thinks these verses are of general nature that describe any of the people of the Book who embraced Islam, although, in particular they could be applicable to some forty Christians who came from Najran along with Ja`far (at Madinah). Also see the notes that follow herewith.

Majid presents the testimony of a Jew. He writes: “Look at the grudging and very amusing admission of a modern Jew, - a rank reviler of the Prophet(*saws*): ‘Mohammed ... had received considerable encourage-

[53] When it is recited to them, they say, 'We have believed in it. It is indeed the truth from our Lord. We had indeed submitted (ourselves)⁹⁵ before this.'⁹⁶

وَإِذَا يُنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ
الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

ment from certain Jews in Mekka. Some accepted Islam; others, doubtless, had flattered him, or even hailed him as a prophet (*saws*), in the hope of bringing him over to Judaism.' (Torrey, Jewish Foundations of Islam, p. 128)."

95. Muslimin: That is, 'we were believers in One God, sincerely devoted to Him, and responsive to His call (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Sayyid Qutb echoes Thanwi and others when he offers a simple explanation: "They were those who had submitted themselves to Allah earlier."

In the following statement of Mawdudi if the word "Muslim" is taken in the sense of "those who had submitted," then, it reflects the opinion of the majority: "This statement explains that Islam is not merely the name of the Religion brought by Muhammad (peace be on him), nor does the term 'Muslim' denote only those who follow him. Rather, all the Prophets brought one and the same Religion and their followers have, at all times, been Muslims. However, if people refused to accept the Prophet

(*saws*) who was raised after the one they initially followed, then, they ceased to be Muslims. As for those who believed in the previous Prophets and who also accepted the new Prophet when he was raised, there was no interruption in their Faith; they were Muslims before and continued to be so after their believing in the new Prophet."

Alusi however, pointing out that while Kashshaf and Bahr tell us that Islam is not a specific attribute of this *Ummah*, but rather, that of anyone who adopted pure monotheism, and believed in Divine revelation, also informs us that Suyuti was reluctant to use the terms Islam and Muslims for the followers of the Prophets of the past. He in fact wrote a short treatise to demonstrate that only this *Ummah* has been named "Muslimeen." However, when he had finished writing the treatise, and lay down to rest, this verse occurred to him as contradicting his thesis, and he felt, in his words, "as if a mountain had fallen over me." He thought over it for sometime but could not work

out reconciliation. He supplicated to Allah to open his heart and went to sleep. By morning three explanations occurred to him that helped him reconcile his thesis with this verse. Alusi mentions the three, but expresses his own dissatisfaction with two of them, agreeing more or less with the third. He, Alusi, is inclined to believe, along with Baydawi, that the use of the word “muslimin” is in the sense of submission. Thus, we are brought back to the explanations offered by Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others, as stated above.

A contemporary commentator seizes on Alusi’s report to criticize Suyuti. To him Suyuti offers “meaningless interpretations,” and that, “None of these answers, however, show any trace of the ‘opening of the heart’ for which he prayed.” The critic then proceeds to present evidences from the Qur’an to demonstrate Suyuti’s error. We cannot of course comment on Suyuti’s thesis without having seen it ourselves, and wonder whether the critic had seen it either. He does not quote anything more than what Alusi did. But we might point out that the verses that he quotes as evidences are in the knowledge of every student of the Qur’an, not to speak of a mufassir of Suyuti’s stature. Suyuti could have had the fa-

mous verse in mind which says (22: 78):

﴿وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ﴾ [الحج: ٧٨]

“And strive in Allah, with a striving due to Him. He chose you. And He has not placed upon you in the religion any constriction: the faith of your father Ibrahim. He named you Muslims earlier,” where, according to Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid and Dahhak, the pronoun “huwa” is for Allah. That is, “Allah named you Muslims.” So, one might ask, if the previous nations were Muslims, what was the point in naming the *Ummah* of Muhammad as Muslims. (Interestingly, the critic does not include this *ayah* among his relevant and irrelevant evidences. Perhaps because it would not have served him his purpose without his curious footnote [placed at 22: 78] in which he says that the pronoun in “sammakum,” [i.e., the “you” of “He named you”], alludes to all the monotheists of the world, previous and subsequent. So, the address in “strive” is to this *Ummah*, the “you” of “He chose you” is for this *Ummah*, the address in “He has not placed upon you” is to this *Ummah*, but the allusion in “He named you” is to all the monotheist of the world, past and present!) In any case,

in view of this *ayah* we understand that, after all, Suyuti had a point, apart from whatever else he would have mentioned in his treatise. Additionally, we might point out that the people of the Book take strong exception to earlier Jews and Christians referred to as Muslims, perhaps not only because as a mass they never “surrendered” themselves to One God but also because the word does not appear anywhere in their scriptures (Au.).

96. Before this, i.e., before the revelation of the Qur’ān (Kashshaf and others).

Sa’id b. Jubayr said that these verses were revealed in response to a delegation from Abyssinia. Some seventy churchmen had been sent to Madinah by Najashi. (They were referred to, according to Muqatil, as the Companions of the Ark, and had come down along with Ja’far: Razi). The Prophet recited *Surah Ya Sin* before them. They wept and declared their faith in Islam. They were rewarded twice for believing in two books, the Gospels and the Qur’ān. Zuhri was also of the opinion that these verses were revealed in connection with this Abyssinian delegation.

According to another report in Ibn Is-haq, the reference is to another

delegation. This one comprised of twenty or so men. They met the Prophet in the *Haram* (at Makkah: Au.) and sat down before him while the Quraysh sat in their own circles. When they had explained to the Prophet the purpose of their visit, he recited some verses of the Qur’ān and invited them to Islam. When they heard the Qur’ān, their eyes were filled with tears. They embraced Islam, for they had found in him the signs that they had read in their Scriptures. When they rose up to go, Abu Jahl and a few of the Qurayshis confronted them and said, “May Allah fail the caravan (of yours). Your compatriots in your religion sent you to bring information about this man. But you had not even settled down before him that you abandoned your religion.” Of the things he said was, “We do not know of a delegation more stupid than yours,” or words of that sort. They replied, “Peace on you. We do not wish to enter into a bickering contest with you. Unto us, what we stand on, and unto you what you stand on. We have not been lax in seeking good for ourselves” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

And Abu Musa al-Ash`ari reports that the Prophet said,

[54] They will be given their reward twice for that they patiently endured. They avert evil with good,⁹⁷ and, of what We have provided them, they expend.⁹⁸

أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا
وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ
يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

ثَلَاثَةٌ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ
آمَنَ بِرَبِّهِ وَأَدْرَكَ النَّبِيَّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَأَمَنَ
بِهِ وَاتَّبَعَهُ وَصَدَّقَهُ فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ وَعَبْدٌ مَمْلُوكٌ أَدَّى حَقَّ
اللَّهِ وَحَقَّ مَوْلِيهِ فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ وَرَجُلٌ كَانَتْ لَهُ أَمَةٌ
فَعَدَّاهَا فَأَحْسَنَ غِذَاءَهَا ثُمَّ أَدَّبَهَا فَأَحْسَنَ تَأْدِيبَهَا ثُمَّ
أَعْتَقَهَا وَتَزَوَّجَهَا فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ

“There are three persons who will be rewarded twice: A man of the People of the Book who believed in his own Messenger and then happen to be in the time of the Prophet, peace on him, believed in him, testified him and followed him: he shall have two fold reward. A slave who did his duty to his master and to Allah – he shall have two fold reward; and a man who had a slave-girl. He trained and educated her well, freed her, and then married her – he shall have two fold reward.”

The *hadith* is in the *Sahihayn* (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

The above is from Muslim (Au.).

And, after narrating this *hadith* to a Khurasani student, Sha`bi remarked,

“Take this *hadith* from me for no cost. Earlier, a man traveled to Madinah to hear a *hadith* of this kind” (Qurtubi).

97. Accordingly, the Prophet has said,

أَتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ تَمَحَّهَا وَخَالِقِ النَّاسِ بِخُلُقِي حَسَنٍ

“Follow up an evil deed with a good one, it will erase it, and deal with the people in a goodly manner” (Qurtubi).

There is a shorter *hadith* of this meaning, in Ahmad, which Suyuti declared trustworthy in his *Jami`* (Au.).

98. One can see how Allah first mentioned belief as their merit, then deeds involving the limbs of the body, and finally, deeds involving wealth, i.e., charitable expending (Razi).

Thanwi adds: In warding off evil with the good, is the cure for love of the self, while in expending is the cure for love of wealth.

[55] When they hear vain talk, they turn away therefrom and say, 'To us our deeds, and to you your deeds. Peace on you.⁹⁹ We seek not the ignorant.'

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] Verily, you cannot guide whom you like; but rather, Allah guides whom He will;¹⁰⁰ and He knows best the rightly guided.¹⁰¹

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

99. Hasan has said about the “salamun alaykum” of such occasion as “kalimatu ‘l hilm” meaning, a word of gentle indulgence (Zamakhshari). What the words mean is, ‘You may rest in peace from us. We do not wish to wrangle with you’ (Qurtubi).

Shah Abdul Qadir wrote at this point that if one feels talking to an ignorant man will not make him understand, then it is better to avoid talking to him altogether (Shabbir).

100. “The Qur’ānic statement, ‘thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest,’ has undoubtedly a timeless import as well: it stresses the inadequacy of all human endeavours to ‘convert’ any other person, however loving and loved, to one’s own beliefs, or to prevent him from falling into what one regards as error, unless that person wills to be so guided” (Asad).

Abu Hurayrah is severally reported to have said that this verse was revealed in reference to the Prophet’s uncle Abu Talib. When his death approached him, the Prophet suggested to him, “Say: there is no deity save Allah, that I might bear witness on the Day of Standing.” He replied, “If not for the Quraysh taunting me that I said it overtaken by death-pangs, I would have said it;” and Allah revealed this verse. According to other reports, when the Prophet offered him the testimony of la ilaha, Abu Jahl and ‘Abdullah b. Umayyah, who had arrived before him, began to say, “Abu Talib! Will you renounce the religion of ‘Abd al-Muttalib (his father)?” The Prophet kept pressing on him with the testimony until Abu Talib said, “Upon the religion of ‘Abd al-Muttalib.” He refused to say the testimony. The Prophet remarked, “By Allah, I shall remain seeking forgiveness for you

until I am forbidden. So Allah revealed, "It was not (proper) for the Prophet and the faithful to seek pardon for the polytheists, even if they were near of kin, after it became clear to them that they are companions of the Fire."

Sa'id ibn Musayyib, Mujahid and others have the same report to offer (Ibn Jarir). The report is in the *Sa-hihayn* which adds that every time the Prophet offered the testimony to Abu Talib, the two repeated their taunt (According to some reports Abu Talib said, "If it was not for a remark that would be left on you and on the progeny of your father, I would have said the words to the cool of your eyes" - Zamakhshari).

In this context, Ibn Abi Hatim has another report. It reports Sa'id b. Abi Rashid as saying,

عن سعيد بن أبي راشد قال: كان رسول قيصر جاء إليّ قال: كتب معي قيصر إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كتابًا، فأتيته فدفعت الكتاب، فوضعه في حجره، ثم قال: "بمَنْ الرجل؟" قلت: من تنوخ. قال: "هل لك في دين أبيك إبراهيم الخنيفية؟" قلت: إني رسول قوم، وعلى دينهم حتى أرجع إليهم. فضحك رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ونظر إلى أصحابه وقال: إِنَّكَ لا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

"I was sent as a messenger by the Roman emperor. I traveled to the

Prophet and presented the letter. He placed it in his house and then asked, 'Where are you from?' I answered 'I am of the Tannukh.' He asked, 'Are you interested in the pure religion of your forefather Ibrahim?' I said, 'I am the messenger of a people, and on their religion until I return.' The Prophet smiled broadly, looked at his Companions and said, 'Verily, you cannot guide whom you like, but rather, Allah guides whom He will' (Ibn Kathir).

The above report is in Ahmad and other works also, some of which versions are quite interesting, but too long for reproduction in this short work (Au.).

We also know of the affair of Abu Talib. The Prophet was keen that he should embrace Islam before death, but he would not. At death bed, with Abu Jahl on guard against Abu Talib's tongue, the Prophet pleaded:

قُلْ لا إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ أَشْهَدُ لَكَ بِمَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، قال: لولا أن تعيرني قريش لأقررت عينك، فأنزل الله: إِنَّكَ لا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ

"Say la ilaha lillallah, so that I can bear testimony to your testimony on the day of Judgment." He replied, "If not for Quraysh taunting me I would have said it

[57] They said, 'If we were to follow the guidance with you, we will be snatched away from our land.'¹⁰² Have We not established for them a secure Sanctuary, to which are brought fruits of every manner, as provision from Ourselves?¹⁰³ But most of them realize not.¹⁰⁴

وَقَالُوا إِن تَتَّبِعِ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَكَ نَتَّخِطْفُ
مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْلَمَ نُمْكِنَ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا يُجِي
إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

to cool your eyes,” and Allah revealed, “You cannot guide whom you love ..” (Ibn Jarir).

It is also reported by `Amir that when Abu Talib died, some people commented that his kinship with the Prophet would not benefit him in anyway. The Prophet remarked,

بلى، وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهُ السَّاعَةَ لَفِي ضَخْصَاحٍ
مِنَ النَّارِ عَلَيْهِ تَعْلَانِ مِنْ نَارٍ تَغْلِي مِنْهُمَا أُمُّ رَأْسِهِ،
وَمَا مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ مِنْ إِنْسَانٍ هُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَذَابًا مِنْهُ

“No, by Allah. There will be no one on the Day of Judgment receiving a lighter punishment than Abu Talib. He will (merely) wear two sandals of Fire, (yet) that will boil his brain” (Ibn Jarir).

This verse does not contradict another of the Qur`ān (23: 73) which says,

{وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ} {المؤمنون:

[٧٣

“And surely, you guide them (O Prophet) to the straight path.” For, the latter is speaking of the way that the Prophet could show, while the

former is speaking of the tawfiq (Divine impulse) – Razi.

In all circumstance, the reports lead us to believe that the Prophet’s eagerness had its basis in his love for his uncle. One should therefore tread on the topic carefully, to avoid causing any pain to him. Caution should be the watchword (Alusi).

101. The words could also be understood as meaning, He knows well who will receive guidance and who will not (Razi).

102. That is because in pre-Islamic times the territories around the Makkans were unsafe. People who could not protect themselves through an alliance could be looted, kidnapped, enslaved, or even murdered, except for the Makkans, who were treated with respect for the virtue of they being the custodians of the Ka`ba. It was Harth b. `Amir b. Nawfal who said, “We know that what you have brought is true. But, we are prevented by the thought that

[58] *And, how many of the towns We destroyed that exulted in their manner of life? Yonder there are their dwellings that were not dwelt in after them, except briefly;¹⁰⁵ it is We who were the inheritors.*

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا
فَبَلَكَ مَسَاكِينُهُمْ لَمْ تَسْكَنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] *And, your Lord was not a destroyer of the towns until He had sent to its central (town) a Messenger reciting upon them Our revelations.¹⁰⁶ And We were not to be the destroyers unless its inhabitants were evildoers.¹⁰⁷*

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ
فِي أُمَّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَمَا
كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَى إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ
﴿٥٩﴾

we will be snatched off the land – meaning, war will be declared on us (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi).

103. The purport of the *ayah* is that when the unbelievers said that they were afraid of losing worldly benefits if they declared their belief in the new message, Allah answered, in effect, that insistence upon rejection of the truth in fact endangers worldly blessings (Razi).

104. That is, they do not know that just as the security provided to them by Allah was by virtue of Him having declared the city a Sanctuary, the fruits of all manner that are brought to it are also by Allah’s power and command.

105. The textual words “illa qalila” afford two meanings. One, those

dwellings were not inhabited but by a few of the remnants, and two, they were not dwelt in at all after their inhabitants were destroyed, save for an occasional passer-by who spent a night or so. This is the meaning that Ibn `Abbas preferred as noted by several commentators.

106. Allah sent Messengers to the main towns because, one, (for cultural reason) the message is understood better in the main towns and, two because propagation of the call is easier from there than from minor towns (Thanwi).

107. That is, Allah would not destroy a town even after it had received His Messenger until confirmed rejection of its inhabitants proved true through several respites.

[60] And, whatever of the things you are given, is but this world's transitory (means of) enjoyment and its glitter. But that which is with Allah, is better and longer lasting. Will you not then reason?¹⁰⁸

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا وَمَا
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى أَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] Is he then, whom We have promised a good promise, and so he will meet it, like he whom We gave this world's transitory (means of) enjoyment but who will be of those arraigned on the Day of Standing?¹⁰⁹

أَفَمَن وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ
كَمَن مَّتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] And that day He will call them, 'Where are My partners that you were alleging?'

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ
كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] Those for whom the word (of punishment) will prove true will say, 'O our Lord! These are the ones whom we led astray. We led them astray, even as we (ourselves) went astray.¹¹⁰ We disassociate ourselves (from them) to You. It is not us they were worshipping.'

قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ
الَّذِينَ آغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا
إِلَيْكَ مَا كَانُوا إِبَانًا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

108. Ibn `Abbas is reported to have said, "Allah created the world and made its people of three kinds: believer, hypocrite and unbeliever. The believer prepares for the Hereafter, the hypocrite goes for the glitter, and the unbeliever for fleeing enjoyments."

109. That is, he will be brought forth and made to appear in Allah's Court of Justice as a criminal on the Day of Judgment (Au.).

110. What they would try to say is that 'we are not truly responsible for

misguiding them. We were ourselves misguided and they, those we are supposed to have misguided, went astray by their own volition. For, all that we did by way of leading them astray is to make suggestions. Yet, if we had invited them to disbelief, they were invited by Allah to belief through a voice that spoke from within, the voice of reason and conscience, to which was added the voice of the Messengers sent to them.' This is what *Shaytan* will say on the Day of Judgment (14: 22):

[64] And it will be said, 'Call upon your partners.' So they will call upon them, but they will not respond to them. And they will see the chastisement – would that they had received the guidance.¹¹¹

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُم فَلَمْ
يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] And that day He will call them and say, 'What did you answer the Messengers?'¹¹²

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ
الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] But that day their arguments will be lost to them, and they will not ask each other.¹¹³

فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَأْذِنُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

﴿ وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَّ الْحَقُّ وَوَعَدْتُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُمُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَشْمُ بِمُصْرِخِي وَإِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴾ [إبراهيم: ٢٢]

"And Satan will say when the matter is concluded, 'Allah promised you a true promise, and I too promised. But I failed in my promise. And I had no power over you except that I invited you and you responded to me. Therefore, do not blame me, blame your own selves. I cannot come to your aid now nor can you come to my aid. I disown your earlier (act of) associating me (with Allah).' Surely, a painful chastisement (awaits) the wrongdoers" (Zamakhshari, Razi).

111. Zajjaj has said that the consequence of "would that" has not been stated. The implication is, "had we believed, we would have escaped the punishment today" (Qurtubi).

112. After being questioned about tawhid, they will next be questioned about risalah to be asked in effect, 'If you could not use your own reason to arrive at tawhid, you could have at least listened to the voice of the Messengers. How did you answer them?' (Shabbir)

113. That is, they will not ask each other for help, as people normally do when they face difficulties (Zamakhshari, Razi). Qurtubi thinks they will not seek each other's advice over how they should answer to construct a good case.

[67] Then, as for he who had repented, believed, and did righteous deeds, then haply¹¹⁴ he will be of the successful.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسَى
أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] And your Lord creates what He will, and chooses.¹¹⁵ Not for them was the choice. Glory to Allah, high above that they associate (with Him).

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ
الْخِيَرَةُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ
﴿٦٨﴾

[69] And your Lord knows what their breasts conceal and what they publish.

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكْرَهُ صُدُّوهُمْ وَمَا
يُغْلِبُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

114. When `asa (haply) is used by Allah (as a possibility from Him), it actually stands for certainty (Ibn Jarir).

my *Ummah*, he chose four centuries: the first, the second, the third and the fourth” (Qurtubi).

115. Bazaar has a trustworthy report which says,

Haythamiyy declared that the above report could be trusted except that some differences in opinion have occurred over a few of the narrators (Au.).

إن الله اختار أصحابي على العالمين سوى النبيين والمرسلين، واختار لي من أصحابي أربعة - يعني أبا بكر وعمر وعثمان وعلياً رحمهم الله - ”فجعلهم أصحابي“. وقال: ”في أصحابي: كلهم خير، واختار أمتي على الأمم، واختار من أمتي أربعة قرون: القرن الأول والثاني والثالث والرابع“

Qurtubi follows up with some details about Salah al-Istikharah. It is not right for a believer that he should decide on any (important) affair without asking His Lord to help him choose the right course. Bukhari has a report that the Prophet (*saws*) used to teach his Companions to seek Allah’s guidance (through Salah al-Istikharah) in every affair. He paid as much attention to it, as he would when teaching them a chapter of the Qur’an. One must offer two rak’ah of Prayers, apart from other supererogatory Prayers and recite after

“Allah chose my Companions over the peoples of the world, except the Messengers and Prophets. Then of my Companions He chose for me four : Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman and `Ali. He made them my Companions. To be sure, there is some good in every one of my Companions. And He chose my *Ummah* over the rest of the nations, and of

Al-Fatīha, Surah number 109 in the first rak`ah, and number 112 in the second rak`ah. Some scholars have said, adds Qurtubi, that in the first rak`ah one might recite the verse under discussion, and in the second *raka`ah* (33: 36) which says,

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا﴾ [الأحزاب: ٣٦]

“It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should have any choice in their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, has surely strayed into clear error.” After finishing the Prayer he should supplicate to Allah in the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَحِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَاسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ
وَ أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ
وَ تَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ. اللَّهُمَّ إِن
كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَ مَعَاشِي
وَ عَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي – أَوْ قَالَ عَاجِلِ أَمْرِي وَ آجِلِهِ –
فَاقْدِرْهُ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي ثُمَّ بَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ. وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ
أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَ مَعَاشِي وَ عَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي
– أَوْ قَالَ فِي عَاجِلِ أَمْرِي وَ آجِلِهِ – فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَ
اصْرِفْ عَنِّي عَنَّهُ وَ اقْدِرْ لِي الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ ارْضِنِي بِهِ

“O Allah! I seek Your help, by Your knowledge, and invoke Your Might through Your Power; ask of Your great bounty; for You have power and I have no power; You know and I do not

know; and You are the Knower of the Unseen. O Allah. If You know that there is good for me in this affair, in my religion and in my life, and my affairs of the hereafter” – or he said, “the immediate of my affairs or the ultimate” – then, give me power for it and make it easy for me. Then, bless me in it. But if You know that this affair bodes evil for me, in my religion or life and in my affairs of the hereafter,” – or he said, “the immediate of the affairs and the ultimate” – then turn it away from me, and turn me away from it, and give me power over good, wherever it might be, and then render it acceptable to me.” After these words the man might name his need.

And `A'isha reports from Abu Bakr who reports from the Prophet that when the Prophet wished to do something he would say, “O Allah! Make a choice for me.” It is also reported that he told Anas, “O Anas, when you wish to do something, seek the right course from your Lord seven times, then see what establishes itself in your heart, for the good is in it.”

The scholars have said that before seeking Allah’s help, one should first empty his heart of any choice with-

[70] And He is Allah, there is no deity save He. Unto Him is the praise,¹¹⁶ at the first and at the last. His is the command,¹¹⁷ and to Him you will be returned.

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] Say, 'Have you considered, were Allah to make the night perpetual upon you till the Day of Standing, what god is there besides Allah who could bring you light?¹¹⁸ Do you not then hearken?'

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] Say, 'Have you considered, were Allah to make the day perpetual upon you till the Day of Standing, what god is there beside Allah who could bring you a night wherein you could repose?¹¹⁹ Do you not see (the truth)?'

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَصْبِرُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

out being inclined to any particular side. Then seek Allah's help in that state of neutrality and do according to the heart's inclination, for the good is in it.

Quote from Qurtubi ends here.

116. The praise of this mention is the "praise of delight" (hamd al-ladhdhah) and not the obligatory praise (hamd al-kulfah). It is about this class that the Prophet said, "They (the inhabitants of Paradise) will be inspired with glorifications and exaltations (of Allah)" – Zamakhshari.

117. Imām Razi traces the sources of morality to Allah's will and command: "If not for His command," he writes, "there would have been

no command on the earth. A child would not have obeyed his parents, a wife would not have obeyed her husband, neither subjects their rulers, nor a people their Messenger. It is Allah's command that established the command of these people."

118. An important reality is concealed behind the simple statement, "who could bring you light" because all life on earth is dependent on photosynthesis of the plants which in turn depends entirely on the sun's energy (Au.).

119. We get light on all parts of the earth because it turns around on its axis completing one turn in about 24 hours, while orbiting the sun in about 365 days. Had the turn on

[73] *It is out of His mercy (that) He made for you the night and the day - so that you might rest therein and seek from His bounty¹²⁰ - and that haply you will give thanks.*

وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ
لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] *And the day He will call unto them and say, 'Where are My associates (in Divinity) that you were alleging?'*

وَيَوْمَ يَنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ
كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] *And We shall draw out a witness from every nation¹²¹ and say, 'Produce your evidence.'¹²² Then shall they know that the truth belongs to Allah, and lost to them will be those that they were forging.*

وَتَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَجَاءُوا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ
عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

its own axis been so arranged that when the earth completed, say one quarter of its orbit around the sun, then, during the same period, it also turned one fourth around its own axis, then the earth would be showing the same face to the sun. On and on, turning on its own axis, and orbiting the sun during the same time, the earth would always show its one face to the sun, the other half remaining in perpetual darkness. As if to give us an example at close hand, Allah established this system between the earth and the moon. The moon turns around its axis in about 29 days, while it also completes an orbit around the earth in exactly the same time, and hence the inhabitants of the earth can never see the other face of the moon from the earth. This ar-

rangement, according to the scientists, is by accident. But the problem is, the universe is filled with such accidental occurrences! (Au.)

120. That is, writes Qurtubi, Allah made night and day, in both of which men can rest, whereas, He made the day specifically so that they may seek His provision.

Alternatively, the verse could be paraphrased as: "It is out of His mercy (that) He made for you night - so that you might rest therein – and the day – so that you may seek His bounty during it (Au.).

121. That is, Allah will draw out of every nation its Prophet or Messenger, who will testify that he had conveyed the message to them (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

[76] Verily, Qarun was of the people of Musa,¹²³ but he acted insolently towards them.¹²⁴ And such were the treasures We had given him¹²⁵ that their very keys would burden a body of strong men.¹²⁶ Whereupon his people said to him, 'Exult not; surely, Allah does not approve of the exultant.

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

122. That is, present your evidences for worshipping false gods despite the Messengers delivering their message to you (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

123. According to Ibrahim, Qatadah and others he was Musa's cousin (Ibn Jarir). The report is in Ibn Abi Shaybah's Musannaf, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Hakim (who declared it trustworthy), and Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani).

124. When bagha is used along with the suffix `alayhi, it adds the connotation of envy to the primary meaning of "rising against," "acting insolently and arrogantly," etc. Muslim sources say that Qarun was envious of Musa and Harun that they held all the ecclesiastical offices between themselves with none invested in him (Qurtubi and others). Further, Musa was demanding from Qarun payment of poor-due, which, at the rate of 0.1%. But Qarun did not feel it was a just demand and so he rebelled. The significance

of the Qur'anic words is fully realized through Jewish literature – if trustworthy. Majid comments and quotes: "Bagha `ala akhihi" is also, 'He envied his brother; he wished that a blessing, or cause of happiness, or an excellence might become transferred from his brother to himself' (LL). The Bible gives rather a meagre account of his 'rising' against Moses and Aron (on them be peace!). 'And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?' (Nu. 16: 2,3).

"Josephus supplies some details: 'Corah, an Hebrew of principal ac-

count, both by his family and by his wealth ... saw that Moses was in an exceeding great dignity, and was uneasy at it, and envied him on that account, (he was of the same tribe with Moses and kin to him) being particularly grieved, because he thought he better deserved that honourable post on account of his great riches, and as not inferior to him in his birth. So he raised a clamour against him among the Levites, who were of the same tribe, and especially among his kindred that ... if God had determined to bestow that honour on one of the tribes of Levi, I am more worthy of it than he is, I myself being equal to Moses by my family, and superior to him in riches, and in my age.' ("Ant," Iv., 2: 2)."

125. Qurtubi points out that according to Farra', the explanation by some that Qarun's wealth was due to his knowledge of "Alchemy" is incorrect. Alchemy is pseudo-science with no basis in truth.

Ibn Kathir comments: Alchemy is no science for the simple reason that no one can alter the essence of things, such as ordinary metals to gold. A trustworthy narrative tells us that the Prophet said, "Allah says,

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذَهَبَ يَخْلُقُ خَلْقًا كَخَلْقِي ، فَلِيَخْلُقُوا
ذرة ، أو ليخلقوا حبة ، أو ليخلقوا شعيرة

"Who can be more wrong than he who claimed that he could create like I create. Let them then create an atom, let them create a barley seed."

This *hadith* is in reference to the prohibition against artwork involving humans. Now, if mere image-making invokes such response, then what about when somebody claims to alter the very nature of things? No one can ever transfer say, one metal into another, unless it is by karamah (thaumaturgy) of the Friends of Allah, where, it is Allah's own power which is working and not that of the person involved. For example, we have the story of Haywah b. Shurayh the Egyptian, whom someone asked for help. He had nothing to offer, although he could see the pressing need of the man before him. So he took a few pebbles, shook them in his hand and then advanced them to the man. And Lo! They were pieces of gold. There are several reports of this kind that cannot be presented for reasons of length.

Ibn Kathir's quote ends here.

126. That Qarun was fabulously rich is a Qur'anic testimony. According to Jewish sources (such as the Jewish Encyclopaedia), the keys to his treasures had to be carried on the back of

three hundred mules. (Yusuf Ali traces a similar report from Jewish compilation called Midrashim). Muslim commentators seem to have been influenced by them. They have reported that the keys were carried not by three hundred, but by sixty mules. But, allowance made for Jewish hyperbole, we are still faced with the Qur'anic statement, "And such were the treasures We had given him that their very keys would burden a body of strong men." There are three answers: one, the word "mafatih" has to be understood in the sense of "treasures." This was the opinion of Abu Saleh. Two, Dahhak thought that the allusion by "mafatih" is to "treasure-chests," that were carried on forty mules. Three, the keys were made of leather which ended with wooden rods (that made them heavy). These three opinions are in Ibn Jarir. A fourth possibility is that since during that period technology was quite crude and cumbersome, the keys could have been made of massive sized wood, for special kinds of locks that the technology of that time could afford. Dozens of such keys would have required a band of men to take charge of material in the stockyards. (There is no consensus over the number that 'usbah stands for. Opinions vary from 3-10 men to 40 men. Further, uli-

quwwah could as well be referring to men experienced in accounts capable of handling large stocks of a variety of goods ranging from cloth, to arms, to spices). Finally, the Qur'an does not implicitly say that the keys were too heavy. A possible implication is that there were so many keys, (quite heavy in their own right), that the carrying, preserving and guarding of which was a heavy task upon a band of men (Au.).

One question may arise: The Israelites did not enter into Palestine for forty years after leaving Egypt. So, where were Qarun's treasures? Yusuf Ali conjectures that perhaps he left his treasures in Egypt itself having brought with him only the keys. But that does not seem to be very likely, unless Qarun also went back to Egypt along with Musa after Fir'awn was drowned, as reported by Josephus (although Josephus does not name him). Alternatively, the episode might have taken place during the sojourn in Sinai, during which sojourn Qarun might have carried his treasure-chests on dozens of mules. That said, perhaps the explanation of Abu Saleh above is the most satisfactory, especially in view of the fact that the Qur'an has not made hyperbolic statements anywhere (Au.).

[77] But seek through what Allah has given you the Final Abode; and forget not your share of the world.¹²⁷ And do good (to others) as Allah has done you good, and seek not corruption in the land. Surely, Allah does not approve of the corrupters.'

[78] He boasted, 'I was only given it by virtue of a knowledge that I have.'¹²⁸ What! Did he not know that Allah destroyed before him of the generations, him who was stronger than he in might, and greater in wealth?¹²⁹ And the criminals will not be questioned about their sins.¹³⁰

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِن قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ جَمْعًا وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَن ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

127. That is, do not give up working to please Allah in this world, through good deeds – Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others (Ibn Jarir).

After presenting the above opinions, Qurtubi adds that according to some the allusion is to his coffin. They meant to say, "Do not forget that in truth, your share of this world is the coffin-shroud in which you will be packed and dispatched into the Hereafter." He quotes two poetical examples in support of this interpretation.

Another possible meaning is, do not forget to take your rightful share of this-worldly things such as victuals, clothes, articles of adornment, etc. For, your Lord has a right on you,

your body has a right on you, your wife and children have their rights on you, your guest has a right on you, and so, give everyone his due (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

128. Several of the earliest commentators have said that the allusion by "knowledge" is to the knowledge of the *Torah* that Qarun had mastered.

Ibn Zayd has said that Qarun thought that 'if Allah was not well-pleased with me, if He was not unaware of my superiority, and the fact that I deserved it all, He would not have bestowed this wealth on me' (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The apparent meaning can be stated in Majid's words: "i.e., what is this foolish talk about the grace and

[79] Then he strutted forth before his people in his pomp.¹³¹ Said those who aimed for the life of the world, 'O would that we had the like of what Qarun has been given. Truly, he is (a man) of great fortune.'

فَحَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

[80] But said those who were given knowledge, 'Woe unto you, Allah's reward is better for him who believes and works righteous deeds. But none is granted it except the patient (and persevering).'

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُفْلِحُهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] So We sank him and his dwelling into the earth.¹³² He had no party to help him against Allah, nor was he of those who could defend themselves.

فَحَسَبْنَا بِهِ وَيْدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

bounty of God? I have earned all this wealth on account of my own skill in the art of making money.”

129. That is, if wealth and material power were signs of Allah's approval, why were nations and individuals of earlier times who were wealthier and stronger than him destroyed?

130. There are two possible meanings: one, as Qatadah has said, the unbelievers will be pushed into Hell-fire without being questioned about their actions in the world. And two, the latter day unbelievers will not be questioned about the sins committed by earlier criminals (Ibn Jarir).

Zamakhshari thinks however that the relationship is as follows: When Allah mentioned that there were

many who were destroyed for their sins, He also stated that He did not need to question the unbelievers for their crimes. He had full knowledge of their doings.

131. That is, he appeared along with his huge retinue, exulting, and displaying his wealth and position (Ibn Jarir).

“That Korah was joined by a large number of malcontents is borne out by the Jewish traditions: ‘Korah incited all the people against Moses, arguing that it was quite impossible to endure the laws instituted by the latter.’ (JE. VII p. 557).”

132. In the absence of a trustworthy report, it is difficult to say what immediate cause led to the earth swal-

lowing Qarun. A popular report as in Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani and others can be summarised in the following manner: When Qarun was asked by Musa to expend a meager amount of wealth in charity, it sounded like too much to him. So he thought he would rather cast aspersion on Musa and humiliate him before the elders of the Children of Israel rather than pay up. He prepared a harlot at good cost to allege that Musa had sex with her. As Musa visited Qarun to admonish him and his retinue, entourage, sycophants and supporters, he was confronted by Qarun who asked him whether what he preached about severing of the hand for theft, stoning to death for adultery and all that was equally applicable to him? (That is, to Musa). Musa said yes. At that point he accused him of adultery and the harlot was produced for testimony. But before the woman could speak out, Musa asked her to swear by all that was holy unto the Israelites before she made a statement. That drove fear into the woman and she decided to tell the truth viz., that Qarun had paid her to make the accusation against Musa. Musa went into prostration weeping, and supplicated that he be given command over the earth for a while. The sup-

plication granted, he commanded the earth to swallow Qarun and his mansion, which it did. Qarun pleaded for mercy as he sank, but Musa paid no attention to him. After the sinking, Allah admonished Musa to the effect that had Qarun pleaded to Him for mercy, He would have responded to him. And, it is thought that his wealth was also sunk into the earth in order to remove any doubt that Musa wished to possess it.

Majid presents the Jewish traditions of this context: "The ground clave asunder that was under them. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained Korah, and all their goods. They, and all appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation.' (Nu. 16: 31-33). See also "Ant." IV, 4: 3,4). 'At the time of Kora's engulfment, the earth became like a funnel, and everything that belonged to him, even linen that was the launderer's and needle that had been borrowed by personal living at a distance from Korah, rolled till it fell into the chasm. According to the Rabbis, Korah himself underwent the double punishment of being burned and buried alive' (JE. VII. p. 557)."

The description above of the earth becoming a funnel, if a reliable report, lends credence to the idea that he sank in the Sinai Desert. In our times, several caving in of the earth in the earth, have been reported, some, right in the middle of a town, and so large as to swallow houses and cars (Au.).

There is no *hadith* that mentions Qarun's end. But Bukhari has a report which says,

بَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ يَمْشِي فِي خَلَّةٍ تُعَجِبُهُ نَفْسُهُ مُرَجَلٌ جُمَّهُ إِذْ
حَسَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ فَهُوَ يَتَجَلَّجَلُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

“While a man was dragging his lower garment, he was swallowed by the earth and he will remain sinking in the earth until the Day of Standing.” Another report in Ahmad is slightly differently worded. It says,

بَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ فِي مَنَ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ خَرَجَ فِي بُرْدَيْنِ أَحْضَرَيْنِ
يُحْتَالُ فِيهِمَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ الْأَرْضَ فَأَخَذَتْهُ وَإِنَّهُ لَيَتَجَلَّجَلُ
فِيهَا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

“While a man from of those before you came out in two green garments, strutting proudly and arrogantly, Allah ordered the earth to swallow him up. He will remain sinking into it until the Day of Judgment.” (Both these reports do not identify Qarun as the person).

And Hafiz ibn al-Mundhir has recorded in his 'Aja'ib wa Ghara'ib the following from Nawfal b. Musahiq: “Once I encountered a young man in one of the mosques in Najran. I began to stare at him for his health, beauty and extremely well-balanced figure. He asked, ‘Why do you stare at me?’ I replied, ‘In wonder at your beauty and perfection.’ He said arrogantly, ‘Ah, even Allah wonders at me.’ Immediately he began to shrink in size until he became as small as about half a foot. One of his relatives picked him up, put him in his pocket and left” (Ibn Kathir).

[82] And those who had longed for his position the previous day began to say by the morning,¹³³ 'Ah! It is Allah indeed who extends provision to whom He will of His slaves and constricts it.¹³⁴ Had not Allah been gracious to us, He would have sunk us (also). Ah!¹³⁵ Surely the unbelievers never prosper.'

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيَكَانَنَّ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيَكَانَنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] That home of the Hereafter We appoint it for those who seek not self-exaltation in the land, nor corruption.¹³⁶ And the (good) end is for the godfearing.¹³⁷

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] Whosoever brings a good (deed), then, for him is better than it. While he who brought an evil, then those who worked evil will not be recompensed but for what they were doing.

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

133. By the morning because, writes Alusi, the sinking took place at night.

134. Wealth and well-being are no signs of Allah's approval. A *hadith* speaks of the principle behind Allah's division of wealth and other things. It says, as reported by Ibn Mas'ud,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَسَمَ بَيْنَكُمْ أَخْلَافَكُمْ كَمَا قَسَمَ بَيْنَكُمْ أَرْزَاقَكُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُعْطِي الدُّنْيَا مَنْ يُحِبُّ وَمَنْ لَا يُحِبُّ وَلَا يُعْطِي الَّذِينَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَحَبَّ

"Allah has divided good character amongst you as he has divided wealth. Indeed, Allah gives wealth unto him He loves, and unto him He does not love. But He does not bestow iman (faith) except on him He loves" (Ibn Kathir).

135. "Ah" is a very poor equivalent of "wayka-annahu". In Arabic it carries several connotations such as: "Have you not seen that?", "Do you not see that?", "Have you not known?", etc., which is the meaning preferred by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir.

136. What constitutes "uluww fi'l ard"? Ibn Kathir writes that it is arrogant treatment of the people. The Prophet has said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَوْحَى إِلَيَّ أَنْ تَوَاضَعُوا ، وَلَا يَبْغِ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

"It has been revealed to me that you should be humble, so that none of you waxes proud against another and no one mistreats another."

The report is in Muslim and Abu Da'ud: Hussain b. Ibrahim.

And `Ali (ibn Abi Talib) has said that if a man wishes that his shoe-lace should be better than his brother's, then this verse is applicable to him (Kashshaf). That however, adds Ibn Kathir, if it is out of pride and show of insolence; otherwise not. A *Sahih* report says that a man asked the Prophet,

قَالَ رَجُلٌ إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ ثَوْبُهُ حَسَنًا وَتَعْلُهُ حَسَنَةً. قَالَ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ

“A man likes that his clothes be good, and shoes beautiful. Does that constitute pride?” He answered, “No. Allah is beautiful and He approves of the beautiful.”

Qurtubi adds the following from Tabarani who narrates through Ahmad b. Hanbal: It is reported that once Hasan b. `Ali passed by a group of poor folks who were having their lunch over pieces of bread. He greeted them and they invited him to join in. Hasan recited this *ayah*,

{ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ } [القصص: ٨٣]

“That home of the Hereafter We appoint it for those who seek not self-exaltation in the land, nor corruption.”

Then he got down from his beast and joined them. When they had finished he said, “I responded to your invitation, now you should respond to mine.” He took them home, fed them and gifted them things.

And it is reported that when `Adiyy b. Hatim entered upon the Prophet for the first time, he spread a cushion for `Adiyy to sit on. But `Adiyy preferred to sit on the bare ground. The Prophet told him,

قال أشهد أنك لا تبغى علوا في الأرض ولا فسادا

“I testify that you are of those who do not seek self-exaltation in the earth nor corruption.” Not surprisingly, `Adiyy embraced Islam in that session.

And it is reported of `Ali at the time he happened to be the Caliph that he would visit the markets, help the lost one to find his way, assist the weak, pass by the grocery and vegetable sellers and remind them by the Qur'an. All the while he would be repeating,

{ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ } [القصص: ٨٣]

“That home of the Hereafter We appoint it for those who seek not self-exaltation in the land, nor corruption” (Alusi).

[85] Surely He who ordained the Qur'ān upon you, will surely bring you back to the place of return.¹³⁸ Say, 'My Lord knows very well who has brought the guidance, and who it is that is in manifest error.'

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] And you were not expecting that the Book will be cast unto you, except that it is a mercy from your Lord. Do not then, ever be a supporter to the unbelievers.

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] And never let them avert you away from Allah's revelations after they have been sent down to you. Invite to your Lord; and never be of the polytheists.

وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أُنزِلَتْ إِلَيْكَ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

137. "This verse was recited by the Prophet at the end of his last public address" (Majid).

138. Linguistically, the construction "ma`ad" is for "a place of return." To what is the allusion? According to Ibn `Abbas, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, Mujahid, `Ikrimah and Sa`id b. Jubayr, it is to Paradise. However, `Ikrimah, Mujahid and Hasan also mentioned it as being an allusion to the Day of Judgment. Ibn `Abbas and Sa`id b. Jubayr offered another opinion. They said that the allusion was to the Prophet's death. And a fourth opinion is that the allusion was to Makkah. This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid (Ibn Jarir). This last opinion of Ibn `Abbas is in Bukhari, Nasa'i and others (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Thus Ibn `Abbas figures in all the opinions, perhaps because he had different aspects and implications in mind when making several statements on different occasions. And of course, reconciliation is easily possible, there being no contradiction between the various opinions. Dahhak on the other hand is reported to have said (Kashshaf) that when the Prophet (*saws*) had reached Juhfah during his *Hijrah*-journey, he felt nostalgic about Makkah. So to comfort him, Allah (*swt*) revealed this verse promising him that one day He will take him back to it (Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi also reports the above opinions as well as the statement of Ibn `Abbas which imply that this verse is neither Makkan nor Madinan.

[88] And do not invoke with Allah, another deity. There is no deity save He. Everything will perish except His Face.¹³⁹ His is the command,¹⁴⁰ and to Him you will be returned.

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ
وَالِيهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

139. “Wajhahu”, literally, ‘His countenance’ signifies ‘His self’ or ‘Him’” (Majid). Alusi points out that according to the *Salaf*, “Wajh” is one of the Attributes of Allah which cannot be qualified or quantified.

Some of the *Salaf* believed that the sentence is purporting to say, “Everything will perish, except such deeds as performed for the sake of His Face – that is, for the sake of Allah’s Plea-

sure” (Bada’e’, ‘Uthmani, Shafi’). Ibn Kathir traces this opinion to Mujahid and Thawri as in Bukhari who himself obviously agrees with the meaning. Ibn Jarir quotes a poetical verse to show similar use by the ancients.

140. That is, it is His command alone that is executed in His creation (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Also see note 117 above. ﴿٨٨﴾



