

Surah 12

Yusuf

Madinan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Ra. These are verses¹ of a clear Book.²

الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿١﴾

1. Yusuf Ali writes: “*Ayat*: Signs and verses of the Qur’ān. The whole of Joseph’s story is a Sign or a Miracle, - a wonder-working exposition of the Plan and Purpose of Allah.”

2. With reference to the textual “*mubin*”, Asad comments: “The participial adjective “*mubin*” may denote an attribute of the noun which it qualifies (“clear”, “manifest”, “obvious”, etc.) as well as its function (“making clear” or “manifesting”, i.e., the truth), either of which meanings is dictated by its context. In the consensus of authoritative opinion, both these meanings are comprised in the above instance; consequently, a compound phrase is necessary in order to render the term appropriately.”

In simpler words, this is a book clear in its intents, purposes, teachings

and instructions, allowing for no ambiguity in matters of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, virtue and evil – clear in itself, and making matters pertaining to the guidance, clear (Au.).

Majid writes: “Contrast this with Christianity which boasts of its ‘mysteries.’ ‘There are three great and fundamental mysteries in the Catholic religion: (1) the Trinity, (2) the Incarnation, (3) the Eucharist; to which Mgr. Kolbe adds that of the Mystical Body of Christ.’ (CD. p. 639).”

Other religions are no less so. The Jewish religion is so full of mysteries that it is better not to read the *Bible* at all, since there is no text of which the obvious meaning is, according to its exponents, not the intended

[2] Verily, We have sent it down an Arabic recitation,³ that haply you will ponder.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ



meaning. Similarly, completely unapparent to a mind used to rational thinking, but claimed to be of the highest rational order, Hindu literature is again so full of mysteries that the best of minds trying to understand the texts give up within fifteen minutes (Au.).

3. The fact that this Qur'ān has been revealed in the Arabic language makes it imperative for everyone who cares for his religion to learn it. According to Imām Shafe`i, learning Arabic is an obligation upon every Muslim. As mentioned by Alusi, Ibn Taymiyyah has reported Imām Abu Yusuf as of the opinion that whoever can manage some Arabic ought not to speak in any other language (Au.).

Majid writes about the power of the Qur'ānic Arabic: "Hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such irresistible influence as Arabic ... the triumph of Islam was to a certain extent the triumph of a language, more particularly of a book." (Hitti, *A Short History of the Arabs*, pp.90-91).

The origin of the language is a mystery. Earnest Renan (1823-1894),

who carried out an extensive research on Semitic languages said, "The Arabic language is the most astonishing event of human history. Unknown during the classical period, it suddenly emerged as a complete language. After this, it did not undergo any noticeable change, so one cannot define for it an early or late stage. It is just the same today as it was when it first appeared."

Anyone who knows its grammatical structure, and the strict application of the rules to the most ancient Arabic texts, when the art of writing was non-existent, will admit that the language could not have come into being through the normal process of gradual development over several centuries, as has been the case with every other languages. The classical *Jahiliyy* poetry that the Arab boast about to this day, was not penned down but centuries after the poets were dead. These facts have led some linguists to believe that it is a revealed language. In fact, Hakim has a report from the Prophet that the language was revealed to Isma`il. But some *hadith* experts have declared the report da`if and most of

[3] We narrate to you the most beautiful of stories⁴ in that We have revealed to you this Qur'an; though you were before it among the unaware.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا
أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الْعَافِينَ ﴿٣﴾

the scholars say that Arabic language precedes Isam`il. Also, Arabic of higher literary quality happens to be difficult because of the possibilities of a vast vocabulary, numerous different shades of meaning and nuances, brought to being by countless rules of grammar. Hence Imām Shafē`i's opinion (as in Alusi) is that no one can master this language except a Prophet. And hence too, the Companions often wondered at the Prophet's skill in the language. As regards any individual gaining complete mastery over the language, countless Arab linguists will have no hesitation in accepting it as true (Au.).

4. *Qassa* in Arabic is to follow. A story is "*qissah*" since stories are closely followed (pl. *qasas*) - Zamakhshari, Razi.

‘Awn b. ‘Abdullah and others have reported that the Prophet's companions once complained to him, "We feel bored. Could you tell us a story?" In response, Allah revealed this story (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi adds: *Surah Yusuf* is the best of stories because it involves all the features of a good story: episodes involving Messengers, Prophets, ordinary men, scheming women, angels, Jinn, animals, birds, kings and their kingdoms, traders, scholars and the laity. In addition, it offers lessons in *Tawhid*, wisdom, rules of law, interpretation of dreams, politics, administration, political economy, and many other topics of interest.

It also has several sub-plots woven into it: of those who were envious and those that were envied, the masters and the slaves, witnesses and the witnessed against, lover and the beloved, imprisonment and freedom, famine and abundance, sin and forgiveness, separation and union, sickness and health, honor and disrepute, etc. (Thanwi from Alusi).

Yusuf Ali writes in his introduction to the *Surah*: "The story is called the most beautiful of stories for many reasons: (1) it is the most detailed of any in the Qur'ān; (2) it is full of human vicissitudes, and has therefore deservedly appealed to men and

[4] When Yusuf⁶ said to his father,⁶ 'O my father. I have seen eleven planets,⁷ the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me.'⁸

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ
أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ
رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٤﴾

women of all classes; (3) it paints in vivid colours, with their spiritual implications, the most varied aspect of life - the patriarch's old age and the confidence behind and his little best-beloved son, the elder brothers' jealousy of this little son, their plot and their father's grief, the sale of the father's darling into slavery for a miserable little price, carnal love contrasted with purity and chastity, false charges, prison, the interpretation of dreams, low life and high life, innocence raised to honour, the sweet "revenge" of Forgiveness and Benevolence, high matters of state and administration, humility in exaltation, filial love, and the beauty of Piety and Truth.

"The story is similar to but not identical with the *Biblical* story; but the atmosphere is wholly different. The *Biblical* story is like a folk-tale in which morality has no place. Its tendency is to exalt the clever and financially-minded Jew against the Egyptian, and to explain certain ethnic and tribal peculiarities in later Jewish history. Joseph is shown as buying

up all the cattle and the land of the poor Egyptians for the State under the stress of famine conditions, and making the Israelites "rulers" over Pharaoh's cattle. The Qur'anic story, on the other hand, is less a narrative than a highly spiritual sermon or allegory explaining the seeming contradictions in life, the enduring nature of virtue in a world full of flux and change, and the marvelous working of Allah's eternal purpose in His Plan as unfolded to us on the wide canvas of history. This aspect of the matter has been a favourite with Muslim exegetists."

5. Bukhari has a report coming through Abu Hurayrah which says that the Prophet (*saws*) was asked:

مَنْ أَكْرَمُ النَّاسِ قَالَ أَنْتَقَاهُمْ فَقَالُوا لَيْسَ عَنْ هَذَا
نَسَأَلُكَ قَالَ فَيُوسُفُ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ ابْنُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ ابْنِ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ
ابْنِ حَلِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَنْ هَذَا نَسَأَلُكَ قَالَ فَعَنْ
مَعَادِنِ الْعَرَبِ نَسَأَلُونَ خِيَارَهُمْ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ خِيَارَهُمْ
فِي الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا فُقُّهُوا

"Who is the most honored of men?" He answered, "The most honored of men is the one most fearful of Allah." They said, "We

do not mean him.” the Prophet said, “Then the most honored of men was Yusuf who was the son of a Prophet, whose grandfather was a Prophet and whose great-grandfather was a Prophet and a khalil of Allah (i.e. Yusuf b. Ya`qub, b. Is-haq b. Ibrahim).” They said, “It is not about him that we inquire.” The Prophet asked, “Perhaps you ask about the Arab tribes?” They said, “Yes.” He said, “The best of you in the pre-Islamic days are the best of you after Islam, provided they acquire understanding (of Islam)” - Ibn Kathir.

6. “The place where Jacob and his family and his flocks were located was in Canaan, and is shown by tradition near modern Nabulus (ancient Shechem), some thirty miles north of Jerusalem. The traditional site of the well into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers is still shown in the neighborhood” (Yusuf Ali).

7. We have chosen to translate the word “*kawkab*” as planets because in all instances the Qur`ān has used the word “*najm*” for stars. Only on two occasions it used the word “*kawkab*” in the sense of stars, but in both cases it employed its plural form “*kawakib*.” In fact, in modern

Arabic, *kawkab* is for planet. Hence, “*kawkab al-saghir*” is “minor planet,” “*kawkab al-`ashir*” is “the tenth planet.” There could or could not be a connection between the statement and the fact that a tenth planet has just been discovered, being too small and at an extremely great distance beyond Pluto. In addition, an asteroid belt comprising of millions of asteroids exists between Mars (the fourth planet from the sun) and Jupiter. The entire belt circles the sun in the same manner as the planets. According to most of the astronomers this belt is the remnant of a shattered planet. If that theory is correct, then so far, eleven planets are accounted for, although there is every possibility there is no connection (Au.).

8. Dreams are of three kinds: Observations of the day, replayed by the mind at night, those that are aroused by Satan, and those inspired by Allah (*swt*). Dreams of the Prophets and Messengers belong to the third category and, for them, they are a kind of revelation (Shafi).

Qurtubi has a long discourse on the topic. He writes, “*sahih ahadith* count a true dream of a believer as being anything between one-forty-sixth and one-seventieth part of prophethood. Depending probably

on the person's commitment to Islam, they vary in proving true from one extreme to another. However, that is for Muslims alone. Occurring to a non-Muslim, they are not any part of prophethood (even if true: Au.). Further, true dreams are shown both ways: either a direct illustration of what is to happen in the future, or expressed symbolically requiring one to figure out the meaning. The Prophet said in a *hadith* of Muslim:

رَأَيْتُ امْرَأَةً سَوْدَاءَ نَائِرَةَ الرَّأْسِ خَرَجَتْ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ
حَتَّى تَزَلَّتْ بِمَهْبِيعَةٍ فَتَأَوَّلْتُهَا أَنَّ وَبَاءَ الْمَدِينَةِ نُقِلَ إِلَى
مَهْبِيعَةٍ وَهِيَ الْجُحْفَةُ

“I saw a black (woman) with ruffled hair leaving Madinah heading towards Mahya`ah and alighting there. And I interpreted it as the Madinan fever being transferred to Mahya`ah;” – which is in Juhfa.

The above is Bukhari's version (Au.).

Or, (he said concerning the battle of Uhud),

رَأَيْتُ سَيْفِي قَدْ انْقَطَعَ صَدْرُهُ وَبَقِرَا فَأَوْلَتْهَا
رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي يَقْتُلُ وَالْبَقْرَ نَفَرٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِي
يَقْتُلُونَ

“I saw (in a dream) that the front portion of my sword is broken and a cow is slaughtered. I interpreted it to mean that one of

my kinsmen will be killed. By the slaughter of the cow the meaning I drew is that I will lose a few of my Companions.”

The above *hadith* could not be traced in *hadith* collections in exactly the same words, but differently worded and as part of longer *ahadith* (Au.).

He also said (on another occasion),

إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَنِّي فِي دِرْعٍ حَصِينَةٍ فَأَوْلْتُهَا الْمَدِينَةَ

“I saw myself in a coat of mail and interpreted it as Madinah.”

The above is in Ahmad, declared Hasan.

And,

بَيْنَمَا أَنَا نَائِمٌ رَأَيْتُ فِي يَدَيَّ سِوَارَيْنِ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ
فَأَهْمَنِي شَأْنُهُمَا فَأَوْجِحِي إِلَيَّ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنْ ائْتِخُمُهُمَا
فَتَفَخَّخْتُهُمَا فَطَارَا فَأَوْلْتُهُمَا كَذَّابَيْنِ يَخْرُجَانِ بَعْدِي

“While I was asleep I saw two golden bangles in my hands. That worried me a little. Then it was revealed to me in a dream that I am blowing at the two and they blew away. I interpreted it as two liars who will appear after me (claiming prophethood).”

The above is Bukhari's version (Au.).

Sometimes dreams come true quickly, but others take a long time to reveal their true meaning, as in Yusuf's

[5] He said, 'O my son. Reveal not this dream to your brothers,⁹ lest they devise against you some plot.¹⁰ Surely, Shaytan is man's open enemy.¹¹

قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى
إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ
لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٥﴾

case. Also, true dreams may forebode both good as well as evil. Imām Malik has said, "Let no one interpret dreams except he who can do it accurately. As for the interpreter thinks there is something good in it, let him interpret it. But if he feels something evil is involved, let him stay silent and say something suitable." He was asked, "Should he interpret what he thinks as evil, as good in some way?" Malik replied, "No. A true dream is one-forty-sixth part of prophethood. So, let it not be played with." The Prophet said,

مَمْ يَبْقَى مِنْ مُبَشِّرَاتِ النَّبُوَّةِ إِلَّا الرُّؤْيَا الصَّالِحَةُ يَرَاهَا
الْمُسْلِمُ أَوْ تُرَى لَهُ

"Nothing remains now of the glad tidings of Prophethood except good dreams that a Muslim sees, or he is shown."

The above is from Muslim (Au.).

They come as a premonition in order that the believer is prepared for them. Imām Shaf'e'i saw a dream in Egypt about Ahmad ibn Hanbal indicating that he would be put to tests. He wrote to him (in Iraq) so

that he could prepare himself for the forthcoming events. The harm from true evil dreams, however, even if foreboding evil, can be avoided by seeking Allah's protection as soon as one wakes up. (This is because some of Allah's decrees are hung in balance [*qada' mu`allaq*]: they may go either way: good or evil. When one seeks Allah's protection, the decree may go the other way: Shafi'). Bukhari has reported Abu Salamah that sometimes he experienced dreams that made him sick until he heard Abu Qatadah report the Prophet's words that the evil of bad dreams could be warded off by spitting three times on the left and seeking Allah's protection. Abu Qatadah himself paid no heed whatsoever to the bad dreams after he had heard the above from the Prophet. If they bother someone too much, he might get up and start to Pray, as is recommended by a *hadith* (Qurtubi).

9. Dreams being everyone's share, the following from the Prophet should be of general interest. He said (in a *hadith* of Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah and Ahmad):

إِذَا رَأَى أَحَدُكُمْ رُؤْيَا يُحِبُّهَا فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَلْيُحْمَدِ
اللَّهَ عَلَيْهَا وَلْيُحَدِّثْ بِهَا وَإِذَا رَأَى غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا يَكْرَهُ
فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ فَلْيَسْتَعِذْ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَلَا يَذْكُرْهَا
لِأَحَدٍ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَنْصُرُهُ

“When one of you sees something pleasant in a dream, he might speak about it to others. But if he sees something unpleasant, let him turn to the other side (on his bed) and spit thrice towards his left, seek Allah’s protection and speak to no one about it, for that might cause him harm.”

The above is from Bukhari (Au.).

In another *hadith* of the same sources he said,

الرُّؤْيَا عَلَى رَجُلٍ طَائِرٍ مَا لَمْ تَعْبَرْ فَإِذَا عُبِرَتْ وَقَعَتْ

“A dream is a flying object: so long as it is not interpreted. Once interpreted, it has to happen that way.”

The above report was declared *sahih* by Albani (Au.).

Hence, adds Qurtubi (as also Ibn Kathir), the rule is that one might conceal an on-coming good thing until it becomes perceptible to all. This is confirmed by a *hadith* which says,

اسْتَعِينُوا عَلَى إِنْجَاحِ حَوَائِجِكُمْ بِالْكَتْمَانِ ، فَإِنَّ كُلَّ
ذِي نِعْمَةٍ مَحْسُودٌ

“Seek to bring your affairs to good termination by concealing them. For, every blessed man is envied.”

The above is in *Jami` Saghir* but declared as weak by Munawi (Au.).

What is meant however is undue display, or to brag about it; and not secrecy and concealment since, according to a well known *hadith*, when Allah bestows a blessing on someone, He wishes to see its effects on him. So, one might tread the middle path between high level secrecy on the one side and show-off on the other (Au.).

10. Being sons of a Prophet, they would have surely interpreted the dream correctly, viz., by the planets it was they who symbolized – meaning, they faced subservience to Yusuf some time in the future - and so were filled with jealousy that led to machinations (Thanwi).

11. Yusuf (*asws*) did learn from his father’s instructions. His brothers treated him badly, but when, after several years he got the upper hand over them and reminded them about what they had done to them, he

[6] And that is how your Lord will choose you, teach you interpretation of the discourses,¹² and fulfill His favor upon you and upon the family of Ya`qub as He fulfilled it upon your fathers Ibrahim and Is-haq aforetime. Surely, your Lord is All-knowing, All-wise.'

وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ
الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُنِمْ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى آلِ
يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَى أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ
﴿٦﴾

[7] Surely, in Yusuf and his brothers there are signs for the inquiring (minds).¹³

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ
لِّلسَّائِلِينَ ﴿٧﴾

[8] When they said (among themselves), 'Indeed, Yusuf and his brother¹⁴ are dearer to our father than we, while we are a goodly body.¹⁵ Surely, our father is in a manifest error.

إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَى آبَانَا
مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّ آبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ
مُبِينٍ ﴿٨﴾

ended by saying (in verse 100), "He (Allah) was indeed good to me when He brought me out of the prison and brought you out of the desert after *Shaytan* had stirred (strife) between me and my brothers" (from Manar). That is, instead of blaming them, he laid the blame on *Shaytan* (Au.).

12. According to the classical scholars, the allusion is both to the interpretation of dreams as well as to the words of wisdom in ordinary talk (Ibn Jarir).

13. Ibn Is-haq has said that when the Prophet felt hurt at the antagonistic attitude adopted by some of his kinsmen to his mission, Allah revealed this chapter to console him that there is a lesson for him in this story (Ibn Jarir).

14. They meant Yusuf and Bin Yamin who were both from the same mother (Ibn Jarir).

15. They were ten in number, by another of Ya`qub's wives (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi explains: "For a better understanding of this statement, one should bear in mind the material conditions of nomadic, tribal societies. Such a society is usually devoid of any organized state, and generally consists of a number of independent tribes that live side by side. In such a society, a man's strength depends entirely on the number of his supporters, and these consist of his sons, grandsons, brothers and nephews. These members of a family are extremely important since a person depends only upon them in the event

[9] Slay Yusuf or cast him into some place so that your father's favor is freed for you alone. Thereafter, you could become a righteous lot.¹⁶

اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهَ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] Said one of those who spoke, 'Do not kill Yusuf. (Instead), cast him into the bottom of a well¹⁷ (from where) someone of the travelers might pick him up¹⁸ - if you must do (it).'

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] They spoke to their father, 'O our father! What is it with you that you do not trust us with Yusuf while we are his sincere well-wishers?

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَاصِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾

of an attack upon his person's property and honor.”

16. That is, you can always repent and lead a righteous life there onward (Suddi: Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi again: “This statement reflects the psychological make-up of those who, even when vigorously pursue their desires, still make an effort to maintain some relationship with faith and righteousness. Such people seem to have a peculiar way of conciliating between their responses to the demands of righteousness on the one hand, and of self-indulgence on the other.”

17. “*Jubb*” is that well which has no parapet or wall around it (Shafi’).

18. Qurtubi discusses “Lost and Found” rules in Islam: If it is a hu-

man being, he is free (and cannot be picked up and enslaved). If it is something material, the following *hadith* helps. A Bedouin asked the Prophet about the things one finds:

اعْرِفْ عِقَاصَهَا وَوِكَاءَهَا ، ثُمَّ عَرِّفْهَا سَنَةً فَإِنِ جَاءَ صَاحِبُهَا وَإِلَّا فَشَاتَنكَ بِهَا ، قَالَ : فَضَالَةُ الْعَنَمِ ؟ قَالَ : لَكَ أَوْ لِأَخِيكَ أَوْ لِلذَّنْبِ قَالَ : فَضَالَةُ الْإِبِلِ ؟ قَالَ : مَعَهَا جَذَاؤُهَا وَسِقَاؤُهَا تَرِدُ الْمَاءَ وَتَأْكُلُ الشَّجَرَ حَتَّى يُلْقَاهَا رَبُّهَا

“What about things that we find?” He replied, “Announce about them for a year describing them in full. If there is no claimant, they are yours.” He asked, “What about goats, sheep etc.?” He replied, “They are either for you, or for your brother (who lost them) or for the wolves (if you do not pick them up. So, better pick them up).” The man

[12] Send him with us tomorrow to frolic¹⁹ and play. We shall surely be watching over him.'

أَرْسَلُهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعُ وَيَلْعَبُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ
لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] He replied, 'It saddens me to think that you should take him with you.²⁰ I fear a wolf might eat him off while you are heedless of him.'

قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَنْ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ
أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ
﴿١٣﴾

[14] They protested, 'If a wolf should eat him off while we are a goodly body, then, surely we are the losers.'

قَالُوا لَئِنْ أَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا
إِذَا لَخَّاسِرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] So, when they took him with them and agreed to place him in the bottom of a well,²¹ We revealed unto him that (one day) you will remind them of this their deed, while they would be unaware (of your identity).²²

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَاجْمَعُوا أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غِيَابَةِ
الْحُوتِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] And they went to their father by the night, weeping.²³

وَجَاءُوا أَبَاهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

asked, "And camels?" He replied, "Camels? What do you have to do with camels? (If you find one), let it alone, feeding itself until its master finds it."

The freely translated *hadith* is in Muslim (Au.).

19. Although one possible interpretation of the original "yarta" is to shepherd, the great majority have treated it in the sense of "frolic" (Ibn Jarir).

20. Ya`qub (*asws*) was so much in love with Yusuf that he could not bear to part company with him even

for a couple of hours (based on Ibn Kathir).

21. "The well was apparently a dry well, deep enough to prevent his coming out, but with no water in which he could be drowned" (Yusuf Ali).

22. This was the wahiyy by ilham (inspirational revelation) - Rashid Rida at verse 38 below.

23. To resort to tears is a good instrument of escape. Zamakhshari records that once when Qadi Shurayh had ruled against a woman, she began to cry. Sha`bi reproached him saying,

[17] They said, 'O our father! We went out racing with each other²⁴ leaving Yusuf with our belongings, and a wolf ate him up. But you will never believe in us, even if we were truthful.'

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا
يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَمَا
أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] And they brought him his shirt with false blood. He said, 'Rather, your minds have concocted a story.²⁵ So, a graceful patience.²⁶ And, it is Allah whose help is sought over what you describe.'

وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ قَالَ
بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً فَصَبْرٌ
جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ
﴿١٨﴾

"Can you not see that the woman is weeping?" Shurayh told him, "Yusuf's brothers also went to their father weeping. One should judge in the light of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* alone."

In a recent American case involving rape, the jury was much moved by the supposed victim who cried before them during the cross examination, although she, a white woman, could give no explanation to how she happened to be in a hotel room, deep in the night, with the supposed assaulter, a black famous boxer. The man was jailed for several years (Au.).

24. Without the involvement of betting, racing is allowed in Islam. The Companions used to race among themselves. The Prophet also ran races with 'A'isha, won and lost. He also allowed racing of camels. Once

his famous fast camel Qadba', which no camel could overtake, was beaten in a race by a bedouin's camel. The Companions were saddened. He remarked, "It is binding on Allah that whatever rises high in this world must be brought down." 'Umar has said that in races involving beasts, their owners should be riding them (Qurtubi).

25. He said that because, even though the shirt was drenched in blood, it was not torn from any place (Ibn Jarir).

26. According to reports coming down through Ibn abi Jabalah, "*sabrun jamil*" is defined as one which is not followed by complaints (before the creation) - Ibn Jarir. But the report is weak (Ibn Kathir).

[19] And a caravan arrived. They sent a carrier. He let down his bucket. He exclaimed, 'Good news. Here is a young lad.' And they concealed him as a merchandise²⁷ while Allah was aware of what they were doing.

وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَا بُشْرَى هَذَا غُلَامٌ وَأَسْرُوهُ بِضَاعَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And they sold him out for a paltry price - a few coins.²⁸ They were of those concerning him, content with little.

وَشَرُّهُ بِنَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمٍ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] Said he who purchased him in Egypt²⁹ to his wife,³⁰ 'Make his stay (with us) honorable. He may well be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.'³¹ Thus We established Yusuf in the land so that We might teach him interpretation of the discourses;³² and Allah is the Prevailer in His affairs but most people know not.³³

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

27. One opinion of the *Salaf* on this passage is that it were Yusuf's brothers who concealed the fact that he was their brother. Yusuf himself did not speak out because he was afraid that if his rescuers let him go, his brothers will murder him. Another opinion, and that preferred by the great majority, is that his rescuers concealed the fact from the co-travelers that they had found him in a well. They feared that in that event they would have to share with them the price. Instead, they made out a story that they had been given the boy by his owners as a merchandise, to be sold whenever a good price came (Ibn Jarir).

28. The agreed opinion - including that of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Dahhak, is that after identifying Yusuf as one of their slaves on the run, his brothers (who had been watching the scene from a distance: Shabbir and others) sold him out to the water carrier(s) for a paltry price (They being "of those concerning him content with little"). The buyers themselves however, concealed the fact of purchase spinning the story that they had received him from his owners at the waters as a merchandise to be sold and profits shared (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

29. Ibn Is-haq and others have said that the man who purchased Yusuf

was known as Qitfir (Heb. Pothiphar), childless and probably a eunuch, Minister of finance under the king Rayyan of the `Amalique (Amalekites) - Ibn Jarir. Majid quotes, "Potiphar literally means eunuch as well as 'court-official', the most important offices having been in the Ancient Orient in the hands of royal slaves who were often eunuchs' (Ebi. c. 3813)."

It has been pointed out by some scholars however, that in Hieroglyphics, the ancient Egyptian system of pictorial writing, the word Poti-pher meant, the favored one of God, which sounds closer to the Qur'anic Al-`Aziz (Au.).

30. Although anyone has as good a chance as another for being correct, the several names of the 'Aziz's wife as reported are Zulaykha, Zalikha and Rahil (Rachael) - [Au.]

Sayyid adds, "The fact that the `Aziz wished to adopt him as a son leads us to believe that his marriage had past its peak and he had lost all hopes of getting a son through his wife. There is another indication in the Qur'an that his woman was at least above thirty of age, and in turn indicating that their fruitless marriage was pretty old. It is in the words of the Egyptian ladies who said, "Aziz's

wife seeks to seduce her page" (verse 30)," where the word "*fata*" (translated by us as page: Au.), could be in the sense of "boy", meaning, an older woman seeks to seduce a lad.

31. Majid comments and quotes, "The officer and his wife were childless. Assuming that the husband was an eunuch, the need for adoption was obvious. 'Cases are on record, in both ancient and modern times, of eunuchs being married' (DB. IV, p. 23)."

32. Discourses include dreams (Ibn Jarir).

33. That is, although for all practical purposes Yusuf was in slavery, but the situation he was in was very conducive to the role he was being readied to play as a Prophet and an administrator. Belonging to a shepherd family, having never witnessed an organized state, and, consequently, completely unaware of the rules and principles of administration of a ministry, he needed to be positioned in a highly placed minister's palace managing all his affairs, including finance, perhaps in close co-ordination with the state's treasury, affording him an exceptional environment to develop his potent abilities. However, he could not have, from that position, become a vizier: being a

[22] Accordingly, when he had reached manhood, We bestowed him judgment and knowledge. That is how We reward those who excel.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا
وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Now, she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him.³⁴ She bolted the doors and said, "Come on - unto you (I say)!"³⁵ He said, "Allah's refuge. Surely, he, my lord³⁶ has provided me with a goodly lodging. And, surely, the evil-doers will not prosper.

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ
وَعَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْت لَكَ قَالَ
مَعَادَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا
يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

foreigner. That required his moral and spiritual superiority to be proven whose passage lay through the prison, entry into which was facilitated by the intrigues of the `Aziz's household. What human could have designed such a complicated course and assured success? Note Allah's words in the verse under discussion, "Allah is the Prevailer in His affairs but most people know not" (Au.).

34. The form of the verb employed in "*raawadat*" implies repeated entreaties (Au.).

35. According to a report in Bukhari, Ibn `Abbas said that the original "*hayta luck*" has come into Arabic usage from the Hawrani language (Ibn Kathir).

36. Suddi, Mujahid and Ibn Nujayh have said that by saying "my lord," Yusuf alluded to the `Aziz (Ibn Jarir). Most commentators of the past have treated the word in this sense. Such titles were allowed in olden times, but stand disallowed now, in the religion of Islamic strict monotheism. The Prophet has said, "Let no slave address his master as 'my lord'" (Shafi').

Although the possibility exists that Yusuf meant Allah when he said "*rabbi*," but the usage as expressed in the translation and backed by the opinion of the *Salaf*, is not unusual in the Qur'an. In this very chapter it has used the word "*rabbika*" (your lord) in verse 42 alluding to the king, as also in verse 50.

[24] She had decidedly desired after him, and he too (would have) desired after her³⁷ had he not seen the signs of his Lord.³⁸ That is how (We helped him) so as to turn away from him evil and indecency. Verily, he was one of Our chosen slaves.

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى
بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ
وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

37. The rendering follows Qurtubi's explanation who demonstrates that the two "*hamma*" of the original have been used in different senses. The introduction of the article "*qad*" preceding the "*hamma*" of Aziz's wife and its absence before that of Yusuf, makes for the difference which we have tried to reflect in the translation. Razi, Alusi and Shabbir have also pointed out the difference between the two "*hamma(s)*".

Imām Ahmad has said that of "*hamm*" there are two kinds: (i) *hamm* of khatarat (passing thoughts) and (ii) *hamm* of israr (firm idea). Yusuf's *hamm* was of the khatarat type, which he withdrew, and so was rewarded for a good act, and not questionable thereof, whereas that of the woman was of the israr type (Al-Mustadrak 'ala fatawa Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qasim, p. 127).

38. The translation herewith follows the common understanding. Ibn Jarir traces dozens of narrations coming down from Ibn 'Abbas that Yu-

suf, after having removed his clothes, was actually on the verge of committing the act - (so far allowed by Allah in order to demonstrate to him his place as a human being) - when, at the final moments Allah showed him some sign, or a kind of warning, he desisted. (However, there is no *hadith* to this effect).

And, although Ibn Jarir rules out any other interpretation, Ibn Kathir treats it as unworthy of consideration. He appears to believe that it was only a passing thought on the part of Yusuf and no more (similar to a fasting man's thought of food and drink without any intention to break the fast: Alusi).

Shawkani departs from his usual habit of relying on narrations from the *Salaf*, and explains the text as meaning that Yusuf had almost made up his mind when he was shown a sign from his Lord after which he refused to budge from his mental position of refusal.

Zamakhshari comes down heavily on the classical interpretation, pointing that the traditional interpretation does not match with Allah's words who said about Yusuf, "He was one of our chosen slaves." He explains further, (in the words of Asad) that "the moral significance of 'virtue' consists in one's inner victory over a wrongful desire, and not in the absence of such a desire." Imām Razi is with Zamakhshari.

The scene of the episode, as constructed here also does not allow for room to believe that Yusuf would have committed what is alleged in the reports. The fact that he had his clothes on when the master encountered the two at the door discredits the report, which needs to be subjected to a thorough authenticity-check before any further discussion (Au.).

As regards the sign that Yusuf saw, some say he saw his father's image - Ya`qub - biting his fingers, while others say he heard his voice chiding him.

There are several other opinions but none backed by a *hadīth* (Au.).

Commenting upon the "*kashf*" of Yusuf, consisting in he seeing his father Ya`qub, Sufi Ashraf Ali Than-

wi warns of the untrustworthiness of *kashf*, and also, that it is not the miracle of the person appearing in a *kashf* on occasions of report. In this case, if the story is true, Ya`qub (*asws*) had no knowledge of himself appearing before Yusuf at the moment the thought passed through his mind, and seeing him, he dismissed the thought. It may be noted that Ya`qub had no idea until then that Yusuf was in Egypt. So, it was Allah's doing, that, without any information to Ya`qub, Yusuf was shown his image. In this connection, Thanwi points out (in *Asbraf al-Tafasir*) that he could recall that Mawlana Muhammad Ya`qub (an Indian Sufi and scholar) reported that once when he was in a certain problematic situation, he heard Haji (Imdadullah Muhajir Makki) Sahib's voice telling him that he should attempt the affair in a particular way. He later remarked, "But I was sure that it was not the voice of Haji Imdadullah, because he definitely had no knowledge of his situation." Similarly, someone mentioned to Sayyid Ahmad Barelawi that when he had lost his way in the forest, it was he (Ahmad Barelawi) who showed him the way. But Sayyid Ahmad strongly refused that it was he. He said, "I never knew that you were in a for-

[25] They raced to the door and she tore his shirt from the rear. They encountered her master at the door. She said, 'What can be the punishment for him who cast evil design on your wife, but that he should be imprisoned or (receive) a painful chastisement?'³⁹

وَأَسْتَبَقُوا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ
وَأَلْفَيْهَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ
مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] He protested, 'It was she who desired after me.' A witness of her household testified,⁴⁰ 'If his shirt is torn from the front then she spoke the truth and he is of the liars.'

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي وَشَهِدَ
شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ
مِنْ قِبَلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ
﴿٢٦﴾

[27] But if the shirt is torn from the rear, then she lied and he is of the truthful (ones).'

وَإِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ
وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

est on that day. It seems Allah sent someone in my figure, to show you the way.” These events demonstrate, says Thanwi after quoting them, that Allah uses the images of his servants whenever He wishes, without those servants knowing anything about it.”

39. Visualizing the scene should not tax the mind. Nonetheless, Yusuf Ali offers help: “With his master’s wife in her mad passion, the situation became intolerable, and Joseph made for the door. She ran after him to detain him. She tugged at his garment to detain him. As he was retreating, she could only catch hold of the back of his shirt, and in the struggle she tore it. He was determined to open the door and leave the place, as it was useless to argue with her in her mad passion. When the door was opened,

it so happened, that the ‘Aziz was not far off. We need not assume that he was spying, or had any suspicion either of his wife or Joseph. In his narrow limited way he was a just man. We can imagine his wife’s consternation. One guilt leads to another. She had to resort to a lie, not only to justify herself but also to have her revenge on the man who had scorned her love. Slighted love (of the physical kind) made her ferocious, and she lost all sense of right and wrong.”

40. Although several scholars of the past were of the opinion that it was an infant who testified, with a *hadith* also coming down to that effect, (but which Albani declared weak), another opinion that has come from Ibn ‘Abbas, ‘Ikrimah, Mujahid, Sa’id b.

[28] When he (the husband) saw that the shirt was torn from the back he said, 'Surely this is one of your guiles (O womankind). Verily, awesome is your guile.⁴¹

فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ فُدِّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ
مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

Jubayr, Suddi and others, as in Ibn Jarir, is that it was a grown up man, a member of the household who had made the suggestion (Au.).

Sufi Thanwi is reported in *Ashraf al-Tafasir* that, going by this ayah (no. 27), Ibn Taymiyyah believed that a person could be punished on the basis of circumstantial evidences. But Thanwi disagreed with two other verses of the Qur'an: (i) "Do not indulge in what you have no knowledge of" (17: 36) and, (ii) "So, when they did not bring the witnesses, then it is they indeed who are liars in the sight of Allah" (24: 13).

41. The Western world does not seem to have been very kind on women. The following from Majid can be offered in evidence. He writes: "Notice that this is not the dictum of Islam, but an observation of Potiphar - a view that has found favour with many non-Muslim savants and writers. 'Nature has not destined them, as the weaker sex, to be dependent on strength, but on cunning; that is why they are instinctively crafty, and have an ineradicable tendency to

lie.' (Schopenhauer, *Essays*, p. 66). See also P.III, n. 178. Compare the following Buddhistic aphorism: 'Inscrutable as the way of a fish in water is, the nature of women, those thieves of many devices, with whom truth is hard to find.' (ERE. V. p. 271) Compare also the observations of modern Western writers: 'Everyone is acquainted with instances from life or from history of women whose quick and cunning ruses have saved lover or husband or child... It is inevitable, and results from the constitution of women, acting in the conditions under which they are generally placed.' (Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman*, p. 196). '... from folklore and myth, from national proverbs and traditions, and from the text-books of the oldest religions, therefore, we learn that woman is two-faced, or false, or treacherous, or disloyal... (Ludovici, *The Woman*, p. 304) 'Women's tendency to ruse and deception is a constant, positive and life-promoting instinct.' (P. 307, n.) 'Finally, among the great thinkers of Europe who have held the view that women are indifferent to truth, and incapable

[29] Yusuf, let this pass. (As for you, O woman), Seek forgiveness for your misdemeanor.⁴² Surely, you were of those who commit error.⁴³

يُوسُفُ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِي
لِدُنْبِكَ إِنَّكَ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

of rectitude, I would further mention Rousseau, Diderot, La Bruyere, and that great genius Kant.’ (P. 320 n.) Another notable observer, Mr. Ingleby Oddit, London Coroner for twenty-seven years, only so recently as December 1939 summed up his age-long experience in regard to the veracity of women in the following words: “I have come to the conclusion that most women are simply born liars and can help themselves. I have seen women stand up in front of men and give the most detailed and precise information, every word of which has been a lie.’ (*The Sunday Express*, 17th Dec. 1939).”

A little above, Majid also quotes: “Lombroso and Ferrero actually regard deception as being “physiological” in women. They ascribe it to her weakness ... to her periodical functional disturbance .. they advance the testimony of such acute psychologists as Flaubert, Balzac, Zola, Schopenhauer, Weininger, Moliere, to support their contention that in woman lying is instinctive. We might add Shakespeare, Luther, Byron, Nietzsche, La Bruyere, and

many others to the list.’ (Ludovici, *Woman A Vindication*, p. 281).”

We might once again emphasize as we have done earlier in this work, (ref., *Al-Baqarah*, note 607), that the above are entirely the opinions of Western scholars and writers, who seem to hold a unanimous opinion about women’s tendency to lie. There is nothing in the Qur’an or *Sunnah*, however, to support these views. In fact, the Qur’an explicitly (24: 23), and the *Sunnah* by implication, confirm the natural simplicity of Muslim women. As regards the *hadith* about they getting the better of males with the help of their guile, that could be true with reference to their sexual prowess and clever ways of achieving their objectives, about which there can be no two opinions (Au.).

42. That is, seek forgiveness from Yusuf for the moral failure (Ibn Zayd - Ibn Jarir), “the implication being,” adds Asad, “that the husband was prepared to forgive and forget.”

43. Perhaps the `Aziz had few alternatives to hushing down the whole issue (Au.).

[30] And, said the women of the town, 'The wife of `Aziz's desires after her page.⁴⁴ He has smitten her with love.⁴⁵ We see her in clear error.'

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَن تَقْسِمِهِ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] When she came to know of their guile,⁴⁶ she sent for them and prepared for them a banquet⁴⁷ giving each one of them a knife. Then she ordered, 'Enter upon them (O Yusuf).' When they saw him they extolled him and cut their hands.⁴⁸ They said, 'Allah's refuge.⁴⁹ This is no mortal. This surely is a noble angel.'⁵⁰

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكًا وَأَتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

44. To fall in love with a mere slave must have been thought a matter of idignity by the aristocratic class (Au.).

Note the use of the present and future tense rather than past tense in the words, "seeks to," meaning, that the woman had not given up the idea altogether (Ibn al-Qayyim). Also see Sayyid's remark above under note 30.

45. Majid comments, "i.e., she has been completely infatuated by him, she has fallen so low as to attach herself to her own servant."

46. One of the probable explanations for the use of the word "*makr*" is that the Egyptian ladies carried the same sentiments for Yusuf but outwardly criticized Zulaykha. Another is that having heard the stories of

his incredible beauty, they wished to see the man who was probably ordinarily kept out of sight (Shawkani, Shabbir). Indeed, aware of his own irresistible beauty, Yusuf could have been in the habit of keeping himself out of public sight (Au.).

Another possibility is that Zulaykha confided to them her infatuation for Yusuf, but they spread the story (Baghawi).

47. The translation follows one opinion. Another opinion is that "*mut-taki*" alludes to cushions. Both the meanings have come from the *Salaf*. Some of them have read it as "*mut-kan*" meaning, "*utrunj*" (citrus fruit: Middle-eastern orange) - Au.

48. In a *sahih* report the Prophet said, recalling his seeing Yusuf in the heavens during his Night Journey

[32] She said, "This is the one about whom you were blaming me.⁵¹ Yes, I did desire after him but he has resisted. Yet if he does not do as I demand, surely, he will be imprisoned and will be humbled."⁵²

قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنِّي فِيهِ وَلَقَدْ
رَأَوْتُهُ عَنِ نَجْمِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ وَلَئِن مَّ
يَفْعَلْ مَا آمُرُهُ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونًا مِّنَ
الصَّاغِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

and Ascension, "I encountered Yusuf in the third heaven,"

إِذَا هُوَ قَدْ أُعْطِيَ شَطْرَ الْحُسْنِ

"He was given one half of (all) beauty."

According to another report coming through Anas, Allah distributed one half of (all) beauty among Yusuf and his mother, and the other half among the rest of the mankind. It is also reported that Yusuf used to veil his face from fear of causing pandemonium, especially among women. Suhayli has explained that what the *hadith* means to say is that Yusuf was given one half of the beauty given to Adam whom Allah had created with His hands and who was the most beautiful of the creatures ever (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi uses the occasion to defend the "words of disbelief" that are reported of some of the ascetics. He reports Ibn 'Ataa' as commenting on the women cutting their hands in total amazement in words, "if such was the effect of the vision of a created

being, why blame those who, when granted the vision of the Creator, uttered what they uttered?"

49. The translation is based on the opinion of the *Salaf* as in Ibn Jarir. However, Shawkani states that the phrase means, roughly, "Glory to God!"

50. Majid writes: "The expression .. suggests moral dignity and sublimity of character rather than physical beauty or carnal charms. The highly-placed ladies of Egypt are paying a tribute to Joseph's character as a human being rather than referring to the eroticising effect of his personality."

51. Yusuf Ali explains: "When her reputation began to be pulled to pieces, the wife of 'Aziz invited all ladies in society to a grand banquet. We can imagine them reclining at ease after the manner of fashionable banquets. When the dessert arrived and the talk flowed freely about the gossip and scandal which made their hostess interesting, they were

[33] He said, 'O my Lord. Verily, prison is better for me than what they invite me to.⁵³ If You do not turn their guile away from me, I might incline towards them and become one of the ignorant.'⁵⁴

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونِي
إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ
إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

just about to cut the fruit with their knives, when, behold! Joseph was brought into their midst. Imagine the consternation which his beauty caused, and the havoc it played with their hearts! 'Ah!' thought the wife of 'Aziz, 'now is your hypocrisy self-exposed! What about your reproaches to me? You have yourselves so lost your self-control that you have cut your fingers.'"

We might point out here that although most of the commentators have explained that the women cut their fingers, the Qur'an itself used the word "hands." Anyone who observed women (not influenced by machinist Western culture) cutting a fruit into halves and quarters with a knife would testify to the accuracy of the Qur'an. They hold the fruit and press the knife in such a manner that if pressed harder the knife would cut their palms (Au.).

52. Although it is not necessary that 'Aziz's wife said these words before those ladies, the context strongly suggests this. And, it should give us

some idea of the moral state of the women of high positions of the time. Modern Western sexual anarchy has its precedence in the culture of the past (Au.).

53. To spurn the invitation of a rich, beautiful and highly placed woman was no small an act for a man in the prime of his youth. A *hadith* says:

سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ الْإِمَامُ
الْعَادِلُ وَالشَّابُّ نَشَأَ فِي عِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ وَرَجُلٌ قَلْبُهُ مُعَلَّقٌ فِي
الْمَسَاجِدِ وَرَجُلَانِ تَخَافَا فِي اللَّهِ اجْتِمَاعًا عَلَيْهِ وَتَفَرَّقَا
عَلَيْهِ وَرَجُلٌ طَلَبَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ مَنْصِبٍ وَجَمَالٍ فَقَالَ إِنِّي
أَخَافُ اللَّهَ وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ أَحَقَمَى حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ بِيَمَانِهِ
مَا تُثْفِقُ يَمِينَهُ وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ خَالِيًا فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ

"There are seven who will be provided shade by Allah at a time when there will be no shade except His: A just ruler, a youth who matured in devotion to Allah, a man whose heart is stuck in the mosque when he leaves it until he re-enters, two men who loved each other for the sake of Allah coming together over it and parting over it, a man who spent with his right hand in a manner that his left hand did not know what

[34] His Lord responded to him and turned their plots away from him.⁵⁵ Surely, He is the Hearer, the Knower.

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Then it appeared (better) to them after the signs they saw, that they might as well imprison him for a while.⁵⁶

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا آيَاتِ
لَيْسَ جُنَّتُهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

the other hand had spent, a man whom a beautiful, well-placed woman invited but he said, ‘I fear Allah,’ and, a man who remembered Allah in his private and his eyes were filled with tears” (Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* is in the *sahihayn* (H. Ibrahim).

54. Use of the plural form suggests that other women had their own designs on Yusuf. It is also possible that the highly-placed ladies threw innuendoes at him suggesting a more positive approach to the proposed fun: “After all you are a man. Hopefully!” In amorous matters women have ways that can lend greater meaning to words unsaid than those they stop at with a giggle (Au.).

55. Allah responded to Yusuf’s prayer and provided him protection from the mischief of the women. As for his imprisonment, that was part of a larger scheme (Shabbir from Shah `Abdul Qadir).

56. Asad offers his note taking a comment from Zamakhshari, “Thus, according to the Qur`an, Joseph was imprisoned not because his master believed him to be guilty, but because, in his weakness, he wanted to appease his wife, ‘being entirely submissive to her, and behaving like a riding-camel whose reins she held in her hand.’”

Yusuf Ali explains further, “To the `Aziz it appears as if it might be in his wife’s best interests that he should disappear from her view in prison. The decisive factor was the view of the men generally, who were alarmed at the consternation he had caused among the women. They knew that Joseph was righteous: they had seen the Signs of Allah in his wonderful personality and his calm and confident fortitude. But, it was argued, it was better that one man (even if righteous) should suffer in prison rather than that many should suffer from the extraordinary disturbance he was unwittingly causing in their

[36] And there entered the prison with him two young men.⁵⁷ One of them said, 'I saw myself (in a dream) pressing wine.⁵⁸ The other said, 'I saw myself carrying bread on my head, and the birds eating thereof. Tell us the interpretation thereof. We perceive you as of those who do good.'

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانٍ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا
إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي
أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ
مِنْهُ تَبَيَّنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] He said, 'The food you two are fed with will not be brought to you, but I will have told you about the interpretation thereof, before it comes to you.⁵⁹ This is of those things that my Lord has taught me.⁶⁰ I have forsaken the religion of those who do not believe in Allah and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter.⁶¹

قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلَّا تَبَيَّنْتُكُمْ
بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ذَلِكَمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي
رَبِّي إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

social life. Not for the first nor for the last time did the righteous suffer plausibly for the guilt of the guilty. And so Joseph went to the prison - for a time."

57. It is said that the two were personal servants of the Egyptian king. One of them a wine server, while the other a baker. The king learnt that they had been poisoned, so he imprisoned them (Ibn Jarir).

58. Following the `Omani dialect, Ibn `Abbas and Dahhak have understood the textual word "*khamran*" as "*inaban*" meaning grapes. In fact, it is said that `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud's copy of the Qur`an read "*inaban*" instead of "*khamran*" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

59. Suddi and Ibn Is-haq have understood the verse as follows: "The food you two are fed with (in your dreams) will not be brought to you, but I will tell you about the interpretation thereof, before it (actually) comes to you." Ibn Jurayj however did not accept this interpretation (Ibn Jarir). And most of the commentators have accepted the apparent meaning.

Thanwi adds that Yusuf tried to build his credibility by prefacing his invitation to *Tawhid* with this piece of information: the food does not come to you but I am able to tell you what it is, before it arrives: so, you should believe in me when I say your Lord is one.

[38] I follow the religion of my forefathers, Ibrahim, Is-haq and Ya`qub.⁶² It is not for us to associate aught with Allah.⁶³ This is by virtue of Allah's favor on us - and on the people⁶⁴ - but most people do not give thanks.

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] O my two fellow-prisoners!⁶⁵ Are several lords better, or Allah the One, the Irresistible?

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٩﴾

60. In truth, knowledge is a great blessing from Allah. Yusuf was given beauty. But it brought him nothing but troubles, including imprisonment. But knowledge brought him great rewards including his escape from the prison (Se`di in `Ibar).

61. Asad comments: "Joseph wants to avail this opportunity to guide his two fellow-prisoners to the true faith; and so, while promising that he would explain their dreams presently, he asks them to listen first to a short discourse on the oneness of God."

62. It is notable that when it comes to the right religion, Yusuf speaks first of Ibrahim (*asws*) then Is-haq (*asws*) and then his own father and not his father and upwards. In matters of guidance, lineage-bonds are spiritual. It might also be noted that he does not mention his own prophethood at this point (Au.).

63. This is how Allah treats him who forsakes the false religions of his forefathers and followed the true guidance received from Allah through his Messengers: Allah guides his heart, teaches him what he knew not, and makes out of him a leader for the people to follow (Ibn Kathir).

64. Allah showed His favor to mankind by raising some men from among them as Messengers in order to deliver His warnings (Ibn `Abbas - Ibn Jarir).

Asad adds: "Since God is almighty and Self-sufficient, it is not for His sake that man is warned not to ascribe divine qualities to aught beside Him: the absolute condemnation of this sin is solely designed to benefit man by freeing him from all superstition, and thus enhancing his dignity as a conscious, rational being."

65. Yusuf Ali illustrates the message hidden in words, 'O my two fellow-

[40] You worship not besides Him but names that you and your forefathers have assigned them.⁶⁶ Allah has not sent down any authority touching them. Surely, the commandment is no one's but Allah's, (and) He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the right religion but most people do not know.⁶⁷

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

prisoners': "Note the personal touch again. 'Are we not also companions in misfortune? And may I not speak to you on terms of perfect equality, - as one prisoner to another? Well then, do you really think a conflict of heterogenous gods is better than Allah, the One (and Only). Whose power is supreme and irresistible?"

66. In Majid's words, "they have no existence whatever anywhere save in your imagination; they are names absolutely without any corresponding reality."

Alusi has a subtle point if those could know whom he intended should know: Similar is the situation of those who imagine that they address their acts of worship to Allah. They imagine Him to be a huge body sitting on the `Arsh: an idea that both knowledge and reason reject. The Name that He has ascribed unto Himself is altogether different from the name they imagine for Him. In

other words, what they worship is but a name. It has no existence beyond their imagination.

67. Yusuf introduced this piece of advice before offering them the interpretation perhaps because he feared that they might not pay him attention later. The verse also speaks volumes about faith in Allah before anything else, and that, in its final analysis, the relationship between Him and His slaves is more important than their relationship with other mortals, even if they are Messengers. In this case, although one of them was a few days away from death, Yusuf did not invite them to belief in his own Messengership. He told them to simply have faith in Allah and forsake false gods. When trying to understand *ahadith* such as, "Whoever said 'There is no deity besides Allah,' entered Paradise," one might keep this verse before him (Au.).

[41] O my two fellow-prisoners! As for one of you, he will serve wine to his master; and as for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat of his head. The affair about which you inquire has already been decreed.⁶⁸

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي
رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُصَلَّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ
الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَضَيَّ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ
تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And, of the two, he said to him about whom he thought would escape (death), ‘Mention me in the presence of your master.’⁶⁹ But Shaytan caused him to forget to mention (him) to his master,⁷⁰ and so he remained in the prison for a few (more) years.⁷¹

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي
عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ فَأَنَسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ
فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

68. Reports say that the two did not like the interpretation at all, and so changed their stance, saying that they were merely testing him, having actually seen nothing of that sort. Yusuf then added these words, “Thus is decreed the affair about which you two enquire” (Ibn Jarir). This opinion has been attributed to Ibn Mas`ud also (Ibn Kathir).

“When a slave girl will give birth to her master (rabbaha).”

69. It was a request to intimate the king that a person wholly innocent was undergoing imprisonment (Majid, slightly altered).

70. The translation herewith follows the understanding of the great majority. However, a few have understood the verse as, “Shaytan made him (Yusuf) forget his Lord.” And, therefore, since he had sought the help of ‘other than Allah,’ “Yusuf had to stay in the prison a few years more as punishment.” In fact, a *hadith* has also been quoted to this effect. One is in Ibn Jarir. But Ibn Kathir says that it has been declared as untrustworthy. Rashid Rida builds on it and says that even if it is accepted that Yusuf momentarily forgot his Lord, it need not have brought punishment on him. After all, the Qur`an instructed the Final Prophet, (6: 68):

To the extra-sensitive who wonder at the usage of the word “*rabbik*” in this verse, Qurtubi reminds of the *hadith* predicting the approach of the Doomsday, which has a similar usage:

إِذَا رَأَيْتِ الْمَرْأَةَ تَلِدُ رَبَّهَا

وَأَمَّا يُسَيِّئُكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَتَّعِدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِ مَعَ
الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ [الأَنْعَامُ : ٦٨]

[43] And the king said,⁷² 'I have been seeing seven fat cows being devoured by seven skinny ones; likewise, seven green ears of corn and seven others withered ones. O chiefs, give me (your) opinion about my dream if you know how to interpret dreams.'

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعَ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ الْأَعْيُنِ فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

"And if Shaytan makes you forget, then do not sit after the remembrance with a transgressing people."

It also said (7: 201):

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ [الأعراف : ٢٠١]

"Surely those who fear (their Lord), remember Allah when a thought from Shaytan touches them, and they begin to see (the truth)."

So, temporary forgetfulness of Allah is not a sin, nor it is a sin to seek the help of other than Allah. (It is reliance on them that is disapproved: Au.). Those who have relied on weak *ahadith* such as the above to lay blame on a Prophet, have forgotten the great status of the Prophets in the sight of their Lord.

Imām Razi clarifies that although it is allowable when one is wronged to seek redress from an unbeliever, his own (Razi's) life-long experience, now in his fifty-seventh year, is that

the more one seeks the help of the created, the more complicated things become.

Sayyid offers us his own opinion: Allah (*swt*) did not wish that the man should remember Yusuf. Once out of prison, life returned to its pains and pleasures. And that was good for Yusuf. His release from the prison could not be attributed to a slave. Allah freed Yusuf of the obligation to a mortal (with slight modification).

71. According to most of the authorities the word "bid" is used for a number between three and nine (Ibn Jarir).

Yusuf did not stay in the prison longer than what Allah had willed for him. The attribution to the wine-server forgiving him was only because, apparently, Allah works through means, and, in this case that was the means employed (Au.).

72. Asad supplies us some useful historical data. He writes: "The king seems to have been of the six Hyksos

rulers who dominated Egypt from about 1700 to 1580 B.C., after having invaded the country from the east by way of the Sinai Peninsula. The name of this dynasty, which was undoubtedly of foreign origin, is derived from the Egyptian *hiq shasu* or *heku shoswet*, meaning “rulers of nomad lands”, or - according to the late Egyptian historian Manetho - “shepherd kings”: all of which point to their having been Arabs who, despite the fact that before their invasion of Egypt they were already well-established in Syria, had to a large extent preserved their bedouin mode of life. This would explain the confidence which the king mentioned in this story was later to place in Joseph, the Hebrew, and the subsequent settlement of the latter’s family (and, thus, of what in due course became the Israelite nation) in Egypt; for it must be borne in mind that the Hebrews, too, descended from one of the many Bedouin tribes who some centuries earlier had migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to Mesopotamia and later to Syria (cf. *Surah* 7, note 48); and the language of the Hyksos must have been very akin to Hebrew, which after all, is but an ancient Arabic dialect.”

Mawdudi wrote under an earlier verse: “The 15th dynasty of Hyk-

sos kings ruled Egypt at that time. They were of Arabian descent. Having moved from Palestine and Syria in 3000 B.C. to Egypt, they had seized power in Egypt. Both Arab historians and the commentators of the Qur’ān refer to them as ‘Amaliq (Amalekites). This accords with the recent findings of Egyptologists. In Egypt, their position was that of alien invaders who established themselves owing to internal dissensions obtaining in that country...The Hyksos continued to rule over Egypt till the end of the fifteenth century B.C. However, during this period, political power actually rested with the Israelites. The Qur’ān refers to God’s favour upon them: ‘When He raised Prophets amongst you and appointed you the rulers’ (al-Ma’idah 5: 20). Later on, a massive national uprising took place and led to the overthrow of Hyksos regime and the banishment of 250,000 Amalekites from Egypt. The Hyksos were replaced by a highly bigoted Coptic dynasty which virtually obliterated every remnant of the Amalekite period. The rulers of this dynasty also embarked upon a brutal oppression of the Israelites the details of which have been mentioned in the Qur’ān in connection with the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

[44] They answered, '(These appear like) Confused dreams;⁷³ and, moreover, we are not skilled in the interpretation of dreams.⁷⁴

قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ
الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Said one of the two who had escaped (death)⁷⁵ and who remembered (Yusuf) after that length of time, 'I will get you the interpretation. Send me (to the prison).⁷⁶

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا
أُنْتَبِهُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] 'Yusuf, dear true one. Give us the interpretation of seven fat cows being devoured by seven skinny ones, and seven green ears of corn and another (seven) withered ones, so that I might return to the people that they may know (the meaning).'

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ
بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ
وَسَبْعِ سُبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ
لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ
﴿٤٦﴾

Sayyid Qutb adds that the struggle between the Israelites and the latter day Fara`inah was on the basis of faith. Yusuf had left marks of *Tawhid* on the body-politic of the land (ref. 40: 34) as well as on the Egyptian society. The Fara`inah were idol-worshippers. The common Egyptian had sided with the Fara`inah and had stood up against the Hyksos family, whom they called Hyksos in their hatred which meant in their language pigs.

73. Qurtubi points out that this verse proves that if a true dream is wrongly interpreted, it has no effect on the predetermined outcome. In this case, the king saw a true dream which was interpreted as "confused dreams" by those who knew nothing

of the art of interpretation. But that did not matter. The dream came out true as rightly interpreted by Yusuf.

This might have been an exceptional case, otherwise the opinion of the scholars is that if wrongly interpreted, a dream might bring that on real life (Au.).

74. Alternatively, they could have meant to say that, firstly, it seemed to be a medley of confused dreams, which do not call for interpretation, and secondly, even if it was a true meaningful dream, they were, after all, administrators of the kingdom and not interpreters of dreams (Thanwi).

75. That is, the other of the two in the prison with Yusuf was sent to the

[47] He said,⁷⁷ 'You shall sow for seven years as usual. Then what you harvest you shall leave in the corn except a little whereof you eat.'⁷⁸

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأَبًا فَمَا
حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] Then will come after them seven hard (years) that will exhaust what you would have saved for them, all but a little that you keep in store.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعَ شِدَادٍ يَأْكُلْنَ
مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ
﴿٤٨﴾

gallows. Qur'ānic illustrations are like a painting in which an observer follows a painter as he paints. He does not get all the details until the painter has finished his task, touching up here and there, as he works on towards its completion. The onlooker does not lose his interest because of the surprising details that the painter's brush-strokes reveal. And, since the onlooker would have failed to notice the significance of a detail here or a detail there until the painter has finished, he has to look at the painting several times to learn the significance of every detail. It is another thing that since the painting is large, the onlooker is never able to understand the whole of it at any time. He must keep shifting his sight of emphasis from detail to detail and connect their significance in his mind if he wishes to appreciate the meaning and significance of the whole. This is how the Qur'ānic illustration is. Consequently, a reader

of the Qur'ān is never satiated with it - whether it is Yusuf's story, that of other Prophets and their missions, or other illustration, the effect is the same. Every time he reads the Qur'ān, a new aspect comes to the fore. One question. How can one be sure that the result of his exercises is not the work of imagination? Simple. He might consult someone who has attempted a similar exercise, and, to his joy, he will discover that the other person has also reached similar conclusions. It is truly then that one feels the conviction taking root in his heart that nothing less than revelation explains this characteristic of the Qur'ān (Au.).

76. The choice of words is either to indicate that the butler needed permission to make a trip to the prison, or, as Ibn Jarir has said, the prison was out of town (or both: Au.).

77. Yusuf offered the interpretation instantly without placing a condi-

tion. Such is the character of the godly ones. When asked for a service, they serve, neither asking a price, nor reminding of the past wrongs (based on Thanwi).

78. That is, there is no need to starve during this period. You might consume as usual, but economize a little (from Ibn Jarir).

Imām Razi writes that leaving the grain in the corn assures that it will be less prone to attack by parasites.

We do not know Imām Razi's source of knowledge, whether he experimented, or whether the advantages of storing grains with the ears was commonly known in his time. Modern research, however, has led to the same conclusion, namely, storage of grains left in the ears results in less wastage. The experiments were conducted in Pakistan. Excerpts of the report:

“Fresh harvested wheat with ears was procured. A portion of it was threshed and the grains were used for storage studies.

20 kg grain capacity mud-bins were fabricated according to the standard methods. Wheat ears and grains were separately stored in mud-bins. The bins were covered with inverted

earthen pitchers, sealed with plaster of paris and placed over raised platforms. All the experiments were run in quadruplicate under fully controlled conditions. Studies were also conducted after introducing 100 adult insects (*Tribolium castaneum*) to each storage bin.

The samples were drawn after 45 and 72 days of storage and analysed for insect infestation. Numbers of alive, dead, and egg plugs were counted. Hidden infestation was detected by staining method. Weight of infested grains was also recorded.

“Averages of the replicates were worked out for calculating standard deviation.

“Results: Preliminary examination of the original wheat samples indicated that there was no insect infestation. Storage of wheat grains for 45 days resulted in increase in the number of insects from zero to 146 alive, 2 dead, and 16 egg plugs, whereas it was roughly 10 alive, 3 dead, and no egg plugs in case of wheat ears. The storage bins containing threshed wheat, to which insects were added, contained 314 insects and 34 egg plugs, whereas in case of wheat ears a number of the added insects also died. It is evident from the results that storage of wheat in the form

[49] And then will come after that a year in which the people will be helped (with rain)⁷⁹ and in which they will press (fruit).⁸⁰

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

suggested by the Holy Book resulted in its preservation not only when it was stored as such, but also from the outside attack.

Further extension in the storage period of wheat to 72 days showed increase in the number of insects (dead or alive) and number of egg plugs. The wheat grains stored after adding insects for 72 days, indicated a 3-fold increase in the number of insects, whereas the pattern was almost similar to that for 45 days storage in case of wheat ears.

The wheat stored with ears required almost four times more space than the wheat grains, which may appear uneconomical. However, saving of the losses due to insect infestation, cost of fumigants, and long-life of the storage bin will make this mode of storage feasible.”

(Source: *Islamic Thought & Scientific Creativity*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1991. Study conducted by F.H. Shah, W.H. Shah and Tasnim Kausar)

79. This additional piece was not in the dream, but a prophecy from Yusuf (Ibn Jarir).

Majid commented: “... rains in lower Egypt are frequent. ‘Notwithstanding what some ancient authors write to the contrary, it often rains in Lower Egypt, and even snow has been observed to fall in Alexandria.’ (Sale) See also Ebr. VIII, p. 35. This disposes of the ignorant criticism of Noeldeke, that in Egypt ‘rain is almost never seen.’ (Ebr. XV, p. 900, 11th ed.) Further, there is no mention in the Qur’ān of rain falling in Egypt. It is mankind, that is, the people inhabiting other parts of the earth, adjacent to Egypt that shall have rain, and not Egypt alone. And it is precisely in these countries that occasion the inundation in Nile - the proximate cause of fertility in Egypt.”

80. That is, you will press grapes for wine, olive for oil, and other seeds and fruits for other purposes (Ibn `Abbas and others - Ibn Jarir).

Majid notes: “The custom of squeezing grapes into a cup is illustrated by Elexes from a text published by Neville from the temple at Edfu, where it is said that grapes squeezed into water formed a refreshing beverage,

[50] The king said, 'Bring him to me.' But when the messenger came to him he said, 'Return to your master and ask him, "What about the women who cut their hands?"'⁸¹ Surely, my Lord is well aware of their guile.'

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ
الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَاسْأَلْهُ مَا
بِأَلِ النِّسْوَةِ اللَّاتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي
بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] He (the king) asked, 'What was your affair when you desired after Yusuf?'⁸² They said, 'Allah's refuge. We did not find any evil in him.' The wife of `Aziz spoke out, 'Now (that) the truth has come to light,⁸³ it was I desired after him, and he is of the truthful.'

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمْ إِذْ رَاودْتُنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ
نَفْسِهِ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ
سُوءٍ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ الْآنَ حَصْحَصَ
الحَقُّ أَنَا رَاودْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

which was drunk by the king (DB, II, p. 272)."

81. Ibn `Abbas has remarked that had Yusuf left the prison then and there, `Aziz would have always harbored doubts about his integrity (Ibn Jarir).

And the Prophet has said (in a *hadith* of the *sahihayn*: Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir),

وَلَوْ لَبِثْتُ فِي السِّجْنِ طُولَ مَا لَبِثَ يُوسُفُ لَأَجَبْتُ
الدَّاعِيَ

"Had I been in prison for as long as Yusuf was, I would have instantly responded" (Ibn Jarir).

The above has been taken from Bukhari.

It may also be noticed that Yusuf - out of respect for his old master -

avoided using the name of his wife. In Mawdudi's words, "... while asking that the king might inquire about the incident, Joseph refers only to the ladies present in the banquet to the exclusion of the chief's wife. This is further proof of his dignified character. For although the chief's wife had attempted to harm him, her husband had been very kind to Joseph. He acted, therefore, with unusual sensitivity and circumspection lest his name and honour were subjected to any slur."

82. "Did you find him inclined to evil?" the king seemed to ask (Alusi).

83. The beauty of the textual word "hass-hasa" may not be missed. It has its root in "*hissa*" which is for a part (of a whole). What it implies is, as the wife of `Aziz put it, the story

[52] ‘This (said Yusuf), so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence,⁸⁴ and that Allah does not lead the guile of the betrayers (to success).⁸⁵

ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

has many parts that are ambiguous and, consequently, each part bears its own doubt, that everyone who knows only that part bears in consequence. Now, at this moment, all the parts have become clear and the doubt that every carrier of a part of the whole bore, has been cleared and the truth behind the episode has become evident (Manar, reworded).

84. In the opinion of Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Is-haq, these are words of Yusuf (Ibn Jarir).

This is also the opinion of Mujahid, Sa`id b. Jubayr, `Ikrimah, Ibn Abi Hudhayl, Dahhak, Hasan and Suddi (Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf said these words when he finally arrived at the king’s place (Qur-tubi).

Mawdudi writes: “It is crystal clear that such a statement (as above) is altogether out of tune with the tenor and character of the chief’s wife. The content of the statement is sufficient to prove that it was made by Joseph rather than by the chief’s wife. Clearly, the virtues of righteousness,

magnanimity, modesty and God-consciousness which underlie the statement are not at all in harmony with the character of the woman who had earlier tried to seduce Joseph...”

Alusi and others have written that this is a typical Qur’anic example of “*ijaz*.” It dropped the details about when exactly Yusuf said these sentences: either in the prison itself, or later, when released and seated in the court.

Nevertheless, despite noting the opinion of the *Salaf*, Ibn Kathir prefers the opinion of his mentor Ibn Taymiyyah who said that these are the words of the wife of ‘Aziz! Shawkani however states that the great majority of commentators have thought that these words fit Yusuf’s tongue.

Faryabi, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu al-Sheikh and Bayhaqi (in his *Sho`ab al-Iman*) have said that when Yusuf said “This, so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence; and that Allah does not guide the guile of the

[53] Yet I do not absolve myself (altogether). Verily, the base self is the inciter to evil⁸⁶ – except that my Lord should show mercy. Surely, my Lord is All-forgiving, All-merciful.’

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ
بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

betrayers (to success),” Jibril asked him in a whisper, “Not even when you desired after her?” So Yusuf added the words, “Yet I do not absolve myself (altogether)” - Shawkani.

The above report is from Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Abu Hudhayl, Hasan and Abu Saleh. According to another report it was `Aziz’s wife who whispered, “not even when you ...?” Another opinion is that the king whispered these words to him. Yet another report is that Yusuf himself thought of that situation and added these words. This last report is attributed to Ibn `Abbas also (Ibn Jarir); but none is supported by a *hadith* (Au.).

85. (Yusuf thought it necessary to clear the doubt, so that it would not hang on him for ever). Hence we find that when a two men passed by our Prophet while he was speaking to a woman at night, he called them back saying,

تَعَالَيَْا إِنَّهَا صَفِيَّةُ بِنْتُ حُجَيِّ قَالَا سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ يَا
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَجْرِي مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ مَجْرَى
الدَّمِّ وَإِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ يُلْقِيَنِي فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ شَيْئًا

“Come, this is my wife Safyah bint Huyayy.” They said, “Glory to Allah, O Messenger of Allah.” He said, “*Shaytan* runs through the body of a man like blood. I feared that he will cast something in your hearts.”

Zamakhshari too used to observe this precaution. He had lost one foot (which went cold in a cold season and had to be amputated). He had obtained a certificate from the court to that effect. He used to carry the certificate to places he traveled and displayed it so that people would not imagine that it was chopped off by the law-keepers for a crime he had committed (Alusi, under verse 50); despite the fact that it was the right foot that had been amputated while it is the left foot which is amputated for a crime (Au.).

86. Referring to the textual term “*ammaaratun-bis-su*” (the inciting base self), Imām Razi raises the question about what it is, and then elaborates that although the “*nafs*” (soul, spirit, base self) is one entity, it has many facets of existence. When it is

[54] The king said, 'Bring him to me, I shall free him for myself.'⁸⁷ When he had spoken to him at length, he said, 'Today (onward) you are firmly established in our favor and trust.'⁸⁸

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ أَتُؤْتِي بِهِ أَتَخْلِصُهُ لِنَفْسِي
قَلَّمَا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ
أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

inclined toward the spiritual world and its realities, then it becomes the “*nafs al-mutma'innah*”, (the comforted soul, the soul in peace, or the satisfied soul). When it is inclined toward carnal desires and base emotions, then it becomes the “*ammaaratun-bis-su*”, (inciting to evil). Further, the form may be noted. It is the intensive or hyperbolic form. That is, when base desires overtake it, then the “*nafs*” is all-persistent, all-powerful in its incitement.

Thanwi adds that a third kind of “*nafs*” is “*nafs al-lawwaamah*” (the reproachful soul) which is in between the two and is the name given to it when it is in the state of reproach and repentance.

87. Yusuf Ali comments: “Now that Joseph’s innocence, wisdom, truth, and trustworthiness had been proved, and confirmed by the splendid tribute of the courtier’s wife, and Joseph’s own manly bearing before the king, the king was much impressed and took him specially to serve about his own person as his trusty and confidential Wazir. If,

as is probable, the ‘Aziz had by this time died (for he is never mentioned again) Joseph succeeded to his office, and he is addressed as ‘Aziz in verse 78 below.”

88. Obviously many discussions held in several sessions would have preceded this decision by the king (Au.).

What in truth was Yusuf’s position? Yusuf Ali writes: “He was given plenary powers and the fullest confidence that a king could give to his most trusted and best-proved Wazir or Prime Minister, with access to his Person, like a Grand Chamberlain.”

Majid adds: “According to ancient tradition, ‘the king who made Joseph his prime minister and committed unto his hands the entire administration of Egypt was Apepia’ (Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*, p. 145). ‘Two of the Al-Amarna tablets show that a Semite held a position in Egypt quite analogous to that attributed to Joseph ... The Pharaoh by whom Joseph was made the practical ruler of Egypt was one of the Hykas kings’

[55] He said, 'Appoint me over the store-houses of the land, I am a good keeper,'⁸⁹ knowledgeable.⁹⁰

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾

(JE. VII, p. 252) ... (a little further down) ... 'He was appointed superintendent of the royal granaries with viceregal powers' (VJE, p. 326)."

89. Imām Razi points out that the "hafiz" of the original could also be understood as someone who keeps the law, that is, follows it in its true spirit.

90. Many commentators have pointed out that Yusuf was not boasting of himself, which is prohibited in Islam, rather, making a statement of fact.

People who manage finance usually volunteer their service when there is a lot of money to handle. The credit for its management goes to the manager, whose short-comings and failures are quickly forgiven and forgotten, because there is plenty. But Yusuf proved his worth by volunteering to manage the finance at a time when, according to his own prediction, there was going to be a severe famine for seven long years, crossing the boundaries of the kingdom and hitting across towns and villages from the Western flank of Egypt to

the Eastern flank of Syria (Based on Thanwi and Sayyid Qutb with addition).

Imām Razi raises the legitimacy question of Yusuf seeking control of the granaries when our own Prophet has disapproved for his followers that they should seek governmental positions. He told 'Abdul Rahman b. Samurah:

لا تسأل الإمارة

"Do not ask for leadership (meaning, a role in the government)."

Iman Razi then explains that when one sees that he is the right person for a job, which, if not handled properly, could lead to large scale suffering, then one might seek it.

In Qatadah's opinion Yusuf's example shows that it is allowed for a Muslim to be in the employment of a fasiq (someone of corrupt faith and practice) especially when one sees that the best way of preventing a tyrant from committing aggression is to be on his side. It was especially true in Yusuf's case whose prime

duty as a Prophet was to improve the people's lot. Many of the *Salaf* also accepted such employments (Zamakhshari).

Obviously, it is conditional to not doing wrong to anyone, such as, ordering someone's execution for no fault of his, or confiscating property wrongfully, or breaking the rules of the *Shari'ah* (Au.).

Al-Mawardi has said that two opinions prevailed regarding employment with a *fasiq*. First, it is allowed so long as wrongs are not committed, but second, that such employment is disallowed in all cases. Yusuf did it for special reasons and seemed to have been given power to rule as he wished, at least in his own department. In certain areas, of course, employment should be allowable, such as, collection of *Zakah* and its distribution (Qurtubi). When a person feels that if he did not take up a job of essential nature, then somebody else, unfit for it, might take it up, then it is advisable to accept it (Shafi').

A contemporary commentator wrote: "... it is evident that the present statement made by Joseph (i.e., I am a good keeper, knowledgeable: Au.) was not at all in the nature of an ambitious job-hunter applying to

the king for a government post at the first available opportunity. This statement was in fact the last in a series of efforts made by Joseph to push open the door to the desired transformation of the entire system. Thus, this marked the culmination of Joseph's rise to moral authority which had proceeded apace for a period of ten to twelve years.

"The time was thus quite ripe and all that Joseph had to do was to push gently, and the door to the desired transformation would be flung open. For Joseph had come a long way."

Further down he writes, "Now, what was the nature and extent of the power that Joseph sought and which was entrusted to him? Those who are not fully familiar with Joseph's true story tend to interpret the expression 'treasurer of the land' quite literally. They tend to assume that Joseph was perhaps appointed as the treasury or revenue officer, or minister of finance, or minister of food.

"However, in the light of the Qur'anic, *Biblical* and Talmudic accounts of the story, there is no disagreement on the point that Joseph was handed total control (in Roman terminology, dictator) of the Egyptian empire. He enjoyed absolute authority over the affairs of Egypt. Ac-

According to the Qur'an, when Jacob reached Egypt, Joseph was seated on his throne so that he 'raised his parents to the throne beside himself' (verse 100). This clearly indicates the extent of authority. The Qur'an also recounts Joseph's remark to the effect that: 'My Lord! You have bestowed dominion on me' (verse 101). Likewise, the officials describe Joseph's cup as the king's cup (see verse 72). Referring to Joseph's rule over Egypt, the Qur'an describes it, 'Thus did We establish Joseph in the land and he had the authority to settle wherever he pleased' (verse 56)."

Comments from the contemporary Mufassir end here, to which we might add: Many scholars objected to the use of the word "dictator" for a Prophet. Technically too it is perhaps incorrect to assume that - even if he was not one - Yusuf commanded the power of a dictator. The Qur'an tells us that following the law of the land, Yusuf could not have taken his brother into Egypt. So, after all, it was the king's law that prevailed and not that of Yusuf! The author was under pressure to explain Yusuf's employment with a non-Islamic government (something he had once declared unlawful), and so was eager to prove that Yusuf established an Islamic system in Egypt, and, therefore, he

enjoyed absolute rule. That could be, but, what kind of Islamic system it was, if the people were not Muslims? The Qur'an tells us by implication that the Egyptians had not become Muslims. Several centuries later, a believer, pleading Musa's case, said to the Pharaoh and his courtiers, (40: 34), "And Yusuf came to you earlier with clear signs, but you ceased not to doubt what he had brought, until, when he died at length, you said, 'Allah will never raise a Messenger after him.'"

The author argues that Yusuf was implementing the *Shari'ah* gradually and so it took him time to alter the laws. But he also states that Yusuf was all-powerful. If he was all-powerful, surely a law that did not allow foreigners to settle in the kingdom could not have come in the way of him retaining his brother Bin Yamin: if not by law, then, as an exceptional case. All he would have needed was to drop a word in passing to the king. In fact, law or no law, he could have retained him, if he had the powers of a dictator.

There are other difficulties in assuming that Yusuf was all-powerful in Egypt. It is inconceivable that the king should have invested all powers with an inexperienced and un-

tried Yusuf, brushing aside his ever-intriguing long time courtiers and experienced viziers, seeing that the ruling class is not mighty fond of moralistic men occupying a position between them. A partial answer lies in Mujahid's statement that the king had become a Muslim. That is, having embraced Islam, perhaps secretly, he had appointed Yusuf with special powers, for a special jurisdiction created for him, not disturbing others of his ministers, who perhaps enjoyed their own freedom under their separate jurisdictions. As to the difficulty in explaining the king's imposition of his own law in place of the Divine law, Thanwi answered that perhaps he had embraced Islam but fearing the general populace, kept it secret, and therefore was unable to declare the centuries old law of the land, null and void. This simple approach saves the need for a lot of contrived explanations (Au.).

Sayyid Qutb follows a different line of thought. After quoting some of the prophetic reports concerning the undesirability of seeking leadership role, and, vying for it, as Yusuf did when he said, "I am a good keeper, knowledgeable," Sayyid comments that these rules are not universal to be incorporated into every Revelation of every age. Possibly, they were

not in force at the time of Yusuf. Impatient with those who indulge in legalities of minor importance, Sayyid launches a criticism against the "*fuqahaa*" for cold-blooded discussion of issues of least importance as if the religion of Islam is nothing but a set of do's and don't do's devoid of the warmth of a revolutionary movement out to change life and civilization. He writes, "We do not wish to attempt explanations to the objections raised, although these objections do not seem to be entirely groundless. But we believe that the primary issues are different and more serious: in their nature and implications, with aspects of grave importance that must be looked into for a proper understanding of the way in which arguments and evidences are presented, and in order to restore meaning to the 'principles of jurisprudence,' the rules that issue forth from that quarter, their true spirit, and give it back the warmth that should go with it - a warmth which has cooled with time and has solidified in the minds of the jurists and in the system that governs it, inherited from the days of slumber and inaction.

"The fact may not be lost sight of that the Islamic jurisprudence did not develop in a vacuum, nor does it

exist today in a vacuum. The Islamic jurisprudence that was developed by the Muslim society, faced in its time real situations of life. Also, the Islamic jurisprudence did not develop the Muslim society. It was the Muslim society that developed the Islamic jurisprudence: as it passed during its own development process through real situations of life dealing with real problems, and not imaginary ones. These historic realities should be an accessory to understanding the spirit of Islamic jurisprudence and the dynamics contained in the rules of its law.

“Those who lift the rulings from the books of law prepared by the past generation of jurists, without understanding the above facts, and without reference to the situations in which those rules were formulated, the realities that they faced at that time, and the conditions in which they lived, those who do that, try to impose the rules now as if they were developed in a vacuum, and, as if, today also they could be applied to a situation of vacuum. Such men are not “*fuqahaa*” for, they understand nothing of the nature of this religion.

“The dynamic jurisprudence of the past differs greatly from the ‘paperwork jurisprudence’ of today. This

fact must not be lost sight of by today’s jurists who have to, per force, draw from and depend on the rules and principles labored out in the past.

“Dynamic jurisprudence considers the realities of the situation in which the principles were once laid down, and believes that those realities were part and parcel of the rules that were then developed, such realities as cannot be separated from them without destroying their very fabric.”

He writes further down, “Those who ruminate over the ‘Islamic System’ today, and consider its forms, or those who write on these topics, wander into a trackless region. That is because they try to apply the Islamic rules with their juristic details, worked out long ago, to a vacuum. They try to implement them in the present day *Jahiliyy* society, as it exists. But today’s *Jahiliyy* society can be considered a vacuum so far as application of Islamic laws are concerned. None of those rules can be applied to it today with any success. Its construction is in complete contradiction with a true Islamic society. The present day society will have to come out from its present day environs and enter into that of Islam wholly, and be ready to face the pres-

[56] Thus We established Yusuf securely in the land, to dwell therein as he felt pleased.⁹¹ We touch whom We will with Our mercy and do not let go waste the reward of those who do good.⁹²

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا
مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ
﴿٥٦﴾

[57] (But) the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for the faithful and the godfearing.

وَلَا جُزْءَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا
يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] Then came Yusuf's brothers (into town) and entered on him. He recognized them but they recognized him not.⁹³

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ
وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

sure and persecutions that every Islamic society has to face during its formation, offer sacrifices, undergo tribulations and demonstrate patience and perseverance - from the point of start to the point of culmination - to benefit from these Islamic laws.”

91. Some commentators have thought that the ‘Aziz (reported to be a eunuch) being dead by then, Yusuf and Zulaykha got married, but this is not supported by any *hadith* (Alusi, Shabbir).

92. Sufyan b. ‘Uyayna has said that a believer is rewarded for his good deeds both in this world as well as in the next, in contrast to the unbeliever who is recompensed for his good deeds in this world alone (Kashshaf).

93. When they had last seen each other, Yusuf’s brothers were already grown up men while, he was but a lad - and all lads look alike. Twenty long years transformed him into a full blown personality, incredibly beautiful, in no way the shadow of the lad the brothers had dropped into the well. Moreover, the contours of his face might have completely faded from their memory (Au.).

Yusuf Ali puts it so tellingly: “.. when the ten selfish brothers, driven by famine, came from Canaan to buy corn. Joseph, though so great a man, kept the details of the famine department in his own hands, otherwise there might have been waste. But to the public he (Yusuf) was a mighty Egyptian administrator, probably in Egyptian dress, and with all the

[59] When he had furnished them with their supplies, he said, '(Next time) Bring me the brother of yours from the father's side.⁹⁴ Do you not see that I give full measure and that I am the best of the hosts?

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] But if you bring him not to me, no more measure is there for you with me; (indeed), you need not come near me.⁹⁵

فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] They said, 'We shall persuade his father to yield him. Surely, we shall press for that.'

قَالُوا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

paraphernalia of his rank about him. When his brothers came, he knew them, but they did not know he was Joseph. In their thoughts was probably some menial slave in a remote household, perhaps already starved to death in these hard times."

94. Perhaps he got them come out with the information about a brother who had not come along (Au.).

95. Although authoritative sources are missing, the details as given by the commentators fit into the verse. As worded by Thanwi, Yusuf's brothers requested Yusuf that they deserved an extra load for a brother who could not come because his father would not let him go. He asked them the details of their brother, although he knew, and they told him that he was by another mother and very dear to the father. Yusuf told

them that the rules did not allow that anyone be given an extra load for an absentia. If they were truthful about their brother, next time they should bring him along. But, if they failed, it would mean they had lied and therefore, in such an event there will be no provision for them either. In fact, they need not even come near him: "Bring me the brother of yours from the father's side. Do you not notice that I give full measure and that I am the best of the hosts? But if you bring him not to me with you, there will be no measure for you with me, and do not come near me."

As regards why was it that neither Yusuf went to his family, nor asked the brothers to bring their father, Qurtubi and others have answered that it is likely that Yusuf was following Allah's instructions in this regard.

[62] He told his pages, 'Put their merchandise⁹⁶ back in their saddle-bags so that they recognize it when they return to their people - hopefully, they will return.'

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] So, when they returned to their father they said, 'O our father. We have been denied the measure;⁹⁷ therefore, send with us our brother, that we may obtain the measure (for him). And, for certain we shall be his guardians.'

فَلَمَّا رَجِعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا أَخَانًا نَكْتَلُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] He remarked, 'Shall I trust you with him except in the manner I trusted you with his brother earlier? At all events, Allah is the best of Guardians. And He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.'⁹⁸

قَالَ هَلْ آمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا آمَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

But the more likely reason could be that with the crisis in full swing, the chief administrator could not move out for a day (Au.).

96. It could have been an expensive metal-ware such as of silver. Alternatively, some other expensive merchandise, barter being the most common form of trade in the ancient times (Au.).

97. The translation follows Ibn Jarir's understanding who says that each of the ten brothers were given one load as provision but were denied the eleventh for their brother Bin Yamin who had not come.

98. These words are from someone who had lost a most promising beloved son earlier, and was facing the prospects of losing another (Au.).

[65] And when they opened their baggage they found their merchandise returned to them. They cried out, 'O our father. What more do we want? Here are our goods returned to us. (Next time) We shall provide (more) to our family, be watchful of our brother, and obtain an additional animal-load.⁹⁹ This (present one) is a small measure.'¹⁰⁰

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَتَزِدَادُ كَيْلٍ بَعِيرٍ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] He said, 'I shall never send him with you until you give me a firm promise by Allah (that) you will bring him back to me - unless you are overpowered.'¹⁰¹ When they gave him their pledge, he said, 'Allah is witness over what we say.'

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعُولُونَ وَكَيْلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

99. In Mujahid's opinion the "ba`eer" of Yusuf's brothers were donkeys (Ibn Jarir). Zamakhshari adds: It is said that originally "ba`eer" was coined for donkey caravans, but later, with usage it came to be used for camel caravans also. Razi and Qurtubi express the same opinion.

100. Here too, the translation follows Ibn Jarir's understanding (Au.).

Sayyid Qutb derives a meaning that in our knowledge no other commentator has done. He said that when Ya`qub's sons opened their baggage they discovered that their bags contained none of the grains they had gone for, rather, the bags were stuffed

with the goods (of barter) that they had gone with. But we find it hard to conceive this. Firstly, will anyone travel a thousand miles and not check his baggage to ascertain that all was in order before trekking back those one thousand miles? And they were ten! Secondly, if disappointment was waiting for them instead of surprise, then, how do we explain the joyful words "what more do we want?" that they expressed when they opened the bags? (Au.).

101. Attacks by highway robbers, on trade or pilgrimage caravans treading their way through deserts, mountains and forests was order of the day as late as early twentieth century (Au.).

[67] He also said, 'O my sons. Do not enter (their city) by one gate. Enter by different gates.¹⁰² I cannot avail you anything against Allah. The command is but for Allah. In Him I have placed my trust. And in Him should those wishing to trust may place their trust.'¹⁰³

وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ
وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي
عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ
إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] When they entered after the manner their father had advised them, (although) nothing would avail them against Allah, except that it was a desire in Ya'qub's heart that he needed satisfied; and indeed, he was a man of knowledge for what We had taught him.¹⁰⁴ But most people do not know.¹⁰⁵

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ آبَاؤُهُمْ
مَا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا
حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسٍ يَعْذُوبُ فَضَاهَا وَإِنَّهُ
لَدُوِّ عِلْمٍ لَمَّا عَلَّمْنَاهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] And when they entered upon Yusuf, he drew his brother unto himself. He said, 'I am indeed your brother. Therefore, grieve not over what they have been doing.'

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ
قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

102. This he advised to avoid the evil eye, they being handsome men (Ibn Jarir from the earliest scholars), and, as Asad put it, "in order not to attract undue attention in the foreign land and possibly fall prey to intrigues."

The verse also tells us by implication that if one fears envy he might conceal Allah's blessings from the envious (Shafi').

103. These verses show the extent to which parents need to go with their spoiled children, observing extreme

patience, rather than cutting off relationship with them (Ma'arif).

104. That is, Sufyan said, he lived according to his knowledge, for, he who does not live by his knowledge, has no knowledge (Ibn Jarir).

105. That is, most people do not know that although we are required to adopt means to achieve our objectives, it is not the means that play the role in bringing the results to light, rather, the decisive factor is Allah's own plan (based on Thanwi).

[70] And when he had prepared their baggage, he placed the drinking goblet in his brother's saddlebag. Then a caller called, 'O caravan! You are thieves.'¹⁰⁶

قَلَّمَا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ
فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيُّهَا الْعَبْرُ
إِنَّكُمْ لَسَارِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] They said, coming forward, 'What is it that you are missing?'

قَالُوا وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

106. It is said that Yusuf allowed them to dislodge and leave. When they were at a distance, he sent an employee behind them to raise the issue of the goblet (Ibn Jarir).

Asad refers to Imām Razi's comments but draws a conclusion which Imām Razi perhaps did not. He writes: "Commenting on this verse, Razi says: 'Nowhere in the Qur'ān is it stated that they made this accusation on Joseph's orders; the circumstantial evidence shows rather (*al-aqrab ila zahir al-hal*) that they did this on their own accord; for, when they had missed the drinking-cup, [these servants of Joseph remembered that] nobody had been near it [except the sons of Jacob], and so it occurred to them that it was they who had taken it.'"

Asad then draws the conclusion that Joseph never contrived the incident. He writes, "Joseph had wanted to keep Benjamin with himself, but under the law of Egypt he could

not do this without the consent of his half-brothers, who were the legal guardians of their half-brother; and they - bound as they were by the solemn promise given to their father - would certainly not have agreed to Benjamin's remaining behind. The only other alternative open to Joseph was to disclose his identity to them; but since he was not yet prepared to go so far, he was obliged to allow Benjamin to depart with his brothers. The accidental discovery of his gift, entirely unexpected by Joseph changed everything; for now Benjamin appeared to be guilty of theft, and under the law of the land Joseph was entitled to claim him as his slave, and thus to keep him in his house. The words, 'in this way did We contrive for Joseph [the attainment of his heart's desire]', referring to the incident of the cup, indicate that its final outcome was neither planned nor even foreseen by Joseph."

Although apparently the above idea sounds plausible, it has several loop-

[72] They said, 'We are missing the king's goblet.¹⁰⁷ Whoever brings it shall have a beast-load (of provision), and I am a guarantor thereof.'

قَالُوا تَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ
حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] They said, 'By Allah, you know well that we have not come to work corruption in the land, and we have not been thieving!'

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا جِئْنَا لِنَفْسِدَ فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] They said, 'Alright. What should be the requital of this (deed), if you should be liars?'

قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ
﴿٧٤﴾

[75] They said, 'His requital?! He, in whose baggage it is found, is himself the requital thereof.¹⁰⁸ That is how we recompense the wrongdoers.'

قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ
جَزَاؤُهُ كَذَلِكَ نُجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

holes: (1) If it is assumed that Joseph gave it to him as a gift, then why Bin Yamin did not protest and say it was gifted to him? (2) If Joseph had given him the cup, why did he not own up when the servants found it missing, saying, it was he who had gifted it to Bin Yamin? (3) Why did the servants act on their own? Why did they not, when they found the cup missing, inquire with the owner of the cup, Yusuf himself? Rather, the explanation as given by other commentators sounds more plausible which says that Yusuf was acting by the commandment of Allah in all that he did. This also explains why he did not try to get his suffering father to Egypt rather than the lad, who would have been, after all, happy anywhere. As Imām Razi has suggested, (as also Shafi') that perhaps Allah wished

to try Ya`qub further (and raise his ranks), and so got the second son (the dearest of his sons to him after Yusuf: Au.), also removed from him. We may recall Ibrahim's slaughter of his son.

We might also point out that the only part in which Razi is with Asad is that it was the crier and not Yusuf who accused his brothers of theft.

107. Most early commentators have said that the "suwa'" of this and the "siqayah" of the earlier verse are different names for the same thing. It used to be a large goblet, or mug, two-eared, that was used for drinking wine. `Abbas b. `Abdul Muttalib had one in use in pre-Islamic times (Ibn Jarir).

108. The punishment for theft in their land (Canaan) was that the

[76] So he¹⁰⁹ began with their baggage before his (full) brother's baggage. Then he pulled it out of his brother's baggage.¹¹⁰ Thus We contrived for Yusuf.¹¹¹ It was not possible for him to take his brother by the law of the king, unless Allah willed.¹¹² We raise the ranks of whom We will. And, over everyone possessed of knowledge, (there) is someone (more) knowing.¹¹³

قَبْدًا بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وَعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ
اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وَعَاءِ أَخِيهِ كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا
لِيُوسُفَ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ
الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ تَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ
مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

thief was given away in slavery to the owner of the goods stolen (Ibn Jarir). Sayyid adds: The period of slavery depended on the amount stolen.

109. "He", i.e., one of Yusuf's deputies, while perhaps Yusuf stood around, supervising (Au.).

110. Yusuf Ali notes the switch from "*rahl*" of verses 70 and 75, to "*wi'ayah*" of this verse and explains: "The Arabic word here used is '*wi'aun*,' pl. '*au'iyah*,' which includes bags, lockers, boxes, or any receptacle in which things are stored. Notice the appropriateness of the words used. The cup was concealed in a saddle-bag ('*rahl*'), verse 70 above. When it comes to searching, they must search all the baggage of every description if the search was to be convincing and effective."

111. Such contriving, called *tawriyah*, is allowed in the Islamic *Shari'ah* so long as it does not contradict a

law of Islam or wrong anyone. But, if it is to avoid an obligation then it is disallowed, such as, e.g., playing with the accounts to avoid paying *Zakah*, or taking up a journey to avoid fasting, etc. (Au.).

112. That is, the law of the land did not allow that a thief be taken slave for theft, rather, a fine was levied on him in accordance with the worth of property stolen. But, in case of Bin Yamin, his brothers committed themselves to avoid the law and thus Allah made it possible for Yusuf to retain his brother with him (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi wrote: "Obviously, Joseph himself suggested putting the drinking-cup in Benjamin's saddle-bag... A careful study of the relevant verses brings out one fact very clearly - that the servants asked the suspected culprits to state the punishment for theft. In response, they mentioned

the punishment laid down by Abrahamic law. This served two purposes. Firstly, it enabled Joseph to act according to Abrahamic law. Secondly, it enabled Joseph to detain Benjamin rather than send him to prison.”

He further writes: “It was unbecoming of Joseph, as a Prophet, to follow Egyptian law in a matter that related to him personally. The scheme which had been devised to retain his brother presented one problem. Joseph could have detained his brother but in order to do so it would have been necessary to have recourse to Egyptian penal Law. This was unbecoming of a Prophet who had taken authority into his own hands in order to replace man-made laws with those of God.

“Had God so willed, He could have let Joseph - a Prophet - commit this mistake. However, God did not do so. Thus, thanks to God’s inspiration, a way out of the difficulty was found. An inquiry was addressed to Joseph’s brother. What punishment was laid down for a thief?”

Further down he writes, “In this way God bestowed His favour upon Joseph and demonstrated His infinitely superior knowledge. What could be a greater means of exalting Joseph’s

position that this? When out of human weakness, Joseph was on the verge of committing an error God planned from on high and found a way to prevent this from happening. Such an exalted status is conferred only on those who prove their mettle after successfully going through a series of tests. Now, although Joseph (peace be on him) was quite knowledgeable and acted wisely, there was nevertheless a gap in the plan he had devised.”

The quote from the commentator ends here.

By way of comment on the above statement, the following may be said: Apart from the casual manner of treating a Prophet, the arguments above suffer a few inconsistencies. A few things are first supposed and then solutions offered; e.g., Yusuf is put on the verge of committing an error, and then rescued with a contrived solution. One might also ask, was Yusuf (*asws*) aware of the Egyptian Law or not? Did his plan take into the consideration that Yusuf’s brothers might have replied, “He has broken Egyptian Law and so let him be judged by Egyptian Law? If we let our imagination run wild, to judge Prophets, it runs into wilderness (Au.).

[77] They said, 'If he has stolen, then (no wonder for) a brother of his stole earlier.'¹¹⁴ Yusuf concealed it in himself and disclosed it not to them; but said (to himself), 'You are worst-placed and Allah knows very well (the truth) of what you describe.'¹¹⁵

قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَّهُ مِنْ
قَبْلُ فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ يَبْدِيهَا
هُمْ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَّانًا وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
تَصِفُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

Sayyid Qutb comments: "The usage of the word 'din' here is a very accurate way of expressing what the word stands for in all its implications. The usage here defines it as the law by which a land is governed. The law of the land did not allow Yusuf to take his brother unto himself. That was only possible by the law of Ya`qub (*asws*) which his brothers agreed to apply. Thus, law, of either side, was termed as the 'din.'

"This is the implication of the word that the people of the contemporary pagandom miss to note: be they Muslims or non-Muslims.

"They restrict its application to doctrinal matters or rituals, or modes of worship. They assume that whoever believes in Allah, His Messenger, angels, revelations, the Last Day and the Divine Decree, good and bad of it, and who performs the rituals of worship, is within the folds of Allah's religion, whoever else he might be submitted to other than Allah in matters of law refusing Allah's judgment in all affairs of life.

"The true implication of "*din*uAllah" is either missing or remains obscure in the minds of the masses, and, if it exists, its true implication is consigned to some remote corner of the mind, clouded with vagueness."

113. That is, every knowledgeable person has another over him, more knowledgeable, the series ending with Allah (Au.).

114. That is, if he has stolen, then no wonder, since his brother, also from the same mother, had earlier stolen, meaning, "we, the rest of us being from a different mother, are unlike him and his brother" (Razi).

Qurtubi comments: What they meant is, "sharing of pedigree gives rise to similarity in characteristics."

In explanation of the statement of Yusuf's brothers, two stories were in circulation among the commentators: none confirmed by a *hadith*. One, Yusuf had stolen an idol from an aunt's house (or from a temple: Kashshaf), and thrown it away. The

[78] They pleaded, 'O `Aziz!¹¹⁶ He has a father, much advanced in years;¹¹⁷ so accept one of us in his place;¹¹⁸ we see you as one of those who do good.'

قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا
كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] He said, 'Allah forbid that we should take (any other) but him in whose possession we found our property. Surely, in that event, we would be wrong-doers.'

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا
مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَطَّالِمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

reference is to that theft. Another story goes that Yusuf was brought up by her aunt, a daughter of Is-haq. When the time came for Yusuf to be taken away, she pleaded for more time. In course of time she hid her belt (that she had inherited from Is-haq - a kind of a dear article, inherited generations after generations) in Yusuf's garments and then made noise that it had been stolen. Upon search it was discovered on him and, by this guile she was able to keep him with herself longer, until she died (Tabari, Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir).

"In fact," Qurtubi writes, "Yusuf could have learnt the trick of concealing the goblet in his brother's baggage from that childhood incident." (That is, if it is true – Au.).

115. What is it that Yusuf concealed from them? The answer is, the words that follow: "Rather, you are worst-placed" (Ibn Jarir).

116. Their addressing Yusuf by the title suggests that either the older 'Aziz (Qitfir) had been removed or was dead (Qurtubi).

117. Note that they did not say about their father that apart from being old, he was a Prophet too; a statement they were very likely to make if they knew Yusuf as a Prophet. And, had he been holding the position of authority as a Prophet, surely, he would be 'known' as that and not as 'Aziz, or a king, etc., especially to his brothers (Au.).

118. Qurtubi comments: They could not have been serious about letting another be enslaved in place of Bin Yamin. Rather, they would have meant to make a point of the seriousness of the situation if Bin Yamin was retained. It was in the same manner as someone would say, "Kill me, rather than do this," by which of course it does not mean that kill-

[80] When they were despaired of moving him, they held a conference in private. The senior-most of them said,¹¹⁹ 'Do you not know that your father took a firm pledge from you by Allah? And (remember) how you failed in (your duty to) Yusuf? So, I shall not leave the land until my father permits me, or Allah judges for me. And surely, He is the best of judges.

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْأَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ فَلَنْ أَبْرِحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] Return to your father and say, "O our father! Indeed, your son committed theft. And we bear witness to naught but what we know; and surely, we were not guardians of the Unseen."¹²⁰

ارْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ آبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلَّمَنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] And inquire the town we were in,¹²¹ and the caravan we came with. Indeed we are truthful."

وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعِيرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] He said, 'Rather, your own minds have concocted (this) story.¹²² Therefore, (my recourse is to) graceful patience. It is possible that Allah will bring them all back to me.¹²³ Verily, He is the Knowing, the Wise.'

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبِرْ جَمِيلًا عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٨٣﴾

ing the man is really an option. Yusuf could have also understood that what they really wished was the release of Bin Yamin, which he denied, turning back their own words on them.

119. It is said that although not the eldest, he was the best of them in character and the most knowledgeable and hence the most esteemed.

120. That is, when we gave the pledge to you to bring back Bin Yamin with us, we did not know that he would steal: an event of the Unseen.

121. The city alluded to was the capital of Egypt.

122. The allusion could be not merely to the news of Bin Yamin having committed theft, but to the whole story beginning with the sons claim-

[84] Then turning away from them he said, 'O (my) grief for Yusuf!'¹²⁴ His eyes turned white from grief,¹²⁵ but he was very suppressing (of sorrow).¹²⁶

وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسْفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ
وَأَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ
﴿٨٤﴾

ing that they were denied any further supplies, if they would not bring Bin Yamin with them, until the explanation of why he and the other brother had not returned with the rest (Razi).

123. That is, all the three missing so far - and the best of the lot (Au.).

124. Of the three missing, Ya`qub specifically mentioned Yusuf perhaps because he was the only one about whom he did not know whether he was dead or alive (from Asad).

125. The blindness was perhaps because of a lot of crying in grief, and hence the words (Au). Zamakhshari writes that once Hasan b. 'Ali cried over someone who had died. When asked to explain he said, "Ya`qub cried for his son without Allah censuring him."

A little further down Imām Razi raises the doubt that it is normally said that a heart filled with the love of other than Allah cannot love Al-

lah, the heart being a container that can contain either this or that, and then answers that love and grief over someone do not rule out love of Allah. In fact, one filled with grief can be very oft-turning to Allah.

After all, did our Prophet not cry when his son Ibrahim died? - saying,

تَدْمَعُ الْعَيْنُ وَيَحْزَنُ الْقَلْبُ وَلَا تَقُولُ إِلَّا مَا يَرْضَىٰ رَبُّنَا
وَاللَّهُ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّا بِكَ لَمَحْزُونُونَ

"The eye sheds tears, the heart grieves, but we do not utter what will displease Allah. By Allah, we are, O Ibrahim, in grief (at your departure)."

What is prohibited is the beating of the faces, tearing of clothes and other such foolish acts (Qurtubi, Alusi and others).

126. Another possible meaning of "kazim", as suggested by Ibn Qutaybah, is that he was filled with grief (Razi).

[85] They remarked, 'By Allah you will never cease remembering Yusuf till you are fatally ill,¹²⁷ or are of the perished.'

قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّىٰ تَكُونَ
حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] He replied, 'I complain my anguish and grief unto Allah alone, and I know from Allah what you do not know.'¹²⁸

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بِنِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ
مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] O my sons! Go and search¹²⁹ for Yusuf and his brother; and do not despair of Allah's mercy.¹³⁰ Surely, none despairs of Allah's mercy but an unbelieving people.¹³¹

يَا بَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِن يُوسُفَ
وَآخِيهِ وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا
يَيْأَسُ مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ
﴿٨٧﴾

[88] So, when they entered upon him they pleaded, 'O `Aziz! Affliction has visited us and our family. And we have come with scanty goods.¹³² (Despite that) give us full measure, and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable.'¹³³

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ
مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُّزْجَاةٍ
فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

127. "Harad" of the text is a condition in which neither the mind nor the body function normally: a condition of severe agony when one is more dead than alive (Ibn Jarir).

Dahh ak and others). In the opinion of the linguist Asma`i, "rawh" is for that feeling which is realized when a cool current of air passes by one's face.

128. The dream of the childhood not yet realized, Ya`qub knew that Yusuf has to come back (Au.).

131. That is because the unbelievers do not know that Allah (*swt*) has power over all things. Hence, to be in despair - someone who has lost hope - is considered a major sin in Islam. A step further, to be in despair out of belief that Allah is incapable of rescue, is disbelief (Alusi, Thanwi and others).

129. The beauty of the textual word should not be missed: "tahassu" stands for a search involving the various senses of the body (Qurtubi and others).

130. The "rawh" of the text could mean both "mercy" as well as "relief" (Ibn Jarir from Suddi, Qatadah,

132. The textual "muzjat" is applicable both to what is "scanty" as well as to what is of "poor quality" - in ei-

[89] He asked, 'Are you aware of what you did with Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant?'¹³⁴

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ
إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

[90] They cried out, 'Why, are you indeed Yusuf?' He replied, 'I am Yusuf and this is my brother.'¹³⁵ Allah has indeed been gracious unto us. Surely, whoever fears (Him) and endures patiently, verily then, Allah does not let go waste the reward of those who do good.'

قَالُوا أَلَيْسَ لَكَ لِأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ
وَهَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّهُ مَنْ
يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

ther case bits and pieces of merchandise such as wool, rope, cheese, and things of the sort that are not highly valued (Ibn Jarir from the earliest commentators).

Zamakhshari writes that “muzjat” is that merchandise which a trader would refuse to accept because of its poor worth.

Razi adds: Linguistically, “izja” is to push something little by little. They say, “The winds are moving the clouds.” Allah said (24: 43):

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْجِي سَحَابًا

“Do you not see that Allah moves the clouds.”

Note use of the word “yuzji.”

The meaning here, as Zajjaj has said, is that, “We have brought something with which we can just manage to push our lives,” or, “goods that we

can just manage to push in the market” (Au.).

133. The once arrogant brothers, their pride broken, now reduced to begging, are mentally better disposed to learn that the one they had cast into the pit without qualms, had been chosen by Allah and showered with great blessings. An earlier declaration of identity on the part of Yusuf could have led them to jealousy and envy rather than re-evaluation of the self (Au.).

134. The choice of words, Qurtubi points out, (“when you were ignorant”) indicates that the brothers had not only grown up in age but had also undergone reform.

135. So, Allah’s words came true (verse: 15):

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَهُمْ بِأَقْرَبِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ
[يوسف : ١٥]

[91] They said, 'By Allah! Allah has preferred you over us; and certainly, we have been sinners.'¹³⁶

قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ آتَيْنَا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

[92] He said, 'No reproach on you this day.'¹³⁷ Allah will forgive you. He is the most merciful of those who show mercy.

قَالَ لَا تَتْرِبْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] Go, with this shirt of mine, and cast it on my father's face; he will become seeing.'¹³⁸ And bring me your entire household.'

اٰذْهَبُوْا بِمِصْرِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَّجْهِ اٰبِيْ يٰٓاْتِ بَصِيْرًا وَّاْتُوْنِيْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ اٰجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

"We revealed unto him that you will (one day) remind them of this their deed, while they would be unaware" - Razi.

Yusuf added, "and this is my brother" to remove any doubt about his identity: I am not any Yusuf, rather, Bin Yamin's very brother (Thanwi).

136. Linguistically, "*khatiyy*" would mean erroneous. But, as Razi has pointed out, there is a difference between "*mukhtiyy*" and "*khatiyy*." The former is for someone who commits an error unknowingly, while the latter for one who does it intentionally - an instance of Qur'anic accuracy. Hence our rendition, "sinners" - (Au.).

137. These are the words that our Prophet uttered when he had over-

come the Makkans. After his victory (over those that had persecuted him and his followers for full 20 years: Au.) he asked his enemies:

"ماذا تظنون يا معشر قريش" قالوا: خيرا، أخ كريم، وابن أخ كريم وقد قدرت، قال: "وأنا أقول كما قال أخي يوسف" لا تتريب عليكم اليوم

"What are you expecting, O Quraysh?" They said, "Good. A generous brother, and the son of a generous brother, and you have overpowered. He replied, "Let me tell you now what my brother Yusuf said, 'No reproach upon you this day.'" (Kashshaf, Razi, Qurtubi).

138. Yusuf could only have known the predicted effect of his shirt on his father's face by Allah's revelation (Razi, Qurtubi).

[94] When the caravan set forth, their father said, 'Indeed, I can sense Yusuf's smell¹³⁹ - if you do not think me doting.'¹⁴⁰

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا أَنْ تُفَنِّدُون ﴿٩٤﴾

[95] They said, 'By Allah. You are still in your old misguided delusion.'

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٩٥﴾

[96] Then, as the bearer of good tiding came to him, he laid it on his face and once again he became seeing. He said, 'Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?'

فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] They said, 'O our father! Seek Allah's forgiveness for our sins, certainly, we have been sinners indeed.'

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] He said, 'Presently I shall seek forgiveness for you from my Lord.¹⁴¹ Indeed He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩٨﴾

[99] When they entered upon Yusuf he drew his parents unto himself and said, 'Enter into Egypt in peace, Allah willing.'

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

139. Several reports have come down from Ibn 'Abbas which say that Ya`qub felt Yusuf's smell from a distance of eight-day's travel, that is, as Ibn Abi Hudhayl said, the distance between Kufa and Busra (Ibn Jarir).

140. The word "tufannidun" carries several shades of meaning. (i) "If you will not call me foolish", (ii) "if you will not think that old-age has advanced", (iii) that "my mind has suffered loss", (iv) "if you will not call me lies," are several connotations that are hidden in the word - all those things that happen to a man

as he advances in age (Ibn Jarir from Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others).

141. For Ya`qub's sons, no reward could have been better than this one: that a Prophet should pray for their forgiveness. This was the reward bestowed on "the three whose case was deferred after the Tabuk expedition," after their repentance had been accepted (Qurtubi). See *Surah Tawbah*, verse 118.

Ibn Mas`ud's opinion is that Ya`qub delayed the supplications until the

[100] He raised his parents to the throne¹⁴² and they fell in prostration to him.¹⁴³ He remarked, 'O my father. This is the fulfillment of my vision of old. My Lord made it come true. He was indeed good to me when He brought me out of the prison¹⁴⁴ and brought you out of the desert¹⁴⁵ after Shaytan had stirred (strife) between me and my brothers. Surely, my Lord is Subtle (in doing) what He will.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, He is the All-Knowing, the All-wise.'

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا
وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ
أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ
الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي
وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ
هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

pre-dawn hour. In fact, Ibn Mas`ud himself used to make his supplications at that time. Ibn Daththar says: "I had an uncle who, on his way to the mosque, would hear the voice of a man emerging from a house, 'O Allah, You beckoned me and I answered. You commanded and I obeyed. Now it is close to the dawn, so forgive me.' He found out that it was Ibn Mas`ud's house. He asked him about those words and Ibn Mas`ud said, "That was the time Ya`qub had in mind when he said, 'I shall soon seek forgiveness of your sins from my Lord'" (Ibn Jarir).

142. Ibn `Abbas, Suddi, Dahhak, Mujahid and Qatadah have said that the 'Arsh of the text alludes to a long couch (Ibn Jarir).

In ancient times thrones were of various kinds. Some were like heavy

chairs. Others were divan-like, long and wide, large enough to accommodate several people, although, normally, it was the king or the high official who occupied it. When they wished to honor someone, they gave him a place on it by their side (Au.).

143. Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Sufyan, Ibn Jurayj and others have said that Yusuf's parents and his eleven brothers prostrated themselves to Yusuf. It was a prostration of respect and greeting and not of worship (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir adds: When Mu`adh b. Jabal visited the Syrian region, he found the people there prostrating themselves to priests. When he returned, he said to the Prophet,

أَرَأَيْتَ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ يَسْجُدُونَ لِأَسَاقِفَتِهِمْ وَيَطَارِقَتِهِمْ
؟ أَفَلَا تَسْجُدُ لَكَ ؟ قَالَ : لَوْ كُنْتُ أَمِيرًا أَحَدًا أَنْ
يَسْجُدَ لِأَحَدٍ لِأَمْرَتِ الْمَرْأَةِ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِزَوْجِهَا

“Do you know that the people of the Book prostrate themselves to their priests and monks? Should we not prostrate ourselves to you? He said, “Were I to ask anyone to prostrate to another, I would ask a woman to prostrate herself to her husband because of the enormity of his rights on her.”

The above is Ahmad’s version, the second half of which is also found in Tirmidhi and others.

According to another report (in Ahmad and Ibn Majah: H. Ibrahim), once Salman (al-Farsi) encountered the Prophet in one of the streets of Madinah and prostrated himself before him.

The Prophet told him, “Do not prostrate yourself to me O Salman. Rather, prostrate yourself to the Living who will not die.”

Since prostration before Yusuf sounds unusual, Imām Razi offers two other alternative meanings. One, Ya`qub, his wife and sons did not prostrate themselves before Yusuf, rather prostrated themselves to Allah. That is because it is unthinkable that Yusuf would have allowed his father, a Prophet - superior in age, intellect, knowledge and religion, a most hon-

orable person otherwise - to prostrate himself to him. Two, while the parents sat on the throne, the sons prostrated themselves to Yusuf. (The textual: “He raised his parents to the throne and they fell in prostration to him,” words favor this meaning: Au.).

Now, a doubt might arise. Yusuf had dreamt that in total thirteen objects had prostrated themselves to him. But, with the parents off, we are left with only eleven. Imām Razi answers that the dream came true in the general sense (of they acknowledging his moral superiority: Au.). It was not at all necessary that the thirteen of them should have physically prostrated themselves to him for the dream to come true. Further, the true interpretation of the dream was that one day they would pay homage to him, which came to pass.

Alusi is inclined to believe that at best they would have bowed their heads a little which has been described as “sajdah” here.

Qurtubi adds: Hasan’s opinion was that they all prostrated themselves to Allah, while Sa`id b. Jubayr, Qatadah, and a second opinion of Hasan was that it was no prostration at all. It was customary then to bend their heads forward in greeting, and that

is what they did. Others have conjectured that it was merely bowing down that has been referred to as prostration. In any case, none of it is allowed in our religion, not even bending forward of the head before men of power which has now become customary among the Muslims. Anas b. Malik has reported, “We asked the Prophet,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّحَيِّ بَعْضُنَا لِبَعْضٍ إِذَا التَقَيْنَا؟
قَالَ: لَا. قِيلَ: فَيَلْتَرِمُ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا؟ قَالَ: لَا. قِيلَ:
فَيُصَافِحُ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا؟ قَالَ: تَعَمُّ

‘Messenger of Allah, should some of us bend forward for one another when we meet?’ He replied, ‘No.’ We asked, ‘Should we embrace each other?’ He replied, ‘No.’ We asked, ‘Should we shake hands?’ He said, ‘Yes.’”

The above is in Ibn Majah and, according to Albani, of Hasan status (Au.).

Now, it might be asked, the Prophet (*saws*) had said, “Stand up for your leader and for the best of you,” (referring to Sa`d b. Mu`adh when he arrived to judge Banu Qurayda’s fate), why then should we also not stand up for one another? The answer is, the Prophet had asked them to stand up and help Sa`d b. Mu`adh come down his donkey (Sa`d was then

in an injured state: Au.). At best, one might stand up in deference of someone about whom he is sure that it will not lead him to self-conceit. The Prophet has said,

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَمُتَّلَ لَهُ الرَّجَالُ قِيَامًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ
مِنَ النَّارِ

“Whoever wished that people should stand up for him (when he arrives) may seek his abode in the Fire.”

Apart from other collections, the above is in Abu Da`ud about which Albani said that it is *sahih* (Au.).

Accordingly, the Companions never stood up for the Messenger. As for shaking the hand or raising the fingers, in reply to greetings, that is allowed on condition that the person greeted is at a distance. So also, kissing of the hands is disallowed in Islam. As for hand-shake, it is clearly allowed. It is reported of the Companions that when they met each other, they shook hands, but when they met after a long separation, they embraced each other.

Qurtubi’s discourse ends here.

It might also be noted that “*sajada*” of Arabic originally stood for an act of humbleness, or self-humiliation. That led to the meaning of bowing

down for someone. Finally, it acquired the meaning of prostration. Here are a few examples:

كلّ شيء ذلّ فقد سجد (المصباح المنير)

Everything that humbles itself is said to have done *sajada* – *Al-Misbah al-Muneer*

سجد: خضع (الصحاح للجوهري و تاج العروس)

Sajada means to humble oneself – *Al-Sibah* and *Taj al-`Arus*.

شجرة ساجدة : مائلة (أساس البلاغة)

Shajarah saajidah means ‘an inclined tree’ – *Asas al-Balaghah*

والسفينة تسجد للرياح : تطيعها وتميل بميلها (أساس البلاغة)

When you say, ‘the ship has *sajada* for the winds,’ it means the ship follows the wind’s course and is inclined (under its pressure) – *Asas al-Balaghah*

سجد البعير وأسجد : طأمن رأسه لراكبه (أساس البلاغة)

When you say, ‘the camel has prostrated,’ it means it lowered its head for the rider - *Asas al-Balaghah*

سَجَدَ ، إِذَا انْحَنَى وَتَطَأَمَنَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ (تاج العروس)

Sajada is used when (someone) bowed and bent forward towards the ground – *Taj al-`Arus*.

In the light of the above, it is quite likely that Yusuf’s brothers merely bowed themselves to him, while it is unlikely that his parents would have done the same. No father will bow down for his son (Au.).

144. It might be noted that Yusuf said, “He was indeed good to me when He brought me out of the prison.” He did not say, “He brought me out of the pit,” because that would have meant reproaching his brothers, while he had already told them, “There is no blame on you” (Qur-tubi).

145. Earliest Muslim scholars have said that Ya`qub had been living at the edge of the Syrian desert, rearing sheep and cattle.

146. That is, when Allah wills something, He creates its means and elements of existence, foreordains (its measures) and renders easy its coming into existence (Ibn Kathir).

[101] 'My Lord! You have given me some power, and taught me the interpretation of dreams, O the Originator of the heavens and the earth. You are my Protector in this world and the next. Take my soul as one submitted, and admit me into the company of the righteous.'¹⁴⁷

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي
مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

147. Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Jurayj and Qatadah have said that when all things were settled to satisfaction, and Yusuf had received the best of what the world can yield, he longed to join with his ancestors and, accordingly, supplicated for death. Among the Prophets he was the only one to have wished for death.

Ibn Kathir, Shabbir and others however point out that supplication for death is prohibited in Islam. The most one can do, if overwhelmed by misfortunes is to say,

لَا يَتَمَنَّيَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ ضَرِّ أَصَابَةٍ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا
بُدَّ فَاعِلًا فَلْيَقُلْ اللَّهُمَّ أَحْسِبْنِي مَا كَانَتْ الْحَيَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي
وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا كَانَتْ الْوَفَاةُ خَيْرًا لِي

“O Allah let me live if living is good for me and let me die if dying is better for me.” (The *hadith* is in Ahmad: H. Ibrahim).

The above is Bukhari's version (Au.).

On one occasion, as the report goes in Ahmad, when the Companions

got together and spoke of the Hereafter, Sa'd b. Waqqas began to cry bitterly and remarked, “O that I was dead.” the Prophet censured him, “Do you say that before me? (Three times).” Then he added,

يَا سَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتَ خُلِقْتَ لِلْحَيَاةِ فَمَا طَالَ عُمْرُكَ أَوْ
حَسَنٌ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ

“Sa'd, if you are created for Paradise, then the longer you live doing virtuous things the better.”

The above is Ahmad's version, but which is declared weak by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut (Au.).

According to another report preserved by Ahmad the Prophet said,

اِتْتَنَايَ يَكْرَهُهُمَا ابْنُ آدَمَ الْمَوْتُ وَالْمَوْتُ خَيْرٌ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِ مِنَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَيَكْرَهُ قِلَّةَ الْمَالِ وَقِلَّةَ الْمَالِ أَقْلُ
لِلْحِسَابِ

“Adam's son detests two things: death, while death is better than tribulations. And he detests poverty while poverty is better than accounting for wealth.”

The above is from Ahmad rated good by Arna'ut.

All said, it is allowed to wish for death when one faces a severe tribulation (in his religion) as it is reported of 'Ali that when he was fed up with the seditions and political upheavals he cried out, "O Allah, take me back to you. They are tired of me and I am tired of them." It is also reported that a man will pass by a grave - during the tribulations brought by Dajjal and remark: "Oh that I was in your place."

Ibn Kathir also states that with reference to Yusuf, various possibilities exist: that Yusuf supplicated in these words either then and there, or when he met his parents, or later, at the time of death. Our Prophet also supplicated to Allah just before dying, in words, as in the *sahihayn*, "O Allah. (to) the companions on high."

Some scholars point out that one might wish death out of love of the hereafter, but not out of fear of this world (Au.).

In any case, Shafi` adds, as against his father Ya`qub , [whose body was taken back for burial in Syria, following his will], Yusuf died and was buried in Egypt itself. He left a will that his body be taken back to Pales-

tine if the Israelites went back there. Accordingly, when the Israelites left Egypt along with Musa (*asws*), they took his corpse along with them.

The report referred to above is in Musnad of Abu Ya`la and Hakim, and is judged *sahih* by Albani (*Al-Ahadith al-sahihah*, no. 313), and by Arna'ut. It runs as follows: the Prophet said,

أعجزتم أن تكونوا مثل عجوز بني إسرائيل؟ قالوا: يا رسول الله وما عجوز بني إسرائيل؟ قال: إن موسى عليه السلام لما سار ببني إسرائيل من مصر ضلوا الطريق فقال: ما هذا؟ فقال علماؤهم: إن يوسف عليه السلام لما حضره الموت أخذ علينا موثقا من الله أن لا نخرج من مصر حتى ننقل عظامه معنا قال: فمن يعلم موضع قبره؟ قال: عجوز من بني إسرائيل فبعث إليها فأنته فقال: دليني على قبر يوسف قالت: حتى تعطيني حكمي قال: وما حكمتك؟ قالت: أكون معك في الجنة ففكره أن يعطيها ذلك فأوحى الله إليه: أن أعطيها حكمتها فانطلقت بهم إلى بحيرة موضع مستنقع ماء فقالت: أنضبوا هذا الماء فأنضبوه فقالت: احتفروا فاحتفروا فاستخرجوا عظام يوسف فلما أقلوها إلى الأرض وإذا الطريق مثل ضوء النهار

"Is it impossible for you that you be - in the least - like the old Israelite woman?" They asked him, "What about her O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "When Musa left Egypt along with the Israelites, they lost the way. He said, 'Now, what's this?!' Their scholars explained, 'When death came

[102] This is of the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal unto you.¹⁴⁸ You were not by them when they put together their plan and conspired.

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

upon Yusuf, he took a promise from us by Allah, that we will not leave Egypt but with his body.' [Musa] asked, 'Who knows where his grave is?' [They said, 'No one knows where his grave is] except an old Israeli woman.' So he sent for her. When she came he said, 'Lead us to Yusuf's grave.' She said, [By Allah I will not] until you give me my judgment.' He asked, 'What is the judgment you are referring to?' She replied, 'That I should be with you in Paradise.' Musa did not like to give her that promise. So Allah revealed to him that he might give her the word. So she led them to a pond, more like a swampy area. She said, 'Drain out water from this spot.' They did that. She said, 'Now, dig and remove Yusuf's body.' As soon as they brought out the body, the way became clear to them" (Au.).

Thanwi adds: This moving of coffins, however, as stated in Tahtawi, is not allowed in Islam by consensus. Also,

some historians have noted that after Yusuf's death, the rule was taken over by the old ruling family, as Yusuf had all along held the position of an 'Aziz only.

148. Note the difference, Shafi' points out, between the expression, "tidings of the Unseen" which the Qur'an uses here and at several other places, and "knowledge of the Unseen," an expression never used anywhere in the Qur'an for anyone save Allah.

Yusuf Ali summarizes: "The story is finished. But, is it a story? It is rather a recital of forces and motives, thoughts and feelings, complications and results, ordinarily not seen by men. However much they concert their plans and unite their forces, whatever dark plots they hack with all their resources, - the plan of Allah works irresistibly, and sweeps away all their machinations. The good wins through in the end, but not always as they planned; the evil forces are foiled, and often their very plots help the good."

[103] Yet, most people - even if you wished eagerly - are not going to believe.¹⁴⁹

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

[104] Although you do not ask them wages for it. It is only a reminder unto all beings.

وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

[105] Indeed, how many a sign (are not there) in the heavens and the earth that they pass by, (but they) turn away from them?¹⁵⁰

وَكَايِنٍ مِّنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] And most of them believe not in Allah but associate (with Him).¹⁵¹

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

149. Imām Baghawi has said that some Jews came to the Prophet and said, “If you are a true Messenger, tell us Joseph’s story.” (According to other versions, “tell us, how the Israelites happened to be in Egypt?”: Au.). In response, this chapter was revealed. But when the Prophet recited it to them, they refused to believe. So Allah revealed the verse, “Yet, most people - even if you coveted - will not believe” (Ma`arif).

Thanwi points out that Baghawi’s report could not be traced.

150. Allah mentions people’s failure to ponder over the signs of Allah’s oneness in what He created in the heavens and the earth: fixed shining stars, planets in circular movement, and all that has been made subservient to natural laws. And how many signs are not there in the earth of

fertile plots (of different kinds) next to each other, gardens and orchards, mountains pitched into the earth, brimming oceans, waves rising one over another, and vast deserts?! And how many of the living and the lifeless are not there to ponder over: animals and plants, fruits similar but dissimilar in taste, smell, color and qualities?! Glory then to Allah, the One, the Creator of varieties, Himself One, endowed with permanent qualities of Uniqueness in Name and Attributes (Ibn Kathir).

151. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others have said that the meaning is: when the people are asked about who created the heavens and the earth, their own souls, and who sustains the created world, they reply with no hesitation that it is Allah. But, within the same breath they de-

clare partners to Him in His Divinity and have no qualms in prostrating themselves before other than Him. Ibn Zayd has turned it around and said that there is no pagan, no one who associates with Allah, but is also a believer in Allah. Note the words of the Arab pagans who used to call out during Hajj,

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ , لَبَّيْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ إِلَّا شَرِيكَا
هُوَ لَكَ تَمَلِّكُهُ وَمَا مَلَكَ

“Here we are O our Lord, here we are. You have no associates but the associate You wish: possessing him and what he possesses” (Ibn Jarir).

The report about the pagan Arabs is in the *sahihayn* (Ibn Kathir).

Majid comments: “The description covers not only the open idolatry of the polytheistic peoples but also its veiled forms such as Christolatry, Mariolatry, the worship of heroes, the adoration of saints and the deification of Reason.”

Ibn Kathir offers the following: According to a report in the *sahihayn*, someone asked the Prophet,

أَيُّ الذَّنْبِ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَدْعُوَ لِلَّهِ نِدًّا وَهُوَ
خَلَقَكَ

“Which is the greatest of sins?”
He answered, “That you suggest

an equal to Allah, while He alone created you.”

Of association (*shirk*) there are some varieties that a man commits unknowingly. It is reported that Hudhayfah visited a man and found him wearing a string in his hand. He ripped it off and recited this verse, “And most of them believe not in Allah but associate (others with Him).” According to a report in Ahmad, Abu Da’ud and others, the Prophet (*saws*) said,

إِنَّ الرُّقَى وَالْتَّمَائِمَ وَالْتَّوَلَةَ شِرْكٌ

“Charms, amulets, and spells (for causing increase in love between husband and wife) are all acts of association.”

According to another report,

الطَّيْرَةَ شِرْكٌ وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُذْهِبُهُ بِالتَّوَكُّلِ

“Drawing omen is Association. However, there is none of us but affected by it except that Allah drives it away by the trust in Him.”

Yet another report preserved by Ahmad tells us that once ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud’s wife was getting herself treated by an old woman for fever. As Ibn Mas’ud cleared his throat, she hid the woman who was blowing the charm on her, under the bed.

Ibn Mas`ud saw a thread around her neck and inquired what it was. She told him it was for reducing fever. He broke it off and said, “‘Abdullah’s family members have nothing to do with *shirk*.” She protested, “Whenever I suffered sore of eye, I went to a Jew who blew a charm and I felt relieved.” He replied, “That was from *Shaytan*. He used to prick you in the eye, and when the charm was read, he ceased. It would have been sufficient for you to say, as taught us by the Prophet:

اللَّهُمَّ أَذْهِبِ الْبَأْسَ رَبِّ النَّاسِ، وَاشْفِ أَنْتَ الشَّافِي
لَا شِفَاءَ إِلَّا شِفَاؤُكَ شِفَاءً لَا يُعَادِرُ سَقَمًا. .

“O Allah, remove the affliction, O Lord of the people, relieve me, You are the Curer. There is no cure but Your cure, a cure that does not leave an affliction behind.”

The version above is from Tirmidhi on the authority of `Ali who said that the Prophet used to say these words whenever unwell. He declared it of Hasan status. However, there are other versions coming through others. One, for instance, on the authority of Anas was declared *sahih* by Abu Zur`ah, as in Tirmidhi (Au.).

According to another report in Ahmad, once `Isa b. `Abdul Rahman vis-

ited `Abdullah b. `Ukaym in his sickness. He suggested, “If you would only tie (something to yourself!).” He replied, “Should I tie something!?! I have heard the Prophet say,

مَنْ تَعَلَّقَ شَيْئًا وَكَلَّ إِلَيْهِ

‘Whoever hung a thing is left to hang by it.’”

Another report in Ahmad said,

مَنْ عَلَّقَ تَمِيمَةً فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ

“Whoever hung an amulet committed association.”

Association takes other forms. One of them is to do something to please others. Muslim reports that the Prophet said,

أَنَا أَعْنَى الشُّرَكَاءِ عَنِ الشُّرْكِ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا أَشْرَكَ فِيهِ
مَعِيَ غَيْرِي تَرَكْتُهُ وَشُرْكَهُ

“Allah says, ‘I am the least in need of a partner. If someone did a thing in which he associated others with Me, I relinquish both the deed as well as the associate.’”

To be sure, there is a kind of *shirk* known as ‘show off’ (*riya*). The Prophet said in a *hadith* of Ahmad,

إِنَّ أَحْوَفَ مَا أَحَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ الشُّرْكَ الْأَصْعَرُ ، قَالُوا
: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَمَا الشُّرْكَ الْأَصْعَرُ ؟ قَالَ : الرِّيَاءُ ،
يُقَالُ لِمَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ إِذَا جَاءَ النَّاسُ بِأَعْمَالِهِمْ :
أَذْهَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَرَاءُونَ فَاطْلُبُوا ذَلِكَ عِنْدَهُمْ

“The most that I fear for you is minor association.” They asked, “What is minor association?” He replied, “It is to (do a good thing intending to) show off.”

Arna’ut’s opinion is that except for a minor problem, the *hadīth* is trustworthy (Au.).

Finally, there is that invisible association. It is reported as a *hadīth* of Ahmad, which Haythami said was trusted by Ibn Hibban,

”أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا الْبَشْرَ، فَإِنَّهُ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَيْبِ النَّمْلِ“، فَقَالَ: مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَقُولَ: وَكَيْفَ تَتَّقِيهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَهُوَ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَيْبِ النَّمْلِ؟ قَالَ: ”قُولُوا: اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَعُودُ بِكَ أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِكَ شَيْئًا تَعَلَّمَهُ وَنَسْتَعْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا تَعْلَمُ“ (رواه أحمد والطبراني في الكبير والأوسط ورجال أحمد رجال الصحيح غير أبي علي ووثقه ابن حبان).

“People, be on guard against association, for it is less visible than an ant’s crawling.” Someone asked, “So, how are we to avoid it when it is less visible than the crawl of an ant, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Say, ‘O Allah we seek Your protection that we should associate aught with You that we know of, and seek Your forgiveness for what we have no knowledge of’” (Ibn Kathir).

We have taken the text from Haythami which is slightly different from what it is in Ibn Kathir (Au.).

Alusi adds that the verse also covers the grave-worshippers who believe in their power to deliver good and evil and who are, ‘in our times more in number than insects.’ He also mentions (in *Bab al-Ishara*: Thanwi) that according to the *Sufiya*, to turn even as much as one’s attention to other than Allah is a kind of Association.

With regard to charms and amulets, one might see *Surah 17* note 137 of this work for discussion over what kind of them are allowable in Islam (Au.).

Yusuf Ali expands: “Even if people profess a nominal faith in Allah, they corrupt it by believing in other things as if they were Allah’s partners, or had some share in the shaping of the world’s destinies! In some circles, it is idolatry, the worship of stocks and stones. In others, it is Christolatry and Mariolatry, or the deification of heroes and men of renown. In others it is powers of Nature or of Life, or of the human intellect personified in Science or Art or invention, and this is more common form of modern idolatry. Others again worship mys-

[107] Do they feel secure that the all-embracing punishment of Allah should come to them? Or, the Hour shall strike suddenly, while they are unaware?

أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ
أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ
﴿١٠٧﴾

[108] Say, 'This is my path. I invite unto Allah - with insight¹⁵² - I and those who follow me. And, glory to Allah, I am not of those who associate.'

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى
بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا
أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

[109] And We sent not (Messengers) before you but men of the towns,¹⁵³ revealing to them. Have they not moved about in the land and seen what was the end of those who were before them? And, surely, the abode of the world to come is better for the godfearing. Do you not understand?

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي
إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ
اتَّقَوْا أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

tery, or imaginary powers of good or evil: greed and fear are mixed up with these forms of worship. Islam calls us to worship Allah, the One True God, and Him only."

152. Commenting on the textual expression "ala basiratin", Muhammad Asad writes: "Thus the 'the call to God' enunciated by the Prophet is described here as the outcome of a conscious insight accessible to, and verified by man's reason: a statement which circumscribes to perfection the Qur'anic approach to all questions of faith, ethics and morality, and is echoed many times in expressions like 'so that you might use your reason' (*la'allakum ta'qilun*), or 'will

you not, then, use your reason?' (*af-ala ta'qilun*), or 'so that they might understand [the truth]' (*la'allahum yafqahun*), or 'so that you might think' (*la'allakum tatafakkarun*), and, finally, in the oft repeated declaration that the message of the Qur'an as such is meant specifically 'for people who think' (*li-qawmin yatafakkarun*)."

153. And not of the deserts. That is, Prophets were not raised among the desert-dwellers (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir adds: This verse has led the great majority of the scholars to the opinion that women have not

been raised as prophets. However, a minority opinion is that, even if not prophets, some have been there who received some sort of revelation, such as, Sarah (Ibrahim's wife), Musa's mother and Maryam bint 'Imran. They have cited the following verse in evidence (28: 7):

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ [القصص : ٧]

"We revealed unto Musa's mother, 'Feed him.'"

But Al-Ash`ari has stated the opinion of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* that there were "*Siddiqaat*" among them and not "nabiyyat." In any case, Ibn `Abbas seems to have understood the verse in another light. He said that the thrust of the verse is that the Messengers that were raised were humans and not angels nor some other heavenly beings.

Following Thanwi's understanding, the passage covering verses 102 to 109 could be paraphrased in the following manner: "This is of the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal unto you O Muhammad. You could not have written it yourself, because you were not by them when they were putting together their plan and were

conspiring against Yusuf. Yet, most people - even if you wished eagerly - are not going to believe. In your case, for example, there is no good reason for their disbelief, seeing that you do not seek wages for it. This Qur`an is no more than a reminder unto all beings. Yet, if they reject, little wonder. After all, how many signs are not there in the heavens and the earth that they pass by, but they give them a blind eye? Further, the tragedy is that if they ever ponder and come to believe, most of them believe not in Allah without associating others with Him. Do they feel secure that the all-embracing punishment of Allah could descend on them? Or, the Hour should strike suddenly, while they are unaware? Faced with their obstinate blindness, say, 'This is my path. I invite to Allah - with insight: I and those who follow me. And, glory to Allah, I am not of those who associate.' They raise a new objection by way of rejection, saying, why an angel was not sent down with the message? Tell them, 'We sent not Messengers before you but they were men, not angels, and were of the same towns as themselves.'"

[110] Till, when the Messengers lost hope¹⁵⁴ and began to suspect that they were counted liars,¹⁵⁵ Our succor came to them. Then We deliver whom We will.¹⁵⁶ And Our scourge cannot be turned away from a criminal folk.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّيَ مَن نَّشَاءُ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

﴿١١٠﴾

154. Shabbir offers an elaborate but useful explanation, “There could be two situations in which a Messenger lost hope. One, when one of them lost hope altogether about succor coming to him, or, about the situation changing towards the better. This is not the characteristic of even an ordinary believer, let alone a Messenger. In fact, a man turns an unbeliever if this happens to be his attitude. Another situation could be when one of them looked at various aspects of the situation he was in, and felt that apparently, there was no room for an immediate change. This second situation, in which many people find themselves, is more of the nature of reading a situation and determining the most likely future course, rather than the of loss of faith. This does not call for censure (slightly expanded).

155. The translation reflects the understanding of ‘A’isha, Ibn Mas‘ud, Ibn ‘Abbas, Sa‘id bin Jyba--yr, Dahhak, Ibn Zayd and several others of the Followers (*tabe`iyyun*) as in

Tabari. That is, the Messengers lost hope into their people ever turning believers. On the other hand, their people began to suspect that their Messengers had lied to them when they had threatened them with destruction failing to believe. Ibn Jarir quotes some six different narrators, through six different chains of narration, reporting about Ibn ‘Abbas that this was his opinion.

However, he also quotes a second opinion of both Ibn Mas‘ud as well as of Ibn ‘Abbas that it was the Messengers who thought that they were not told the truth (about when their disbelieving nations would be taken to task) - uttering that out of human weakness in situations of extreme disappointment. But when ‘A’isha was told about this second interpretation coming from Ibn ‘Abbas, she reacted it strongly saying, “Glory to Allah. No Messenger ever thought of such a thing. (Even an ordinary believer does not think of such a thing: Razi). Messengers knew very well that what Allah had informed them through

revelation would come true before their death. Rather, it was the followers of the Messengers who began to suspect that they were not told the truth by their Messengers.” In fact, she used to recite the word as كَذَّبُوا

(they [the Prophets] were rejected), and not as كَذَّبُوا (the [people] were told a lie) - Ibn Jarir.

‘Ai’sha’s opinion is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir).

156. “So this is,” Sayyid points out, “Allah’s *Sunnah* with regard to the mission brought by the Prophets: there can be no escape from hardships and inflictions until nothing of the strength and energy is left for expenditure. It is only when every apparent means to which people cling, and depend on, have disappeared, that succor comes, relieving those who deserve to be relieved, while others - the criminal minded, and the arrogant ones - have the destruction delivered on themselves, with no help and succor from any quarter.

“This, in order that help and succor from Allah does not become cheap and the mission and the Call treated lightly and taken up with ease. If this system of delayed retribution (during which trials and tribulations continue) was not in place, every

false caller, who did not deserve to be a caller, would have stood up for the cause. But in Allah’s scheme the call to truth was not to be rendered a plaything. It is a lofty affair, that stands to transform lives of the people. It must be saved from false callers: those who cannot bear the hardships that accompany it. The false ones soon realize what it means to be in the field, and, usually, abandon it sooner than one would expect. Succor comes to those who remain on the tracks, without losing heart, despite their realization that after all, succor might not come from on high during their own lives.

“This call is not similar to any other trade that promises quick returns, so that, if one failed, he might direct his activities towards some other trade that promises quicker results. Accordingly, those who take up this call in the *Jahiliyy* environments, in those societies that do not submit to the religion of Allah in every facet of their existence, have to understand from the beginning that this is not an easy path. One must realize that he challenges the people of power, wealth and resources, who have already bent the masses to their ways, to the extent that their subjects see black as white and white as black; who are capable of setting those very

[111] Surely, in their story there is a lesson for those endowed with reason. It is not a tale concocted, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed exposition of all things¹⁵⁷ - a guidance and a mercy unto a people who believe.¹⁵⁸

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِن
تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ
﴿١١١﴾

masses against the callers by invoking them to fully indulge in their carnal pleasures and then assuring them that the callers are out to rob them of those pleasures. The callers therefore must remain assured that the Call is not going to be a cakewalk, that holding on to it in the face of opposition would mean great troubles and that the masses are not going to be - at least initially, with them. Rather, in every generation, only a few - those with potential for goodness - will break away from the rest and join them in their struggle, those few who give preference to the great spiritual pleasure that accompanies the Call. In every stage, the numbers that take up this Call, sincerely, persistently, will remain small. But, a day will arrive, after a long or short struggle, when Allah will intervene, send His succor, and the masses will enter His Religion en masse.”

157. Asad remarks, “i.e., everything that man may need for his spiritual welfare.”

158. Jewish and Christian scholars often allege that Prophet Muhammad took material from the *Bible*. Interestingly, most of them neither examine the Qur’an nor the *Bible* carefully. The commonality of a few incidents is enough for them to rush to the pre-conceived conclusion. They cite Joseph’s story as a good example, although it is a bad example. Joseph’s story, as it runs in the *Bible*, runs through a good number of chapters in its first book, the famous Genesis.

It was hard to reproduce the whole of the *Biblical* account here for comparison, as it runs into, all in all, 14 pages. We present just the 37th chapter from verse 5 onwards, the whole of the 38th chapter and the first verse of the 39th chapter, with the relevant Qur’anic verses facing them. In other words, we have presented only about 15% of the *Biblical* version. In the *Bible*, the account goes on up to the 50th chapter covering Joseph’s life until his death. But the above should be enough for comparison.

“Gen: Ch. 37 - 5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. 10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to the earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying. 12 And his brethren went to feed their father’s flock in She’-chem. 13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in She’-chem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him,

Here am I. 14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of He’-bron, and he came to She’-chem.

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. 17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Do’-than. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Do’-than. 18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. 20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. 21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. 22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. 23 And it came to pass,

when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; 24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ish'-me-el-ites came from Gil'-ead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ish'-me-el-ites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. 28 Then there passed by Mid'-i-an-ites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ish'-me-el-ites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. 29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. 30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? 31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; 32 And they sent the coat of many colours,

and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. 33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 36 And the Mid'-i-an-ites sold him into Egypt unto Pot'-i-phar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Ch. 38 AND it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain A-dul'-lam-ite, whose name was Hirah. 2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Ca'-naan-ite, whose name was Shu'-ah; and he took her, and went in unto her. 3 And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. 4 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name O'-nan. 5 And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name She'-lah: and he was at Che'-zib, when she bare him. 6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Ta'-mar. 7

And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. 8 And Judah said unto O'-nan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. 9 And O'-nan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother. 10 And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also. 11 Then said Judah to Ta'-mar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till She'-jaj my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Ta'-mar went and dwelt in her father's house. 12 And in process of time the daughter of Shu'-ah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up into his sheepshearers to Tim'-nath, he and his friend Hi'-rah the A-dul'-lam-ite. 13 And it was told Ta'-mar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Tim'-nath to shear his sheep.

14 And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Tim'-nath; for she saw that She'-lah was grown, and was not given unto him to wife. 15 When Judah

saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. 16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? 17 And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? 18 And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. 19 And she arose, and went away, and laid by her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. 20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the A-dul'-lam-ite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. 21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place. 22 And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. 23 And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. 24 And it came to

pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Ta'mar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. 25 When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, where these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. 26 And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to She'lah my son. And he knew her again no more. 27 And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. 28 And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29 And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pha'rez. 30 And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zar'ah.

Ch. 39 AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Pot'i-phar, an

officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him off the hands of the Ish'-me-el-ites, which had brought him down thither."

The following is the Qur'ānic text for comparison:

[4] When Yusuf said to his father, 'O my father. I have seen (in my dream) eleven planets, the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves before me.' [5] He said, 'O my son. Do not reveal this dream to your brothers, lest they devise against you some plot. Surely, *Shaytan* is man's open enemy. [6] And that is how your Lord will choose you, teach you interpretation of the discourses and fulfill His favor upon you and upon the family of Ya`qub as He fulfilled it upon your fathers Ibrahim and Is-haq aforetime. Surely, your Lord is All-knowing, All-wise.' [7] Surely, in Yusuf and his brothers there are signs for those who seek to know. [8] When they said (among themselves), 'Surely, Yusuf and his brother¹⁴ are dearer to our father than we while we are a goodly body.¹⁵ Surely, our father is in a manifest error.

[9] Slay Yusuf or cast him into some (unknown) place so that your father's favor is freed for you alone. Thereafter, you could become a righteous lot.' [10] Said one of those who

spoke, 'Do not kill Yusuf. (Instead), cast him into the bottom of a well (from where) someone of the travelers might pick him up - if you must do (it).' [11] They spoke to their father, 'O our father! What is it with you that you do not trust us with Yusuf while we are his sincere well-wishers? [12] Send him with us tomorrow to frolic¹⁹ and play. We shall surely be watching over him.' [13] He replied, 'It saddens me to think that you should take him with you. (In addition) I fear a wolf might (snatch and) eat him off in your unawares.' [14] They protested, 'If a wolf should eat him off while we are a goodly body, then, surely we are the losers.' [15] So, when they took him with them and agreed to place him in the bottom of a well, We revealed unto him that (one day) you will remind them of this their deed, while they would be unaware (of your identity).

[21] Said he who purchased him in Egypt to his wife, 'Make his stay (with us) honorable. He may well be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.'

A few errors may be noted in the above *Biblical* text: Firstly, at the time of the story, the terms Ish'-me-el-ites or Israelites, did not exist. The division and classification into Ish'-

ma-el-ites or Israelites took place much later. Secondly, it is unthinkable that Joseph's brothers should be able to recognize their immediate cousins, but their cousins should not be able to recognize them, or fail to recognize Joseph even when sold to them, nor that Joseph should fail to reveal his identity to them.

The objective of course of these kinds of tampering, here, as well as in several other parts of the *Bible*, was to create hatred for the sons of Isma'il, the Arabs.

Also note that by the time the story advanced, the interpolators forgot their own tampering. So that, it is stated in ch.37, verse 28 that the Mid'-i-an-ites sold Joseph to the Ish'-me-el-ites right near the well: "Then there passed by Mid'-i-an-ites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ish'-me-el-ites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt." But verse 36 of the same chapter says, "And the Mid'-i-an-ites sold him into Egypt unto Pot'-i-phar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard." The 38th chapter should especially help in judging as to which of the two is better qualified to be a revelation: the Qur'an or the *Bible*? - Au. ﷻ



Surah 13

Al-Ra`d

(The Thunder)

Makkan¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Mim. Ra. These are verses of the Book.² And that which has been sent down unto you by your Lord³ is the truth; but most people do not believe.

المر تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ وَالَّذِي أُنزِلَ
إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾

Prefatory Note:

This is a chapter of indescribable beauty. Apart from its powerfully expressed message, it has music and an inner rhythm unique to itself and not repeated elsewhere in the Qur`ān. Although Sayyid normally expands on every verse, in this chapter he is clearly at a loss, overpowered by the text and hardly able to expand on it or its content, rather contents himself with a kind of a translation, putting the meaning in a simpler language: in one place he admits his inability to add anything by way of explanation.

It is also a chapter of contrasts. Its another specialty is that it mentions two of Allah's Attributes (*Muta`aal*

and *Shadeed al-Mihal*: Au.) that have not been mentioned elsewhere in the Qur`ān. Further, it has only two types of rhymes. Those ending with a "nun" in verses 1-5 and those whose second last letter is alif or its sound, running through the rest of the *Surah*.

1. Except for a few verses that are spread all over the *Surah*, this is a Makkan chapter (Qurtubi, Alusi).
2. The allusion is to previous revelations such as *Tawrah*, *Zabur* and *Injil* (Qatadah, Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).
3. Another possibility however, writes Shafi`, is that the allusion by the opening words, "These are verses of the Book" is to the Qur`ān, and by the words, "and that which has

[2] Allah it is who raised the heavens without any pillar that you can see.⁴ Then He assumed Istawa' on the `Arsh.⁵ And He subjected the sun and the moon (to a law),⁶ each one running to an appointed term. He directs the affair, explains the verses, so that you may believe in the encounter with your Lord.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَحَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُؤْفِقُونَ ﴿٢﴾

been sent down unto you from your Lord”, it is to the Prophetic *Sunnah* which is another kind of Revelation.

4. Led perhaps by the contextual words, “without any pillar that you can see,” Ibn ‘Abbas, Qatadah and others were of the view that the heaven rests on supports or columns, but the humans cannot see them (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir remarks: Allah (*swt*) said v (22: 65),

وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ [الحج
: ٦٥]

“He holds the heaven that it should fall on the earth except by His leave.”

He adds: The heaven closest to the earth is at a distance of 500 years of travel from the earth. It covers it from all sides. Similarly the second heaven surrounds the first at a distance of five hundred years of distance, and so on until the ‘*Arsh* which is on top of all. The *Kursiyy* comes below the

‘*Arsh*. The seven heavens are like a ring in a desert in comparison to the *Kursiyy* and the *Kursiyy* like a ring before the ‘*Arsh*.

Imām Razi and Qurtubi add that the invisible supports are none other than Allah’s Power.

Looked at scientifically, the verse allows for another interpretation. Our solar system has the sun in the center with 10 planets, dozens of their moons, and a belt of meteors endlessly orbiting at constant pace and at constant distances. What keeps them in their places and not fall into each other, or, escape away into empty space? Similarly, what keeps galactic stars in place, revolving in the Galaxy, not falling into each other, or the sun sucked in by the more massive galactic center? These are questions that had puzzled the scientists for long. The answer is in two terms: force, and movement. The sun for example, holds its planets into an orbital movement around itself (not

letting them drift away into space) because of its gravitational pull. But, why do the planets not crash into it, because of its pull? The answer is, the circular (or elliptical) movement prevents it. Their onward movement (creating a centrifugal force) cancels out the inward gravitational pull of the sun, and so they remain in place. If they ever went nearer to the sun, they would only increase their orbital speed and still remain orbiting around the sun and not fall into it. Nevertheless, even the possibility of a movement closer to the sun is ruled out. Why? It is because the planets exercise their own pulls on each other. Their respective gravitational pulls on each other, at any position (which changes from moment to moment), their respective speeds of orbital movement, and, finally, the gravitational pull of the sun on its planets, are all forces that are so finely balanced in the system that they cancel out each other to give it stability. By stability of course, what is meant is constant speeds at constant (although varying) distances. This stable, unchanging situation prevailing in the system, despite the several movements, is referred to as the “dynamic equilibrium.” Indeed, this fact is so amazing that if the solar system did not exist, nobody could have

imagined that such a thing was possible. An earthly model, for instance, is just out of the question. It is likely that it is this dynamic equilibrium, the perfect canceling out of various forces, to give stability to the system, but keeping it in movement, that has been alluded to by the words “pillars that you cannot see.”

To be sure, what is true of the planetary system, is true of the Galactic system also. The same forces and the same movements explain the prevalent stability. Allah said v (30: 25):

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَقُومَ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ بِأَمْرِ [الروم :
[٢٥

“And of His signs is that the heaven and earth stand (firm and stable) by His command.”

The gravitational force is itself quite mysterious. How does it function? Some scientists believe that there must be sub-atomic particles that carry the force. They even call the supposed particles gravitons. The idea is old, but unproven. Obviously, if their existence is proven, it will only add to the mystery. So, perhaps, believing that Allah holds the earth and the heavens together by His Power, is not so unscientific (Au.).

5. For explanation see *Surah al-A`raf*, verse 54, note 82 of this work.

[3] And He it is who stretched out the earth⁷ and placed thereon pegs⁸ and rivers.⁹ And of every fruit He placed there - in pairs of two.¹⁰ He covers the night with the day. Surely, in that are signs for a people who reflect.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغِشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

6. Majid comments: “So these awe-inspiring luminaries are mere helpless creatures, and there are no such absurd things as solar and lunar ‘gods’, whose cult has been common among polytheistic nations. ‘It is no exaggeration to say,’ observes Sir William Jones and Dr. E. B. Taylor, ‘that one great fountain of all idolatry in the four quarters of the globe was the veneration paid by men to the sun.’ (PC. II. p. 286). ‘Moon-worship, naturally ranking below sun-worship in importance, ranges through nearly the same district of culture’ (p. 299).”

7. After having spoken of the world above man, Allah now speaks of the world below him: that of the earth (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Imām Razi remarks: Anything that is extended in a manner that the eye cannot circumscribe it, would be referred to as having been stretched.

Alusi adds that during his time there were two schools of thought. One believed that the earth was flat while the other that it was spherical. Alusi’s

own opinion is that it is spherical. He judges by the fact that to the eye it appears spherical; that in some parts of the world, the sun would have set but not in other parts, as also the fact that the heaven that covers the earth appears spherical. However, since the diameter is very large, to all appearances the surface of the earth appears stretched.

8. Since the commentary on the thirtieth part of the Qur’ān came to be written earlier than these chapters, the full significance of the Qur’ānic usage of the term “*rawasiyy*” (sing.: *ra’siyah*) in place of the simple “mountain” can be seen in *Surah Al-Naba’*, note no. 4 (Au.).

9. Majid comments, “Rivers are often worshipped as such - e.g., by the Celts who regard them as divine or as fertile mothers, while in Egypt the Nile was worshipped as a man’ (ERE, IX, p. 204). In India the cult of the Ganges, the Jamuna, the Sarju, the Bhagrithi, the Nerbada, and other rivers is too well known to need description.”

[4] And in the earth (there are) neighboring tracts,¹¹ vineyards, sown fields, and (several) palm trees growing out of a single root or otherwise¹² (although), watered with one water.¹³ And We make some of them more delicious than others to eat. Verily, in these are signs for a people who think.

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ
أَعْنَابٍ وَرِزْقٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنَوَانٍ وَعَيْرٌ صِنَوَانٍ
يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنَفْضِلٌ بَعْضُهَا عَلَى
بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

10. Some classical commentators have speculated that Allah created two pairs of each fruit, each pair consisting of a male and a female, altogether four (Ibn Jarir).

That said, one wonders if the allusion is to two pairs of primary tastes, totally four: salty, sour, sweet and bitter - in which case “*thamarat*” could be understood as every thing that Allah has created for human sustenance (Au.).

11. That is, there is a great sign in the fact that two tracts of land, although neighboring, can be so different from each other in their constituents, that they yield entirely different kinds of crops (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi elaborates, “God has caused the various regions of the world to differ from one another despite their contiguity. These regions differ in many respects - in their configuration, in their color, in their component elements, in their characteristics, properties and potentialities,

in the produce which they yield and in the chemical and mineral deposits which are hidden under their surface. The variation and diversity thus found abounds in wisdom and leads to countless benefits. Let us disregard for a moment the benefits inherent in the diversity in respect of other species of creation and simply consider the benefits which accrue to human beings. In this regard it will be noted that there is a close correspondence between the diverse interests and purposes of man and the diversity which characterizes the different regions of the world. The result of all this manifest in the growth of an efflorescence of human culture and civilization.”

12. Sometimes several trunks grow out of a single root. Each of the trunks in such a tree is “*sinwun*” to the other trunks, while the tree itself is known as “*sinwaan*.” Hence the Prophet’s statement, “A man’s uncle is the “*sinwun*” of his father” (Razi and others).

[5] And, if you are amazed (at their disbelief) then, (truly) amazing is their saying, 'When we have become dust, shall we be (brought out) in a renewed creation?' These are a people who have denied their Lord, and these (are a people) with fetters on their necks.¹⁴ They are the companions of the Fire, abiding therein forever.

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبَ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَإِذَا كُنَّا
 تُرَابًا أَأَنْتَا لَنْفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ الْأَعْلَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ
 وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٥﴾

13. Hasan has said that the allegorical allusion is to different kinds of men, like different kinds of soils. They are all watered with the same water: the revelation. But, some of them draw benefits from it, while others do not. Then he added, "By Allah no one sat with the Qur'an but rose up either with profit or loss" and recited the verse (17: 82):

وَنَزَّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا
 يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا [الإسراء : ٨٢]

"And We send down of the Qur'an what is a cure and a mercy to the believers. And the wrongdoers increase in nothing but loss" (Ibn Jarir).

Thanwi mentions the difficulty that mentors face in producing men of their desire: "Thus, differences in po-

tentialities and natural dispositions, despite commonality of the influencing factors, result in the production of variant kinds of men. There is nothing that a mentor can do about it."

14. Most of the classical scholars have understood the verse to mean that the deniers of truth shall have fetters in their necks in Hell-fire. But a few have believed that it refers to their self-adopted, self-shackling attitudes. Yusuf Ali combines the two meanings: "Aghlaal, yokes (of servitude): The punishment may be conceived of in two stages: yokes of servitude to superstition, falsehood, etc., as against the freedom in Faith; and finally, the Fire which burns the very soul."

[6] And, they would have you (O Muhammad) hasten the evil before the good;¹⁵ yet exemplary (punishments) have preceded them.¹⁶ Surely, your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrong-doing,¹⁷ but your Lord is also severe of chastisement.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثَلَاتُ وَإِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ وَإِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾

15. This refers to the demand made on the Prophet (*saws*) by the pagans to bring down the chastisement he promised, as a punishment for disbelief. The allusion could also be refers to their own words (8: 32),

اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَابًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ اثْبِتْنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ [الأنفال : ٣٢]

“O Allah. If this be true from You, then rain down upon us stones from the heaven, or bring us a painful chastisement” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others).

Imām Razi offers another possibility: the Prophet used to announce tidings of Allah’s help and succor to those who accepted his call, as well as deliver threats to those who rejected. The unbelievers rejected the “good” tidings, and, accepting the “evil” ones, demanded that they be brought down upon them. This explains Allah’s words, “And they would have you hasten the evil before the good.”

16. That is, “(The examples) of the destruction of ancient infidel nations, (have gone before them) and this ought to serve as an eye-opener” (Majid).

The translation of “*mathulaath*” follows the explanation offered by Qatadah, Mujahid and Sha’bi. They said that the previous nations were either visited by destructive chastisements, or were transformed into apes and pigs: those were the *mathulaath* (Ibn Jarir).

17. Hafiz Ibn ‘Asaakir notes in the biography of Hasan b. ‘Uthman b. Abu Hassan al-Ramadi that he saw his Lord in a dream with the Prophet before Him interceding on behalf of one of his followers. The Lord told him, “Is it not enough for you that I revealed to you in *Surah al-Ra`d* the verse, ‘Surely, your Lord is full of forgiveness for the mankind for their wrong-doing?’” Hasan said, “At that point I woke up” (Ibn Kathir).

[7] And, those who have disbelieved say, 'Why has a (miraculous) sign not been sent down unto him from his Lord?'¹⁸ Surely, you are but a warner.¹⁹ And, to every people is a guide.²⁰

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ
مِّن رَّبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ



18. That is, why does he not he produce a miracle?

Majid writes: "A miracle, in Islamic phraseology, is an event deviating from the usual course of events, appearing at the hands of him who claims to be a prophet, as a challenge to those who deny him, of such nature that it makes it impossible for them to produce the like of it. It is God's testimony to the truth of his prophets, but clearly an act of God, not of the prophets."

Mawdudi adds: "The expression '[miraculous] sign' here signifies the sign that would persuade the unbelievers to have faith in Muhammad (peace be on him) as God's Messenger. Such was their mentality that they were not willing to appreciate the truth of the Prophet's teaching even though they found that it was supported by weighty arguments and persuasive proofs. They were also not prepared to consider the excellence of the Prophet's character as a strong testimony in support of the truth of his teachings. Nor were they prepared to take into account the full

significance of the moral transformation which the Prophet's teaching had brought about in the lives of the Companions. Nor did they pay any heed to the weighty arguments set out in the Qur'an which showed the hollowness of their polytheistic beliefs and the glaring errors of the superstitions to which they subscribed. They turned a blind eye to all these and insisted that they would believe only if they came across a miracle that would indisputably prove that the Prophet's claim to Prophethood was true."

19. Yusuf Ali sees beyond the plain words. He comments, "The last sentence of this verse has usually been interpreted to mean that the Prophet's function was merely to warn, and that guidance was sent by Allah to every nation through Prophet. I think the following interpretation is equally possible: 'it is itself a Sign that Al-Mustafa should warn and preach and produce the Qur'an..'"

20. Ibn 'Abbas has interpreted the textual "*haad*" as "a caller," while there are other interpretations too.

[8] Allah knows what every female bears, what the wombs fall short of or exceed,²¹ and everything with Him is in a (well-defined) measure.²²

اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ
الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ
بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

But, as regards the *hadīth* about ‘Ali as the “*haad*” of this *Ummah*, it is untrustworthy (Ibn Kathir).

As for Hakim’s declaration that it is a trustworthy report, Alusi writes that generally, his judgment stands in need of cross-examination; secondly, if that is so, it proves *Ahl al-Sunnah*’s point rather than that of the Shi’ah who claim that the *hadīth* in question proves that ‘Ali should have been the immediate successor of the Prophet. The point of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* is that if the *hadīth* about ‘Ali as the “guide of this *Ummah*” be trustworthy, then he proved to be so, by obeying the authority and accepting the choice of the *Ummah* and submitting himself to the three caliphs that preceded him (leaving behind example of good conduct: Au.).

Shafi` leads to another aspect of the meaning: Every nation has had (and will have) a guide: either a Messenger, or, one of his deputies among the later generations.

21. The rendition is following the preference of the great majority. However, another understanding

of “*taghidu*” and “*tazdaadu*” would render the meaning as, “shrinking and swelling of the wombs.”

But the preferred opinion is expressed as follows. Some wombs bring forth babies in nine months, others in less, yet others in more number of days. According to Ibn ‘Abbas, Mujahid and several others, the allusion is to this variation (Ibn Jarir).

22. Jurists have differed over the period of pregnancy. Most of them agree that while minimum is six months, maximum is four years. This is because there was a woman, wife of Muhammad b. ‘Ajlaan, during the time of the Companions, who gave birth thrice in 12 years, each time carrying the child for four years. They used to call her “the elephant bearer” (perhaps because of oversized infants born to her: Au.). Several cases were reported during the time of ‘Umar of women carrying for two years. Dahhak, the often quoted commentator of the Qur’ān was himself in his mother’s womb for two years. He was named Dahhak (the laughing one) because

[9] *Knower of the unseen and the visible, the Great, the Exalted.*²³

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾

[10] *Equal unto Him of you is he who conceals his speech and he who pronounces it, one who seeks to conceal himself by the night or walks forth freely by the day.*

سَوَاءٌ مِّنْكُمْ مَّنْ أَسَرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] *For him there are attendant (angels),²⁴ before him and behind him, guarding over him by Allah's command.²⁵ Verily, Allah changes not what is with a people until they change what is within themselves.²⁶ When Allah intends evil for a people, there is no turning it away, and they do not have besides Him a protector.*

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُعَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُعَيِّرُوهُ مَا بَأْتُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ ﴿١١﴾

at birth he already had teeth in his mouth. There was another person Haram b. Hibban, who was carried by his mother for four years, and was so named (haram: old man) because he looked much older than an infant at birth (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

ing or potential; also, according to Zamakhshari, above anything that could be circumscribed by human definitions.”

Yusuf Ali comments on the text, “A verse of matchless rhythm in Arabic.”

One of the Roman emperors is also reported to have had teeth at birth. Sociologists have noted that in ancient Christian times children born with teeth were considered bad omen and murdered at birth (Au.).

24. The textual word “*mu`aqqibaat*” bears several connotations. One is expressed in the following note. Another connotation would render the translation as “followers” since they follow men’s deeds and write them down meticulously (Alusi).

23. The textual word “*muta`aal*” defies translation in a single word. Asad writes, “God’s attribute *muta`aal*, which occurs in the Qur’an only in this one instance, denotes His exaltedness above anything exist-

25. The allusion is to the guardian angels attached to every soul guarding him or her from harm, unless Allah wills otherwise. According to a *hadith* in Abu Da’ud, these angels

guard man from falling into pot-holes, slip down from top of walls, escape flying objects, etc., unless Allah wills otherwise. When He does, they move away. According to Ka`b, life would be impossible if Allah removed these angels (Alusi, Shafi`).

One of the angels is positioned at the front while the other at the rear. They change their duties morning and evening. There are two others, one at the right hand side and another at the left. These two write down the deeds. The one on the right records good deeds while the other at left records evil deeds. Thus, every man has four angels with him at any time: four during the day, and four at night. Says a *hadith* of Bukhari,

يَتَعاقِبُونَ فِيكُمْ مَلَائِكَةٌ بِاللَّيْلِ وَمَلَائِكَةٌ بِالنَّهَارِ وَيَجْمَعُونَ فِي صَلَاةِ الْعَصْرِ وَصَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ الَّذِينَ بَاتُوا فِيكُمْ فَيَسْأَلُهُمْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ فَيَقُولُ كَيْفَ تَرَكْتُمْ عِبَادِي فَيَقُولُونَ تَرَكْنَاهُمْ وَهُمْ يُصَلُّونَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ وَهُمْ يُصَلُّونَ

“Angels of morning and evening remain with you in succession. They get together at Fajr and ‘Asr Prayer-times. When those who were with you rise up to Him (Allah), He asks, although He knows, ‘In what state did you leave My slaves?’ They reply, ‘When we went to them, they

were in Prayers. And when we left them they were in Prayers.”

Another *hadith* says,

إياكم والتعري فإن معكم من لا يفارقكم إلا عند الغائط وحين يفضي الرجل إلى أهله فاستحيوهم وأكرمهم

“Do not get naked. With you are those who do not part company with you except when you are in the washroom or when a man goes into his wife. Therefore, feel shy of them and honor them” (Ibn Kathir).

The above is in Tirmidhi who rated it as Hasan (Au.).

Thanwi’s understanding of this passage (verses 9-11) could be paraphrased in the following manner: “Knower of the Unseen and the visible, the Great, the Exalted. Equal unto Him of you is he who conceals his speech and he who pronounces it, whether he lies concealed by the night or walks forth freely by the day.” [That is, he knows about everything, about every person; and, He also guards everyone, so that], “attached to him are successive (angels), in front of him and behind him, guarding over him by Allah’s command.” [But, Allah’s protection should not lead the people to believe that they can do as they wish.

[12] He it is who shows you the lightning, driving fear and evoking hope, and generates the heavy clouds.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنزِلُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] The thunder²⁷ extols His glory,²⁸ and (so do) the angels in awe of Him. He sends the thunderbolts and strikes therewith whom He will, while they are disputing about Allah.²⁹ And He is Mighty in Power.³⁰

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾

Rather, although it is true that Allah does not punish without crime, but when they rebel, the protection is withdrawn]. “Verily, Allah changes not what [of the good] is with a people until they change what is in themselves” [changing the good to evil. So that], “Whosoever Allah intends evil for a people, there is no turning it back, and they do not have besides Him a protector.” [Not even the guardian angels can do anything for them in that event].

26. There is no difference in opinion among the commentators of the Qur`ān that Allah does not withdraw a blessing in which a people find themselves until they change themselves towards the worse, by way of corruption and evil-doing (Razi).

Mufti Shafi` warns against an error of understanding commonly spread in our times. He writes: The opposite of the principle enunciated in this verse has not been meant and is not always true.

27. A report in Tirmidhi, which he rated as *sahih*, as well as in Nasa`i and Ahmad narrates the Prophet (*saws*) as having said that “*Ra`d*” is the name of an angel who drives the clouds. However, (since the Prophet did not refer specifically to this verse: Au.), the allusion here could either be to an angel, or to the literal meaning, viz., thunder (Alusi).

Majid writes: “Compare and contrast the attitude of various polytheistic peoples. ‘Thunder was one of the great gods of the Germans.’ (Menziez, *History of Religions*, p. 29). ‘The place of the Thunder-god in polytheistic religion is similar to that of the Rain-god, in many cases even to entire coincidence. But his character is rather of wrath than of beneficence.’ (PC. II. p. 262).”

How firmly and fully Islam did away with irrationalism can be judged from the following, although for fuller appreciation one might remember that a thousand years ago the world

was steeped in ignorance, and, mythology was the mainstay of the people's religion. No one knew anything about the cycle that brought rains, or had any idea what caused thunder and lightning. Yet, even at that time, the Muslims firmly rejected irrational ideas. Zamakhshari remarks at this point in his commentary, (not without sarcasm): "Among the innovations of the (ignorant) *Sufis* can be counted their belief that "*Ra`d*" is the roar of the angels, that lightning the panting of their hearts, and rains their tears!"

28. One of the Banu Ghifaar who accompanied the Prophet said that he heard the Prophet say,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ فَيَنْطِقُ أَحْسَنَ
الْمَنْطِقِ وَيَضْحَكُ أَحْسَنَ الضَّحْكِ

"Verily, Allah generated the clouds so that they speak the best of speeches and laugh the best of laughter." And, it is explained that by "speech" the Prophet meant their thunder, and by "laugh" he meant their lightning (Shawkani).

The *hadith* is in Ahmad and in "*Majma`*" about which Haythami remarked that it is trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

It is reported of the Prophet, that when he heard the thunder, he would say,

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَقْتُلْنَا بِغَضَبِكَ وَلَا تَهْلِكْنَا بِعَذَابِكَ وَعَافِنَا
قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ.

"O Allah, do not kill us out of Your anger, do not destroy us by Your chastisement, and protect us until then."

The report is in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and in Bukhari's Kitab al-Adab, (*Adab al-Mufrad*: Alusi) - Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir.

Tirmidhi himself judged the above report as weak, but Hakim remarked that it has the chain of *sahih* reports (Au.).

A *hadith* in Ahmad reports the Prophet as having said,

لَوْ أَنَّ عِبَادِي أَطَاعُونِي لِأَسْقِيَهُمُ الْمَطَرَ بِاللَّيْلِ
وَأَطْلَعْتُ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّمْسَ بِالنَّهَارِ وَلَمَّا أَسْمَعْتُهُمْ
صَوْتَ الرَّعْدِ

"Your Lord says, 'If My slaves were to obey Me, I would send the rains at night, expose them to the sun during the day, and never let them hear the sound of thunder.'"

The above narrative is in Ahmad declared weak by Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut (Au.).

29. Anas reports as immediate context of revelation that,

بعث النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم مرة رجلا إلى رجل من فراعنة العرب أن ادعه لي قال يا رسول الله إنه أعتى من ذلك قال اذهب إليه فادعه قال فأثاه فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يدعوك قال أرسل رسول الله وما الله أمن ذهب هو أم من فضة هو أمن نحاس هو فرجع إلى النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فقال يا رسول الله قد أخبرتك أنه أعتى من ذلك وأخبر النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم بما قال قال فارجع إليه فادعه فرجع فأعاد عليه المقالة الأولى فرد عليه مثل الجواب فأتى النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم فأخبره فقال ارجع إليه فادعه فرجع إليه فبينما هما يتراجعان الكلام بينهما إذ بعث الله سبحانه حيال رأسه فرعدت ووقعت منها صاعقة فذهبت بقحف رأسه وأنزل الله عز و جل { ويرسل الصواعق فيصيب بها من يشاء وهم يجادلون في الله }

“The Prophet sent one of his men to one of the Pharaohs of the Arabs asking him to come to him. The man said, “Messenger of Allah, he is more arrogant than that.” The Prophet said, “Go and call him to me.” So he went and told him that the Prophet wished to see him. He replied, “Who is this Prophet of Allah? And who is Allah? Is He made of gold, or silver or copper?” The Prophet’s envoy returned and told him what had happened. The Prophet (*saw’s*) told him, “Go and call him to me.” So he went again. The man

replied in the same manner. He went back and reported to the Prophet. He told him to go again and call him. So he went up to the man a third time. As the two stood exchanging words, Allah sent forth a piece of cloud with lightning. A thunderbolt struck the man on the head and killed him. Allah revealed, “He sends the thunder-bolts and strikes therewith whom He will, while they are disputing about Allah.”

This report is in *Sunan al-Nasa’i al-Kbra*, *Musnad Abu Ya’la* and *Tabarani* with trustworthy chains: Haythami (Au.).

Another narration has it that two men Arbad and `Amir b. Dawsī went to the Prophet. `Amir asked, “Muhammad. Shall I become a Muslim on the condition that I should be the chief after you?” The Prophet refused. He asked, “Alright. You be the chief over the city dwellers and I over the desert dwellers.” The Prophet refused. `Amir said, “I will bring waves of `Amir riders on Madinah and destroy you.” Then the two tried to kill him treacherously, but the intended killer’s hand froze. They left him. On their way back, one of them, Arbad, was killed by a thunderbolt while the other by a boil in his body as big as

[14] To Him in truth are devotions due. As for those they invoke besides Him, they do not respond to them with anything, except as one who stretches out his hands towards water so that it may reach his mouth; but it is not going to reach it. The invocations of the unbelievers is nothing but in vain.³¹

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كَبَاسِطٍ كَفَّيْهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ وَمَا دَعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ ﴿١٤﴾

a camel's hump. And Allah revealed this verse. Some poems have also been said about the two (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir - shortened).

Ibn Kathir recalls the Prophet's prophecy as reported by Abu Sa`id al-Khudri and preserved by Ahmad,

تَكَثَّرَ الصَّوَاعِقُ عِنْدَ اقْتِرَابِ السَّاعَةِ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ الرَّجُلُ
الْقَوْمَ فَيَقُولُ مَنْ صَعِقَ تِلْكَمُ الْعَدَاةُ فَيَقُولُونَ صَعِقَ
فُلَانٌ وَفُلَانٌ

“Thunderbolts will increase their frequency near the end of the world until a man visiting a people will ask, “Who was struck by the thunderbolt yesterday?” They will say, “So and so, and so and so were struck by it” (Ibn Kathir).

The above *hadith* is, according to Arna`ut *sahih* (Au.).

30. The textual term “*shadeed al-mihaal*” has been understood variously.

A variant meaning is suggested by Raaghib, as also by several commentators. In the words of Asad, “.. *shadid al-mihal* .. signifies ‘powerful in contriving, in a manner hidden from man, that wherein wisdom lies.’”

31. Majid quotes from *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, “Belief in the one Deity, sovereign in the universe, carries with it a sense of security and of elevation which has an ennobling influence on thought and life. It makes man strong and free in the world. Here is the secret of the transformation which Islam effects from the African animist ... the monotheist ... lifts his face to heaven and gives his worship to the Supreme alone, and asks help from a Power which, he is assured, has no rival’ (X. p. 171).”

[15] And, unto Allah prostrates itself everything that is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and (so do) their shadows mornings and evenings.³²

[16] Ask, 'Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Have you then taken protectors other than Him - those who have no power of good or harm over their own selves?' Say, 'Are equal the blind and the seeing, or, are equal darkness and Light?' Or, have they assigned partners to Allah who created the like of His creation, so that the creations are confusing to them? Say, 'Allah is the Creator of all things and He is One, the Irresistible.'

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظِلَالُهُم بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿١٥﴾

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٦﴾

32. What is the manner of prostration of the animate and the inanimate objects? Muhammad Asad explains: "The expression *yasjudu* ('prostrate himself' or 'prostrate themselves') is a metonym for complete submission to His will (Zamakhshari), that is, to the natural laws decreed by Him with regard to everything that exists. According to most of the classical commentators, those who submit to God willingly (i.e., consciously) are the angels and the believers, whereas

the deniers of the truth, who are 'not willing' to submit to Him, are nevertheless, without being conscious of it, subject to His will. However, in view of the subsequent references to 'shadows' it is logical to assume that the relative pronoun 'man' relates in this context not only to conscious beings but also to all other physical objects, whether animate or inanimate - i.e., to 'all things and beings that are in the heavens and the earth.'"

[17] He sent down water from the heaven and the valleys flow according to their capacity,³³ and the torrent carries rising scum.³⁴ And from what they heat up on fire, seeking ornaments or ware, (there also rises up) scum in the like manner. That is how Allah coins (the similitude of) the truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it stays back as scum on the banks. But, as for what benefits the people, it abides in the earth. That is how Allah strikes similitudes.³⁵

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ
بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا
يُوقَدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ
مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ
وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا
يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ
يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

33. That is, the valleys hold water according to their size, some less, some more (Razi, Qurtubi and others). Another possibility, and the more likely, is that Allah sends water to the valleys in quantities determined by Him (Alusi).

34. The textual word “*raabiya*” is from “*rabw*” and has the connotation of something that has swelled to appear bigger than its true size (Ibn Jarir); hence the word “*riba*.” And, this is the reality of falsehood: puffed up, blown to an enormous size, but without substance (Au.).

35. These are examples of truth and falsehood: one abiding, the other perishing. From Ibn `Abbas we have two interpretations. To paraphrase what he said, “He sends down water from the heaven and the valleys flow according to their capacity,” i.e., this is an example of the hearts and what

of belief or skepticism that they hold within them, each in according to its measure. [That is, the “valleys” of the example are “hearts”]; and no deed is profitable when it is accompanied by doubts. It is pure belief alone that is beneficial to the people. “As for the scum, it vanishes, (being) cast out.” The scum here is equivalent of doubts and skepticism. “But, as for what profits the people, it abides in the earth:” that is, true faith abides. As metals are heated on the fire, for extraction of the pure and separation of the impure, in the like manner Allah accepts true faith and rejects that which is adulterated with doubts and skepticism.

Another interpretation coming from him, (and of course, the two are reconcilable) is as follows: “He sends down water from the heaven and the valleys flow according to their ca-

capacity. The torrent carries the rising scum,” i.e., the torrents pick up the straws and pieces of trash and such other things on their way; “and from what they heat on fire,” such as gold, silver and other metals which also carry impurities with them, which are also as useless as the scum carried by the torrents is. “As for what profits the people:” just as water benefits the land, the good deeds of a believer are of profit to him; but evil deeds are washed away as scum is washed away. This is the example of the truth that has come from Allah. Whosoever lived by what Allah sent, will have it with him (on the Judgment Day), as water that remains behind in the valleys. Similarly, a knife, or a sword cannot be made until iron is heated on the fire for it to eat away its impurities, and, for the rest to emerge and last as the pure, useful. In the like manner, truth will last on the Day of Judgment, and its upholders will benefit from it, while falsehood will vanish with its upholders left in loss (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The same point has been brought out through a *hadith* to be found in the *sahihayn*. It reports the Prophet as saying,

إِنَّ مَثَلَ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا فَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا طَائِفَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ

قَبِلَتِ الْمَاءَ فَأُثْبِتَتِ الْكَلَاءَ وَالْعُشْبَ الْكَثِيرَ وَكَانَ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبُ أُمْسَكَتِ الْمَاءَ فَتَنَعَ اللَّهُ بِهَا النَّاسَ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهَا وَسَقَوْا وَرَعَوْا وَأَصَابَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهَا أُخْرَى إِنَّمَا هِيَ قَيْعَانٌ لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً وَلَا تُثْبِتُ كَلَاءً فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ قَفَّهَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ وَتَنَعَهُ بِمَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ فَعَلِمَ وَعَلَّمَ وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ

“The example of the guidance and knowledge that Allah sent me with is like rain that fell on a tract of land. There was a tract that absorbed water and brought forth grass, shrubs and woods. Another tract was a hard patch. It held water which Allah proved beneficial for the people: they drank, watered their cattle and fields, and cultivated the land. Then there was a tract that was totally barren: it neither held water nor brought forth any vegetation. Such is the example of the one who acquired religious understanding and profited from what Allah sent me with. He proved himself of benefit to others: learning and teaching. It is also the example of him who did not lift his head and did not accept the guidance that Allah sent me with” (Ibn Kathir).

Sayyid Qutb sheds light from another perspective: “This is the example of truth and falsehood in the life of

this world. Falsehood rises up, swims, is puffed up, and in all appearances looks like growing and overshadowing everything. But, it remains what in reality it is: scum, impurity. It is not long before it dries up and is cast away. It has not a real existence and does not enjoy true hold. In contrast, truth is slow, cool and noiseless, so that, sometimes people get to feel that it has withdrawn itself, or has gone into hiding, or is lost, or is dead. But, it remains on the earth, just like life-giving water and useful minerals, benefiting the people: that is how Allah strikes similitudes.”

Note a few contrasts drawn by the Qur`an in this passage (verses 1-17):

Verses of the Book and that which has been sent down;

raised the heavens, assumed *Istawa`* on the *‘Arsh*;

the sun and the moon;

directs the affair, explains the verses;

(fixed) mountains, (flowing) rivers;

(of every fruit) pairs of two;

the night, the day;

tracts neighboring;

vine orchards, sown fields;

(palm trees from a) single root and several;

(if) amazed, (more) amazing;

evil before the good;

Forgiving, Severe of chastisement;

a warner and a guide;

(wombs) fall short of or exceed;

the Unseen and the Seen;

the Great, the Exalted.

conceal (the speech or) pronounce (it);

by the night, by the day;

(successive angels), before him and behind him;

He alters not until they alter;

lightning: driving fear and evoking hope;

thunder extols glory, as do the angels;

prayers: worthy and in vain;

the heavens and the earth;

willingly or unwillingly;

(shadows) mornings and evenings.

Lord of the heavens, and the earth;

(equal) the blind and the seeing;

darkness and light;

The Creator and those associated;

The One, the Irresistible;

water and scum;

[18] For those who responded to their Lord, there are good (things). As regards those who did not respond to Him, if they possessed all that is in the earth, and the like of it along with it, they would surely (seek to) ransom themselves therewith. Those - theirs shall be an evil reckoning;³⁶ their abode is Jahannum, an evil place of rest.

لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ
يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ هُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ
جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَاقْتَدُوا بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُم
سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ وَمَأْوَاهُم جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ
الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] Is he then who knows that what has been sent down to you by your Lord is the truth, the same as one who is blind? Surely, it is men of understanding who receive admonition.³⁷

أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ
الْحَقُّ كَمَن هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] Those who fulfill Allah's covenant³⁸ and break not the compact.³⁹

الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ
الْمِيثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾

ornaments and ordinary ware;
truth and falsehood.

One may continue with the rest of the passages to further the list. Moreover, this is apparent to a cursory look; within the verses there are other beautifully drawn contrasts, all pointing to the inescapable conclusion that no human could have produced this Qur'an (Au., with a point from Sayyid).

36. Shahr b. Hawshab is reported to have said that an evil reckoning signifies that nothing of their evil deeds will be forgiven (Ibn Jarir). The same is reported of Ibrahim Nakha'i (Qurtubi).

37. Commenting on "it is men of understanding who receive admoni-

tion" Thanwi writes that Allah's usage of the term "*ulu al-albab*" (which can also be rendered as, "men of intelligence") leads us to believe that whosoever is endowed with qualities as stated here and in the verses that follow, is an "intelligent" man (in Allah's sight), even if he does not happen to be very clever in worldly affairs. In contrast, those who lack these qualities are not intelligent, even if they are clever in worldly affairs.

38. Allah's covenant! What is it? Imām Razi deals with it in some detail. He writes: Several explanations can be offered in connection with Allah's words, "Those who fulfill Allah's covenant." First, as Ibn `Abbas has said, the allusion is to the cov-

enant taken by Allah from the human souls before their creation while they were yet in Adam's loins, asking them, "Am I not your Lord?" Second, the term "Allah's covenant" includes every right thing (that the humans ought to be doing) following the demands of reason and good sense. Of this second kind, there are two types: 1) Those things that are so proved through intellectual reasoning. These do not accept abrogation or alteration. And 2) Those things that are so proved by Revelation. Allah's covenant covers everything that has an unequivocal evidence in its favor: either rational or revelational. In fact, the word covenant is synonymous with evidence. And there is no covenant stronger than evidential proofs (that the humans are shown as Allah's signs). In short, anything that an irrefutable evidence indicates as the right thing to do, is something the human beings are bound to do. This is the covenant of Allah in its fullest sense.

Asad adds: "A covenant is, in this context, a general term embracing the spiritual obligations arising from one's faith in God and the moral and social obligations, resulting from that faith, towards one's fellow-men (Zamakhshari).

Qurtubi takes up another issue, viz., avoiding violation of the covenant once entered into. 'Awf b. Malik reports,

كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- تِسْعَةً
أَوْ ثَمَانِيَةً أَوْ سَبْعَةً فَقَالَ « أَلَا تَبَايَعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ »
وَكُنَّا حَدِيثَ عَهْدٍ بِبَيْعَةِ فُقُلْنَا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ « أَلَا تَبَايَعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ». فَقُلْنَا قَدْ
بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ « أَلَا تَبَايَعُونَ رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ ». قَالَ فَبَسَطْنَا أَيْدِيَنَا وَقُلْنَا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ فَعَلَّامٌ تَبَايَعُكَ قَالَ « عَلَى أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا
تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَالصَّلَاةَ وَالْحُمْسَ وَتُطِيعُوا - وَأَسْرَ
كَلِمَةً خَفِيَّةً - وَلَا تَسْأَلُوا النَّاسَ شَيْئًا »

"Once some eight, or nine, or seven of us were sitting with the Prophet when he suggested, 'Will you not enter into a compact with the Messenger of Allah?' Since we had recently given our allegiance to him we said, 'We have already entered into a compact with you.' □ After a while he said, 'Will you not enter into a compact with the Messenger of Allah?' We said, 'But we have already entered into allegiance with you. But again he said, 'Will you not enter into a compact with the Messenger of Allah?' So we stretched our hands and said, 'We have already given our allegiance to you, so what is this new compact about?' He said, 'That you will worship Allah alone with-

out associating aught with Him. That you shall pray five times, listen and obey - and, lowering his voice - you will not ask the people for anything.”

So, `Awf the narrator added, some of those who were there at that time, would not in their life ask anyone for anything to the extent that if he was riding a beast and his whip fell down, he would not ask anyone to pick it up for him. He would rather dismount to pick it up himself.

When Abu Hamza the Khurasani - who was a man of great devotion - heard of this report he said, “O Allah. Those people saw the Prophet and entered into a compact with him. I give my word to You that I shall not ask anyone for anything.” Now, once he went for pilgrimage and as he had separated out from the rest near Syria, he fell into a well that had not been hedged. He was reminded of his promise and said to himself that he would not ask anyone for help. It should so happen that as some people were passing by, they saw the hole in the ground and said to each other that someone could fall into it. So they covered it with wooden planks. As they were working, Abu Hamza thought he should seek help but was reminded

of his own resolve. They sealed the opening and went away. He blamed himself for not asking their help but decided firmly on faith in Allah. As he sat in there with no hopes, someone lowered a hand and said, ‘Here. Let me pull you out.’ However, when he came out he found no one there. Then he heard a voice saying, ‘How was the reward for placing trust in Allah?’”

But when Ibn Jawzi heard the story he disagreed with Abu Hamza and remarked, “After all, the Prophet himself had sought help of the people in connection with his various affairs.” To abandon the means is not tawakkul. In fact, Sufyan Thawri has said that if someone was hungry, but did not ask until he died, he committed suicide. Ibn Jawzi also said that although the help (that came to Abu Hamza) cannot be denied, it can be explained as Allah’s rescue of an ignorant man. Following the rules, he was required to seek help when he was in the well. Not doing that, he was playing with his life which is a gift of Allah in man’s trust.

Quotation from Qurtubi ends here.

39. We have a *hadith* in this connection:

لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ وَلَا دِينَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ

[21] Those who unite what Allah has commanded be united,⁴⁰ fear their Lord,⁴¹ and dread an evil reckoning.

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ

﴿٢١﴾

“He has no faith who is not trustworthy and he has no religion who does not keep promises.”

The version above is from Ahmad, treated as trustworthy by Aran’aut (Au.).

Imām Razi comments: To keep one’s promise has the backing of both reason as well as revelation. The Prophet has said, “Whoever gave a promise, and then betrayed, bears one of the traits of hypocrisy.” In another report brought to us by Abu Hurayrah (and preserved by Bukhari: Au.), he said,

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : ثَلَاثَةٌ أَنَا حَصْمُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ،
وَمَنْ كُنْتُ حَصْمُهُ حَصْمَتُهُ : رَجُلٌ أَعْطَى بِي ثُمَّ غَدَرَ ،
، وَرَجُلٌ بَاعَ حُرًّا فَأَكَلَ ثَمَنَهُ ، وَرَجُلٌ اسْتَأْجَرَ أَجِيرًا
فَاسْتَوَى مِنْهُ وَمُ يُوْفِيهِ

Allah Most High said, “There are three against whom I shall be disputing on the Judgment Day. And when I dispute against someone, he will be destroyed: A man who gave his word in My Name and then betrayed; a man who purchased a free man, then sold him as a slave and devoured the price; and a man who hired

another, took his labor and then did not pay him in full.”

It is reported that once Mu`awiyah wished to break the implication of a treaty he had entered into with the Romans. But he was prevented by a Companion.

See *Surah Al-Anfal* note 103 of this work (Au.).

40. Ibn Jurayj reported,

إذا لم تمش إلى ذي رحمك برجلك ولم تعطه من مالك
فقد قطعته

“We have been told that the Prophet said, ‘If you did not walk with your feet to your kinsfolk, and did not share your wealth with them, then, you snapped ties with them’” (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Jurayj was not a Companion, and his report could not be traced in any *hadith* collection (Au.)

Zamakhshari expands on the issue of ties and bonds. In the words of Asad: “This refers to all ties arising from human relationships - e.g., the bonds of the family, responsibility for the orphans and the poor, the mutual rights and duties of neighbors -

as well as the spiritual and practical bonds which ought to exist between all who belong to the brotherhood of Islam. In its widest sense, the phrase 'what God has bidden to be joined' applies to the spiritual obligation, on the part of man, to remain conscious of the unity of purpose underlying God's creation, and hence - according to Razi - man's moral duty to treat all living beings with love and compassion."

Razi wrote, "It includes the duty to those related by blood as well as those related by spiritual bonds: Allah said, 'Believers are brothers unto each other.' In practical term it would imply helping the needy, preventing harms that threaten to strike them - such as those that are within one's means - visiting the sick, attending funerals, spreading Salam among the Muslims, smiling in their faces, and being good to animals. It is said that,

وعن / الفضيل بن عياض رحمه الله أن جماعة دخلوا عليه بمكة فقال: من أين أنتم؟ قالوا: من خراسان. فقال: اتقوا الله وكونوا من حيث شئتم، واعلموا

أن العبد لو أحسن كل الإحسان وكان له دجاجة فأساء إليها لم يكن من المحسنين

Some people entered upon Fudayl b. `Iyad in Makkah. He asked them, "Where are you from?" They said, "We are from Khurasan." He said, "Fear Allah, and then you can live where you will. Remember, if a man was good towards everyone to the extreme limits, but did not treat well the chickens that he owns, he will not be counted among those who 'do good.'"

41. What is the difference between "*khashyah*" and "*khawf*" both of which are translated as "fear"? "*Khashyah*" has an element of love, respect and admiration concealed in the primary meaning of fear that the word lends, but which the word "*khawf*" lacks (Shafi`).

Khawf sounds more brutal than *khashyah* which, in contrast, carries some subtlety (Au.).

[22] *And, those who patiently persevere seeking their Lord's countenance,⁴² attend to the Prayers, expend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and ward off evil with good,⁴³ they, for them is the Ultimate Abode.⁴⁴*

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً
وَيُذَرُّوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ
عَقَبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾

42. Imām Razi writes: It is reported that Shaqiq b. Ibrahim the Balthami visited `Abdullah ibn Mubarak without revealing his identity. He inquired, "Where are you from?" He replied, "From Balkh." Ibn Mubarak asked, "Do you happen to know Shaqiq?" He said, "Yes." He asked, "How do you find his disciples?" Shaqiq replied, "Well, when they are denied, they observe patience, and when they are bestowed, they give thanks." Ibn Mubarak remarked, "This is the quality of our dogs. Perfect are those who, when denied, give thanks, and when bestowed, give preference (and pass on) to others."

43. Yusuf Ali has a nice comment on this passage: "In this section the contrast between Faith and Righteousness on the one hand and Infidelity and Evil on the other is set out. The righteous man is known as one who

- (1) receives admonition;
- (2) is true to his covenants;
- (3) follows the universal Religion of Faith and Practice joined together;

(4) is patient and persevering in seeking Allah; and in practical matters he is known to be;

- (5) regular in prayer;
- (6) generous in true charity, whether open or secret; and
- (7) not revengeful, but anxious to turn off evil with good, thus breaking the chain of evil which tends to perpetuate itself."

44. This can have two explanations. One, these are a people who, when they commit an evil, immediately follow up with a virtuous act. The Prophet (*saws*) told Mua`adh,

أَتْبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ تَمْحُهَا

"And follow up an evil deed with a virtuous one, it will erase it."

Second, they do not retaliate evil with evil, rather, respond to evil with what is good (Razi and others).

Mawdudi expands on the theme, "The conduct of the believers has been aptly portrayed in the following saying of the Prophet (peace be

[23] Gardens of perpetual bliss⁴⁵ which they shall enter - they and those who were righteous from among their parents, spouses and offspring.⁴⁶ And the angels entering upon them by every portal.

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ
آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ
يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

on him): ‘Do not follow the ways of the others, saying, “If they do good, we will also do good to them; but if others wrong us, we will also wrong them.” Discipline yourself to a principle. If people do good to you, do good to them; and if they mistreat you, [still] refrain from being unjust’ (Tirmidhi).

“Of similar import,” continues Mawdudi, “is the tradition in which the Prophet (peace be on him) mentions that his Lord had enjoined nine commands. Four of those commands are as follows: ‘That I should speak with justice in anger and happiness; that I should render the right of him who deprives me; that I should give him who denies me; that I should forgive him who wrongs me.’ Another tradition expresses the same idea in another saying of the Prophet (peace be on him): ‘Do not betray him who betrays you’ (Tirmidhi).”

Shabbir points out that forgiving the evil-doer should only be practiced when it is not feared that forgiving will lead to further wrongdoing.

45. Dahhak has said that ‘Adn is a city in Paradise wherein Messengers, Prophets, martyrs and those who guided to righteousness will dwell. There would be paradises around them in which other people would dwell (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). There have been other interpretations too. See Al-Tawbah, note 154 of this work.

46. That is, parents, spouses and the offspring, although righteous, might not deserve the same rank and level of Paradise, but in honor of this exemplary soul, would be allowed into the same rank and level. In fact, Ibn ‘Abbas has said that they could be very ordinary believers. Wahidi has pointed out that if they happen to be believers of the same quality as he, then their entry would be on their own merits and cannot be considered a favor shown to him. Therefore, they would have to be of lower status granted a Paradise of higher rank, for the pleasure of the higher rank of the person in discussion. Further, as Razi has pointed out, the rule is both for man and woman, husband and wife:

[24] 'Peace upon you for that you patiently endured.'⁴⁷ How excellent then, the Ultimate Abode!⁴⁸

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

﴿٢٤﴾

whoever is of higher rank will have the other with him or her in Paradise in honor of his or her true faith and righteous deeds (Alusi and others).

The opinion of Ibn `Abbas can be corroborated with another Qur`anic verse. It says (52: 21),

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ [الطور : ٢١]

"As for those who believed, and their progeny followed them in faith, We shall join them with their progeny."

However, (putting together the two verses) the meaning that can be derived is that faith and righteous deeds are essential requirements for entry into Paradise. Then, by Allah's grace, they might go up to higher levels (Shabbir).

47. The allusion is to both types of "sabr": what are known as "sabr 'ala al-ta`at" (patience in the observation of the obligations) and "sabr 'an al-ma`asi" (patience against sins) - Shafi`.

48. The textual words for Ultimate Abode are "uqbat-dar". Imām Ahmad has a *hadith* in explanation, re-

ported by `Abdullah ibn `Amr. The Prophet said,

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ قَالَ أَوَّلُ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَالْمُهَاجِرُونَ الَّذِينَ تُسَدُّ بِهِمِ الثُّغُورُ وَيُنْفَى بِهِمِ الْمَكَارَهُ وَيَمُوتُ أَحَدُهُمْ وَحَاجَتُهُ فِي صَدْرِهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ لَهَا قِصَاءً فَيَقْبُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَلَائِكَتِهِ اثْتَوَهُمْ فَحَيُّوهُمْ فَتَقْبُولُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ نَحْنُ سَكَّانُ سَمَائِكَ وَخَيْرُ نِكَاحٍ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ أَفْتَأْمُرُنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَ هَؤُلَاءَ فُسَلِّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالَ إِيَّاهُمْ كَانُوا عِبَادًا يَعْبُدُونِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَتُسَدُّ بِهِمِ الثُّغُورُ وَيُنْفَى بِهِمِ الْمَكَارَهُ وَيَمُوتُ أَحَدُهُمْ وَحَاجَتُهُ فِي صَدْرِهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ لَهَا قِصَاءً قَالَ فَتَأْتِيهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ فَيَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ {سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ}

(The Prophet asked), "Do you know who of Allah's creation will enter Paradise first?" They answered, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "The first of Allah's creation to enter Paradise will be the poor Immigrants: those by whom the borders are secured, and calamities are warded off. One of them dies while a need is still in his breast, unable to fulfill it. Allah will say to whom He will of the angels, 'Go up to them and greet them.' They will ask, 'We are the dwellers of

[25] As for those who break Allah's covenant after its ratification,⁴⁹ snap what Allah has commanded to be joined, and work corruption in the land: they, theirs shall be the Curse⁵⁰ and for them an evil abode.

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيُقْطِعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Allah enlarges upon the providence of whom He will, and constricts.⁵¹ They exult in the life of this world, although the life of this world is no more with reference to the Hereafter, but a passing comfort.⁵²

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَفَرِحُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Your heaven and Your choicest creation. Do You ask us to go to these people and greet them? He will say, 'They were such of My slaves who worshiped Me alone, associating none with Me. By them the outposts were secured and calamities warded off. One of them would die with a need in his heart, unable to fulfill it.' So the angels will go to them, entering upon them from every portal saying, 'Peace on you for that you patiently endured. How excellent then, the Ultimate Abode?!'" (Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi deduces from the above *hadith* that angels are superior to mankind.

The report is, according to Arna'ut, quite trustworthy (Au.).

49. "This may refer to," Majid writes, "the religious instinct innate in every human being."

50. For the lack of suitable alternative, the term "*la'nah*" has been rendered as "curse." But, as Asad has written, "The Qur'anic term *la'nah* - usually but inexactly translated as "curse" (and popularly used in this sense in post-classical Arabic parlance) - denotes "banishment" or "alienation" (*ib-'ad*), i.e., from all that is good (*Lisan al-'Arab*). Whenever it is attributed in the Qur'an to God with reference to a sinner, it signifies the latter's "exclusion from God's grace" or his "rejection by God."

51. Since in common observance unbelievers are better off in terms of wealth and worldly possessions when compared to the believers, it is normally asked, "If they are not

[27] And say those who have disbelieved, 'Why has not a (miraculous) sign been sent upon him by his Lord?'⁵³ Say, 'Truly, Allah lets go astray whom He will⁵⁴ and guides unto Himself any who turns (to Him) in penitence.⁵⁵

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ
مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاءُ
وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن أَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾

approved by Allah, why are they so well off?" Or, alternatively, "Isn't their wealth and prosperity, a sign of their right behavior in life?" This verse answers the question. Allah bestows material bounties on whomsoever He will, whether qualified or not. It is after all of little worth, no matter how enormous. In contrast, guidance is a thing of great worth. It is not granted to someone who is not worthy of it, or did not strive for it (Thanwi and others).

52. (The Prophet has expanded on this theme). In a report in Muslim he said,

وَاللَّهِ مَا الدُّنْيَا فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مِثْلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ
إِصْبَعُهُ هَذِهِ - وَأَشَارَ يَمِينِي بِالسَّبَابَةِ - فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيَنْظُرْ
بِمَ يَرْجِعُ

"By Allah, the world is no more in comparison to the Hereafter than that one of you should dip his finger in a sea – he pointed to his index finger. So, let him see what it returns with." In another report, also in Muslim, he passed by the carcass of a sheep and remarked,

قَوَالِدِي نَفْسٌ مُّحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ لَلدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَيَّ اللَّهُ عَزَّ
وَجَلَّ مِنْ هَذِهِ عَلَيَّ أَهْلِهَا

"By Him in whose hands is my life, the world is less worthy in the sight of Allah than this one was to its owners" (Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

53. It is strange that the unbelievers kept asking for a sign. How else did they think thousands had embraced Islam before them (Au.)?

54. Jiba'i has said that once they made a decision to reject, Allah led them to the course of rejection. That is the meaning of "Allah does not guide the unbelievers" (Razi).

Mawdudi expands: "God does not forcibly direct to the right way those who, instead of turning to God for guidance, defiantly turn away from Him. God allows such people to stumble in the deviant ways of their choice. The same factors which direct those who seek God's guidance to the right way are allowed to become the factors of misguidance in respect of those who seek error. Such

[28] Those who have believed, and whose hearts find comfort in Allah's remembrance; and lo, in Allah's remembrance do hearts find comfort.⁵⁶

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ
أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾

persons are unable to benefit from the light which, rather than illuminating their path, merely serves to dazzle their vision. That is what is meant by saying that: 'Allah lets go astray those whom He wills.'

55. Thus, turning to Allah in penitence is the way of life of a believer. Who can stay on the path of guidance for longer than a few minutes? We keep straying away. All we can do is to pull back as soon as we become conscious of the straying (Au.).

56. Majid comments: "This state of serene tranquility and steady peace of mind, is clearly marked off from boisterous merriment the invariable concomitant of material pleasures to be inevitably followed by a sad reaction. The greater the communion of man with his Maker, the more contented, the more optimistic would he be in his outlook of life."

Alusi and Thanwi have elaborated on the cause of "comfort" (alternatively "rest"), as, "a Light (nur) coming from Allah and descending into the hearts following true and sincere faith in Him. This Light expels the

inner restlessness (*wahshah*) and the fear of "other than Him," calming it down. Further, Thanwi adds, this comfort can co-exist with the fear of Allah, (which is not similar to fear of dreadfully harmful things, rather, a fear out of awe, in other words, "*kbashyah*" and not "*khawf*").

Alusi mentions a few reasons why the heart finds rest and comfort in the remembrance of Allah. When a heart remembers one of the things of the world, it wishes to indulge in it, maneuver it, and control it. That makes the heart restive. But since Allah is beyond indulgence, maneuvering, or control, the search ends with Him and the hearts find rest in Him. Again, when the heart thinks of something material, then, after a while, it wishes for something better, and, there always being something better, more attractive, the heart loses its peace. In contrast, Allah is the Ultimate Good. There is nothing better than Him to desire after. Hence the rest and comfort in remembrance of Him (slightly modified).

We can add on to what has been stated above and say that by no other

[29] Those who believed and worked righteous deeds, bliss⁵⁷ for them, and a happy resort.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ
وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

means can this restiveness and anxiety of the inner self, the heart and the soul, which occupy every heart, can be got rid off, except by renewing faith through the remembrance of Allah. The unbelievers resort to games, music, drugs, films, and similar diversions only keep the heart occupied until engaged in those activities. Once those diversions are removed, the hearts are back with the feeling of emptiness and anxiety of various sorts. Recent studies conducted in the United States of America say that the immediate after-effect of watching television programs is depression and feelings of loneliness. Most of the people are less happy after shutting down the TV than they were before. As for music, it leads to such feelings of depression and other psychological disorders that the producers and listeners have to often resort to hard drugs (Au.).

57. The “*tuba*” of the text has been variously explained as, happiness,

comfort, cool of the eye, joy, bliss, blessedness, and a tree in Paradise (Ibn Jarir). Imām Ahmad has a report coming through Abu Sa`id Khudri. Someone said to the Prophet, “Messenger of Allah, tuba (blessings) for him who saw you and believed in you.” He replied, “Tuba for him who saw me and believed in me. And tuba, and then tuba and then tuba for someone who believed in me without having seen me.” Someone asked, “What is tuba?” He replied, “It is a tree in Paradise which a rider will take a hundred years to cross. Clothes for the inhabitants of Paradise are produced from its bark” (Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* is *sahih* of status and is in Ahmad, Ibn Hibban and Albani’s *sahih al-Jami`* (S.Ibrhim).

In other words, points out Shabbir, tuba as used here is a noun (a tree in Paradise) but also has other linguistic implications.

[30] Thus We have sent you among a people before whom many nations have passed, so that you may recite unto them that which We have revealed unto you, the while they are rejecting the Most Merciful.⁵⁸ Say, 'He is my Lord. There is no god save He. In Him I have placed my trust, and to Him is my return in penitence.'

كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لِيَتْلُوَ عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] If there was a Qur'an⁵⁹ whereby the mountains were moved, or whereby the earth cut asunder, or whereby the dead spoken to⁶⁰ .. nay, but Allah's is the affair altogether.⁶¹ Have the believers not given up hopes that, had Allah wished,⁶² He could have guided all the peoples (aright)?!⁶³ But those who have disbelieved will always have a calamity strike them for their doing, or it will alight close to their dwellings, until Allah's promise comes to pass; surely, Allah will not fail the trust.⁶⁴

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِعَتْ بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كُتِبَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَى بَل لَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا أَفَلَمْ يَيْئَسِ الَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَهْدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا نُصِيبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةً أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] Indeed, Messengers were scoffed at before you, but I granted respite to the unbelievers, and then seized them. So (see) how (awesome) was My retribution.

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأُوا بِرُسُلِ مَنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾

58. It is reported that when the Prophet's writer began to pen the peace treaty at Hudaibiyyah, beginning with "In the name of Allah, *Al-Rahman* (the Kind), *Al-Rahim* (the Merciful)," the pagans interjected saying, "*Al-Rahman*? Who is *Al-Rahman*? Rather, begin simply with, "In the name of Allah" (and drop the rest). The Prophet's Companions said, "Let us instead fight these people O Messenger of Allah." The

Prophet said, "Rather, write down as they say" (Ibn Jarir). The substance of the *hadith* is in Bukhari. And Muslim has a *hadith* that says that the most approved of names with Allah are: 'Abdullah and 'Abdul-Rahman" (Ibn Kathir).

59. Linguistically, the word "Qur'an" is for any piece of writing, or written material. The Prophet has used it in the sense of a scripture. He said in a *hadith* of Bukhari,

خَفَّفَ عَلَىٰ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ الْقُرْآنَ فَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ
بِدَوَابِّهِ فَتُسْرَجُ فَيَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُسْرَجَ دَوَابُّهُ وَلَا
يَأْكُلُ إِلَّا مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ

“The Qur’ān was made easy for Da’ud. He would order his mount readied, and would finish off his Qur’ān before it could be saddled. And he never ate but from the earnings of his hands.” The allusion by the word “Qur’ān” is to *Zabur* (Ibn Kathir).

60. That is, if any writing could achieve that, then the Qur’ān was better qualified to do it.

This verse came in response to the suggestion by the pagans that they could believe in him only if he could widen their town by moving the mountains surrounding their city, make rivers flow through the town, and bring back to life their ancestors. They were told that had in the past any other piece of writing moved the mountains, split the earth and quickened the dead, then this writing, the Qur’ān, would have also done it (Ibn Jarir).

61. That is, if He wished, Allah could do it. But if He did not, nobody can make Him do it (Razi).

Alternatively, and in Asad’s words, “.. no ‘miraculous sign’ can ever convince those whose hearts God

has ‘sealed’ in consequence of their ‘breaking their bond with Him.’”

62. The translation is literal, the meaning and purport are clear in Arabic, but the construction is difficult to analyze. Hence several interpretations have been offered. According to ‘Ali, Ibn ‘Abbas and others, the meaning is, “Is it still not apparent to the believers..?” (Ibn Jarir).

Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi and others offer poetical examples to demonstrate that the usage as in the verse was not uncommon in classical times.

63. “The meaning is that God grants man the freedom to choose between right and wrong: ‘He guides unto Himself all who turn unto Him’ (verse 27 above) and ‘are true to their bond with God’ (verse 20); on the other hand, He withholds His guidance from ‘the iniquitous, who break their bond with God’ (2: 27-27)” - Asad.

64. Our translation reflects the literal sense and Hasan’s opinion. Asad adds his comment in the same vein: “.. an unceasing succession of calamities and social catastrophes, fratricidal wars and mutual deprivation which, in consequence of their deliberate disregard of all spiritual values, will directly befall ‘those who are bent

[33] Is He then who stands⁶⁵ over every soul for what it earns - while they declare associates to Allah - say, 'Name them.'⁶⁶ Or, will you tell Him what He knows not in the earth? Or, is it (a statement) with apparent words (and no meaning)?⁶⁷ Rather, decked out fair to the unbelievers is their scheming,⁶⁸ and (so) they are prevented from the Path. And he whom Allah leaves unguided, will not have a guide.

أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ أَمْ تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ بِيْظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ بَلْ زَيْنٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

on denying the truth (*alladhina kafaru*),’ or will, indirectly, cause them to suffer by affecting their whole organic environment..”

However, and more correctly, the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbas, ‘Ikrimah, Mujahid and several others would render the meaning as, “One or the other Muslim raiding party (sent by the Prophet) will keep attacking the pagan positions, or You, (O Prophet) will (yourself) go down for an attack, until Allah’s promise of the fall of Makkah is fulfilled.” That is, they understood the “*qari`ah*” as alluding to a Muslim raiding party and not as calamity, and the pronoun in “*tahullu*” referring to the Prophet and not to the “*qari`ah*” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Alusi and others).

A rough count shows that the Prophet had sent some 80-90 sorties, to various parts of the Arabian Peninsula in eight years after *Hijrah*, which works out to an average of one every

month. Surely, that would have kept the pagans on their edge (Au.).

Yusuf Ali writes: “Let not the unbelievers think that if they seem to prosper for a time, that is the end of the matter. They are warned of three things (1) their ill deeds must carry evil consequences for them all the time, though they may not perceive them for a certain time. (2) Their homes, their places of resort, the circles in which they move, will also be haunted by their ill deeds and their consequences. For evil makes a complex of its environment. The walls of Jericho, when they fall, must bring down all Jericho in its ruins. (3) The Ultimate Disaster, the final Reckoning, must come, for Allah never fails in His promise. True values must eventually be restored: the good to the good, and the evil to the evil.”

65. The textual word “*qa'im*” has been explained as, a guard, knowing, watcher, etc. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

66. Asad remarks: “Name them! Most of the commentators explain this phrase as an expression of utter contempt for those allegedly ‘divine’ beings, i.e., ‘they are so unreal and meaningless as not to deserve even a name.’”

Further, naming them would immediately demonstrate the hollowness of their claim, since, firstly, they would have to name hundreds, if not thousands, as those “divine” beings to whom they address their prayers and worship, and secondly, the exercise of naming “gods” is so shameful, that they will shy away from the undertaking. Thus, “Name them,” is a pithy, devastating remark (Au.).

67. That is, do you follow and worship other than Allah, by merely following apparent words, without any meaning and substance?

68. Mawdudi renders “*makr*” as foul contriving and then explains it thus under two notes: “The association of others with God in His divinity by the unbelievers has been branded as a ‘foul contriving.’ For the celestial bodies or angels or spirits or saints which are said to be God’s associates in His attributes, powers and rights, have never made any such claims. They do not ask the unbelievers to worship or bow down before them.

It is merely a contriving of some unscrupulous human beings who, in order to establish their own control over ordinary people and usurp their earnings, have invented false gods and have misled people into becoming the devotees of those same false gods. This enables them to exploit the people under the claim that they were authorized representatives of gods.

“Another reason for branding polytheism as a ‘foul contriving’ is that it is an act of self-deception. For it provides one with an opportunity to fully engross oneself in worldliness and in evading moral scruples. It also provides a moral rationale for total permissiveness and licentiousness.

“Such is human nature that when a person prefers a certain course of action, he comes forward with arguments in support of it. He does so in order to satisfy his own conscience as well as to justify his choice to others. He has recourse to a variety of contrived arguments and specious rhetoric with a view to malign and degrade the course he has rejected. It is for this reason that it was pointed out that when the unbelievers made up their minds to deny the truth, in consonance with the law of their nature their ‘foul contriving’ was made

[34] For them is a chastisement in the life of this world, but the chastisement of the Hereafter is more severe, and they shall have none to shield them from Allah.

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ
الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ
﴿٣٤﴾

[35] The likeness of the Gardens that the god-fearing have been promised: beneath which rivers flow.⁶⁹ Its fruits eternal, (and so) its shade. That is the requital of the godfearing. And the requital of the unbelievers is the Fire.

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا تِلْكَ
عُقُوبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَعُقُوبَى الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ
﴿٣٥﴾

attractive to them. It is in this sense that they were barred from finding the right path.”

69. The dwellers of Paradise will be able to make those rivers flow in the direction they wish. The following *ahadith* may be noted. Said the Prophet:

إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ يَأْكُلُونَ فِيهَا وَيَشْرَبُونَ وَلَا يَبْثُقُونَ وَلَا
يُبُولُونَ وَلَا يَتَعَوَّطُونَ وَلَا يَمْتَحِطُونَ . . . قَالُوا فَمَا بَأْسُ
الطَّعَامِ قَالَ: جُشَاءٌ وَرَشْحٌ كَرَشْحِ الْمِسْكِ يُلْهَمُونَ
التَّسْبِيحَ وَالتَّحْمِيدَ كَمَا يُلْهَمُونَ التَّحْسَنَ

“Dwellers of Paradise will eat and drink but will not spit, urinate, relieve themselves, nor will they clear their noses.” They asked him, “So, what would happen to the food?” He said, “Belch and sweating like the exuding of misk. They will be inspired with Allah’s glorification and His praises, like they are inspired with the breathing action (in this life).”

According to a report in the *sahihayn*,

حَسَفْتُ الشَّمْسُ عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَصَلَّى قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ رَأَيْتَكَ تَتَوَلَّى
شَيْئًا فِي مَقَامِكَ ثُمَّ رَأَيْتَكَ تَكْعُكُعْتَ قَالَ إِيَّيْ أُرَيْتُ
الْجَنَّةَ فَتَنَاولْتُ مِنْهَا عَنُقُودًا وَلَوْ أَخَذْتُهُ لَأَكَلْتُمْ مِنْهُ
مَا بَقِيَتِ الدُّنْيَا

During one of those solar eclipses, the Prophet led in Prayers. Those behind him said, “We saw you trying to reach out to something but then you retreated!” He answered, “I was shown Paradise and sought to take a bunch of grapes. Had I taken it, you would have eaten from it the rest of the life of this world.”

And a *hadith* in Nasa’i and Ahmad says:

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمٍ قَالَ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
رَجُلًا مِنَ الْيَهُودِ فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا الْقَاسِمِ أَلَسْتَ تَزْعُمُ
أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ يَأْكُلُونَ فِيهَا وَيَشْرَبُونَ وَقَالَ لِأَصْحَابِهِ
إِنْ أَقَرَّ لِي بِهَدْيِهِ حَصَمْتُهُ قَالَ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

[36] *Those to whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been sent down unto you (O Muhammad) while, among the factions there are some who reject a part of it.*⁷⁰ *Say, 'I have been ordered that I worship Allah and not associate (aught) with Him. To Him I invite, and to Him is my return.'*

وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ
إِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُنْكِرُ بَعْضَهُ قُلْ
إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا أُشْرِكَ بِهِ إِلَيْهِ
أَدْعُو وَإِلَيْهِ مَآبِ ﴿٣٦﴾

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَلَى وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّ
أَحَدَهُمْ لَيُعْطَى قُوَّةَ مِائَةِ رَجُلٍ فِي الْمَطْعَمِ وَالْمَشْرَبِ
وَالشَّهْوَةِ وَالْجِمَاعِ قَالَ فَقَالَ لَهُ الْيَهُودِيُّ فَإِنَّ الَّذِي
يَأْكُلُ وَيَشْرَبُ تَكُونُ لَهُ الْحَاجَةُ قَالَ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَاجَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ عَرَقٌ يَفِيضُ
مِنْ جُلُودِهِمْ مِثْلُ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ فَإِذَا الْبَطْنُ قَدْ صَمَرَ

A Jew came to the Prophet and said, “O Abul Qasim. Do you claim that the people of Paradise will eat and drink?” (He told his companions, “If he says yes, I will argue him out”). The Prophet replied, “Yes, by Him in whose hand is my life; someone there will be given the strength of a hundred men in matters of food, drink and sex.” The man questioned, “Someone who eats and drinks will obviously need to relieve himself?” He answered, “The relief of one of them will

be from a fragrance that will exude from their skins; and lo, the stomach will be relieved” (Ibn Kathir).

Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut declared it as worthy of trust (Au.).

70. There have been two interpretations. One, the allusion by “those who were given the Book,” is to the Companions of the Prophet, and by “the factions who rejected a part of it,” it is the Jews and Christians. This opinion is attributed to Qatadah and Mujahid. A second opinion, attributed to Ibn Zayd is that the allusion by “those who were given the Book” is to the early converts from among the Jews and Christians, while the allusion by “the factions who rejected a part of it” is to those among them who rejected it (Ibn Jarir).

[37] And, thus We have revealed it as an ordinance⁷¹ in Arabic.⁷² But, if you were to follow their caprices after what has come to you of knowledge,⁷³ then you will have no protector against Allah, nor anyone to shield you.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا وَلَعِنَ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] We sent Messengers before you (also) and assigned to them wives and children.⁷⁴ And it was not for a Messenger that he should produce a sign, except by Allah's leave. For every term, there is an appointed hour.⁷⁵

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِي بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

71. The textual word “*hukman*”, literally meaning “judgment”, has been understood by Zamakhshari as “*hikmah*” (wisdom). The current translation, “ordinance”, picked up from Asad, seemed more appropriate to this author.

them what they miss by not knowing Arabic? (Au.)

72. Asad explains the connection with the previous verses, “i.e., by compromising with the followers of other creeds who, while accepting some of the fundamental verities of the Qur’an, are unwilling to accept the whole of it.”

Asad writes: “(The Qur’an has been revealed as an Arabic ordinance) .. so as to enable the Arabian Prophet to propound it to the people of his immediate environment and, through them, to the whole world.”

73. Arabic, being capable of such rhetoric, richness, subtleties, eloquence and internal organization, deserves to be called the Mother of the Languages, or the Queen of Languages (Shabbir). And, therefore, if it cannot be the universal language, it should be, in the least, the language of the elite of the world, the position once held by Latin. But who will tell

74. Humans are subjected to certain needs that they cannot defy. Food, drink, sexual gratification all needs to which the humans are subject. How can satisfying these desires, enforced upon them, can be contrary to piety? (Au.).

The Prophet said, as in a *hadith* of Muslim:

لِكَيْ أُصَلِّيَ وَأَنَا مُ وَأَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأَتَزَوَّجَ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“As for as I am concerned, I Pray (in the depth of night), sleep, fast and break fast, and marry wom-

[39] Allah erases what He will, or confirms.⁷⁶
And with Him is the Mother of the Book.⁷⁷

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ
الْكِتَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] And, whether We show you (O Muham-
mad) some of what We are promising them,
or cause you to die - (in both cases) there is
no more upon you (than) delivery (of the mes-
sage), and upon Us, the reckoning.

وَإِنَّمَا نُرِيئُكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ
نَتَوَفِّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا
الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾

en. So, whoever spurned my *Sun-
nah*, is not of me” (Ibn Kathir).

Majid writes: “There is absolutely no contradiction between a family life and the dignity of the prophetic office; and there is nothing unholy or unclean about marriage and married life. This refutes and negatives the position of the Christians and others who have held that woman and the begetting of children were repugnant to spirituality. Influenced by the teachings of Paul, ‘the celibate life was exalted above that of marriage .. on the ground that there was in marriage and its relations something impure and defiling.”

75. That is, every term has been written down in the Book. However, Dahhak b. Muzahim had another explanation. According to him the meaning is, “Every book had its term.” That is, every revealed Book was destined to a term decreed by Allah after which it was replaced by a

new one. This explains Allah’s words in the following verse, “Allah erases what He will, or confirms. And with Him is the Mother of the Book” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

76. Several opinions have come down from the classical commentators. One opinion is that Allah erases anything from the Book of Divine Decree, or confirms anything except four things: life, death, whether one will be fortunate (sa`id) or wretched (shaqi). Another opinion is that there are two Books of the Divine Decree. Changes take place only in the second one. What is written in the Preserved Tablet (*Al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*) does not undergo any change. A third opinion is that the reference here is to those rules of law that Allah obliterates from the Book and replaces with others. That is, this verse carries the same meaning as verse 106 of *Surah al-Baqarah*, which says,

مَا تَسْخُحُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ تَنْسِيهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا
[البقرة: ١٠٦]

"We do not abrogate a verse or render it forgotten but bring one better than it, or similar to it."

A fourth and the stronger opinion comes from ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud, Dahhak and Hassan. They held that Allah erases what He will from the Book and confirms what He will of what is already written, with no exception whatsoever. Accordingly, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab was heard weeping and saying during his circumambulation around the Ka‘bah,

اللهم، إن كنت كتبت علي شقوة أو ذنبًا فامحه،
فإنك تمحو ما تشاء وتثبت، وعندك أم الكتاب،
فاجعله سعادة ومغفرة

"O Allah, if You have written me among the unfortunate ones, or a sin I have committed, then erase it; You erase what you will or confirm, and You have the Mother of the Book; and convert it to good fortune and forgiveness."

The above is on the authority of Ibn Jarir (Au.).

Ka‘b in fact once told ‘Umar, "If not for a verse in the Qur‘ān, I could have told you all that is going to happen." ‘Umar asked, "What verse

is it?" Ka‘b recited this verse, 'Allah erases what He will, or confirms. And with Him is the Mother of the Book.'" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

(A report in Ibn Abi Shaybah speaks for us the mind of the Salaf with complete clarity with regard to Allah's intervention in the affairs of the world: Au.). In that report Ibn Mas‘ud says, addressing a supplication to Allah, "...If you have written me in Your Mother of the Book as a wretched one, then, erase it ..." (Alusi). That is, Ibn Mas‘ud believed that what is written in the Mother of the Book, is subject to change by Allah's will and command (Au.).

And Mujahid has said in confirmation of the above that when the Quraysh heard some of the verses of the Qur‘ān, they said, "We do not see you O Muhammad, except as (a helpless man) without power over anything. God seems to have been through with the affair." So Allah revealed, "Allah erases what He will, or confirms. And with Him is the Mother of the Book." (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report is in Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim also (Shawkani).

Ibn Kathir writes: "What the above means is that the earliest Muslims believed in the alteration in Allah's

[41] Have they not observed that We are reducing the earth from its edges?⁷⁸ Allah commands; there is none to turn back His command, and He is swift at reckoning.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾

decree. There are *ahadith* that support this. One of them is in Nasa'i and Ibn Majah. It says,

إن الرجل يحرم الرزق بالذنب يُصِيبُهُ ، وَلَا يرد القدر إِلَّا الدُّعَاءُ ، وَلَا يَزِيدُ فِي الْعُمُرِ إِلَّا الْبِرُّ

“A man destined to receive provision is denied because of sins. Nothing turns back the decree but supplication and nothing causes increase in life-span except doing good to others.”

Hakim declared the above *hadith* as of good chain of narration (Au.).

Another *hadith* says that supplication and heavenly punishment engage themselves with each other in conflict between the earth and the heavens.

Qurtubi adds: The verse is clear in its meaning, viz., Allah erases what He will and confirms what He will, without any exception. Nothing else can be said about it by way of interpretation. Interpretations are disallowed when the apparent meaning is clearly expressed.

77. The allusion is to *Al-Lawh al-Mahfuz* (Zamakhshari).

78. The textual term “*taraf*” has several connotations: sides, extremities, borders, or outlying areas. The word is also used to describe ‘the best (of everything).’ Accordingly, there have been several interpretations. One of them is that if the word “*taraf*” is taken in the sense of “the best (of everything)”, the meaning of the verse is that Allah is gradually taking away good men from among the unbelievers and transferring them to the rank of the Muslims. This usage is not uncommon. We have a statement of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib who used “*taraf*” in this sense. He said,

العلوم أودية في أي واد أخذت منها خسرت فخذوا من كل شيء طرفا

“Knowledge is in several valleys. From whichever alone of the valleys you decide to take, (in exclusion of others) you will be a loser. Instead, take from everything, the best of it” - Alusi.

By “valleys” he meant disciplines (Au.).

Asad also derives the same meaning of the word “*taraf*” but gives its

pronoun a wider meaning, translating the second half of the verse as, "We visit the earth [with Our punishment], gradually depriving it of all that is best thereon", and then explains in a note below, "Thus in its widest sense, the phrase 'gradually depriving it of all that is best in it' may be taken to relate not merely to physical and social catastrophes but also to the loss of all ethical values - and, thus, to the loss of all worldly power - which 'those that are bent on denying the truth' are bound to suffer in the end."

But the popular opinion is that with the ever continuing conversion to Islam, the unbelievers have constantly been losing grounds to Muslims. A rough calculation shows that after his emigration to Madinah, the Prophet (*saws*) was wresting control of the lands that were formally ruled by the pagans, at the rate of about 500 sq. km a day.

Yusuf Ali is close to this meaning when he writes: "In the Prophet's ministry at Makkah, the most stiff-necked opposition came from the seat and center of power at Makkah. The humbler people - the fringe of Makkan society - came in readily, as also did some tribes around Makkah. After the Hijrat there was

a hard struggle between Makkah and Madinah and at last the bloodless conquest of Makkah in A.H. 8 made the Pagan structure totally collapse, though it had already been shaken of its foundations. So, generally, Truth finds easiest entrance through the humble and lowly, and not in the beginning at the headquarter of power, but in the fullness of time it makes its way everywhere with irresistible force."

With the meaning of the term "*taraf*" assumed as "the best part (of anything), a couple of other modern interpretations are possible. The first is the further elaboration of Asad's understanding. It can be said that not only the earth is losing its ethical values, but also, thinkers, scholars, and great leaders are disappearing from it. This is clearly noticeable in the non-Muslim world where, after a brief spurt during the last three centuries, now, since about half a century, there is a tremendous paucity of outstanding men in every field of thought and activity: literature, philosophy, fine arts, and even politics. Everywhere, substandard men seem to be occupying important positions while ordinary men and women have been converted into mules: who do not know right from wrong, truth

from falsehood, treading the path of everyone who can trick them into believing that he is the man of the hour.

Another possible, allusion could be to the massive exploitation of the earth's natural resources at a maddening pace, despite the warnings issued by the scientists of the consequences resulting from the loss of "its best part." Very soon the world is out to exhaust its valuable, non-replaceable resources to human greed. Sweet water, fossil fuels, essential minerals, everything is being used to manufacture products that have a short life, which are used and thrown away in a manner that it is not possible to recycle them. The allusion by the words, "Have they not observed that We are reducing the earth from its edges?" could as well be to referring to this situation, which, although is felt more acutely in our times, had actually begun with the dawn of the so-called iron-age.

A third interpretation is that the allusion is to the physical reduction in the land mass on this planet. We do not know since when this began to happen. Measurement and records are only too recent. But that the land surface of the earth has been decreasing due to rise in sea levels is a fact.

One of the reasons is the famous Green House effect. Fossil fuel burning gives rise to carbon dioxide emission which increases the temperature of the earth. It is said that during the past decades the temperature has risen by 1 degree centigrade. In one of its effects, it has led to the creation of a huge lake at the North Pole, where once there was no lake. If the lake further expands, its waters will join with the seas and increase its level all over, eating away land masses at the edge of the continents. It is further being predicted that in the coming decades the temperature of the earth might go up by as much as 3-6 degrees. That will cause millions of tons of ice at the poles to melt. One estimate says that in consequence the sea level will rise up by about 10 meters, swallowing millions of km of low lying areas at the edges of the continents while thousands of islands will go under the sea.

There is another, and a strong reason that the sea level has to rise. Millions of tons of extraterrestrial material falls yearly on the planet from space in the form of meteorites. Sea area being larger than the land area, it receives more of them than the land area, and hence the sea level has to rise to encroach on the land mass.

[42] Surely, those also devised plots who went before them.⁷⁹ But for Allah is the devising altogether. He knows what every soul earns, and soon the unbelievers will know whose will be the Ultimate Abode.⁸⁰

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ
جَمِيعًا يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ وَسَيَعْلَمُ
الْكُفَّارُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And the unbelievers say, 'You are not a sent one.' Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and (such as) those who possess knowledge of the Book.'⁸¹

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا قُلْ
كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ
عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

Another source is erosion of the land by the river waters. The waters drag down millions of tons of sand into the sea every year. That again causes the sea level to rise. The allusion by this verse could as well include this phenomenon.

Finally, with morally superior men and women continuously joining the ranks of Islam in the non-Islamic world, the earth under the feet of the unbelievers is as if being liberated and handed over to Islam and Muslims.

It might be noted that all the possible interpretations are close to the text, without the need to stretch the meaning, and are reconcilable with each other. This is the meaning of the Prophetic statement that the Qur'an will never run dry of its meaning (Au).

79. That is, past nations also plotted against the Messengers and their messages, but it was to no avail (Au.).

80. Or, in the words of Asad (the unbelievers will soon know) "to whom the future belongs."

81. That is, those who have the knowledge of the Qur'an. In the words of Asad again, ".. implying that a true understanding of the Qur'an unavoidably leads to the conviction that it has been revealed by God."

Another opinion is that by the words, "one who has the knowledge of the Book" the allusion is to the people of past Scriptures, that is, Jews and Christians. When they compared their Scriptural knowledge with that of the Qur'an, they felt convinced that both should have had the same origin (Alusi and others).

(Some others, who believe that this verse of the *Surah* is Madinan, have thought that although the application is general), the immediate reference was to men such as ‘Abdullah b. Salam, Salman al-Farsi, Tamim al-Dari and others of their class (Ibn Jarir). There were altogether 80 of them (Zamakhshari, Razi).

We do not know Zamakhshari’s source, but surely men of this class were more numerous than that. For example, many of the Christian inhabitants of Najran, whose numbers ran into hundreds of thousands, converted to Islam. Quite a few others had converted in Abyssinia. Similarly, Yemen had a large population of Jews, most of whom converted to Islam, although of course, the con-

version there was gradual, and not everyone in those places had embraced Islam during the life of the Prophet. Further, several tribes in the northern part, below the Syrian borders, were originally either Christian, or were heavily influenced by its traditions, all of whom converted to Islam. And, finally, conversion has not ended there. In every age Jews and Christians have been studying the Qur’ân and embracing the faith. Muhammad Asad for instance, one of the commentators often quoted in this work, was formerly a Jew. It is estimated in our times that all over the world around 100,000 men and women embrace Islam every year, of whom Christians account for the largest numbers (Au.). ﴿قَالَ﴾





Surah 14

Ibrahim

Makkan¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Ra. A Book We have sent down to you that you may bring forth mankind from darkneses to Light, by the leave of their Lord² - to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.

الرَّ كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿١﴾

[2] (The path) of Allah to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth.³ And woe unto the unbelievers for a severe chastisement.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَوَيْلٌ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ ﴿٢﴾

1. There is no difference in opinion that this chapter is Makkan, except that a variant opinion is that a few verses are Madinan (Qurtubi, Alusi). Verses thought to be Madinan are 28-30. Imām Razi adds that so long as there is no abrogation, it does not matter whether a chapter is Makkan or Madinan.

2. Ibn Jarir explains the words “By the leave of their Lord,” as, ‘with the help of Divine inducement’ or ‘grant of ability’ (*tawfiq*).

This verse proves that the knowledge of Allah (*ma`rifatu-Allah*) can only

be gained through Prophetic teachings.

Yusuf Ali writes: “It is insisted on that every Prophet speaks not from himself but from Allah. His leading into the light is but by the grace and mercy of Allah, not by any power of his own, or by any merit of those who hear him.”

3. Imām Razi points out that Allah (*swt*) cannot be said to be in a particular direction. If He was, let us say above the heavens, then, since anything above is “*sama*” in Arabic, His person would be included when

[3] Those who prefer the life of this world over the next,⁴ and hinder from the path of Allah, desiring to make it crooked. They are in a distant error.⁵

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ
وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُوتَهَا عَوجًا
أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾

[4] And We sent not a Messenger but in the tongue of his people so that he could expound to them.⁶ Then Allah leads astray whomsoever He will and guides whomsoever He will.⁷ And He is the All-powerful, All-wise.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ
لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

Allah said that ‘His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth’. That would mean He owns Himself. Therefore, He cannot be said to be in the direction above the heavens.

It has been answered however that, firstly, what does not exist in any of the six directions, does not exist, and, secondly, “above” is used in the sense of ‘over and above.’ When it is said, “The man could not have said these words, he is above that,” then, in this sentence “above” is used in the sense of a distinguished existence. Thus, the word ‘above’ can have so many meanings (Au.).

4. This part of the verse proves that he who preferred the life of this world over the next is a misguided person (Razi).

5. The error has been called a “distant error” because, not to believe is itself an error. And, to prevent others from the path of guidance by trying

to make it look crooked is a greater error (Razi).

Shabbir comments: “This world is, all in all, for the unbelievers. They prefer the present one over the next, spending their days and nights in obtaining it. (Since anyone not following their ways threatens to harm their world: Au.), they want others too to also fall in love with the material world and abandon the path that leads to Allah’s approval. They keep striving to show defects in Allah’s religion and prove how the straight path is crooked. It is only when they are struck by Allah’s harsh chastisement that they might open their eyes.”

6. The Prophet (*saws*) has said,

أرسل كل نبي إلى أمته بلسانها وأرسلني الله إلى كل
أحمر وأسود من خلقه

“Every Messenger was sent to his people speaking the language of his people. But Allah sent me to every fair and dark of His creation.”

Although meaning-wise this *hadith* is in several collections, but in words as above.

He also said,

وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ لَا يَسْمَعُ بِي أَحَدٌ مِنْ هَذِهِ
الْأُمَّةِ يَهُودِيٍّ وَلَا نَصْرَانِيٍّ ثُمَّ يَمُوتُ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِالَّذِي
أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَّا كَانَ مِنَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ

“By Him in whose hand is my life, not a Jew or Christian of this *Ummah* heard of me, yet did not believe in me, but will be a dweller in the Fire” (Qurtubi).

The above *hadith* is from Muslim.

This verse carries two messages. One, the Messenger raised among a people was of them, spoke their language and brought the Divine message in their language. Second, Messengers previous to the Final Messenger were for a particular people, of a geographical region. It is another thing that, anyone belonging to any other people who heard of him was bound to accept his Message since truth is to be accepted regardless of its origin (Au.).

Shabbir writes: “Since a Prophet addresses those people first among whom he is raised, Allah sent them Messages in their language. Now, our Prophet’s *Ummah* is whole of the mankind as well as the Jinn. (Either as *Ummah al-Da`wah* [those to be invited], or *Ummah al-Ijabah* [those who have responded]: Au.). However, since Arabic was the language of the people among whom he was raised and who were the first to be addressed, he was given a revelation in Arabic. That made it easy for the first generation Muslims to understand and obtain the Message in complete accuracy and fullest scope and to be able to pass it on to the next generation Muslims. Accordingly, after the Prophet, they spread in every direction to spread the Message. Then, with the acceptance of the Message, such a powerful urge was created among the non-Arab Muslims, that they did not simply learn the language of the Qur’ān but acquired mastery in it. In fact, they gained such mastery in the language and in several Qur’ānic disciplines, that they surpassed the Arabs.”

Soon, the non-Arabs became experts of the language, and, consequently, although at the time of revelation Arabic was a local vernacular spoken by a small number of people,

it became an international language within a short time. It began to decline with decline in interests in religious disciplines. It continues to shrink in its influence: there being interest neither on the part of the Arabs to return to their religious roots, nor on the part of the non-Arabs. The present situation is that there is a sizable number of educated Arabs who cannot fully comprehend the Qur'ān when recited before them, not to speak of non-Arab intellectuals who cannot understand a syllable of the language, and who, therefore, repeat Western ideas in a parrot-like manner without knowing how their ideas are conflict with the Qur'ān. This situation will only change with the revival of true religious interests (Au.).

Yusuf Ali adds: "If the object of a Message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the Messenger is sent. Through them it can reach all mankind. There is even a wider meaning for 'language.' It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters, or words. Each age or people - or world in a psychological sense - casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form. Allah's Message - being universal - can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally

valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the Qur'ān is marvellous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced."

7. Probably dismayed by the widespread fatalism in the Islamic world, Asad, preceded in his ideas by Zamakhshari, writes the following: "All Qur'ānic references to God's 'letting man go astray' must be understood against the background of 2: 26-27 - 'none does He cause to go astray save the iniquitous, who break their bond with God; that is to say, man's 'going astray' is a consequence of his own attitudes and inclinations and not a result of an arbitrary 'predestination' in the popular sense of this word. In his commentary on the above verse, Zamakhshari stresses this aspect of free choice on the part of man and points out that 'God does not cause anyone to go astray except one who, as He knows, will never attain to faith; and He does not guide anyone aright except one who, as He knows, will attain to faith. Hence, the [expression] 'causing to go astray' denotes [God's] leaving [one] alone (*takhliyah*) and depriving [him] of all favour, whereas [the expression] 'guidance' denotes [His] grant of

[5] Surely, We sent Musa with Our signs, that 'You bring forth your people from dark-nesses to Light. And remind them of the days of Allah.'⁸ Verily, in that is a sign for everyone firm in patience, constantly grateful.⁹

[6] And (recall) when Musa said to his people, 'Recall Allah's favors upon you when He rescued you from Fir`awn's folk. They were sub-jecting you to severe ordeal, slaughtering your sons and letting your women live; and in that was a great trial from your Lord.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٥﴾

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنْجَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُدَّبُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾

fulfillment [*tawfiq*] and favour Thus, He does not forsake anyone except those who deserve to be forsaken, and does not bestow His favour upon anyone except those who deserve to be favored.' Commenting on the identical phrase occurring in 16: 93, Zamakhshari states: '[God] forsakes him who, as He knows, will [consciously] choose to deny the truth and will persevere in this [denial]; and ... He bestows His favour upon him who, as He knows, will choose faith: which means that He makes the issue dependent on [man's] free choice [*al-ikhtiyar*], and thus on his deserving either [God's] favour or the withdrawal of [His] aid ... and does not make it dependent on compulsion [i.e., predestination], which would rule out [man's] deserving anything of above."

8. (The textual term "*ayyam*" is used for a period of glorious events, or for memorable years of a nation, such as, e.g., "*ayyam al-`Arab*" which will refer to the glorious days of early Islam: Au.). Majid's rendering is: 'annals of Allah.'

Mujhaid, Sa`id b. Jubayr and Qatadah have understood "*ayyamu`Allah*" as blessings of Allah (or days of Allah's great blessings, or trials: Razi). Ubayy has reported a *hadith* to this effect. (The *hadith* referred to by Ibn Jarir is in Musnad of Ahmad: Ibn Kathir). However, Ibn Zayd has understood it to mean 'the days when Allah punished the sinning nations of the past' (Ibn Jarir).

Alternatively, "*ayyamu`Allah*" could be referring to the Hereafter, in particular the Day of Judgment. This is the opinion of some commentators.

[7] And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you are grateful,¹⁰ surely I will add (more favors) to you; but if you show ingratitude¹¹ (then) surely, My chastisement is severe."¹²

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ
وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

[8] Musa also said, 'If you should disbelieve, you and whoever is in the earth, altogether, then, surely, Allah is the All-sufficient the All-laudable.'

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ تَكْفُرُوا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنِي حَمِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

9. Since "ayyamu`Allah" can either be days of blessings, during which a believer should be grateful, or those of trials and tribulations, when he is required to be patiently persevering, Allah mentioned these two qualities of the believer here and said, "a sign for everyone firm in patience, constantly grateful." Further, since it is the faithful who see Allah's hand behind all events, they are the ones to whom the days carry signs, the unbelievers being totally incognizant of them (Razi).

he observes patience, and that is good for him" (Ibn Kathir).

A *hadith* of Muslim's collection says,

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ
لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَّاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا
لَّهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ صَرَّاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

10. When asked, some pious men answered that being grateful means 'not to be encouraged to commit sins' (Qurtubi).

"A believer's affairs are amazing. Every of his affair is good for him, which is for none else: if he is struck by a good fortune, he gives thanks, which is good for him. But if he is struck by an evil,

Razi speaks the language of the *Sufis*: Allah's blessings are many and come in various forms: material, moral, spiritual, etc. Someone grateful about them should keep reminding himself of them, as often as he can. If he does that over a period, he is bound to learn to keep less in view the bestowals, and more in view the Bestower Himself. As time passes, he might become totally unmindful of the bestowals, falling so deeply in love with the Bestower.

11. Ibn Kathir understands the "ingratitude" of the original as alluding to sins against Allah. He quotes the famous *hadith*,

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيُحْرَمُ الرِّزْقَ ، بِالذَّنْبِ يُصِيبُهُ

[9] Has not the news of those before you reached you? Of the people of Nuh¹³, `Aad¹⁴ and Thamood?¹⁵ And of those (that came) after them? No one knows them except Allah.¹⁶ Messengers came to them with clear signs. But they thrust their hands into their mouths¹⁷ and said, 'We certainly disbelieve in what you have been sent with. Indeed we are in a doubt concerning that to which you invite us - in a disquieting suspicion.'¹⁸

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ
وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ
إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا
أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا
أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ
مُرِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾

“Sometimes a man misses out on his providence because of a sin he commits.”

(The *hadith* is in Ibn Abi Hatim).

12. A *hadith* preserved by Muslim says,

يَا عِبَادِي لَوْ أَنَّ أَوْلَكُمْ وَأَخْرَجْتُمْ وَإِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ
كَانُوا عَلَى قَلْبِ أَتَقَى عَبْدٍ مِنْكُمْ لَمْ يَزِدْ ذَلِكَ فِي
مُلْكِي شَيْئاً ، وَلَوْ كَانُوا عَلَى أَفْجَرِ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ لَمْ
يَنْقُصْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مُلْكِي شَيْئاً ، وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا فِي صَعِيدٍ
وَاحِدٍ فَسَأَلُونِي فَأَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ مِنْهُمْ مَا سَأَلَ لَمْ
يَنْقُصْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مُلْكِي شَيْئاً إِلَّا كَمَا يَنْقُصُ الْبَحْرُ أَنْ
يَغْمَسَ فِيهِ الْمَخِيطُ غَمْسَةً وَاحِدَةً

“O My slaves! If the first and the last, the men and the Jinn of you were to have hearts as pious as the most pious of you, that will not cause increase in My kingdom by the least. O My slaves! If the first and the last, the men and the Jinn of you were to have a heart as wicked as the most

wicked of you, that will not diminish My kingdom by the least. O My slaves! If the first and the last, the men and the Jinn stood on a flat patch of land and asked, and I granted everyone what he asked, that will not decrease from My kingdom anything except by what a needle causes to decrease when it is dipped into the sea” - Ibn Kathir.

13. See *Surah Hud*, verses 25-48 for a detailed account.

14. See *Surah Hud*, verses 50-60 for a detailed account.

15. See *Surah Hud*, verses 61-68 for a detailed account.

16. In the light of this verse Ibn Mas`ud has said that all genealogists have lied. That is, adds Zamakhshari, they traced men's genealogy right up to Adam while Allah said that “no one knows them except Allah.”

[10] Their Messengers said, 'Is there any doubt regarding Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?'¹⁹ He invites you so that He may forgive you of your sins, and allow you respite until an appointed term.' They answered, 'You are no more than mortals like us, wishing to prevent us from what our forefathers worshiped; then bring us a clear authority.'²⁰

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ
مِن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخَوِّجَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
قَالُوا إِن أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ
تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا
بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] Their Messengers said to them, 'We are but mortals like yourselves. But Allah grants grace (of Messengership) unto whom of His slaves He will. (At all events) It is not for us to bring you an authority except by Allah's leave. And in Allah should the believers place their trust.'

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ
مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ
إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَىٰ اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

17. There have been several interpretations; but the closest to truth seems to be what is widely reported of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud. He said that the reference is to the unbelievers placing the edges of their fingers into their mouths (between the teeth) out of rage at the Messengers (Ibn Jarir).

Another opinion is expressed by Asad in the following words, "An idiomatic phrase indicating one's inability to refute a reasonable proposition by cogent, logical counter-arguments: for the out-of-hand rejection of the Prophet's message by their recalcitrant compatriots cannot by any means be regarded as an 'argument.'"

18. The textual words "shakk" and "rayb" draw the following comment from Yusuf Ali: "Shakk is intellectual doubt, a doubt as to fact: is it so, or is it not? Rayb is something more than intellectual doubt; a suspicion that there is fraud or deception; something that upsets your moral belief and causes kind of disquiet in your soul."

19. That is, Allah's oneness is such a natural, logical thing to recognize, that if the Divine message had not spoken of it, it would still be binding on the human beings to believe in it (Thanwi).

Imām Razi has a brilliant point: It is said that a single slap to a child suf-

[12] *And what is with us that we should not trust in Allah seeing that He has guided us in our ways. And we shall surely endure in patience the hurt you cause us, and in Allah should those who trust, place their trust.'*

وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا تَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا
سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَىٰ مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَىٰ
اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] *The unbelievers said to their Messengers, 'We shall assuredly expel you from our land,²¹ or you will return to our religion.'²² So their Lord revealed unto them, 'We shall surely destroy the transgressors?*

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ
مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا فَأَوْحَىٰ
إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] *And We shall make you dwell in the land after them; that - for him who fears the standing before Me, and feared My warning.'*

وَلَنُسَكِّنَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ
لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ﴿١٤﴾

fices to prove that this world has a creator, that the Hereafter is a necessity and that there have to be Prophets. When a child is slapped, he knows that there is a person behind that slap who chose to slap him. The slap would not have happened by itself. Next, the child, if innocent, will not forgive the slap. He will demand retribution. And, since there is no retribution in this world, there has to be another world for it. Thirdly, when the child demands retribution, there has to be another, a third person, to judge the measure and quantity of retribution (shortened).

Yusuf Ali adds: "Infidelity is illogical and argues in a circle. If the Prophet speaks of Allah (*swt*), the unbeliever says, "You are only a man!" "But I

speak from Allah!" "Oh well! Our ancestral ways of worship are good enough for us!" "What if they are wrong?" "What authority have you for saying so?" "The highest authority, is that from Allah!" And so we come back a full circle! Then the wicked rely on violence, but it recoils on them, and they perish."

20. "*Sultanum-mubin*": that is, an authoritative, irrefutable proof of Messengership (Au.).

21. Yusuf Ali makes a confident prediction: ".. Infidelity looks upon arguments merely as an amusement. Its chief weapon is physical force. As its only belief is materialism, it thinks that threats of force will put down the righteous. It offers the choice between exile and violence against con-

[15] They sought the judgement,²³ and (then) *وَاسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ*
every deviant tyrant²⁴ was frustrated. ﴿١٥﴾

formity to its own standards of evil, which it thinks to be good. But faith is not to be cowed down by Force. Its source of strength is Allah, and it receives the assurance that violence will perish ultimately by violence, and that Faith and Good must stand and be established.”

22. Since at no time Prophets of Allah worshipped idols, or committed association of any sort, the explanation of the verse is that the unbelievers simply assumed that before prophethood, they – the Prophets – must have subscribed to their pagan religious views and hence they said, “You will have to revert to your (ancestral) religion (Au.).

Mawdudi explains: “In fact, the verse can be fully appreciated if we bear in mind that before designation to their office, Prophets live a relatively quiet life. For prior to that designation, they preach no specific religious doctrines. Nor do they engage in refuting the religious doctrines that are generally accepted by their people. As a result, people are commonly inclined to think that they too are an integral part of their religious fold.

Hence, when Prophets embark on teaching true religious doctrines, they are charged by their people as renouncing their ancestral faith.”

23. Literally, the textual word “istaftahu” means to seek victory (Au). And the meaning that the majority of scholars have derived is, (having lost all hopes of acceptance) the Messengers sought judgment and victory over their unbelieving nations (Ibn Jarir). But a minority opinion is that it is the unbelievers who sought the judgment. Shabbir combines the two. He writes: The Messengers sought Allah’s intervention. Nuh had said (26: 118),

{ فَاقْتَضِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَنَجِّنِي وَمَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ } [الشعراء: ١١٨]

“So, judge between me and them: a decisive judgment - and save me and those of the believers with me.”

Lut had said (26: 169),

{ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْْمَلُونَ } [الشعراء: ١٦٩]

“O Allah, deliver me and my family from what they are doing.”

Shu`ayb had said (7: 89),

{ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ } [الأعراف: ٨٩]

“O Allah, deliver Your judgment between us and our people in truth.”

And Musa had said (10: 88),

{ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَى أَمْوَالِهِمْ } [يونس: ٨٨]

“O Allah, You have bestowed on Fir`awn and his folk splendor and wealth in the worldly life, our Lord, that they may lead (people) astray from Your way. Our Lord, obliterate their wealth ...”

On the other hand, the people addressed by the Prophets also got weary of them. How long would it be that they'll receive threats of punishment? Nuh's people had said (38: 16),

{ رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطْعًا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ } [ص: ١٦]

“Our Lord, hasten for us our share (of punishment) before the Day of Account.”

Some others said (8: 32),

{ وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ اثْبِتْ بَعْدَابٍ أَلِيمٍ } [الأنفال: ٣٢]

“O Allah. If this should be the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the sky or bring us a painful punishment.”

Nuh's nation said (7: 70),

{ فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا } [الأعراف: ٧٠]

“Therefore, bring us what you have been threatening us with.”

Shu`ayb's people said (26: 187),

{ فَأَنْسِقْطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ } [الشعراء: ١٨٧]

“Therefore, bring down upon us a piece of the sky.”

Thus, weary of each other, both, the Prophets as well as their nations, sought Allah's a final judgment.

24. The textual word “*jabbaar*” (literally: compeller) draws the following comment from Qurtubi: When used for a human being, *jabbaar* is for that haughty man who does not believe that anyone has any right on him.

[16] *Jahannum, beyond him,*²⁵ *and he will be given a drink of pussy liquid.*²⁶

مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] *He will take it in mouthfuls, yet hardly able to swallow it;*²⁷ *death coming upon him from every quarter, but he will not die;*²⁸ *and behind him is a rude punishment.*²⁹

يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِغُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ﴿١٧﴾

25. Linguists have said that “*wara*” has a dual meaning: both “in front” as well as “behind” (Ibn Jarir).

يَقْرَبُ إِلَىٰ فِيهِ فَيَكْرَهُهُ فَإِذَا أُذِنَ مِنْهُ شَوَىٰ وَجْهَهُ وَوَقَعَتْ قَرْوَةٌ رَأْسِهِ فَإِذَا شَرِبَهُ قَطَعَ أَمْعَاءَهُ حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجَ مِنْ دُبُرِهِ

26. The textual word “*sadeed*” is a common noun for vomit, pus and blood or any putrid liquid oozing out from a wound (Ibn Jarir).

“It (the drink) will be brought to him. (Initially) he will reject it. As it is brought closer, it will burn his face and the scalp will fall off. Finally, when he drinks it, it will cut his intestine to pieces until it passes out through his anus” (Alusi).

27. The Arabs used the textual word “*yakaadu*” (root: *kaada*) both for an act attempted, but not accomplished, as well as attempted and accomplished. Here, the usage has been in the sense of actually drinking the liquid. This is confirmed by a *hadith*. The Prophet (*saws*) said in reference to Allah’s words, “He will take it in mouth-fulls and gulp it down,” that

The Qur’an has also stated (47: 15),

{وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ} [محمد: ١٥]

“And they will be given a boiling drink that will cut their intestines.”

And (18: 29),

{وَإِنْ يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ يُعَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ} [الكهف: ٢٩]

” قَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُ حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجَ مِنْ دُبُرِهِ “

“As he swallows it, it will cut his intestine into pieces that will emerge from his rear” (Ibn Jarir).

Another *hadith* further elaborates it. Transmitted by Abu Umamah, and preserved in Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nas a`i and Hakim, who declared it as *sahih*, it says,

“And, if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil which will scald their faces” (Ibn Kathir, Shabbir and others).

28. Apart from the generally understood meaning as embodied in the

[18] *The likeness of those who disbelieved in their Lord (is that): their deeds are like ashes, over which the wind blew strong on a stormy day;³⁰ they have no power whatsoever over what they earned.³¹ That indeed is the distant error.³²*

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ
اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ لَأَ
يُقَدِّرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ
الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٨﴾

translation, another interpretation that has come down from Mujahid as in Ibn Jarir, is that death will advance on the man in Hell from every quarter of his body - even from the roots of every hair on his skin - but, in the end, will get stuck in his throat (choking him). Thus he will neither be able to die, nor live in peace.

29. That is, other, and more severe kinds of torture would be in wait for the man (Ibn Jarir).

30. By the words "stormy day" the allusion is to the Day of Judgment (Ibn Jarir, from Ibn `Abbas).

Are the material achievements, tall buildings, large parks, wide roads, industries, universities, research centers and seats of learning, banks and commercial centers, high rise towers and historical monuments, arts, science and literary heritage, the glittering civilization and gorgeous culture, in short, results of centuries of human endeavor and intensive hard work any more than ashes for the storms of the next morn? (Au.)

31. Since it is only deeds performed for Allah's sake alone, and done strictly following the requirements of the Shari`ah, that are any worth, the deeds of the unbelievers will not pay off on the Day of Judgment or earn them any rewards (Ibn al-Qayyim).

32. Yusuf Ali comments: "Note the fullness of the parable. The works of the ungodly are in themselves light and unsubstantial like ashes; they are the useless rubbish that remains out of the faculties and opportunities which they have misused by burning them up. Further, the ashes are blown about hither and thither by the wind: the ungodly have no compass, direction, or purpose that can stand. The wind, too, which blows on them is no ordinary wind, nor the day on which they seek to enjoy the fruits of their labours an ordinary tranquil day; a furious gale is blowing, for such is the Wrath of Allah. They have neither internal peace nor external gain. In the scattering of the ashes they lose control even of such

[19] Have you not observed that Allah has created the heavens and the earth in truth?³³ If He wished, He could put you away and bring a new creation (in your place).

أَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] That indeed is not at all difficult for Allah.

وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] And they will appear before Allah, all together. Then the weak ones³⁴ will say to those who waxed proud,³⁵ 'We were your followers, therefore, can you prevail against any of Allah's chastisement (now)?' They will reply, 'Had Allah guided us, surely we would have guided you.'³⁶ It is the same for us (now) whether we refuse to endure or observe patience.³⁷ There is no place of escape for us.'

وَبَرُّوْا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُعْتَدُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهْدَيْنَاكُمْ سَوَاءَ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرَعْنَا أَمْ صَبْرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ ﴿٢١﴾

things as they might have earned but for their misdeeds. Their whole nature is contaminated. All their wishes go astray. They are carried so far, far away than what was in their minds. What did they aim at, and what did they achieve?"

Yusuf Ali writes: "*Haqq*: Truth, Right, Righteousness, True proportions, Reality. Allah's creation is not to be trifled with. It is built on righteousness, and those who do not obey its laws must give place to others who do."

33. That is, on principles following a set of laws that are equally applicable anywhere in the universe and which allow for an ordered world to come into existence, the forces themselves balanced so precisely and precariously, that one-millionth variation in any of them would render the existence of the world impossible. The impeccable design and the efficient system speak of a purpose behind them (Au.).

34. The textual term "*du'afaa*" does not, at this point refer to those who were economically, socially or politically weak, but rather to those who were morally and intellectually so, and hence preferred to follow not their own, but opinions of others (Au.).

Asad might be quoted: "I.e., those who had sinned out of moral weakness and self-indulgence, relying on

the supposedly superior wisdom of the so-called “leaders of thought”, who are described in the sequence as having “gloried in their arrogance” (istakbaru) inasmuch as they refused to pay heed to God’s messages.”

Sayyid writes: “Who are the ‘weak ones?’ Well, the truly ‘weak ones’ are those who relinquished one of the most important blessings of their Lord in favor of others. Our reference is to their personal freedom ... the freedom to think, to believe and to choose a direction. But the ‘weak ones’ preferred to follow arrogant and rebellious men of their own kind. They sought closeness to Allah’s creations, in preference of Allah’s, opting to take religion from them rather than from Him.

“Show of weakness is no virtue nor does it offer any excuse. It is a crime. Allah did not wish anyone to be weak. He invites the people to seek strength through Him - and all might is His. He does not wish that someone should forego his share of strength and, instead, spend his life in servility of others. Strength in fact, is something of a special, honor-giving quality that comes directly from the Lord, and cannot be taken away with ease from anyone. Material strength on the other hand, whatever its mag-

nitude, is not enough by itself to enslave a people wishing to be free. It cannot imprison man’s nobility. The most that brutal, material strength can do is to own bodies, which it can imprison, torture and punish. As for conscience ... as for the soul ... as for the intellect ... these, no one can rob these things of another, unless the owner himself wishes to relinquish them, in humiliation.

“Who has the power to force these ‘weak ones’ to follow the arrogant ones in matters of faith, ideas and attitudes, but the weak ones themselves? What made these people seek a religion other than Allah’s? - when it is in common knowledge that Allah is their Creator, Sustainer, and Custodian, with none sharing these qualities with Him? Surely, no one forced them, except that their own souls chose that course. They are the ‘weak ones’ not because they possess lesser material strength than the arrogant ones, or are materially poorer, or in lower positions. These are all external traits and qualities that have nothing to do with the internal weaknesses of the ‘weak ones.’ They are weak because there is weakness in their spirits, souls, and minds. (It is the weakness of faith).”

35. Those are meant who, because they were followed, became proud of themselves for their capacity to prevail upon others and give the lead. They over-estimated their capacities, crossed their boundaries, and prevailed upon the people to treat them as providers, withholders and, therefore, law-giving authorities: quite similar to deities of the past (Au.).

36. So, the arrogant ones felt themselves free in the world to oppress the people, take away their rights, including their right of choice, and spread corruption in the land by setting precedence of a life of debauchery, but did not feel themselves free enough to treat the Message of Allah, as something deserving consideration. Did they have the freedom for evil but not for good? Is that what they will mean when they will say, "Had Allah guided us, surely we would have guided you?" Or, is it that their dishonest habits will continue in the pit of Fire, where they would try to lay the blame on Allah? (Au.)

Zamakhshari's explanation however is that since they themselves missed

the guidance, they could not have guided those who were under their influence.

37. It is said that those in Fire will say to each other, "Those in Paradise seem to have obtained their position by their weeping, and by their long supplications during the life of the world, so let us also cry and supplicate until we are forgiven." So they will cry for a long period which will be of no avail. They will say, "We have cried but got nothing out of it. Those in Paradise seem to have gained their present position from being patient. So, let us also endure in patience. Maybe we will be forgiven." But, after a long period of patient endurance, they will find that it does not alter their situation. So they will say, "We have tried crying, and we have tried enduring in patience, but neither seems to prevail anything against the torture. It seems we have no place we could escape to" (Ibn Jarir).

Some narrators have attributed the above report to the Prophet. But, those reports are not trustworthy (Shawkani, S. Ibrahim).

[22] And Satan will say when the matter is concluded,³⁸ 'Allah promised you a true promise, and I too promised. But I failed in my promise.³⁹ And I had no power over you except that I invited you and you responded to me.⁴⁰ Therefore, do not blame me, blame your own selves.⁴¹ I cannot come to your aid, nor can you come to my aid. I disown your former (act of) associating me (with Allah).⁴² Surely, a painful chastisement (awaits) the wrongdoers.

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

38. 'Uqbah b. 'Aamir reports in a long *hadith*, the Prophet said,

فيأذن الله لي أن أقوم إليه فيثور [من] مجلسي من أطيب ريح شهما أحد قط، حتى آتي ربي فيشفعني، ويجعل لي نورا من شعر رأسي إلى ظفر قدمي، ثم يقول الكافرون هذا: قد وجد المؤمنون من يشفع لهم، فمن يشفع لنا؟ ما هو إلا إبليس هو الذي أضلنا، فيأتون إبليس فيقولون: قد وجد المؤمنون من يشفع لهم، فقم أنت فاشفع لنا، فإنك أنت أضللتنا. فيقوم فيثور من مجلسه من أنثن ريح شهما أحد قط، ثم يعظم نحيبهم وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

“... then Allah will allow me (to seek permission to intercede). I will rise up. At that point, a massive amount of fragrance will issue forth from my assembly: the best kind of fragrance anyone has ever smelled. I will go to my Lord and He will allow me to intercede and give me a Light that

will cover me from the top of my head to the nails of my toes. At that the unbelievers will say, ‘There! The believers have found someone to intercede for them. Rise now, (O *Shaytan*) and intercede for us. Was it not you who led us to error?’ He will rise, and along with him will rise up a massive amount of worst possible smell one has ever smelled. He will only increase their lamenting by saying, ‘Allah promised you a true promise, and I too promised. But I failed in my promise ...’ to the end of the verse.”

Hasan and Muhammad b. Ka'b have the same thing to say, but as their own statements (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

39. What Satan means to say perhaps is that he promised them so many things: a beautiful life, unend-

ing material progress, unimaginable comforts, peace, prosperity, and unceasing pleasures - if his advice was followed. But nations after nations, and generations after generations tried out his suggestions and found that he never delivered his promise. At best, there was material progress, but, due to unjust distribution of the fruits of progress, conflicts arose robbing the peace of the people. Imbalanced material life devoted to physical pleasures, destroyed personal peace. And, material progress took a heavy toll of energies, resulting in very uncomfortable life. This happened so many times over and over, with so many of his followers, that it should have opened their eyes. But mankind refused to learn any lesson. So, why should they blame him on the Day of Judgment? (Au.)

40. That is, "I only suggested. Acceptance or rejection was your discretion and your choice" (Au.).

With reference to Satan's words, that he had no power over the people save to suggest and induce them to evil, some scholars have pointed out that this negates the opinion that Satans can physically harm the people. But Alusi points out that, this is not the purport of the verse in question. What Satan means here is that he

only suggested and could not have forced them to doing evil. Otherwise, physical harm at the hands of Satans are possible and have been experienced. It is another thing, adds Thanwi, that the good and the pious are prevented from his harms by the attendant angels.

41. "(Satan's) answer is frank, cynical and brutal" (Yusuf Ali).

In contrast to the fatalists who hold that Allah misguides the people, the rationalists have pointed out that Satan's speech works against their position with clarity. Satan did not say, "Well, neither I nor you are responsible for the present situation. It is by Allah's will." The Ahl al-Sunnah however, take the position that the truth lies in between. Man chooses, and Allah makes easy the path he chooses (Au.).

42. That is, "I now declare myself clear of you having obeyed me in preference to God, and your worshipping me as His co-partner" (Majid).

Asad adds his note: "The implication is that Satan, while endeavoring to lead men astray, never claims to be God's 'equal' (cf. 7: 20, where he speaks of God, to Adam and Eve, as 'your Sustainer', or 15: 36 and 39, where he addresses Him as 'my Sus-

[23] As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, they shall be admitted to gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever, by their Lord's leave. Their greeting⁴³ therein: Salam.

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ
فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ

﴿٢٣﴾

tainer', or 8: 48 and 59: 16, where he says, 'behold I fear God') but, rather, tries to make men's sinful doings 'seem goodly to them (cf. 6: 43, 8: 48, 16: 63, 27: 24, 29: 38), i.e., persuades them that it is morally justifiable to follow one's fancies and selfish desires without any restraint. But while Satan himself does not make any claim to equality with God, the sinner who submits to Satan's blandishments attributes to him thereby, as it were, 'A share in God's divinity.'

In Mawdudi's simpler words, "This verse provides another instance of polytheism at the level of human actions as distinct from polytheism at the level of doctrine and belief. For, obviously no one professes, at the doctrinal level, that Satan is a partner of God in His divinity. Nor does anyone worship Satan. In fact, so far as verbal expressions go, people generally curse Satan. Ironically, the same people who curse him, also follow his ways, at times consciously, and at other times unconsciously.

It is precisely this which has been termed as associating Satan with God in His divinity. (This is strengthened by other verses. E.g., "Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan" (Ya Sin, 60).

"... polytheism does not merely assume one form viz., associating others with God in matters of belief. There is also another form which consists of exalting someone to a position where it becomes imperative to follow him without any sanction for it from God, or even in opposition to God's command. Such an act, according to the Qur'an, is tantamount to setting up a partner to God in His godhead. A person who follows someone in this unreserved fashion is guilty of setting up a partner to God even if he keeps on abusing and cursing him."

43. (The textual word for greeting) "tahiyah" literally means wishing someone to have a long life (Mawdudi).

[24] Have you considered how Allah sets forth the parable of a good Word?⁴⁴ (It is) like a good tree.⁴⁵ Its roots are firmly rooted, while its branches (high up) in the sky.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً
كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي
السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾

44. Good Word: To what is the allusion? Ibn `Abbas has said that the allusion is to the believer's faith - *kalimah shahadah*. He lives on earth while his words and deeds are carried up to the heavens (Ibn Jarir).

45. By "the good tree" the allusion is to the believer (Ibn Kathir).

Which is the earthly good tree referred to in this similitude? Mujahid says in explanation,

صَحِبْتُ ابْنَ عُمَرَ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ ، فَلَمْ أَسْمِعْهُ يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَّا حَدِيثًا وَاحِدًا قَالَ ، كَتَبْنَا عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَأَتَانِي بِجُمَّارٍ فَقَالَ: مِنَ الشَّجَرِ شَجَرَةٌ مِثْلُهَا مِثْلُ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ. فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَقُولَ " هِيَ النَّخْلَةُ " ، فَإِذَا أَنَا أَصْغُرُ الْقَوْمَ ، فَسَكَتُ ، [فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : هِيَ النَّخْلَةُ]

"Once I accompanied Ibn `Umar to Madinah. He did not narrate any *hadith* on the way except one. And the one he narrated was the following. The Prophet was brought a bunch of dates. He remarked, 'Of the trees there is

one which Allah likened to a believer.' Now, I wished to say that it was date palm tree, but I was the youngest of those present and so kept quiet.' But the Prophet said, 'It is the date palm tree.'"

According to other reports, he knew it was the date-palm tree but men like Abu Bakr and `Umar were present and so he did not speak out (Ibn Jarir).

In various words, the *hadith* is in Bukhari and others (Au.);

Zamakhshari points out however, that it can be any tree which gives its fruits in every season such as grapes, fig, pomegranate, etc. Razi goes one step further and says that it makes little difference whether it is date-palm tree or some other. The similitude encourages a Muslim to live a life endowed with qualities as described of the good tree, irrespective of the question whether such a tree exists in the real world or not.

[25] It yields its fruits in every season⁴⁶ by the leave of its Lord. And Allah strikes parables for the people, haply that they will be admonished.⁴⁷

تُزَيِّتُ أَكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ
اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

46. The “*heen*” of the original has been interpreted by Ibn `Abbas, when applied to the tree, as a period of “six months” or may be “a year”. But `Ikrimah and Sa`id b. Jubayr have said that it is “six months alone.” However, when applied to the believer (as bringing forth fruit every “*heen*”), this “*heen*” is interpreted as “morning and evening,” or, in simpler words, “at all times.” In the Qur`ān “*heen*” has been used both in the sense of a term known, as well as in the sense of an indefinite term, e.g., in 38: 88):

وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ تَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ

“You will surely get its news after a while (i.e., the news of the Hour of Doom).”

Or, (76: 1):

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا

“Did a time (“*heen*”) pass over man when he was not a thing to be mentioned?”

In both these instances, the term “*heen*” is an indefinite term (Ibn Jarir).

Alusi adds: The term “*heen*” is used in the language in the sense of a moment, six months, forty years or even eternity. What is meant here is that the tree yields its fruit faithfully, on time, whenever its season arrives.

47. Yusuf Ali writes: “The goodly tree is known for: (1) its beauty: it gives pleasure to all who see it; (2) its stability: it remains firm and unshaken in storms, because its roots are firmly fixed in the earth; (3) its wide compass: its branches reach high, and it catches all the sunshine from heaven, and gives shade to countless birds in its branches and men and animals beneath it; and (4) its abundant fruit: which it yields at all times. So is the Good Word. It is as beautiful as it is true. It abides in all the changes and chances of this life, and even beyond (see verse 27 below); it is never shaken by sorrow or what seems to us calamity; its roots are deep down in the bed-rock facts of life. Its reach is universal, above, around, below; it is illuminated by the divine light from heaven, and its consolation reaches countless beings of all grades of life. Its fruits - the enjoyment of

[26] And the parable of an evil Word⁴⁸ is like an evil tree,⁴⁹ which is uprooted from the surface of the earth: it has no stability.⁵⁰

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ
مِن فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

its blessings - is not confined to one season or one set of circumstances; furthermore the fortunate man who is the vehicle of that word has no self-pride; he attributes all its goodness, and his act in spreading it to the Will and Leave of Allah.”

Ibn al-Qayyim comments: There has to be a good amount of similarity between a tree on the one hand and belief on the other, for it to have been chosen for the simile. Firstly, a tree should have to have a root, a stem, branches, leaves and fruits. So is the tree of faith: a strong belief in Allah is its root; sincerity is its stem, virtuous deeds are its branches and good conduct its fruits. Secondly, a tree cannot live and thrive without some sustaining material poured onto it. If that sustaining material is denied, it goes dry. So is the tree of faith in the heart. If useful knowledge and righteous deeds, remembrance of Allah, and pondering over His signs are not poured onto it, it goes dry. Again, it is of the ways of the nature that a tree should have weeds and parasites growing around it. If they are not checked and rooted out, from time to time, it is likely that they will take

over and kill the mother tree. (Similarly, the tree of faith must be cleared of the weeds of hypocrisy and innovation).

48. The “evil word” of the original stands for Association with Allah (*shirk*) - Ibn Jarir. It can be any word that Allah disapproves (Alusi).

49. Hasan is widely reported as having said that the allusion by the “evil tree” is to “hanzal tree” (Ibn Jarir). Zamakhshari adds once again that it can be any tree which is not firmly rooted in the ground and does not yield any fruit.

50. Ibn `Abbas said: This is the example of the unbeliever’s life and works. He is not firmly established in the earth and his deeds do not rise up to the heavens in acceptance. Rabi` b. Anas said that the unbeliever’s deeds neither rise to the heaven, nor do they find a root in the earth. “So,” he was asked, “where will their deeds be (on Judgment-day)?” He answered, “They will carry their deeds on their backs” (Ibn Jarir).

Though not as beautifully stated, the similitude has its precedence in the OT. Majid writes, “And he shall be

[27] Allah grants firmness to those who believe, by the firm Word,⁵¹ in the life of this world⁵² as well as in the next.⁵³ And Allah leads the evildoers to error.⁵⁴ Allah does what He will.

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ
الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٧﴾

like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he doth shall prosper (Ps. 1: 3)."

51. The "firm Word" has been interpreted as the *kalimah shahadah* (Ibn Jarir).

52. That is, Allah keeps them firm on their faith and good deeds in this world (Ibn Jarir). Zamakhshari gives the example of the *As-hab al-Ukh-dud* (people of the trenches, Qur'an, Surah no. 85, *Al-Buruj*), and those who were split with *saws*: they stayed firm in their religion until their last breath.

Ibn al-Qayyim points out that if Messengers needed to be granted firmness, how much more not the ordinary believers? Allah said about the Prophet, (17: 74):

{ وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكُنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا }
[الإسراء: ٧٤]

"Had we not firmed you up, you had begun to incline towards them a little." And, (11: 120):

{ وَكَلَّا نَقْصُصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا ثَبَّتْنَا بِهِ
فَعَوَّادًا } [هود: ١٢٠]

"And We recite unto you every news of the (previous) Messengers wherewith We firm up your heart."

This "firming up" originates from the good word and virtuous deeds. Allah said (4: 66)

{ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ
تَثْبِيثًا } [النساء: ٦٦]

"Had they done what We were admonishing them, it would have been better for them and more firmly rooted."

53. Several traditions have come down from the Prophet in explanation of the words, "Allah grants firmness to those who believe by the firm word, during the life of this world as well as in the Hereafter." They are in major Sihah works. We shall combine a few. Bara' b. 'Azib reported:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ قَالَ
حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ عَنْ مِنْهَالِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو عَنْ زَادَانَ عَنْ
الْبَرَاءِ بْنِ عَازِبٍ قَالَ خَرَجْنَا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

وَطَيْبَهَا وَيُفْسَخُ لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ مَدَّ بَصَرِهِ -

قَالَ - وَيَأْتِيهِ رَجُلَانِ حَسَنُ الْوَجْهِ حَسَنُ الثِّيَابِ طَيِّبُ الرِّيحِ فَيَقُولُ أَبْشِرْ بِالَّذِي يَشْرُكَ هَذَا يَوْمُكَ هَذَا يَوْمُكَ الَّذِي كُنْتَ تُوعَدُ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مَنْ أَنْتَ فَوَجَّهْتُكَ الْوَجْهَ يَجِيءُ بِالْحَيِّرِ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا عَمَلُكَ الصَّالِحِ. فَيَقُولُ رَبِّ أَقِيمِ السَّاعَةَ حَتَّى أَرْجِعَ إِلَى أَهْلِي وَمَالِي.

قَالَ وَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ الْكَافِرَ إِذَا كَانَ فِي انْقِطَاعِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَإِقْبَالِ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ تَزَلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَائِكَةٌ سُوِّدُ الْوُجُوهِ مَعَهُمُ الْمُسُوخُ فَيَجْلِسُونَ مِنْهُ مَدَّ الْبَصَرِ ثُمَّ يَجِيءُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ حَتَّى يَجْلِسَ عِنْدَ رَأْسِهِ فَيَقُولُ أَيَّتْهَا النَّفْسُ الْحَيِيَّةُ الْخُرْجِي إِلَى سَخَطِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَعَظْبٍ -

قَالَ - فَتُفْرَقُ فِي جَسَدِهِ فَيَنْتَرَعُهَا كَمَا يُنْتَرَعُ السَّقُودُ مِنَ الصُّوفِ الْمَبْلُولِ فَيَأْخُذُهَا إِذَا أَخَذَهَا لَمْ يَدْعُوهَا فِي يَدِهِ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ حَتَّى يَجْعَلُوهَا فِي تَلْكَ الْمُسُوخِ وَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا كَأَنَّ رِيحَ حَيْفَةٍ وَجِدَتْ عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ فَيَصْعَدُونَ بِهَا فَلَا يَمُرُّونَ بِهَا عَلَى مَالٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِلَّا قَالُوا مَا هَذَا الرُّوحُ الْحَيِيثُ فَيَقُولُونَ فَلَنْ بُنِيَ فَلَنْ بَأْتِجَ أَسْمَائِهِ الَّتِي كَانَ يُسَمِّي بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يُنْتَهَى بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا فَيُسْتَفْتَحُ لَهُ فَلَا يُفْتَحُ لَهُ». ثُمَّ قَرَأَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- (لَا تَفْتَحْ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْحِيَاظِ) «فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَكْتُبُوا كِتَابَهُ فِي سَجِينٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ السُّفْلَى فَيُطْرَحُ رُوحُهُ طَرَحًا». ثُمَّ قَرَأَ (وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَّفَهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ)

«فَتُعَادُ رُوحُهُ فِي جَسَدِهِ وَيَأْتِيهِ مَلَكَانِ فَيُجْلِسَانِهِ فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَنْ رَبُّكَ فَيَقُولُ هَاهُ هَاهُ لَا أَدْرِي. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَا دِينُكَ فَيَقُولُ هَاهُ هَاهُ لَا أَدْرِي. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَا هَذَا الرَّجُلُ الَّذِي بُعِثَ فِيكُمْ فَيَقُولُ هُوَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ وَمَا عَلِمْتُكَ فَيَقُولُ قَرَأْتُ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ فَآمَنْتُ بِهِ وَصَدَّقْتُ. فَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ صَدَّقَ عَبْدِي فَأَفْرِشُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالْأَسْبُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَافْتَحُوا لَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَافْتَحُوا لَهُ بَابًا إِلَى النَّارِ فَيَأْتِيهِ

وسلم- فِي جَنَازَةِ رَجُلٍ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ فَاتَّهَمْنَا إِلَى الْقَبْرِ وَلَمَّا يُلْحَدُ فَجَلَسَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- وَجَلَسْنَا حَوْلَهُ كَأَنَّ عَلَى رُءُوسِنَا الطَّيْرَ وَفِي يَدِهِ عَوْذُ بِنَكْتٍ بِهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَرَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ

فَقَالَ «اسْتَعِيدُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ». مَرَّتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثًا ثُمَّ قَالَ «إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ الْمُؤْمِنَ إِذَا كَانَ فِي انْقِطَاعِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَإِقْبَالِ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ تَزَلُ إِلَيْهِ مَلَائِكَةٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِيضُ الْوُجُوهِ كَأَنَّ وَجُوهُهُمْ الشَّمْسُ مَعَهُمْ كَفَنٌ مِنْ أَكْفَانِ الْجَنَّةِ وَخُطُوبٌ مِنْ خُطُوبِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى يَجْلِسُوا مِنْهُ مَدَّ الْبَصَرِ ثُمَّ يَجِيءُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ حَتَّى يَجْلِسَ عِنْدَ رَأْسِهِ فَيَقُولُ أَيَّتْهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ الْخُرْجِي إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ - قَالَ - فَتَخْرُجُ تَسْبِيلُ كَمَا تَسْبِيلُ الْقَطْرَةُ مِنَ فِي السِّقَاءِ فَيَأْخُذُهَا إِذَا أَخَذَهَا لَمْ يَدْعُوهَا فِي يَدِهِ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ حَتَّى يَأْخُذُوهَا فَيَجْعَلُوهَا فِي ذَلِكَ الْكَفَنِ وَفِي ذَلِكَ الْخُطُوبِ وَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا كَأَطْيَبِ نَفْحَةٍ مِنْكَ وَجِدَتْ عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ -

قَالَ - فَيَصْعَدُونَ بِهَا فَلَا يَمُرُّونَ - بَعْضِي بِهَا - عَلَى مَالٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِلَّا قَالُوا مَا هَذَا الرُّوحُ الطَّيِّبُ فَيَقُولُونَ فَلَنْ بُنِيَ فَلَنْ بَأْتِجَ أَسْمَائِهِ الَّتِي كَانُوا يُسَمُّونَهَا بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يَنْتَهَى بِهَا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا فَيُسْتَفْتَحُونَ لَهُ فَيُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ فَيَسْبِعُهُ مِنْ كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ مُقَرَّبُوهَا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الَّتِي تَلِيهَا حَتَّى يُنْتَهَى بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ السَّابِعَةِ فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَكْتُبُوا كِتَابَ عَبْدِي فِي عَلِيِّينَ وَأَعْبِدُوهُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ فَيَأْتِي مِنْهَا خَلْقَتُهُمْ وَفِيهَا أُعِيدُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا أُخْرِجُهُمْ نَارَةً أُخْرَى -

قَالَ - فَتُعَادُ رُوحُهُ فِي جَسَدِهِ فَيَأْتِيهِ مَلَكَانِ فَيُجْلِسَانِهِ فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَنْ رَبُّكَ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي اللَّهُ. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَا دِينُكَ فَيَقُولُ دِينِي الْإِسْلَامُ. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ مَا هَذَا الرَّجُلُ الَّذِي بُعِثَ فِيكُمْ فَيَقُولُ هُوَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. فَيَقُولَانِ لَهُ وَمَا عَلِمْتُكَ فَيَقُولُ قَرَأْتُ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ فَآمَنْتُ بِهِ وَصَدَّقْتُ. فَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ صَدَّقَ عَبْدِي فَأَفْرِشُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالْأَسْبُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَافْتَحُوا لَهُ بَابًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ - قَالَ - فَيَأْتِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهَا

مِنْ حَرِّهَا وَسَمُومِهَا وَيُصَيِّقُ عَلَيْهِ قَبْرَهُ حَتَّى تَخْتَلِفَ فِيهِ
 أَضْلَاعُهُ وَيَأْتِيهِ رَجُلٌ قَبِيحُ الْوَجْهِ قَبِيحُ الثِّيَابِ مُنْتِنُ
 الرِّيحِ فَيَقُولُ أَبَشِرْ بِالَّذِي يَسْؤُوكَ هَذَا يَوْمَكَ الَّذِي
 كُنْتَ تُوعَدُ. فَيَقُولُ مَنْ أَنْتَ فَوَجْهُكَ الْوَجْهُ يَجِيءُ
 بِالشَّرِّ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا عَمَلُكَ الْحَبِيثُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّ لَا تُقِمِ
 السَّاعَةَ

“We were attending the funeral service of an Ansari. The grave was being dug. The Prophet sat down and so did we around him, quiet and arrested as if we had birds on our heads. He had a twig in his hand with which he began to scratch the ground. Then he raised his head and said, ‘Seek Allah’s refuge from the punishment in the grave – he said that twice or thrice. When a believer is about to leave this world and about to enter the next, bright faced angels come down from the heavens; their faces as radiant as the sun. They carry a shroud with them from Paradise covered with a perfume from Paradise. They sit down in front of him. They are followed by the Angel of Death, who sits down at his head. He says, ‘O good soul, come out to Allah’s forgiveness and His approval.’ It flows out, like water from the mouth of a water bag. He collects it and no sooner has he collected it when the others

take it away from him enwrapping him in the shroud and the perfume (they had brought). It emits the best of fragrance ever possible on the face of the earth. Then they ascend to the heavens along with it and do not pass by them, that is, any group of angels, but they exclaim, ‘What good soul is this?’ They reply, ‘So and so, son of so and so,’ naming him by the best of names that he was known by in the world, until they arrive at the heaven nearest to the earth. They seek the opening of its door. In every heaven those of its inhabitants that are the closest (to Allah) greet him and see him to the next heaven until he reaches the seventh heaven. There, Allah says, ‘Place My slave’s book (of deeds) in the `Illiyun (a place somewhere in the cosmos) and return him to the earth, for, therewith I have created them, thereunto I shall return them and therefrom I shall resurrect them a second time.’ So his soul is returned to his body.

“Then two angels arrive and make him sit up. They ask, ‘Who is your Lord?’ He replies, ‘Allah is my Lord.’ They ask, ‘What’s your religion?’ He replies, ‘Islam is my religion.’ They ask him,

‘What have you to say about this man who was sent to you?’ He replies, ‘He is Allah’s Messenger.’ Then they ask, ‘What’s your knowledge?’ He replies, ‘I read Allah’s book and believed in it.’ At that a caller calls out from the heaven, ‘My slave has spoken the truth. So spread out a bed for him from Paradise, give him a dress from Paradise, and open up for him a door to Paradise.’ So, (when the door is opened) tranquility and perfumes come to him from Paradise and his grave is expanded to the reach of the sight. And then comes to him a man: of beautiful face, beautiful dress, and clothed in pleasant fragrance. He says, ‘Receive the glad tidings. This is the day you were being promised.’ He asks, ‘Who are you? Your face is of the kind that cannot but bring good.’ He replies, ‘I’m your good deeds.’ He begins to say, ‘My Lord, call the Hour, call the Hour, so that I can return to my kinsfolk and to my property.’

“In contrast, when an evil person is about to leave the world, and enter into the Hereafter, Allah sends towards him angels from the heaven, of dark faces, with coarse leather (pieces) in their

hands. They sit down in front of him. They are followed by the Angel of death who sits down at his head. He says, ‘Come out O filthy soul. Come out to Allah’s anger and displeasure.’ The soul spreads itself out in the body (resisting to come out). So he pulls it out like a thorny branch (entangled) in a (ball) of wet wool. He takes it but not a minute is wasted before they place it in that thick leather piece. It leaves the body covered in such a filthy smell as never experienced on the face of the earth. Then they ascend to the heavens with it. They do not pass by a group of angels but they remark, ‘Whose stinking soul is this?’ They reply, ‘It is that of so and so, son of so and so,’ naming it by the worst of names that he was known by in the life of this world. Until, when they reach the heaven nearest to the earth, they seek the door to be opened, but they are refused entry.”

“At that point the Prophet recited the verse (7: 40), ‘The doors to the heaven will not be opened for them and they will not enter Paradise until a camel passes through a needle’s eye.’ Allah says at that point, ‘Place his book (of

deeds) in the Sijjin in the lowest earth.' So his soul is flung away (into Sijjin). The Prophet then recited (22: 31), 'And whosoever associated with Allah is as if cast away from the heaven whom the birds have snatched him away, or the wind blows it away to a distant place.'

"Then his soul is returned to the body. After that two angels arrive. They make him sit up and ask, 'Who is your Lord?' He replies, 'Ha, ha, I have no idea.' They ask, 'What's your religion?' He answers, 'Ha, ha, I have no idea.' They ask, 'Who is the man who was sent to you?' He replies, 'Ha, ha. I have no idea.' Then someone cries out from the heaven, 'My slave has lied. So spread out a bed for him from the Fire, and open up a door on him from the Fire.' Its heat and poison reach him and his grave is squeezed on him until his ribs cross each other. Then a man with a dreadful face, in dreadful attire, and smelling horribly, arrives. He says, 'Be of good cheer about something that will prove evil to you. This is the day you were warned of.' He asks, 'Who are you? The face you have, can only bring evil.' He re-

plies, 'I am your evil deeds.' The man cries out, 'My Lord, do not call for the Hour.'" (The *hadith* is in Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah).

According to other versions, "When a dead man is placed in the grave, and his companions turn away, while he hears the retreating noise of their footsteps, two angels come down and ask..." Tirmidhi's version names the angels as Munkar and Nakir, and that, if he succeeds in answering the questions correctly, his grave is filled with light (*nur*) and he is told, 'Sleep.' He says, 'Let me go back to my family and tell them (what happened).' They say, 'Sleep, the sleep of a bridegroom who is not awakened but by the dearest of the family.' But, if it is a hypocrite, and he is asked the questions, he says, 'I used to hear the people say (some things about faith and beliefs) and I used to utter the same things. (Otherwise) I know nothing.' The earth is told, 'Squeeze him from all sides.' It closes in on him from all around until his rib bones cross each other. He remains enduring torture until the Day of Judgment."

There is yet another report which records Abu Hurayrah as having said,

عن أبي هريرة قال، إن الميت ليسمَع خَفَقَ نِعَالِهِ حين يُؤلُون عنه مدبرين. فإذا كان مؤمناً، كانت الصلاة عند رأسه، والزكاة عن يمينه، وكان الصيام عن يساره، وكان فعلُ الخيرات من الصدقة والصلة والمعروف والإحسان إلى الناس عند رجله، فيؤتى من عند رأسه فتقول الصلاة: ما قبلي مدخلٌ. فيؤتى عن يمينه فتقول الزكاة: ما قبلي مدخلٌ. فيؤتى عن يساره فيقول الصيام: ما قبلي مدخلٌ. فيؤتى من عند رجله فيقول فعل الخيرات من الصدقة والصلة والمعروف والإحسان إلى الناس: ما قبلي مدخلٌ.

فيقال له: اجلس. فيجلس، قد تمتلئ له الشمس قد دنت للغروب، فيقال له: أخبرنا عما نسألك. فيقول: دعوني حتى أصلي. فيقال: إنك ستفعل، فأخبرنا عما نسألك عنه! فيقول: وعمّ تسألون؟ فيقال: رأيت هذا الرجل الذي كان فيكم، ماذا تقول فيه، وماذا تشهد به عليه؟ فيقول: أمحمد؟ فيقال له: نعم. فيقول أشهد أنه رسول الله، وأنه جاء بالبينات من عند الله، فصدّناه. فيقال له: على ذلك حبيبت، وعلى ذلك ميت، وعلى ذلك تبعث إن شاء الله. ثم يُفَسَّح له في قبره سبعون ذراعاً ويُؤر له فيه، ثم يُفْتَح له باب إلى الجنة فيقال له: انظر إلى ما أعدّ الله لك فيها، فيزداد غبطةً وسروراً، ثم يفتح له باب إلى النار فيقال له: انظر ما صرّف الله عنك لو عصيته! فيزداد غبطةً وسروراً. ثم يجعل نَسْمَهُ في النَّسَم الطَّيِّب، وهي طيرٌ حُضِرَتْ تُعَلَّقُ بشجر الجنة، ويعاد جسده إلى ما بُدئ منه من التراب، وذلك قول الله تعالى: يثبت الله الذين آمنوا بالقول الثابت في الحياة الدنيا وفي الآخرة.

“The dead man hears the sounds of their footsteps as they (the burial crowd) recede. Now, if he was a believer, Prayers take position at his head, Zakah on his right, fasts on his left and good

deeds, charity, kin's rights well observed, acts of charity to the people, (all of them) near his feet. He is sought access to from the side of his head. Prayers say, 'There is no entrance from my side.' He is approached from the right. Zakah says, 'There is no entrance from my side.' He is approached from his left. Fasts say, 'There is no entrance from my side.' He is approached from the side of his feet. Charity and good acts speak out, 'There is no entrance from our side.'

He is told, 'Sit down.' He sits up and it appears to him as if the sun is about to set. He is told, 'Tell us about what we are about to ask.' He says, 'First, allow me to do my Prayers.' He is told, 'You will do that presently. But for the moment tell us about what we inquire.' He asks, 'What do you wish to ask?' He is told, 'What do you have to say about this man, who was among you? And what is your testimony about him?' He asks, 'Do you mean Muhammad?' He is told, 'Yes.' He replies, 'I testify that he was a Messenger of Allah and that he came from Allah with clear signs, and so we believed in him.' He is told, 'Upon this you lived, upon this you died,

and upon this you will be raised, Allah willing.' Then his grave is widened by seventy hand-measures and it is lightened. A door is opened to Paradise and he is told, 'Look at what Allah has prepared for you therein.' That increases his joy and delight. Then a door is opened to Hell and he is told, 'Look, this is what you have been saved from, had you disobeyed Him.' That increases his joy and delight. Then his soul is placed among the good souls, residing in green birds hanging by the trees of Paradise. As for the body, it is returned to its origins in the earth. And this explains Allah's words, 'Allah grants firmness to those who believe, by the firm Word, in the life of this world as well as in the next' (Ibn Jarir).

This *hadith* is also in Ibn Hibban, with some additions (Ibn Kathir).

Its first few lines are in Muslim, while the rest in various other collections.

In connection with the questioning in the grave, Qurtubi reports two stories of confidence. Sahar b. `Ammar said: "I saw Yazid b. Harun after his death. I asked him, 'How did Allah treat you?' He replied, 'Two tough looking, tough acting angels came to me. They asked, "What's

your religion, who is your Lord and who is your prophet?" I held my white beard in my hand and said, "Is that what you ask of a man of my kind? And I had been teaching people answers to your questions for eighty years." So they went away." And `Umar ibn al-Khattab enquired the Prophet about the situation in the grave, "Will I be able to use my mind?" He replied, "Yes." `Umar remarked, "I think I know how I'll deal with them."

And Bazzar has a report coming from `A`isha. When she heard about the questioning in the grave, she asked the Prophet, "How can I deal with them, Messenger of Allah, seeing that I am after all a woman (with all my weaknesses)?" He replied with this verse, "Allah makes firm those who believe by the firm word, during the life of this world as well as in the Hereafter" (Shawkani).

54. That is, Allah creates error in the heart of the unbeliever following his will and choice (Alusi).

The words, "And Allah leads the evil-doers to error," refer to the situation of the hypocrite in the grave, who, when asked about the Prophet as to who he was, replies, "I heard people say some things and I repeated. Otherwise, I know nothing." It is Allah

[28] Have you considered those who exchanged Allah's blessings with disbelief and led their people to the abode of ruin?⁵⁵

أَمْ تَرَى إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا
وَأَحْلَوْا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] Jahannum, where they will burn, an evil resting place.

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَيُنْسِ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] And they set up Allah's equal so as to lead away from His path. Say, 'Enjoy yourselves briefly, your destination is the Fire.'

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ
تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِن مَصِيرِكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Say to those of My slaves who have believed that they (should) perform the Prayers (regularly and properly), expend out of what We have provided them secretly and openly, before a day comes when there will be neither trading nor mutual befriending.

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِّن قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَّ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] Allah it is who created the heavens and the earth and sent down out of heaven water. He brought forth thereby fruits for your sustenance. And He subjected the ships to you that sail in the seas by His command. And He subjected to you the rivers.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ
الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلُوكَ
لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ
الْأَنْهَارَ ﴿٣٢﴾

who makes him forget the right answers and hence His words, "Allah leads the evildoers to error" (Ibn Jarir).

55. The immediate reference at the time of revelation was, according to the widely reportedly opinions of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id b. Jubayr and others, to the leaders of the Quraysh who led their people to destruction at Badr and to the everlasting punishment in Hell-fire (Ibn Jarir).

The report is also in Bukhari (Shawkani).

However, it is also reported of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, `Ali, Ibn `Umar and Ibn `Abbas that the allusion is to the two corrupt Quraysh clans: Banu al-Mughira and Banu Umayyah (Ibn Jarir). `Umar said, "As for Banu al-Mughira, you took care of them at Badr. As regards Banu Umayyah, they have been given respite." The reports are in Bukhari's "Tarikh" (not the *sahih* collection), Ibn al-

[33] And He subjected to you the sun and the moon constantly pursuing (their courses); and He subjected to you the night and the day.⁵⁶

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبِينَ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] And He gave you all that you asked Him.⁵⁷ If you count Allah's bounties, you will never number them.⁵⁸ Verily, Man is given to much wrong-doing, much ingratitude.⁵⁹

وَأَنَّا كُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِن تَعُدُّوا
نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ
لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Mundhir, Ibn Marduwayh, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani in his Awsat and Hakim, who declared it as trustworthy (Alusi, Shawkani).

56. Ibn Kathir writes: Allah mentioned some of the favors He showed to mankind, such as, He made the sky a protective ceiling, earth a bed, brought forth vegetation in the aftermath of rains that yield fruits of different tastes and colors, as well as grain and grass. He also made ships to sail on the surface of water by His command, and rivers that help in irrigation and transport from one region to another. This is the meaning of making these things subservient.

Asad comments: "Almost all classical commentators agree that God's having made the natural phenomena "subservient" to man is a metaphor (*majaz*) for His having enabled man to derive lasting benefit from them."

Mawdudi elaborates: "Some (people) think that it means that the forces of nature have been placed under the

control of man. Such an assumption leads people to develop a variety of odd ideas. Some even go so far as to say that to achieve mastery over the heavens and the earth is the true end of man's existence. However, what the Qur'anic statement means by the subjection of the natural phenomena is simply that God has bound them to laws which are beneficial for mankind. Had sailing in the sea not been subject to any law, it would not have been possible for man to undertake sea voyages. Had the rivers not been subject to any laws, man could not have used them for irrigation. Likewise, had the sun, the moon, the day and the night not been regulated, there could have been no life on earth, let alone any flourishing human civilization."

57. Qadi Baydawi has said that the meaning is: Allah provided everything for you that you will ever need, whether you asked for it or not (Ma'arif).

Some commentators have however understood the “min” of the text as meaning, “out of.” That is, He gave you something out of all that you asked Him, following His wisdom, withholding that alone which was harmful (Razi and others).

58. Bayhaqi has reported Abu Darda’ as saying, “He who does not see Allah’s bounties except in his food and drinks, will be poor in the obedience of his Lord, and his punishment is close” (Shawkani). And a tradition in Bukhari reports that the Prophet used to say,

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ ، غَيْرَ مَكْفِيٍّ ، وَلَا مُوَدَّعٍ وَلَا مُسْتَعْتَى عَنْهُ ، رَبَّنَا

“Praises to Allah in great measure, goodly, blessed - of the kind that can never be sufficient, nor that which will be the last one, nor something we can feel self-sufficient about - O our Lord” (Ibn Kathir).

It was either Abu `Ali Shibli or Ibn Ali Sina who reportedly belittled the blessing of this life in a poem, a part of which is reproduced here:

Time scatters our years over here and there

Like the leaves of a branch scattered around

Whenever the world lays a new born
It is devoured by the vicissitudes of
the wet-nurse

We are watched from the time earlier
than we were born

While any disagreement is in the
mother’s womb cut down

We only wait for misfortunes and ca-
lamities

And thereafter? Ah, threats (of pun-
ishments) await us

We leave, unwilling, as does the liz-
ard leaves when forced out of its hole

Why should we be taunted over our
existence?

When we had no choice to be or not
to be?

It would have been a better blessing
if we were

Consulted earlier, or given a choice

This is a malady that has no cure

This is a breaking down, that has no
mending.

(Alusi)

Obviously, it is a cynic who sees the
world as a clock-work, in which men
are denied any role, awaiting only ca-
lamities as life’s events unfold them-
selves: a view which is somewhat dif-
ferent from the real world, in which

[35] (Recall)⁶⁰ when Ibrahim said,⁶¹ 'My Lord! Make this a land of peace,⁶² and preserve me and my offspring that we should worship idols.⁶³

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ
آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ
﴿٣٥﴾

every living being wishes to live as long as possible, obviously not out of grief. That apart, we are sure the poet must have been well pleased with his lines, as will all those be, who are, for some reason or the other, of similar skeptic temperament. They will pass these lines around in delight, to men of similar dispositions. But, ignoring other things, can they deny that the life's pains are worth the pleasure which these lines offer: to the writer and those of similar disposition? After all, rocks do not say poetry. Would a man choose to be a rock, rather than someone who enjoys reading and writing poetry? As regards not having been consulted before creation, let us suppose a piece of rock is consulted: "Do you wish to come alive?" We all know what the answer would be. Life itself is a reward and a blessing (Au.).

59. Man is given to "much wrongdoing," (*zalum*), making noise and complaining to everyone he comes across when he faces hard times, and is given to "much ingratitude" (*kaf-*

far), amassing and refusing to share with others when bestowed with bounties (Zamakhshari).

(Accordingly) a report in Ibn Abi Hatim has `Umar saying, "O Allah, forgive me my *zulm* and my *kufr*." He was asked, "*Zulm*, yes. But what about *kufr*?" He replied, "Allah said, 'Surely man is *zalum*, *kaffar*'" (Shawkani).

60. Asad seeks a connection with the preceding passages: "The whole of this passage (verse 35-41) - from which the title of this *Surah* is derived - represents a parenthetical reminder, in the form of Abraham's prayer, of the only way to righteousness, in the deepest sense of the word, open to man: namely, recognition of God's existence, oneness and uniqueness and, hence, a rejection of all belief in 'other powers' supposedly co-existent with Him (cf. verse 30 above). Inasmuch as this prayer implies a realization of, and gratitude for, God's infinite bounty, it connects directly with the preceding verse 34 and the subsequent verse 42."

Shabbir `Uthmani and Mawdudi look at the passage from another angle. In Mawdudi's words, "After mentioning God's favours to all mankind, reference is made here to the favours which were specially bestowed on the Quraysh. The Quraysh are told that when their ancestor, Abraham (peace be on him), settled in Makka with the robust hope that his descendants would live in obedience to their Lord, God lavished a great variety of favours upon them in response to Abraham's prayer. But in return for all those favours, the Quraysh acted in brazen disregard of Abraham's expectations of them, embraced erroneous doctrines and engaged in every kind of misdeed."

61. Although himself a *Sufi*, Thanwi warns that the lesson that some extremist *Sufis* have derived from this verse, that, following Ibrahim's example, wife and children can be abandoned to Allah's care, is wrong. Ibrahim did it on Allah's command, which Hajar too ascertained by demanding to know, "Is this by Allah's command?"

62. By ordering its territory as sacred and inviolate, Allah made Makkah and its surrounding areas, sitting as an island in a sea of violence, debauchery and immorality, a place of

peace and security, that has no second to its unique position on the planet (Au.).

63. The question that arises is whether Ibrahim feared that he or his children would worship idols? Majid says that the reference here is to his immediate progeny, and not to his entire race. Imām Razi considers various answers and then concludes that one of the plausible answers is that he supplicated against what the *Sufis* call as the "*shirk al-khafiy*," (minor and unobvious form of Association) which consists in the heart's attachment, in any degree, to anyone other than Allah.

Alusi is not satisfied with the answer. He has a different explanation: "I believe the state and status of the un sinfulness of the prophets is not a natural physical quality that they are endowed with and by virtue of which they remain sinless. It is by Divine Will, and a blessing on them from Allah." In that sense, it is continuation of the grace which was sought by Ibrahim.

Asad adds: "The term 'Idols' (*asnam*, sing., *sanam*) does not apply exclusively to actual, concrete representation of false 'deities': for *shirk* - that is, an attribution of divine powers or qualities to anyone or anything be-

[36] My Lord! They⁶⁴ have indeed led astray many of the mankind.⁶⁵ Then whoso followed me is of me and whoso disobeyed me - but, surely, You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Kind.⁶⁶

رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ أَضَلَّلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ
تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

side God - may consist also, as Razi points out, in a worshipful devotion to all manner of 'causative agencies and outward means to an end' - an obvious allusion to wealth, power, luck, people's favor or disfavor, and so forth - 'whereas genuine faith in the oneness and uniqueness of God (at-tawhid al-mahd) consists in divesting oneself of all inner attachment to [such] causative agencies and in being convinced that there exists no real directing power apart from God."

Thanwi does not miss out another implication. He writes: "The verse shows that even Prophets did not feel themselves safe from Satan's contriving. Should lower men, however perfect, ever feel secure?"

64. "They:" "That is, idols and images which are to the idolatrous people visible representation of God or gods and fraught with Divine glory and majesty" (Majid).

65. Majid comments and quotes: "The name of the idolatrous peoples both ancient and modern, is legion;

and nations after nations, not all of them of the lowest savagery, are known to have succumbed to the influence of idolatry. 'Its tendency to revive ethnographically is embarrassing ... The modern Brahmans, professed followers of Vedic doctrine, are among the greatest idolaters of the world. Early Christianity by no means abrogated the Jewish law against image-worship, yet image-worship became and still remains widely spread and deeply rooted in Christendom.' (PC. II. p. 168)."

66. Qatadah used to say, "Listen people, what was it that Ibrahim have to say (about his pagan people). He did not curse them nor called them names."

And, it is reported of the Prophet that,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَلَا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ: فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ، وَقَوْلَ عِيسَى: إِنْ تَعَدَّبْتَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّرْتَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ، فَرَفَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَدَهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: "اللَّهُمَّ أُمَّتِي أُمَّتِي"، وَبَكَى، فَقَالَ اللَّهُ لِحَبْرَيْلَ: "أَذْهَبْ إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ، وَاسْأَلْهُ مَا

[37] Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring by Your sacred House⁶⁷ in a valley⁶⁸ devoid of vegetation,⁶⁹ O our Lord, that they may perform the Prayer.⁷⁰ So make the hearts of some people incline towards them,⁷¹ and provide them with fruits,⁷² haply they will give thanks.⁷³

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ
ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا
الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي
إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

يَبْكِيكَ؟“، فَأَتَاهُ جِبْرِيْلُ، فَسَأَلَهُ، فَأَخْبَرَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَجِبْرِيْلٍ: “أَذْهَبَ
إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، فَقُلْ لَهُ: إِنَّا سَنَرْضِيكَ فِي أُمَّتِكَ وَلَا
نَسْؤُوكَ“

“Once he recited this verse, “My Lord! They have indeed led astray many of the mankind. Then whoso followed me is of me and whoso disobeyed me - but, surely, You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Kind.” Thereafter he recited the words of `Isa ibn Maryam (5: 118): “If You punish them, then, surely they are Your slaves. But if You forgive them, then, surely, You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.” Then he raised his hands and supplicated, “O Allah, my *Ummah*. O Allah, my *Ummah*,” and cried. Allah said to Jibril, “Jibril! Go to Muhammad – and, although Allah knows - ask him, ‘What makes you cry?’ Jibril came down to him and asked him. The Prophet told him what made him cry. Allah

said, “Jibril! Go to Muhammad and say to him, ‘We shall satisfy you in the matter of your *Ummah*, and shall not cause you any pain” (Ibn Jarir).

The above *hadith* is in the *sahih* of Ibn Hibban and other books (Au.).

67. This confirms that the Sacred House was already there in existence, in some form or the other (Qurtubi).

Another possibility is that the supplication was made after the construction, although, the place was marked for such a House, the day Allah created the heavens and the earth (Au.).

68. Majid quotes various Western scholars, “‘The city lies in a hollow among the hills’ (Ebr. XV. p. 150). ‘Mecca lies in a valley imprisoned by stony hills, the last word of desolation’ (Lady Cobbold, Pilgrimage to Mecca, p. 139). It would be difficult to meet with a more forbidding site, even amongst the mixed rock-masses of Tihama, the lowest-lying and with

desolate part of this stern province of Hijaz ... In the badly-ventilated corridor, scorched all through in endless summer by the pitiless sun of Arabia, without the shelter of a single palm-tree, the population in order to slake their thirst were reduced to the uncertain flow of Zamzam.’ (Lammen, *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions*, p. 16).”

The honest Western scholars might note with some disappointment that the “uncertain flow of Zamzam” has never failed, right up to this day, when thousands of gallons of water is drawn from it every day with the help of several power-operated pumps (Au.).

69. This supplication was made at the time when Ibrahim had left Hajar with Isma`il in her lap at the deserted spot, which was later to become Makkah. When he turned to go back Hajar followed him to some distance asking him whether he was leaving them there, and if so, was it by Allah’s command. He said yes without turning. Then, as they became out of sight, he turned and prayed in these words (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others).

However, the full content suggests that this is a collection of supplications that Ibrahim made on various occasions at various times (Au.). Ibn

Kathir and Thanwi have also stated something to this effect.

For details of Ibrahim’s journey from Syria to the deserted valley in Makkah, see *Surah Al-Baqarah*, note 253 of this work.

The place is still as barren as it was four thousand years ago (Au.). No tree bears any fruit there. All the fruits found in the town are brought from outside (Ibn Kathir).

Majid again comments and quotes: “The old geographers observe that the whole Haram area or sanctuary around the city is almost without cultivation or date-palms (Ebr. XV. p. 150). ‘For many miles around Mecca ... the general features are rugged rocks without a trace of foliage. Even at the present day ... Mecca can hardly boast a garden or cultivated field, and only here and there is a tree’ (Miur, op. cit. p.2). The city of Makkah, about forty-eight miles east of the Red Sea, lies in the world zone of maximum heat and dryness, and the whole tract, which is rainless, experiencing great extremes of heat in summer. ‘The thermometer in Makka can register almost unbearable heat’ (Hitti, op. cit. p. 104).”

70. Imām Razi writes on the implication of this passage: This shows that once a man is free of worldly worries,

he should busy himself with prayers and other rituals of worship.

Umar ibn al-Khattab is reported to have said during a Friday sermon, "Allah first granted custody of the House to the Tasm. But they violated its sanctity. So Allah destroyed them and gave it to the Jurham tribe. But in time they too violated its sanctity. So Allah destroyed them too and has given you the custody now, O Quraysh. So take care not to disobey its Lord, declare its lawful as unlawful, or neglect its rights. By Allah, one Prayer offered therein is dearer to me than a hundred elsewhere. And, you might know that sins therein are similarly treated" (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi adds: Most of the scholars have considered prayers offered in the Sacred House as the most reward bearing, followed by those done in the mosque at Madinah. One of the traditions in this regard says,

صَلَاةٌ فِي مَسْجِدِي هَذَا أَفْضَلُ مِنْ أَلْفِ صَلَاةٍ فِيمَا سِوَاهُ، إِلَّا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ، وَصَلَاةٌ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ صَلَاةٍ فِي مَسْجِدِي بِأَلْفِ صَلَاةٍ

"Prayers in my mosque are a thousand times more reward-bearing than in any other mosque except for the Sacred House at Makkah where the Prayers are a hundred times more reward bear-

ing than Prayers in this mosque of mine." Hence, many scholars say that Muslims may offer their 'Eid Prayers anywhere in a town, but in Makkah, it must be offered in the Grand Mosque alone.

The first part of the above *hadith* is in the *sahihayn* while the whole is in several collections with Haythami declaring one version as trustworthy (Au.).

71. Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah and Mujahid have said that as a result of the addition of article "min" before "al-nas", (rendering the meaning as 'some of the people'), it is only the Muslims who are inclined towards them. If all the people had been intended, peoples of the world would have crowded into the Holy Sanctuary (Ibn Jarir).

72. Zamakhshari wrote: The supplication was accepted and, in consequence, we notice the amazing phenomenon that the shops are laden with fruits of all varieties, none of which are grown in Makkah, not at any particular time, but throughout the year.

That was in the sixth century. And so has it been throughout the centuries. Whoever visited Makkah noticed this strange phenomenon (Au.).

[38] Our Lord! You know what we conceal and what we reveal,⁷⁴ for nothing whatsoever is hidden from Allah, in the earth or in the heaven.⁷⁵

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا تُعْلِنُ وَمَا
يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا
فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] Praise be to Allah who bestowed upon me in my old age, Isma`il and Is-haq.⁷⁶ Surely, my Lord is the Hearer of supplication.⁷⁷

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ
إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ
﴿٣٩﴾

73. Apart from fruits, Allah provided them with water too: which is both water as well as diet. The Prophet said in a *hadith* in Dara Qutni,

ماء زمزم لما شرب له إن شربته تشتهي به شفاك الله
وإن شربته لشبعك أشبعك الله به وإن شربته لقطع
ظمئك قطعه وهي هزمة جبريل وسقيا الله إسماعيل

“Zamzam water is good for whatever it is drunk. If you seek to be cured, Allah will cure you. If you consider it as food, Allah will fill your stomach. If you drank it out of thirst, Allah will remove your thirst. It is by Jibril’s strike and Allah’s water to Isma`il.” Hence Ibn `Abbas used to say before drinking it, “O Allah! Grant me useful knowledge, wide sustenance and cure from every ailment.” And Ibn al-`Arabiyy has said, “This will last until the day of Judgment for him who has the right intention, not denying (its qualities) inwardly, nor drinking it by way of experiment; for, Allah is with those who trust Him, and

He dispels the experimenters” (Qurtubi).

Except for Hakim who gave it conditional approval, most *hadith* Doctors have thought that the above *hadith* is weak, with the first part accepted by most (Au.).

74. The allusion was perhaps to Ibrahim’s love and concern of Hajar and the child (Shawkani from Ibn Abi Hatim).

75. That is, Allah knows what desires we conceal in our hearts, and so, in fact, there is no need for supplications. Nevertheless, we do it to demonstrate our humbleness (Zamakhshari).

76. Ibrahim (asws) was a centurion by the time he finally became a father.

77. Allah (*swt*) of course is the Hearer. But the meaning here is, He responds to the supplications and meets with our needs (Zamakhshari).

[40] O my Lord! Make me a performer of Prayer, and of my offspring (too),⁷⁸ O our Lord, and accept my supplication.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي
رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] O our Lord! Forgive me,⁷⁹ my parents, and the believers the Day the reckoning is established.⁸⁰

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ
يُقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And think not that Allah is unaware of what the transgressors do. He is only deferring them to a Day when the eyes will be fixed in stare.

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ
الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ
الْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] Racing ahead,⁸¹ with heads erect, their gaze not returning towards them,⁸² and their hearts void.

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ
طَرْفُهُمْ وَأَفْبَدَتْهُمْ هَوَاءَ ﴿٤٣﴾

78. Asad writes: “The particle ‘min’ (“[some] of”) preceding the word *dhurriyati* (‘my offspring’) is obviously an allusion to 2: 124, where God says in answer to Abraham’s question about his descendants: ‘My covenant does not embrace the evildoers’ ... (and, by implication, extends) even to the unrighteous among the descendants of the Last Prophet, Muhammad.”

79. Majid offers a very useful note here, especially for those who get confused over our own Prophet’s “*Ghufran*” as stated, e.g., in verse 2 of *Surah Al-Fat-h*: “‘*Ghufri*’ is only ‘to cover with Divine grace,’ and does not necessarily presuppose sinfulness on the part of one who asks for his ‘*maghfirah*.’” Hence “*mighfar*” for

helmet, which covers the head (Au.).

80. Apparently, this supplication of forgiveness, which includes Ibrahim’s parents, was made earlier to he disowning them.

81. We have adopted one of the several connotations expressed by the earliest scholars. A second connotation contained in “*muhti*” is that of someone staring hard ahead, not diverting the sight for a moment. A third is to bend one’s head down. Classical poets, as quoted by Ibn Jarir and others, have used the term in all these senses.

However, the sense in this context seems to be that of a people rushing onward with their heads raised, looking upward towards the heaven in fearful apprehension (Shawkani).

[44] So warn the people of a Day when the punishment comes on them. Then will the transgressors plead, 'Our Lord! Grant us respite for a short term, we shall answer your call and follow the Messengers.' (They will be answered), 'Were you not swearing aforetime that you will not have to move?'⁸³

وَأَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُولُ
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخِّرْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ
نُحِبِّ دَعْوَتِكَ وَتَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ أُولَٰمَ تَكُونُوا
أَفْسَتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِّن زَوَالٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

True believers however, would be free from any fear. The Qur'an said about them (21: 103),

{ لَا يَحْزَنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ هٰذَا
يَوْمَ كُمْ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ } [الأنبياء: ١٠٣]

"They will not be grieved by the great fear. Rather, angels will meet with them (saying), 'This is your day which you had been promised.'"

82. The "shukhus" (rendered as fixed stare), allegorically expresses a stare filled with fear and horror. But it does not express continuance, or permanence. The purport of the latter part of the verse is to impress that the fear and horror will not cease to be the fate of the people. They will keep staring ahead in horror, their gaze not returning back (Razi).

In fact, the term "tarf" is for the eyelid, meaning, eye-lids will not move, implying that the eyes would be staring hard ahead (Alusi).

83. That is, you were sure that you will not move from the material world to the Next (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir and others)... "a reference to many people's refusal, often mentioned in the Qur'an, to believe in life after death and, hence, in God's ultimate judgment" (Asad).

Although most of the classical commentators have expressed the meaning as we have adopted above, another possible meaning (Alusi and others) is, "You deemed that you will not face material decline."

Qurtubi and Alusi quote Ka'b al-Qurazi that the dwellers of Hell-fire will ask Allah on five occasions. He will answer them on four occasions. When He would have answered them on the fifth occasion, they will ask no more. They will say (40: 11),

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَخْرَجْنَا فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا
فَهَلْ إِلَىٰ خُرُوجٍ مِّن سَبِيلٍ [غافر: ١١]

"O our Lord! You gave us death twice and brought us to life twice.

Now, we admit our sins. So, is there a way out?"

He will answer (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 judgment is for the Most High, the Great."

Then they will ask (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 attempt righteous deeds, we are now believers."

He will answer (32: 14),

فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا إِنَّا نَسِينَاكُمْ وَذُوقُوا
عَذَابَ الْحُلْدِ بِمَا 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 أَخْرِزْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَتَتَّبِعِ 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 لَكُم مِّنْ زَوَالٍ
[إبراهيم : ٤٤]

"Were you not the ones who swore aforetime that you will not have to move?"

Then they will 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, other than what we were doing."

Allah will answer them (35: 37),

أَوَلَمْ نَعَمِّرْكُمْ مَا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ
فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَّصِيرٍ [فاطر : ٣٧]

"Did we not lengthen your life therein, that he might remember who wished to remember; and a warner came to you, so, taste (the punishment), there is no helper for the wrongdoers."

They will say in reply (23: 106),

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ
[المؤمنون : ١٠٦]

"O our Lord! Our wretchedness got the better of us. We were a misguided people."

Allah will reply (23: 108),

قَالَ احْسَبُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ [المؤمنون : ١٠٨]

"Remain despised therein, and do not speak to Me (any further)."

[45] *And you dwelt in the dwelling-places of those who wronged themselves and it was obvious to you how We dealt with them,⁸⁴ and We struck for you similitudes.'*

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِينِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ
وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمْ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] *And they plotted their plot,⁸⁵ and with Allah are (recorded) their plots,⁸⁶ though their plot was such that the mountains could move thereby.⁸⁷*

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَكْرُهُمْ
وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُولَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ
﴿٤٦﴾

Thereafter, they will never address Him again, but only howl and bark at each other. The lid will be laid over their heads and sealed.

Despite this, the unbelievers have not ceased their contriving, fancying that their efforts will ultimately meet with success."

84. "That is, 'you lived on the same earth, and in basically the same human environment, as those earlier generations who offended against all ethical values and thereby brought destruction upon themselves: hence, their tragic fate should have been a warning to you.'" (Asad).

86. That is, their plots are recorded with Allah.

85. There can be several interpretations. Ibn Jarir thinks the allusion is to the blasphemous beliefs of the unbelievers.

87. One of the two interpretations considers the article "in" of the text as negative which renders the meaning as, "though their plot was not such as that would move the mountains." This is how Ibn `Abbas, Hasan and Mujahid understood this passage (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi relates it with the past and the present: "... the nations of the past resorted to all sorts of contriving to evade the consequences of having denied God's laws and to defeating the mission of God's Messengers. But it is well known that just one move from God checkmated them.

The translation here however, follows the understanding of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, `Ali, `Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Ubayy b. Ka'b and others as reported in Ibn Kathir. In fact, according to them "in kana" is actually "in kada" which supports the meaning as we have adopted.

Some of the Salaf have said that the reference is to the story of a former

[47] Never imagine that Allah will fail in His promise to His Messengers. Surely, Allah is All-mighty, Lord of Retribution.⁸⁸

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهِ رُسُلَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] The Day when the earth will be replaced by another earth,⁸⁹ and the heavens (as well).⁹⁰ And they will sally forth unto Allah, the One, the Subduer.

يَوْمَ تَبْدُلُ الْأَرْضَ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ وَبَرُّوْا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٨﴾

king who used hawks to lift him off the ground and fly for a while in the air. That almost shook the mountains. But, since such a feat is impossible to achieve, we have dropped it (Au.).

Ibn Mas`ud, Dahhak and Qatadah have said that the purport of the verse is the same as another which said (19: 90), "And they said, 'Allah has taken a son.' Surely, you have come up with an atrocious thing."

88. Majid comments: "The God of Islam is not an abstraction, an impersonal and inert something. He is a living Personality, Just, Awful, Awarder of punishment to the guilty."

89. Ibn Mas`ud, Anas b. Malik, Mujahid and others have said that the new earth will be white, smooth, as if made of silver, on which no blood would have been shed and no sin committed. (This however is not a *hadith*. A *hadith* says some-

thing slightly different: Au.). The Prophet (*saws*) said, "On the day of Judgment, mankind will be gathered together on a white flat earth, like the wheat bread." (The version in the *sahihayn* ends with words, "with no recognizable features of any sort": Ibn Kathir). However, there have been other opinions too. And a *hadith* reported by `A'isha says that she asked the Prophet, "When the earth is replaced by another, where will the people be?" He answered, "On the Bridge laid over Hell-fire" (Ibn Jarir). The report is in Bukhari. And, according to other reports, "when the earth will be stretched flat, with no ups and downs; then a cry will awaken men and there they will be, on the new earth" (Ibn Kathir).

In this context another *hadith* could be quoted here. It is in Muslim reported by Thawban, the freed slave of the Prophet. He said,

كُنْتُ قَائِمًا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- فَبَجَاءَ خَبْرٍ مِنْ أَخْبَارِ الْيَهُودِ فَقَالَ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا

مُحَمَّدٌ. فَدَفَعْتُهُ دَفْعَةً كَادَ يُصْرَعُ مِنْهَا فَقَالَ لِمَ تَدْفَعُنِي
 فَمُتُّ أَلَا تَقُولُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. فَقَالَ الْيَهُودِيُّ إِنَّمَا
 نَدَعُوهُ بِاسْمِهِ الَّذِي سَمَّاهُ بِهِ أَهْلُهُ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
 -صلى الله عليه وسلم- «إِنَّ اسْمِي مُحَمَّدٌ الَّذِي سَمَّانِي
 بِهِ أَهْلِي». فَقَالَ الْيَهُودِيُّ جِئْتُ أَسْأَلُكَ. فَقَالَ لَهُ
 رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- «أَيَقْنَعُكَ شَيْءٌ
 إِنْ حَدَّثْتُكَ». قَالَ أَسْمَعُ بِأُذُنِي فَكَتَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
 -صلى الله عليه وسلم- بِعُودٍ مَعَهُ. فَقَالَ «سَلْ». فَقَالَ
 الْيَهُودِيُّ أَيَنْ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ يَوْمَ تَبْدُلُ الْأَرْضُ
 غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله
 عليه وسلم- «هُمُ فِي الظَّلْمَةِ دُونَ الْجِسْرِ». قَالَ
 فَمَنْ أَوَّلُ النَّاسِ إِجَارَةٌ قَالَ «فَقَرَاءَةُ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ». قَالَ
 الْيَهُودِيُّ فَمَا تُحَفِّثُهُمْ حِينَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ «
 زِيَادَةُ كَبِدِ التُّونِ» قَالَ فَمَا غِذَائُهُمْ عَلَى إِثْرِهَا قَالَ
 «يُنْحَرُ لَهُمْ ثَوْرُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّذِي كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا.
 قَالَ فَمَا شَرَابُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ «مِنْ عَيْنٍ فِيهَا تُسَمَّى
 سَلْسَبِيلًا». قَالَ صَدَقْتَ. قَالَ وَجِئْتُ أَسْأَلُكَ عَنْ
 شَيْءٍ لَا يَعْلَمُهُ أَحَدٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا نَبِيٌّ أَوْ رَجُلٌ
 أَوْ رَجُلَانِ. قَالَ «يَقْنَعُكَ إِنْ حَدَّثْتُكَ». قَالَ أَسْمَعُ
 بِأُذُنِي.

قَالَ جِئْتُ أَسْأَلُكَ عَنِ الْوَلَدِ قَالَ «مَاءُ الرَّجُلِ أبيضُ
 وَمَاءُ الْمَرْأَةِ أَصْفَرُ فَإِذَا اجْتَمَعَا فَعَلَا مِثْلُ الرَّجُلِ مِثْلِي
 الْمَرْأَةُ أَكْثَرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَإِذَا عَلَا مِثْلِي الْمَرْأَةُ مِثْلِي الرَّجُلِ
 آتَتْهَا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ». قَالَ الْيَهُودِيُّ لَقَدْ صَدَقْتَ وَإِنَّكَ
 لَنَبِيٌّ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفَ فَذَهَبَ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله
 عليه وسلم- «لَقَدْ سَأَلَنِي هَذَا عَنِ الَّذِي سَأَلَنِي عَنْهُ
 وَمَا لِي عِلْمٌ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْهُ حَتَّى آتَانِي اللَّهُ بِهِ.

“I was standing with the Prophet when one of the Jewish rabbis came up. He said, ‘Peace be upon you, O Muhammad.’ I pushed the man so hard he almost fell down. He asked, ‘Why did you do that?’ I said, ‘Why did you not address

him as the Messenger of Allah?’ He said, ‘I addressed him by the name that his family gave him.’ The Prophet (*sams*) interrupted, ‘Indeed, the name as given to me by my family is Muhammad.’ The Jew said, ‘I have come to ask you a few things.’ The Prophet asked, ‘Will it be of any profit to you if I spoke to you?’ He replied, ‘I’ll hear it with my ears.’ (For a while) the Prophet scratched the ground with a stick he had in his hand and then said, ‘Ask.’ He asked, ‘Where will the people be when the earth will be changed for another?’ He replied, ‘They will be in a dark area a little away from the Bridge.’ He asked, ‘Who will be the first to cross it?’ He replied, ‘The poor Immigrants.’ He asked, ‘What will they be gifted with as they enter Paradise?’ He replied, ‘The appendage of fish liver.’ The Jew asked, ‘What will they eat therein?’ The Prophet replied, ‘A Paradise oxen that used to feed around it would be slaughtered for them.’ He asked, ‘What will they drink over it?’ He replied, ‘From a spring called Salsabila.’ The man remarked, ‘You spoke the truth.’ Then he said, ‘I have come to ask you something that no one has the true answer for except for a

[49] *And you will see the criminals that day, bound together in chains.*⁹¹

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقْرَّبِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] *Their garments from tar⁹² and their faces covered by the Fire.*

سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطَرَانٍ وَتَعَشَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمْ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] *That Allah may requite each soul for what it earned. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning.*

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾

Prophet, or one or two other persons.’ The Prophet asked, ‘Will it be of any profit to you if I gave the answer?’ He replied, ‘I will hear with my ears.’ Then he asked, ‘I have come to ask you about the child.’ The Prophet said, ‘A man’s liquid is white. That of the woman is yellowish. When they combine, then, if the man’s overcomes the woman’s, the child is a male by Allah’s leave. But if the woman’s overcomes that of man, the child is a female by Allah’s leave.’ The Jew said, ‘You spoke the truth, and you are indeed a Prophet.’ Then he went away. After he was gone, the Prophet said, ‘I had no answers to the questions the man asked until Allah provided these to me’ (Ibn Kathir).

It might be noted however, Shabir points out, that a study of other verses reveals that the earth and the heavens will undergo several changes before the Day of Judgment.

90. Asad writes: “This is an allusion to the total, cataclysmic change, on the Last Day, of all natural phenomena, and thus of the universe as known to man.. Since that change will be beyond anything that man has ever experienced or what the humans mind can conceive, all the Qur’anic descriptions - in the next two verses as well as in many other places - of what is to happen on that Last Day are, of necessity, expressed in allegorical terms.”

91. Two implications have been noticed: one, sinners will be bound with fetters, two, several of them will be bound together and, three, each of them will be bound to the accompanying devil (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir and others).

92. In classical times “*qatiran*” was liquid pitch (now made from tar and turpentine but in earlier times from herbs and oil) that the Arabs used for rubbing on camels as a treatment against parasites. Ibn ‘Abbas and

[52] This is a message for the mankind that they may be warned thereby, and they realize that He is indeed One God, and so that the men of understanding take heed.⁹³

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ وَيَعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ مَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَيَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ
﴿٥٢﴾

Qatadah have however interpreted “*qatiran*” as (liquid) brass. Some others have separated “*qatirun*” and “an” treating them as two words - where “*qatirun*” is brass and “an” (anything) heated to the highest degree, such as, e.g., in another usage of the word “an” (55: 44):

يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ آتِنِ [الرحمن : ٤٤]

“They shall move between it and between extremely hot water.”

(Ibn Jarir and others).

93. Sayyid has a long comment which we summarize here: “It should be obvious that it is not merely the knowledge (of Allah’s oneness) that has been meant here. The objective is the establishment of a life with this piece of fact as its basis. Allah has to be accepted as the true Lord: One who commands, who owns, who sustains, who is worth addressing prayers to, and who alone dictates the rules that are to be followed in life. A life which has this principle as the basis will be completely different from a life that is established on the basis of the lordship of some men

over others. The Islamic life covers every aspect and circumscribes every activity of the human life: faith, beliefs, ideologies, rituals of worship, everyday conduct, customs, practices, values, as well as political, economic and social principles. In short, this primary principle (of Allah’s Oneness) influences the entire life: of the individual as well as of the community and state.

“The idols that Ibrahim sought to save his offspring from worshipping, were not those simple figures or statuettes that were then fashionable: of stones, mud, wood; or deities imagined in trees, animals, fire, stars or ghostly spirits. The restriction of the term ‘idols’ to these simple figures and objects prevents us from realizing those forms of Association that are more subtle and that have no end in a listing. Such imbecile thinking prevents us from recognizing the new partners and new associates of Allah in today’s modern, dark age...

“Today, a person who relates himself to God in matters of faith and rituals,

and believes in Him as the law-Giver in matters pertaining to cleanliness, ablution, prayers, fasts, Hajj and other rituals of worship, while at the same time, he is bent in prostration to other than God in matters pertaining to values, conduct, customs, practices ... and everything else, is, in actual fact, opposed to the truth expressed in the testimony: there is no deity save Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger. He commits '*Shirk*' in an area of life that truly matters...

"Idols and images - those simple figures of the past - were no more than symbols. They symbolized a Satanic system hidden behind them, and were carved to enslave people and to assure that they would, with them as the facade, remain bonded to a system of life designed for them by the masters who sat behind the scenes.

"When it so happens that symbols and slogans of race, homeland, nation or class are handed down to a people, who devote themselves to worshipping them instead of Allah, sacrificing their lives, wealth, morals and even their honor in their way, spending their best energies for them, so that, whenever a clash occurs between these symbols and slogans on the one hand, and Allah's religion, His teachings, and laws on the other,

then the wishes of the symbols and slogans are carried out, or, to put it more precisely, the wishes of the rebellious devils concealing themselves behind them, are carried out - when that happens - then this in truth is the worship of idols other than Allah. It is not necessary that an idol should be in front of the devotee in a physical, material form. A way of life, symbols and slogans can also assume the position assumed by idols.

"Islam has not come merely to destroy the material and physical idols. It has come to destroy these abstract and intangible objects of worship also. Islam has come to separate and demarcate the path of worship of Allah, in all matters and affairs, as distinguished from the ways of life run on un-Islamic principles.

"Those who believe they are followers of the religion of Allah, simply because they utter the testimony of Allah's divinity and the Prophet's messengership, but restrict to follow His religion in matters of cleanliness, modes of worship, marriage and divorce, and a few rituals alone, while, apart from this little arena of private activity, devote themselves to other systems and follow other commands - those that Allah did not send - and spend their lives and energies,

whether willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, in devotion of these modern forms of paganism symbolized by new kinds of idols, such people, they are far away from the Islam of true definition.

“Religion is not the name of the mockery that is played on Islam by those of the east and west who think they are Muslims. Allah’s religion is a complete way of life, for everyday living, with guidance on every detail. This is the ‘Islam’ besides which no other religion is acceptable to Allah. They must also realize that ‘*shirk*’ is not realized through belief in deities other than Allah alone. Rather, it is also realized by acceptance of commands from other than Allah. And that construction of alters for deities of stones and wood and devotion to them is not the only way of demonstrating devotion to them. This can also be realized by agreeing to meet with the demands and requirements of the modern day symbols and slogans.

“Let the Muslims then, in every part of the world, consider as to for whom have they reserved the true place of honor ... for whom is their religion, in its entirety ... for whom is their submission and devotion? If all these things are for Allah, then they are on

the Religion of Allah. But if they be for other than Him, in part or whole, then they are on the religion of the rebels and the devils:

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ وَيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ
وَاحِدٌ وَلِيُنذَرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ [إبراهيم : ٥٢]

“This is a message for the mankind that they may be warned thereby, and they realize that He is indeed One God, and so that the men of understanding take heed.”

With statements of the above sort, to some Sayyid Qutb became someone in political struggle, desperate to get at the helms of power. To others he was being extreme. But today, the ills that he spoken of are the subjects of serious discussion among Western intellectual circles, except that they cannot relate themselves and their situation to the Qur’anic guidance. One may note in the following text the familiarity of thought. It is by a well-respected and well-meaning political analyst of the time Chris Hedges (Au.):

The ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes spent his life battling the assault on democracy by tyrants. It is disheartening to be reminded that he lost. But he understood that the hardest struggle for humankind is often stating and understanding the obvious. Aristophanes, who had the

temerity to portray the ruling Greek tyrant, Cleon, as a dog, is the perfect playwright to turn to in trying to grasp the danger posed to us by movements from the tea party to militias to the Christian right, as well as the bankrupt and corrupt power elite that no longer concerns itself with the needs of its citizens. He saw the same corruption 2,400 years ago. He feared correctly that it would extinguish Athenian democracy. And he struggled in vain to rouse Athenians from their slumber. ..

The huge amount of taxpayer money doled out to Wall Street, investment banks, the oil and natural gas industry and the defense industry, along with the dismantling of our manufacturing sector, is why we are impoverished. It is why our houses are being foreclosed on. It is why some 45 million Americans are denied medical care. It is why our infrastructure, from public schools to bridges, is rotting. It is why many of us cannot find jobs. We are being fleeced. The flagrant theft of public funds and rise of an obscenely rich oligarchic class is masked by the tough talk of demagogues, themselves millionaires, who use fear and bombast to keep us afraid, confused and enslaved.

Aristophanes saw the same psychological and political manipulation undermine the democratic state in ancient Athens. He repeatedly warned Athenians in plays such as "The Clouds," "The Wasps," "The Birds," "The Frogs" and "Lysistrata" that permitting political leaders who shout "I shall never betray the Athenian!" or "I shall keep up the fight in defense of the people forever!" to get their hands on state funds and power would end with the citizens enslaved.

"The truth is, they want you, you see, to be poor," Aristophanes wrote in his play "The Wasps." "If you don't know the reason, I'll tell you. It's to train you to know who your tamer is. Then, whenever he gives you a whistle and sets you against an opponent of his, you jump out and tear them to pieces." ...

All ideological, theological and political debates with the representatives of the corporate state, including the feckless and weak (leader), are useless. They cannot be reached. They do not want a dialogue. They care nothing for real reform or participatory democracy. They use the tricks and mirages of public relations to mask a steadily growing assault on our civil liberties, our inability to

make a living and the loss of basic services from education to health care. Our gutless liberal class placates the enemies of democracy, hoping desperately to remain part of the ruling elite, rather than resist. And, in many ways, liberals, because they serve as a cover for these corporate

extremists, are our greatest traitors (<http://www.informationclearing-house>).

(The word 'leader' in parenthesis is our placement in place of a president's name, in order to remove the impression that any individual is the target of criticism: Au.). ﷻ





Surah 15

Al-Hijr

Makkan¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Ra. These are verses of a Book²
and a clear Recitation.

الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَقُرْآنٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾

[2] Much³ will those who disbelieved wish
(one day) they were Muslims⁴

رُبَّمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

1. Except for a few verses, over whose identity there is no agreement, the whole chapter is Makkan (Alusi).

2. That is, these are magnificent, noble verses of a Book which alone, because of its qualities, deserves to be referred to as “the Book (worth its name)” - Shabbir.

3. The word “*rubba*” is used with various conjunctions to yield a variety of meanings. The linguists agree that although at this point the meaning is of “sometimes” or “a few times”, the hidden implication is “quite often” or, as we have rendered, “much” (Razi). Qurtubi says the word is used in both the senses, although less in the sense of “quite often.”

4. According to Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Abu Musa and others, this will happen when, condemned to the Fire, sinning Muslims and unbelievers alike, will be in Hell and the unbelievers will taunt the Muslims: ‘So it doesn’t look like your faith in Allah did you any good to you,’ until Allah will be provoked to anger. He will allow the intercessors to intercede for the unbelievers and they will begin to leave one after another. When the last of them is gone, the lid will be finally laid over the Hellfire and sealed. It is then that the unbelievers will say, “O that we were believers” (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir).

According to one report in Ibn Marduwayh and Tabarani, and of

[3] Leave them alone: eating and enjoying themselves,⁵ hope distracting them.⁶ But soon they will know.⁷

ذَرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِيهِمُ الْأَمَلُ
فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

trustworthy chain of narration, the Prophet (*saws*) recited this verse after making the above statement (Alusi).

Dahhak and Qatadah said that such wishes will be expressed from the time angels appear before the unbeliever at death, and at every stage thereafter (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi).

There are in fact at least four *ahadith* that explain this verse in this way (although all are not very trustworthy, but one strengthening the other: Au.). According to one of them the sinning believers will stay in Hell for varying lengths of time in accordance with the seriousness of their sins, some a day, others a year, and some others for as long as the age of the universe, from the day of its creation to the day of destruction (Ibn Kathir).

Majid comments: "In a minor degree one finds a similar feeling experienced in this very world. 'Renan said that he never entered a mosque without a lively emotion, or even without a certain regret at not being a Muslim' (Arnold, Islamic Faith, p. 29)."

5. This is Allah's mercy and justice. If the unbelievers use their faculty of reasoning to choose to deny some hard facts of life and death, and devote themselves madly to building this world, then, why should they be denied the fruits of their works? (Au.)

Razi writes: The verse should lead us to believe that overwhelming indulgence in worldly affairs should be avoided by an intelligent Muslim.

6. The Prophet has said,

نجا أول هذه الامة باليقين والزهد ويهلك آخرها
بالبخل والامل

"The first generation Muslims succeeded by faith and renunciation, and the last of them will be destroyed by parsimony and vain hopes."

The above *hadith* is from *Jami' al-Sagheer* and is *sahih* (Au.).

He also said,

أَرْبَعَةٌ مِنَ الشَّقَاءِ : جمود العين ، وقساوة القلب ،
وطول الأمل ، والحرص على الدنيا

"Four things are a sign of bad luck: inability to cry, hardness of

[4] We did not destroy a people but they had a known decree.⁸

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْنَةٍ إِلَّا وَهِيَ كِتَابٌ
مَعْلُومٌ ﴿٤﴾

[5] No nation outstrips its term nor postpones it.⁹

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ
﴿٥﴾

the heart, vain hopes and greed of this world” (Qurtubi). The *hadith* is in Bazzar, reported by Anas (Shafi’).

According to Haythami, one of the narrators of the above *hadith* was not trustworthy (Au.).

7. It is worth quoting here Yusuf Ali’s soothing words: “The foolish and the wicked set great store by the pleasures of this world. In their pride they think they have all knowledge. In the fullness of knowledge they will see how wrong they were. Meanwhile those who have received the Light should not for a single moment wonder at the apparent prosperity of the ungodly in this world. They should leave them alone, confident in the goodness and justice of Allah.”

8. The unbelievers usually taunt the believers: ‘If we are wrong, why do we prosper? Why are we not destroyed?’ The answer is in this verse: “We did not destroy a people but they had a known decree.” There

is a time for prosperity and there is a term for destruction (Au., with a point from Thanwi).

9. Asad comments: “I.e., every community - and, in the widest sense of this term, every civilization - has a God-willed, organic span of life resembling in this respect all other living organisms, destined to grow, to reach maturity and ultimately to decay.”

Yusuf Ali has a more detailed note. He writes, “There are many shades of meaning implied. (1) For every people, as for every individual, there is a definite Term assigned: their faculty of choice gives them the opportunity of moulding their will according to Allah’s Will, and thus identifying themselves with Allah’s Universal Law. During that Term they will be given plenty of rope; after that Term is past, there will be no opportunity for repentance. (2) Neither the righteous nor the ungodly can hasten or delay the doom: Allah’s will must prevail, and he is All-Wise. (3) The destruction of a people is not an ar-

[6] They say, 'O ye, to whom the Reminder has been revealed, surely, you are mad.'¹⁰

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ
لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٦﴾

[7] Why do you not bring angels to us, if you be of the truthful?'

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧﴾

bitrary punishment from Allah: the people bring it upon themselves by their own choice; for the fixed Law or Decree of Allah is always made known to them beforehand, and in many ways.”

10. There can be two implications. Either, they took the physical effects of Revelation coming down upon the Prophet, when it appeared to them as if he was in a trance, as signs of madness; or, they thought it impossible that anyone in the world should receive revelations from Allah, and so, to explain the phenomenon, they had to say that he was possessed, which is another meaning of the textual word “*majnun*” (Razi).

Yusuf Ali sheds light on another aspect: “Al-Mustafa was accused by the ungodly of being mad or possessed, because he spoke of higher things than they knew, and acted from motives purer and nobler than they could understand. So, in a minor

degree, is the lot of all the righteous in the presence of an ungodly world. Their motives, actions, words, hopes, and aspirations are unintelligible to their fellows, and they are accused of being mad or out of their senses. But they know that they are on the right path, and it is the ungodly who are really acting against their own best interests.”

Alusi has another implication of the verse to offer: Another plausible meaning of the verse is that one may not deny the validity or authenticity of esoteric knowledge or “states” that the *Sufiya* claim or evince, a denial in the manner of those ignorant Muslims who attribute some of their actions or words to madness. However, in our mind are the true masters, learned *Sufis*, who closely follow the *Shari`ah*, and not the pseudo-*Sufis*, friends of the devil, teeming in today’s world, compared to whom the corrupt and atheistic Muslims are Islamically less sinful.

[8] (But) We do not send down angels except in truth.¹¹ And then, they would not be given respite.

مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا
إِذَا مُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Indeed, it is We who have revealed the Reminder, and it is indeed We who will be its Guardian.¹²

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ
﴿٩﴾

11. That is, angels are not sent down but for a true purpose: either with a message to a Prophet, or with the command to destroy a nation (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

12. The first part of the verse makes a claim: "We have revealed this Reminder." The second part offers a proof: "We shall be its Guardian" (Thanwi).

And the meaning of the second half is: We shall prevent any distortion, addition, deletion or the loss of the revelational text of the Qur'an - a promise that has given the Qur'an the unique position of being the only revelation around that has escaped corruption at man's hand (Au.).

Shabbir adds: Just think about it. A ten-year old Indian boy, who cannot memorize a few pages in his own language, memorizes the whole of the lengthy Arabic Qur'an, interspersed in hundreds of places with similar words, phrases and sentences, and then recites like a machine, without a break, and, in fact, who will offer

correction to an elderly renowned scholar, if he quotes the Qur'an wrong, and not only he, but, several voices intolerant of even a minor error will impatiently correct his error in an assembly! Is this not a manifestation of Allah's promise that He will guard this Revelation?

This writer once had the occasion to test a young Indian lad, about ten year old, who had memorized the Qur'an. I tested the boy by asking him to start reciting from where I asked, and, to my amazement, the boy would start off from wherever I would ask: a feat only those are capable of, who have devoted the best years of their lives to mastering the Qur'an.

Sayyid has a few points here: "Times came upon the Qur'an when there were many factions, divisions, disagreements and uprisings. Every group sought support from the Qur'an and prophetic sayings. The uprisings were supported by the ever trouble-creating Jews and pushed along by

the so-called 'people's' movements. These divisive groups were able to introduce into the *hadith* literature material which they could argue their points with: a pollution that took the scholars decades to weed out. The factions also tried to give new meanings to Qur'anic verses.

"Then came upon the Muslims a time, through which we are now passing, when they weakened in the defense of their religion, their faith, and their system of life. In fact they became too weak to be able to defend their lands, their wealth, their morals and values. They could not even defend their minds and intellect. Their enemies overcame them and changed every good thing to evil. Beliefs, ideologies, values of life, morals, conduct, systems, laws - just about everything underwent changes. In fact, their enemies beautified for them their downfall and pushed them to a life little better than those of animals, making them accept every mean thing in the name of 'advancement', 'improvement', 'secularism', 'enlightenment', 'scientific and technological development', 'forward march', 'freedom', 'removal of the chains', 'revolution' ... and the rest of the balderdash. The Muslims were transformed into Muslims in

name alone, with nothing of the religion of Islam remaining with them as their share, converted to scum which is good for nothing except that it could be used as fuel for the fire, yet, fuel of little worth.

"Their enemies, spearheaded by the Jews, a people with their four thousand years of experience of corrupting the nations, laid for them many traps and were able to execute several plans. They were able to give new meanings to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, new interpretations to the events of their history, even inventing events that never took place, and planting among them individuals from outside, managing to give them new set of heroes who could destroy the Muslims and their religion from within.

"Over the centuries, the enemies of Islam achieved all these things. But, although the Muslims lost the power to defend the Qur'an, even abandoned it, casting it behind their backs as if it did not exist, yet, one thing the enemies of Islam could not accomplish was to corrupt the Holy Book or introduce a single verse into it. This is the manifestation and fulfillment of the promise, 'Indeed, We have revealed the Qur'an, and We shall be its Guardian.'"

Majid compares: “The *Bible* in particular makes no such claims ... The *Bible* is the work of a large number of poets, prophets, statesmen, and lawgivers, extending over a vast period of time and incorporates within itself other and earlier, and often conflicting documents” (Bosworth Smith, p. 19).

To the above we might add the following from the Church-approved, St. Jerome Biblical Commentary, produced by some fifty highly qualified scholars selected from Catholic, Protestant and other denominations: “Although God is the author of the Sacred Scripture, it is also true that human beings made their own genuine contribution to the production of the sacred books - a point firmly stated by Pius XII in *Divine Afflante Spiritu* (EB 556), when he remarked that the human writers employ their faculties and powers in the composition of Scripture.”

A little below: “That a human factor stands at the origin of Scripture has never been doubted.”

Further down again: “The real creativity of the human writers is also suggested in the few scenes that the *Bible* provides showing the sacred writers at work on their documents.

Thus in the Foreword to Sir (Sirach) the writer states that he developed pains and labor to the composition of his book and begs indulgence for any imperfections that may exist in the finished work... (Similarly), In the NT (New Testament) Luke (I: 14-16) writes of the personal research that he has incorporated into the composition of his Gospel.”

A little further down: “Hence in contemporary Catholic thought great stress is placed on the *Bible* as truly the word of God expressed in words that are truly the product of human minds, as though two ‘artists’ composed the book of Scripture: God and man.” (St. Jerome Biblical Commentary, Prentice-Hall inc., Ind. publication, 1980, Vol. II, pp. 503, 504) – Au.

And, with reference to the last paragraph above, may we point out that the “contemporary”, “great stress” on *Bible* as “(in part a) product of human minds” coincided with the manufacture of printing presses and publication of the *Bible*, which allowed common Christians to read the scripture themselves, until then banned by the Church. Maybe there is a connection between the “open admission” by the Church (after the

lapse of several centuries), and the Christian laity beginning to read the *Bible* themselves (Au.).

What about the Jewish Scriptures? The Jewish religion has two foundation principles: Yahweh is the racial god of the Jews, and Palestine is the land promised to them. Nothing else matters for them. And these principles are laid down in the *Torah*. But how trustworthy is the *Torah*, which portrays a Prophet as getting excessively drunk and lying naked (Genesis, 9: 20) another as having intercourse with his daughters (Gen., 20: 30-38), and a third as indulging in idol-worship (1Kings, 11: 1-8)? What do the Jews themselves think about this Holy Scripture? Let us hear a Jew. Max I. Dimont, the well known Jewish scholar of the modern times who writes in his famous work, *Jews, God and History*: "The final fusion of the first five books of Moses, called Pentateuch, (the *Torah*: au.), occurred around 450 B.C. - in other words, eight to sixteen hundred years after some of the events narrated in them took place."

The same author, who idolizes the Jews in his works, writes: "Biblical scholars have conjectured that the Old Testament is composed of four

narratives, the 'J,' 'E,' 'JE,' and 'P' documents woven in one. The 'J' documents are so named because in them God is always referred to as 'Jehovah.' They are the oldest, written around the ninth century B.C. in the southern kingdom of Judah. The 'E' documents, so called because in them God is referred to as 'Elohim,' were written a hundred years after the 'J' documents in the eighth century in the northern kingdom of Israel. Scholars assume the 'P,' or 'Priestly,' documents were composed some two hundred years or so after the 'E,' about 600 B.C. In the fifth century, Jewish priests combined portions of the 'J' and 'E' documents, adding a little handiwork of their own (known as pious fraud), which are referred to as 'JE' documents, since God in these passages is referred to as 'Jehovah Elohim' (translated as 'Lord God.') - *Jews, God and History*, Signet classic pub., 1962, p. 40. The words in brackets are Dimont's (Au.).

A question arises about the Qur'ān. 'Why did the Companions compile it, after the promise that it will be guarded?' The answer is, their compilation was one of the means that Allah (*swt*) adopted for guarding it (Razi).

That the Qur'ān has been preserved as it was revealed is widely accepted in scholarly circles. Majid produces the testimony of, (in his words), “a few such unwilling witnesses”:

(i) ‘The text of the Qur'ān is the purest of all the works of a like antiquity’ (Wherry, *Commentary on the Qur'ān*, I., p. 349).

(ii) ‘Othman’s recension has remained the authorized text ... from the time it was made until the present day’ (Palmer, ‘*The Qur'ān*’, Intro. P. LIX).

(iii) ‘The text of this recension substantially corresponds to the actual utterances of Muhammad himself’ (Arnold, *Islamic Faith*, p. 9).

(iv) ‘All sects and parties have the same text of the Qur'ān’ (Hurgronje, *Mohammadenism*, p. 18).

(v) ‘It is an immense merit in the Qur'ān that there is no doubt as to its genuineness ... That very word we can now read with full confidence that it has remained unchanged through nearly thirteen hundred years’ (Lane-Pool, *SLK*, Intro. P. C).

(vi) ‘The recension of ‘Othman has been handed down to us unaltered ... There is probably in the world no other work which has remained

twelve centuries with so pure a text’ (Muir, op. cit. Intro. pp. xxii).

(vii) ‘In the Qur'ān we have, beyond reasonable doubt, the exact words of Mohammad without subtraction and without addition’ (Bosworth Smith, op. cit. p. 22).

(viii) ‘The *Koran* ... lies before us practically unchanged from the form which he himself (Muhammad) gave it’ (Torrey, *Jewish Foundations of Islam*, p. 2).

(ix) “Modern critics agree that the copies current today are almost exact replicas of the original mother-text as compiled by Zayd (some ten years after the Prophet at the time of the third caliph ‘Uthman: Au.), and that, on the whole, the text of the *Koran* today is as Muhammad produced it.” (Hitti, op. cit. p. 123).

To the above, this author might add the following quotes:

“Apart from certain orthographical modifications of the originally somewhat primitive method of writing, intended to render unambiguous and easy the task of reading and recitation, the *Koran* as printed in the twentieth century is identical with the *Koran* as authorized by ‘Uthman more than 1300 years ago” (A.J. Ara-

berry, *The Koran Interpreted*, Foreword).

“The *Koranic* revelation followed each other at brief intervals and were at first committed to memory... During Mohammad’s life-time verses were written on palm-leaves, stones, and any material that came to hand. Their collection was completed during the caliphate of Omar, the second caliph, and an authorized version was established during the caliphate of Othman, his successor (644-56 A.D.). To this day this version remains as the authoritative word of God” (*The Koran*, translated with notes by N.J. Dawood [a Jew], Foreword, Penguin Publications, 1976).

Qurtubi narrates the following anecdote: The following was read in the presence of the famous *Shaikha*, the learned, pride of womenfolk, Shahda the daughter of Abu Nasr, in her own house. Yahya b. Ukthum said, “Once when Ma’mun was conducting his court, a smart looking, well-dressed Jew came in. He spoke in a well-polished language. As he was leaving, Ma’mun (d. 218 A.H.) asked him, ‘Are you a Jew?’ He said yes. Ma’mun suggested that he embrace Islam and he would offer him such and such things (or posts) as

gifts. The man said, ‘I think I will hold on to my religion.’ Then he left. It should so happen that the man re-appeared in the court after a year - this time as a Muslim. When he was about to leave Ma’mun asked him, ‘Are you not the one who was here last year?’ He said, ‘Yes, indeed.’ Ma’mun asked him what made him embrace Islam. He said, ‘After I left you, I said to myself, “Let me check on these three religions.” So, I prepared three copies of the *Torah*, adding and deleting verses of my own. After that I went around and offered them to the Synagogues. They bought them with no complaints. Next I did the same thing with the New Testament and sold the copies to the Church authorities. They too purchased without a comment. Finally, I did the same thing with the Qur’ān and offered for sale to Muslim (book sellers). They examined them at length and then threw them away, refusing to buy, saying that the Book had been altered. That led me to believe that the Qur’ān is a revealed text that has been well preserved.”

When Sufyan b. ‘Uyayna learned of the story, he remarked: The safeguarding of the earlier scriptures was left to the humans (but they corrupted them) so Allah took it upon Him-

self to guard the Final revelation. When asked how he could prove the statement that previous nations were charged to safeguard their revelations, he quoted the verse (5: 44):

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ
الَّذِينَ اسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّيْبَانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَابُ
بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ
[المائدة : ٤٤]

“Surely, We sent down the Tawrah wherein was guidance and a Light. The Prophets who had surrendered themselves gave judgment thereby for those of the Jewry (who believed in it), as did the godly men and the scholars, following what of Allah’s Book they were charged to preserve - and they were witnesses to it...”

It might be explained with reference to the above story that Ma’mun was the first Caliph in Islam who set up academies of study and translation. He collected together thousands of scholars in Baghdad and conducted special sessions, presided by himself. Any learned man could participate in those sessions. (See Shibli’s Urdu work Al-Ma’mun). Further, in those days books were hand-written. Copyists produced them, often on demand, but, pressed by economic needs, would do it on their own too. They then offered their pro-

duce to the booksellers. The bookseller would normally ask the man to leave his work for evaluation. The book was examined for its content, oftentimes compared with previous copies, either in stock, or in the personal library of a scholar, and then, depending on the ink, paper, style of writing, size of the work, etc., a price was offered. Many of the booksellers employed editors who checked the texts for accuracy (Au.).

Shafi` adds: It must be understood that what we know as “the Qur’ān” is the name of two elements: the words and the meaning. Neither the words are the Qur’ān, nor the meanings are the Qur’ān; but rather, when both are brought together. For example, if somebody pieces together a few disparate phrases taken from the Qur’ān, patching them up with his own words in between, it does not become “the Qur’ān” because of the foreign words. Many religious books have passages of this sort. Similarly, merely expression of the meaning does not make a piece of writing the Qur’ān. For example, a translation of the Qur’ān is not the Qur’ān since no translation can express the true meaning of the Qur’ān, and that is how it should be referred to, i.e., meaning of the Qur’ān, and not the Qur’ān.

[10] We sent (Messengers) before you (O Muhammad) among the factions¹³ of the past.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي شِيَعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ



Further, it is agreed by the scholars, that the Qur'an should not be quoted in meaning, sense, substance, or with the addition of the words, "to this effect." Rather, the original words themselves should be quoted, even in conversations, or not at all. At best, if one cannot recall the actual words, he might say, "I think there is something about the topic at hand in the Qur'an" (Au.).

13. "The term 'Shi'ah' denotes a distinct group of people having in common the same persuasion or adhering to the same principles of behaviour, and is sometimes (though not here) used in the sense of 'sect'" (Asad).

Yusuf Ali offers another, more subtle, understanding in words that the modern day Muslim preachers could place on their desks in bold letters, as should also the non-believing thinkers, philosophers, social workers and all those to whom this life is a baffling assembly of unconnected truths: "Mankind sees fragments of Truth at a time, and is apt to fall into fragments and divisions. All true messengers of Allah come to reconcile these fragments or divisions, for they preach the true Gospels of

Unity."

In other words, Prophet Muhammad offered an organized whole that integrates the parts that mankind see on their own, but are not able to make much of, not knowing their place in a workable system. Nor do they know their quantitative values, or results of their interactions: factors without which the data cannot be used for constructing a harmonized working system. The following illustration might help. A well-designed, efficient system runs a large manufacturing industry. An outsider sees a few cards, stationary, charts & graphs, and observes some people at work in various departments. He appreciates the functional beauty of the charts & data, and the efficiency of the men. But, does he understand the system that brings the end-product neatly packed at one end, after the raw material was fed at another? Can he ever formulate the system with the help of those cards, stationary and charts alone? Or, from observation of men at work? Modern man has a million pieces of fragmented truths that he presumes he can assemble to yield a meaningful

[11] But no Messenger went to them but they made fun of him.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] That is how we make a way for it in the hearts of the criminals.¹⁴

كَذَلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] They do not believe in it; and the ways of the past peoples have already been.

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] If we opened a door for them in the heaven, and they spent the day¹⁵ climbing through it,

وَأَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا مِّن السَّمَاءِ فَظَلُّوا فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] They would only say, 'Our eyes have been intoxicated. Nay, we are a people bewitched.'¹⁶

لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ أَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُورُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

shape. But time and again he fails. Beyond that, he thinks if he had all the bits and pieces of data, he could also come up with the same results as the Messenger of Allah produced. From the start he is doomed to fail. Reductionism (the principle that to understand something, it must be broken down into its component parts) is considered as a tool that can work this wonder. But reductionism might work very well in the physical world, and help in successfully unraveling physical laws. But it can never succeed in generating a system that can so govern life as to produce good individuals, and a peaceful world (Au.).

14. According to Hasan and others, the article "it" refers to disbelief, Association, etc., which Allah (*swt*)

lets creep into the hearts of a people when they have made up their minds to deny clear truths (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Jarir).

Razi however strongly feels that the reference by "it" is to the Qur'an which Allah runs through the hearts of the unbelievers, even though they do not wish to know anything about it, and even though they have no desire to accept its message.

15. "Zalla" of the original text has the sense of doing something during the day. Thanwi and Majid have taken note of this in their translations.

16. Ibn 'Abbas, Dahhak and Hasan have said that such is the adamancy of the unbelievers, that even if a door to heaven was opened, and they saw angels passing through them, in and

out, they would only say that either they were drunk or bewitched (Ibn Jarir). Another possible meaning is that if a door was opened and the unbelievers ascended to the heavens through it, they would still say ... (Zamakhshari, Razi).

Asad adds: "The confusing of revealed truths with illusory 'enchantment' or 'sorcery' is often pointed out in the Qur'an as characteristic of the attitude of a people who a priori refuse to accept the idea of revelation and, thus, of prophethood."

Yusuf Ali once again takes us to a higher plain of understanding. He writes "The spiritual kingdom is open to all to enter. But the entrance is not a mere matter of physical movement. It is a question of a total change of heart. Evil must cease to be evil, before it can see or enjoy Good. If we could suppose Evil, like Bottom the weaver, to be "translated" or in some way carried up to heaven, it would only think that the Truth was an illusion, and the reality was mere witchery. The taint is in its very nature, which must be purified and rendered fit for the reception of light, truth and bliss."

Sayyid relates the verse to the modern context: "This attitude is illustrated here as an example of the audacious

attitude of the deniers of all times. It is not specific to the past ages, nor is the product of a culture of a certain phase of human existence. It is the example of human responses when their natures are corrupted and vision is restricted; when they are cut off from the real world.

"In our times, this attitude can be seen among the atheists who deny Allah's existence and construct their lives on this denial and on the assumption that this world came into existence by itself, without the aid of an outside agency; that it is self-subsistent and self-supportive; it has ever been there, and will ever be there: without a Creator, without a Sustainer and without a meaningful end. The various social, economic and political systems created by them are based on these principles, although the fact is, signs that lead to opposite conclusions, are more numerous and much weightier than they would be if they could ascend to the heavens.

"To say that this world came into existence by itself along with all the numerous laws that help in its sustenance, as also the factors that produced life and sustain it, is an idea that human reason and the deep-rooted nature within him refuse to

[16] Indeed We have set constellations¹⁷ in the heaven, and have beautified it for the onlookers.

وَأَقْدَجَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا
لِلنَّاطِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] And We have guarded it from every accursed Satan.

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾

accept. Says a professor of a German university, ‘Several ideas have been offered to explain the origin of biological life; from viruses, to proteins, to several other theories have been suggested. To the common people these suggestions fill the huge gulf that divides the animate world from the inanimate. But the truth is that the gulf is not bridged by the least and the origin of life remains a great mystery which inexorably leads to the existence of an outside Power that created it.’ This person did not start off from a position of belief in God. His inquiry was simple and objective. He arrived at a truth at which anyone will arrive who starts with an unprejudiced mind.

“But those who begin from a position of denial of a Deity, oppose every logic and every reasoning. They have given a holiday to their capacity to see and acknowledge the truth whenever it becomes obvious. They are the blind ones the Qur’an referred to when it said (13: 19):

أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ

[الرعد : ١٩]

‘Is he who knows that what is revealed to you by your Lord is truth, equal to someone who is blind?’

“Obviously, if this happens to be the truth of the matter, then what respect can we have for the systems of thought and life that the deniers have developed? How trustworthy are their opinions and ideas about this world, the life in it, human history therein, etc.? It should be obvious that their ideas should be treated as no more than a confused package, prepared by blind men. It does not behoove a Muslim that he should accept the ideas about life and society as advanced by them, or, what would be more disastrous, build his life and society on ideas promoted by them.”

17. The textual word “*buruj*” (sing, burj) has been explained as stars by Mujahid and Qatadah (Ibn Jarir). But others of the *Salaf* have said that the allusion is to sun and moon orbits (Ibn Kathir). Many others explained

[18] Excepting such as one who steals a hearing, and is pursued by a bright fiery object.¹⁸

إِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاتَّبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

it as the twelve constellations which stood for twelve spheres of the zodiac (Razi and Alusi). On the other hand Taj al-`Arus offers the meaning as “great constellation.” Baghawi, Baydawi and (even) Ibn Kathir are with him (Asad).

Until the development of modern cosmology, the term “*buruj*” referred to groups of stars in various parts of the cosmos, some twelve of them.

18. Bukhari has a *hadith* explaining this verse. Reported by Abu Hurayrah it says, “When Allah decrees an affair in the heavens, angels flutter their wings at His Command. That makes a noise similar to the noise of (an iron) chain struck against a rock. When they are out of fright they ask, ‘What did your Lord say?’ Others reply, ‘He spoke the truth. He is the Most High, the Most Great.’ Those (of the Satans) who try to steal a hearing also try to hear. They pile themselves upon one another (rising to the heaven). A fiery flame is shot at the one on top. Sometimes it burns him, at others it misses him, and he is able to pass on the word to the one next, until the

news is brought down to the earth. There it is passed on to one of the soothsayers who add a hundred lies (and spreads it among the people); so that, when something comes true, it is said (by the people), ‘Did he not tell us that on such and such a day, such and such a thing will come to pass? It has come true and confirms the news we received from the heavens,’ (shortened) - Ibn Kathir.

The descending of Allah’s word of command, adds Shabbir, happens in stages, from heaven to heaven, downward. It is at the bottom-most heaven, the one closest to the earth, (in fact, according to one report in Bukhari, in the clouds), that the devils try to eavesdrop, in the fashion of secret agencies trying to eavesdrop on (electronic) messages exchanged by the humans.

To the question, “can anyone with the littlest intelligence, ever attempt to steal a hearing when he knows that he might get burned?” The answer is, can anyone with the littlest intelligence ever attempt to be high on drugs when he knows that it will burn out his body and mind? How

[19] And the earth - We have stretched it out wide,¹⁹ and placed thereon pegs²⁰ and caused to grow therein all kinds of things in due proportion.

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ
وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And We have placed therein the means of living for you, and for those for whom you are not the providers.²¹

وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ
بِرَازِقِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

do we explain the millions in our times who pay no heed? Or, can we explain people climbing high mountains, with fifty percent chance of losing their lives? Who can say what fun or pleasure the eavesdropping has for the Satans? Further, in common usage the textual word “shihab” is for (i) a bright flame, (ii) a bright burning piece of wood, and (iii) asteroids and meteorites. The allusion here is only to the first meaning, viz., “a bright flame.” Nor, should it be assumed that every bright flame visible in the constellation is the “shihab” of the Qur’ān. In fact, the “shihab” aimed at the Jinn might not be visible to us at all, just as the Jinn are not visible to us, although made of flame (Au.).

19. Although round, for all practical purposes the earth is stretched out flat for us human beings. However, Qatadah has said that Makkah is the “*umm al-qura*” (mother of all towns) starting from where the rest of the

earth was stretched (Alusi and others). The textual word of Qatadah’s usage “*dubhiyat*”, has the linguistic connotation of being “folded in” to a round shape. That is, with Makkah as the starting point, the rest of the earth was created in a round shape, stretched around it.

But there is the spiritual aspect. Every town is infested with *Shirk* barring Makkah which is kept free of it. If *Shirk* enters this town, it will be a sign of end of the world (Au.).

20. The textual “*rasiyat*” is literally pegs, and the reference is to mountains, with the clear allusion to the fact that the mountains are pitched into the surface of the earth, just as pegs (of a tent, for example). In fact, just as pegs are more inside the ground than out, greater part of the mountains are also, according to latest findings, inside the earth. For more details, see *Surah Al-Naba’*, note 4 of this work (Au.).

[21] And, there is not a thing but We have treasures thereof, but send it not except in a known measure.²²

وَإِنْ مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِلُهُ
إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٢١﴾

21. The second part of the verse could also mean, “We also provided you with those that you do not provide for; such as, your dependents. You think you provide them. But you do not. It is We who do” (Zamakshari and others).

Two notes of Yusuf Ali could be combined together: “And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they in their turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and vice versa. And this is a chain of gradation and inter-dependence... ‘We provide sustenance of every kind, physical, mental, spiritual, etc., for you. But We do more. We provide for everyone of Our creatures. And there are those of which mankind is not even cognizant. We provide for them also. There are those who may at first sight appear hostile to man, or whom man may consider hostile, such as wild and noxious animals. They are Our creatures, and We provide for them

also, as they are Our creatures. But there is due order and balance in the economy of Our universal Plan.”

22. As Allah (*swt*) said elsewhere (42: 27),

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ
يُنزِلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ [الشورى
: ٢٧]

“If Allah were to extend the provision (excessively) for His slaves, surely they would commit tyranny in the land. But rather He sends down in measures as He will” (Shawkani).

‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud said, “There is not any land that receives greater amount of rain than another, but Allah sends it down in known measures,” then he recited this verse, “And, there is not a thing but We have treasures of it, sending it not but in known measure.” The words in another version are, “No year it rains more than the previous year. But Allah spreads it around, sometimes in one region, and at others in other regions” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Also, Ibn ‘Abbas has said, in a report preserved by Ibn al-Mundhir

[22] And We send the winds, impregnating;²³ and then, send down water from the heaven, providing it to you for drink. And you are not its treasurers.

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَّاحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] And, surely, it is We who give life and deal death, and We are the Inheritors.²⁴

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْحَيُّي وَنُومِيتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] And, surely, to Us are known those who preceded you, and those who will follow.²⁵

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ
عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

and Ibn Abi Hatim, “Rains have not decreased since the time Allah sent them down for the first time, rather, sometimes it rains more in a place than in another” (Shawkani).

Scientifically correct, the above statement leaves one curious about the source of such knowledge in those antiquated times (Au.).

23. “*Lawaqih*” is the plural of “*laqih*” (from *laqaha*: to impregnate), since “*riyah*” is plural. One meaning is that the allusion is to such winds as are productive and fruitful, as against those that are unproductive (*‘aqim*), mentioned elsewhere in the Qur’ān. Another is that the word is in the sense of impregnator, or fertilizer. The winds impregnate both the clouds as well as trees. That is how ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud understood it. However, Ibn ‘Abbas, Dahhak and others thought that the allusion is to the seeding of the clouds (Zamkh-

shari, Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir adds: ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umary al-Laythi said, “Allah sends the winds. They sweep the earth in a thoroughgoing fashion. Then He sends them as stirrers that stir up clouds. Then He sends those winds that help in cloud formation. Then He sends the impregnators that impregnate (the cloud) and the trees.”

Once again, the description, a millennium and a half years old, comes so close to modern scientific description that it leaves us wondering about the source of knowledge. After all, those were days when followers of other religions thought that God had buckets of water that He threw down on the earth as rains (Au.).

24. A metaphorical usage meaning that He is the true Owner and Possessor to whom things return after His creations have used them (Au.).

[25] Surely, your Lord will gather them together. He is indeed All-wise, All-knowing.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] We created man from a clay²⁶ of (stinking) transmuted slime.²⁷

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَآءٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

25. That is, He knows those who have passed away as well as those who are yet in their father's loins (Ibn 'Abbas and others). However, in a second opinion, Ibn 'Abbas thought the immediate reference was to those who prayed in the last of the male rows in order to look at an extremely beautiful woman in the first row for women. There were others who prayed in the front row in order to avoid seeing her. In other words, there was an immediate reference, and a general meaning (of preceding and following nations), which fits into the context (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Kathir points out that the report about the beautiful woman is in Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah, but he is not comfortable with the chain of narrators, (although trusted by Ahmad and Abu Da'ud, but not so by Yahya b. Abi Ma'in), and, therefore, prefers the general meaning. In any case, writes Alusi, a rule of Qur'anic exposition says, 'the general meaning overrides the immediate reference.' Therefore, adds 'Uthmani, the allusion could as well be to both of

the above expressed interpretations, as well as to a third meaning, viz., 'those who overtake others in good deeds and those who lag behind.'

26. The textual word "*salsal*" is used for dried clay that has not been fired in the oven. When knocked, it emits sound. (After it is fired, it is known as "*fakhkhar*" - Zamakhshari).

Ibn 'Abbas has said that man was made from three elements: (i) an unadulterated sticking clay (*al-tin al-lazib*), (ii) the kind of clay from which pottery is made (*salsal*), and (iii) a mud which has some sludge in it (*hama' masnun*). Some others have said that "*salsal*" is a clay that stinks (Ibn Jarir).

27. "Hama" (sing.: *ham`atun*) of the textual "*hama'imasnun*" is for dark wet clay. "Masnun" has several connotations: (i) fetid, putrid, stinking, (ii) changed, altered, [or transmuted, as Asad put it], (iii) fashioned, patterned, shaped, etc. (Ibn Jarir); as well as (iv) smooth (Ibn Kathir).

In short, the process was something like this: to begin with, it was dust

(*turab*) composed of various elements. Then it was wetted. It became adhesive clay (tin). Then it was left to itself until it became (transmuted) putrid slime (*hama'i'masnun*). Finally, it was left to dry and it became "*salsal*" (Qurtubi).

Life:

Qur'anic verses are unambiguous about creation of man at Allah's Hand. A *hadith* says that when Allah (*swt*) blew the spirit into Adam (*asws*), the first thing that happened to him was that he sneezed. Thus, we are left in no doubt about the creation: he was human in the complete sense. But science has other theories. We propose to demonstrate here that those theories do not rest on any solid ground.

Firstly, science has not one, rather several theories about the origin of life. But, although every theory is supported with evidence, they all lack credibility because they do not explain the process fully. In addition, every theory raises a few questions for which there are no satisfactory answers. In any case, before looking into the question of the origin of life, we need to first determine what life is. Or, to be more specific, what according to the non-Muslim mind, life is? Encyclopedia Britannica

(Macropedia) states under the article on 'Life' that: "There is no generally accepted definition of life." Then it goes on to define it in five ways.

"Physiological: For many years a physiological definition of life was popular. Life was defined as any system capable of performing a number of such functions as eating, metabolizing, excreting, breathing, moving, growing, reproducing and being responsive to external stimuli. But many such properties are either present in machines that nobody is willing to call alive, or absent from organisms that everybody is willing to call alive."

"Metabolic: It describes a living object as an object with definite boundary, continually exchanging some of its materials with its surroundings, but without altering its general properties, at least over some period of time. But again there are exceptions. There are seeds and spores that remain, so far as is known, perfectly dormant and totally without metabolic activity at low temperatures for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years but that can revive perfectly well upon being subjected to more clement conditions."

"Biochemical: A biochemical or molecular biological definition see living

organisms as systems that contain reproductive hereditary information coded in nucleic acid molecules and that metabolize by controlling the rate of chemical reactions ... In many respects this is more satisfying .. (but) .. there are, even here, hints of counterexamples.”

“Genetic: A genetic definition of life would be: a system capable of evolution by natural selection.”

“Thermodynamic: (According to this), Living systems might be defined as localized regions where there is a continuous increase in disorder.”

The divergence in definitions should tell us something about the confusion. It stems from refusal to recognize the soul as the life-giving property. That results in the inability to differentiate between different kinds of lives: higher and lower, human and non-human. The recognition would have led them to a proper definition of life.

Mystery also surrounds the question regarding the origin of life. There is no satisfactory explanation as to how it arose. There are several hypotheses. To quote Britannica again:

1. The origin of life is a result of a supernatural event: that is, one permanently beyond the

descriptive powers of physics and chemistry.

2. Life - particularly the simple form - spontaneously and readily arises from nonliving matter in short periods of time, today as in the past.

3. Life is co-eternal with matter and has no beginning; life arrived on the Earth at the time of the origin of the earth or shortly thereafter.

4. Life arose on the early earth by a series of progressive chemical reactions requiring highly improbable chemical reactions. Such reactions may have been likely or may have required one or more highly improbable chemical events” (Encyclopedia Britannica, art.: ‘Life’).

In view of the failure to ascertain the origin of life, confusion prevails in every department of biological science. To be sure, there are many scientists who would rather avoid discussing the question altogether. Darwin too, showed his frustration, and tried to dismiss the question by saying: “It is mere rubbish thinking at present of the origin of life; one might as well think of the origin of matter.” This of course is a defeatist

attitude. The question will not go away by such means.

Attempts at explanation, therefore, go on. Some say that “life is written into the laws of nature.” That is, it is in the fitness of things that life should originate and evolve. Obviously, by the use of words “laws of nature,” the scientists avoid any reference to a Supernatural Being who originated it. They would rather have us believe: “nature did it.” And nature is nobody! It is not surprising, therefore, that a recent scientific work called “Our Place in the Cosmos,” (by Fred Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, Phoenix pub. 1996) has the first chapter entitled, “On the tendency of human societies to depart indefinitely from the objective of truth!”).

Nevertheless, since the question persists, there are a few fresh conjectures. In the words of a scientist: “It now appears that the first organisms lived deep underground, entombed within geothermally heated rocks in pressure-cooker conditions. Only later did they migrate to the surface. Astonishingly, descendants of these primordial microbes are still there, kilometers beneath our feet.” (Paul Davies, “*The 5th Miracle*”, Preface, Touchstone Books, 1999).

Yet others believe that life came from Mars. Examination of meteorites on the earth, presumably of Martian origin, has led to the discovery of traces of “remnants” of microbes (and not microbes themselves). Some scientists believe life evolved twice, once on the earth and a second time on planet Mars. But, the latter notion defeats the evolutionary theory, because, if life originated in Mars, why has it firmly refused to evolve into higher life forms? Some other scientists, therefore, pooh-poo the idea of life originating in Mars and landing on earth from there. Another suggestion is that it originated somewhere deep in space and must have been brought to earth by a comet!

Some scientists maintain that “life is a freak accident of chemistry, unique to earth, and that the subsequent emergence of complex organisms, including conscious beings, is likewise purely the chance outcome of a gigantic cosmic lottery.” (Davies, “*Our place in the Universe*,” preface). Obviously, the statement is of philosophical nature, rather than scientific.

The above demonstrates the confusion in which the scientists are about the central issue of what life is, and how it arose. Next is the question of

how man appeared on earth. This is because, those who could neither define life nor determine its origin assert, that it evolved from the simplest to develop into the complex, the chain ending with humans. In other words, and according to the evolutionary hypothesis, single celled animals gave rise to multiple celled animals, invertebrates to aquatic vertebrates, i.e. fishes, which evolved into amphibians, which gave rise to reptiles. Over a long period of time, some reptiles evolved into birds, while others evolved into mammals culminating in the appearance of man. The theory is simple, catchy and speciously logical. But is it true?

This of course is not the place to refute the theory. Volumes have been written to defend it and volumes have been written to refute it. (It is noticeable though, that the more that is written in favor of evolution, the weaker the theory gets). On our part, we shall adopt a simpler method to demonstrate that life could have neither emerged accidentally, nor is the theory of evolution a tenable one. For that, we present a few details to demonstrate how complex life is. Complexity rules out chance occurrence.

Humans are made up of limbs and

parts: hands, feet, heart, kidney, bones, etc. In the final analysis, the limbs and parts are made of specialized cells. The cells are a microscopic entity, invisible to the eye, made from some two dozen elements only, (although more than 100 exist in the natural state). A cell wall, thousands of inner machinery (known as organelles, which can also be referred to as different kinds of proteins), a nucleus containing the DNA molecule, (46 chromosomes that carry the genetic code), a nucleolus, (a nucleus within the nucleus, whose functions are not well-understood), are in short the constituents of every cell. The cell is covered with a cell wall (Plasma membrane), with pores through which, chemical gate-passes are required, for in and out flow of material.

Within the cell, commands are issued, material mobilized, manufacturing undertaken, quality tests carried out, and final products transported across to various parts of the cell. The movement of the material along the various pathways of a cell is analogous to the movement of trucks carrying different types of cargo along the various arteries of a city. But the difference is that the cell is sort of spherical and transport arteries run across in every direction

without getting entangled with one another: a miracle by itself. Several types of transports require definite traffic patterns to ensure that materials destined for different locations are accurately delivered to the appropriate sites. Great advances have been made in the study of these traffic patterns. Vesicles and their protein cargo are directed to their proper destination by specific targeting signals that are carried by the proteins themselves. To imagine the complication, one of the thousands of organelles of an invisible cell is mitochondria. Each organelle has different functions. Mitochondria convert chemical energy into power, and are likened to power houses. Now, there are some 1500 of mitochondria in every cell!

The DNA of every cell consists of 46 double helical strands. Each strand is studded with a tiny molecule called 'nucleotide base' that number, altogether, 3 billion. If all the DNA, of all the human cells were stretched out, the string will reach the moon and back 8,000 times. The DNA molecule has been estimated to have information content of around 1,000,000,000,000 (one thousand billion) bits, comparable to about hundred million pages of Encyclopedia Britannica. It is the blue print

of life and is contained in each and every one of the 100 trillion cells from which an average human body is made. These blue prints tell everything about a man: from the size of the body, to the color of the eyes, to the diseases he carries, to finally, by implication, even his likes and dislikes. (Some scientists are looking for a gene for intelligence, while others have found a "God Gene"!) It also has the message about where each of the hundred trillion cells will be located in a body. The cells can be likened to bricks of a vast, massively built sky-scraper city. Every brick of every building contains a blue print of the entire city, neatly folded and placed in the center of the brick, containing every little detail thinkable, so that, if the building collapsed, a single brick would be enough to rebuild the building, and if the city was destroyed, a single brick would be enough to re-create the information and re-build the city as it was before destruction.

But the similarity is incomplete. A cell has the amazing ability to absorb material, swell in size, and, in a couple of hours or days, split into two: with each of the daughter cells being exact replication of the mother cell, and each of the two daughter cells with the blue print for the whole

body within their nucleus! Millions of cells are made in the body each minute. Some take a few hours to be replaced, others a few days, while some longer. In about four months, most of the cells would have been replaced, and a man is, in chemical sense, a new person.

Thus, the cell is like a chemical industry, which, if humans were to attempt to imitate, would be spread over a few square kilometers. But, this industry of human imitation will not split into two, replicating all its inner components, functioning independently, doing everything that the mother industry was doing.

The DNA (the blue print) which is sited in the nucleus, is the most amazing part of the system. Operating from within its inner walls, a sort of dark room, well protected from any outside intruder, as no fort was ever protected, it sends commands, and issues virtual blue prints to manufacture various cellular components. It is capable of making thousands of different kinds of proteins, even the while it is busy replicating itself. More strangely, since duplication is a time consuming affair, the long DNA strand can, to cut on time, start duplicating itself at several places at the same time, while it

is also issuing commands for making proteins or other organelles.

These proteins require 1000-2000 different enzymes for their manufacture. Their structure is so unique, and the complication so great that the famous British scientist Hoyle has estimated that whereas the probability of the chance assembly of a single protein is one in 10160 over 1048 years, the probability of a thousand enzymes coming the right way to form one living cell has the staggering chance of one in 1040,000. Impossible is too weak a word to describe the above in terms of chance.

Proteins in turn are made of amino-acids. A biologist writes: "There is obviously an immense variety of possible amino-acids, but it is a startling fact that only some twenty are found in proteins..." (J.Z. Young, *An Introduction to the Study of Man*, Oxford, 1979, p. 31).

Finally, amino-acids themselves are made from natural elements, and a living body uses only 16 to 24 of the total of a large number available in nature. Young writes, "This is a very small selection, and certainly neither a random one nor one based upon the relative frequency of the elements outside the living world. Hydrogen, carbon, oxygen and nitrogen

are, it is true, among the commonest elements of the universe, but they are present on earth in proportions very different from those in living organisms” (Ibid, p. 21). The author then proceeds to show that those elements that are abundant on the earth are used sparingly by the living bodies, whereas those that are rare, have been used generously by living organisms, leading to the conclusion that there had been a choice. Chance could not have played a role in the selection.

What about the DNA? Could it have come into existence by itself?

The Encyclopedia Britannica states: “The number of possible ways of putting nucleotides together in a chromosome is enormous. The renowned geneticist H.J. Muller estimated that in a human chromosome there are about 4×10^9 base pairs. Each base pair position could be filled by any one of four possible bases; accordingly, the number of possible varieties of human chromosome is 44×10^9 , an inconceivably large number... Thus a human being is an extraordinary improbable object” (art., ‘Life’).

(Note: the last figure above is 4 to the power of 4 to the power of 10^9 , which the author’s computer is incapable of showing).

Yet, the scientists hang on to the belief that life came into being by itself, only once, some 4 billion years ago. They also assert that because of changed conditions, the feat cannot be repeated. That is, all present life being replication of previous life, new life can never come into existence. Attempts are being made to construct a short DNA strand and insert in a bacteria cell, in an operation called “Creation of Synthetic Life.” Since molecules carry hidden messages in them (in this case stolen from Nature, so to say), and since these molecules are assured the “body” of the bacteria (less its original DNA) in which it will grow, there is good chance of a new species of bacteria coming into existence. The scientists are not sure how this half real, half artificial bacterial will affect other living bodies. They are assuring anyhow, that this monster will not be allowed to escape the labs.

The confusion in which the scientists are, as a result of their intransigence and refusal to acknowledge facts of existence, is well reflected in the following from a leading evolutionist biologist who is talking about one of the most essential enzymes for life. He writes: “The probability of the formation of a Cytochrome-C sequence is as likely as zero. That is,

[27] And the Jinn - We created them earlier from a scorching fire.²⁸

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am to create a human being from a clay of (stinking) transmuted slime.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] When I have proportioned him and blown into Him of My Spirit,²⁹ fall into prostration before him.³⁰

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

if life requires a certain sequence, it can be said that this has a probability likely to be realized once in the whole universe. Otherwise, some metaphysical powers beyond our definition should have acted in its formation. To accept the latter is not appropriate to the goals of science. We therefore have to look into the first hypothesis.”

Obviously, it is hopeless to change the opinion of blind men fanatically clinging to fanciful ideas. The above details, much simplified and shortened for a general reader, are enough to demonstrate that to rule out a chance creation of life is scientifically the more accurate thing to do. As for the similarities visible in various biological organisms, they in fact, instead of leading to an evolutionary theory, tell us that the Creator used the same primary ideas for

His various creations: similar parts, limbs, cells and genetic codes, but different species, each according to the environment (Au.).

28. According to the *Salaf*, the textual “samum” is used for an extremely hot fire. Ibn ‘Abbas said that Iblis was originally a tribe of the larger angel-kind (Ibn Jarir).

29. The translation is literal. But the meaning is not. The words “My spirit,” is by way of honor, just as in this Qur’ān itself, “Allah’s House”, “Allah’s camel,” etc., or (*Nisa’*, 17), “And a spirit from Him” (Qurtubi, Shawkani). Asad explains: “God’s breathing of His spirit” into man is obviously a metaphor for His endowing him with life and consciousness: that is, with a soul.” There is no room, ‘Uthmani quotes from Imam Razi, to imagine “hulul wa itthihad (interfusion and unison).”

[31] Except Iblis.³¹ He refused that he should be with those who prostrate themselves.

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] He asked, 'What ails you, O Iblis, that you are not among those who prostrated themselves?'³²

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

The word “*ruh*” has also been used by the Qur’ān in the sense of “light of guidance”, as in verse 22 of *Surah Al-Mujadalah*. It says,

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَاتَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ [المجادلة : ٢٢]

“You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they are their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred. Those, He has inscribed faith upon their hearts, and has strengthened them with a Spirit from Himself” (Au.).

This being the first occurrence of the word “*ruh*”, Alsui discusses its nature over several pages, but without any substance. He picks up Munawi’s statement which is perhaps worth quoting here: Many individual scholars and schools of thought have

spent their goodly energies trying to resolve this issue. But no one has been able to say anything convincing. Of the thousand or so opinions concerning the nature of the soul, none is more trustworthy than another because every one of them is based on sheer conjecture.

30. A report in Muslims says,

لَمَّا صَوَّرَ اللَّهُ آدَمَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ تَرَكَهُ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَمْرُكَهُ فَجَعَلَ إِبْلِيسَ يُطِيفُ بِهِ يَنْظُرُ مَا هُوَ فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ أَجُوفَ عَرَفَ أَنَّهُ خَلْقٌ خَلَقًا لَا يَتَمَالَكُ

“When Allah had fashioned Adam in Paradise, He left him to himself for a while. Iblis circled around him several times trying to figure out what it is. When he found him hollow, he knew that this is a creation that will not be able to control itself (against desires) - Qurtubi.

31. “Iblis: the name has in it the root-idea of desperation or rebellion” (Yusuf Ali).

32. Either he was originally of the an-

[33] He replied, 'I am not one to prostrate myself unto a human You created from a clay of (stinking) transmuted slime.'³³

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] He ordered, 'Then get out of here, for you are accursed.'

قَالَ فَاحْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] And the curse will rest on you until the Day of Judgement.'³⁴

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] He pleaded, 'My Lord! Allow me respite until the Day they are resurrected.'

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] He replied, 'You shall be of those allowed respite.'

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] Until a known time.'³⁵

إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] He said, 'My Lord! For Your putting me into error,³⁶ I shall deck (sins)³⁷ fair unto them in the earth, and surely I shall put them all into error.'³⁸

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

gels, as some scholars have thought, or was included among those that were commanded, because Iblis lived among them (Kashshaf, Razi, Qurtubi and others).

33. His true reason was given in Al-A`raf, verse 12, where he said,

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ
[الأعراف : ١٢]

"I am better than he. You created me from Fire, while You created him from slime" (Shawkani).

34. Yusuf Ali comments: "The curse on Iblis remained, i.e., he was de-

prived of Allah's grace and became in the spiritual world what an outlaw is in a political kingdom."

35. Imam Razi thinks that when Iblis said, "Allow me respite until the Judgment-day", his intention was that he should not be allowed to die until then. And, if he did not die until then, he would not die at all, since no one is going to die after the Judgment-day. Therefore, Allah said that he is allowed respite until a known day. And that "known day" is, according to the prevalent opinion, the day when the Trumpet is blown for the first time.

[40] Excepting Your chosen servants among them.³⁹

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] He said, 'This is a path unto Me, straight.'⁴⁰

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] Surely, My own servants, you have no power over them except those who follow you of the deviators.⁴¹

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا
مَنْ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And indeed, Jahannum is the place promised: for them all.

وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

However, in view of the *ayah* 35, the curse will remain on him through the Day of Judgment also, that is, after death and resurrection too (Au.).

36. What Iblis meant is: 'Since You put me to the test, in which I failed, You are the cause of My error' (Zamakhshari).

Yusuf Ali adds: "Satan cannot be straight or truthful even before Allah. By his own arrogance and rebellion he fell; he attributes this to Allah."

37. The word in parenthesis is following the explanation as in Ibn Jarir.

38. "Iblis is powerless against Allah. He turns therefore against man" (Yusuf Ali).

"Thus, the Qur'an makes it clear that despite his ostensible 'rebellion'

against his Creator, Satan fulfils a definite function in God's plan: he is the eternal tempter who enables man to exercise his God-given freedom of choice between good and evil and, thus, to become a being endowed with moral free will" (Asad).

39. Dahhak has said that the allusion by the words "the chosen servants" is to the faithful (Ibn Jarir).

40. The translation herewith follows the understanding of Mujahid, Hasan and others as recorded by Ibn Jarir.

41. What the verse means is that Allah does not allow His chosen slaves (those who chose Him over Satan: Au.), to be wholly captured by Satan and His prompting. An error here, an error there, is not ruled out, as in the case of Adam and many others (Qurtubi, Ma'arif).

[44] It has seven gates.⁴² For each of the gates is a class of them assigned.⁴³

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Surely, the godfearing shall be amidst gardens⁴⁴ and spring.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] 'Enter here in peace, secure.'

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Asad adds: “.. Satan will thus address his erstwhile followers on Judgment Day, ‘I had no power at all over you: I but called you - and you responded unto me.’”

42. ‘Ali, ‘Ikrimah and others have said that there are seven Hells, one upon another. Ibn Jurayj has named them as, Jahannum (hell), as the top most, then Laza (raging flame), Al-Hutamah (the Crusher), Al-Sa`ir (the blazing flame), Al-Saqar (hell-fire), Al-Jahim (the blazing fire), and Al-Haawiyah, which is the bottom most. Abu Jahl is in Al-Jahim (Ibn Jarir). A similar statement has come down from Ibn ‘Abbas also, but, his ordering is different, and he did not mention Abu Jahl (Ibn Kathir). Qurtubi thinks that the bottom most is Jahim (Qurtubi); and Jahannum is a common name, applicable to anyone of them, as well as to all (Uthmani).

Some other commentators have said that the reference is to seven doors of Jahannum (Thanwi and others).

43. That is, every one of the unbelievers will be assigned to a specific Hell in accordance with his deeds (Ibn Jarir from Qatadah). The Prophet said in a *hadith* of Muslim:

إِنَّ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ تَأْخُذُهُ النَّارُ إِلَى كَعْبِيهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ تَأْخُذُهُ إِلَى حُجْرَتِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ تَأْخُذُهُ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ

“Some will have the Fire up to their ankles, others will have it up to their waist, and yet others will have it up to their necks” (Ibn Kathir).

44. Imam Razi points out that everyone in Paradise will get four gardens (in the least) as recorded in *Surah Al-Rahman* where it is said (verse 46),

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ [الرحمن : ٤٦]

“And for him who feared his Lord, there will be two gardens”, and (verse 62),

[47] We shall remove any rancor that is there in their breasts:⁴⁵ (like) brothers, on couches⁴⁶ facing each other.

وَتَرَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا
عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] No fatigue shall touch them there, nor shall they ever be expelled from there.

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا
بِمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Inform My slaves that I am the All-giving, the all-Compassionate.⁴⁷

تَبَيَّنْتُ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ
﴿٤٩﴾

وَمِنْ ذُوَيْمَنَّا جَنَّاتٍ [الرحمن : ٦٢]

“And, besides them, two more gardens.” And so will be the springs that everyone will have, at least four: of wine, milk, honey and water.

45. Abu Sa`id al-Khudri reports that the Prophet said,

يَخْلُصُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ مِنَ النَّارِ فَيُحْبَسُونَ عَلَىٰ قَطْرَةٍ بَيْنَ
الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ فَيَقْتَصُّ لِبَعْضِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ مَّظَالِمَ كَانَتْ
بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا هَدَّبُوا وَتَقَوُّوا أُذِنَ لَهُمْ فِي
دُحُولِ الْجَنَّةِ قَالَ فَوَالَّذِي تَفَسُّ مُحَمَّدٌ بِيَدِهِ لِأَحَدِهِمْ
أَهْدَىٰ بِمَنْزِلِهِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مِنْهُ بِمَنْزِلِهِ الَّذِي كَانَ فِي الدُّنْيَا

“After the believers have crossed over the Fire, they will be held on a bridge between Heaven and Hell and left to deal with retaliation for wrongs committed against each other in the world. Thus cleansed, and past sense of injury obliterated, they will be allowed entry into Paradise. And,” the Prophet added, “one of you will find it easier to locate his

place in Paradise than he does in this world” (Ibn Jarir). The earlier part of the *hadith* is in Bukhari (H. Ibrahim).

And `Ali is widely reported as saying to Talha’s son, “I and Talha will be the first to whom this verse will be applied” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi and others). [Talha had sided with `A’isha against Ali during the Jamal battle: Au.].

According to another report, once when Talha’s killer went to see `Ali, he kept him waiting for a long time, avoiding to see him. But the man persisted. Finally, when he was allowed in, `Ali he told him, “I and Talha hope to be of those about whom Allah said, “We shall remove any rancor that is there in their breasts: (like) brothers, on couches facing each other” (Ibn Kathir).

46. One opinion is that the word “sarir” is derived from a couch that

[50] And that My chastisement is a painful chastisement.⁴⁸

وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] And inform them about the guests of Ibrahim.

وَتَبَيَّنْهُمْ عَنِ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] When they entered upon him and said, 'Peace.' He said, 'Behold. We are scared of you.'⁴⁹

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] They said, 'Be not scared. We give you the good news of a learned boy.'⁵⁰

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

has been designed as a seat of pleasures. Hence *majlis al-surur* (an assembly for pleasantries) - Razi.

47. The implication hidden in the word, "My slaves" is that whoever acknowledged His Lordship, shall have His forgiveness and Compassion, and whoever denied will receive chastisement (Razi).

48. That is, 'Let him, who persist in sins and does not repent, know that My punishment is very severe indeed: of a kind that cannot be compared to anything' (Ibn Jarir).

Muslim has a *hadith* which runs as follows: the Prophet said,

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْعُقُوبَةِ مَا طَمِعَ بِجَنَّتِهِ
أَحَدٌ وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْكَافِرُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ مَا قَبِطَ
مِنْ جَنَّتِهِ أَحَدٌ

"If a believer knew what Allah has in store of punishment, no one will ever hope to win His

Paradise. And, if an unbeliever knew what Allah has in store of mercy, no one will ever lose hope of His mercy" (Qurtubi).

And, 'Ata' has said that by implication the Prophet is being told that he should let his Ummah individuals to remain on the middle path of hope and fear (Ruh). However, Thanwi adds, if there is an excess of hope, out of love of Allah, and does not lead to weakness in deeds, then there is no harm in it (slightly modified).

49. He said that because when he offered them roasted calf, they refused to eat (Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir). See Hud, verses 69-73 for details.

50. Alusi, (following the statements of most of the commentators elsewhere) has said that it was Is-haq who was meant. However, unless there was a great age difference between Ism`il the first born, and Is-

[54] He said, 'Do you give me the good news even though old age has seized me? Of what then do you give me the good news?!'⁵¹

قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَىٰ أَن مَّسَّيَ الْكِبِيرَ فِيمَ
تُبَشِّرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] They said, 'We give you the good news in truth.⁵² Be not of those who despair.'⁵³

قَالُوا بَشِّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ
الْقَانِطِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] He said, 'Who despairs of his Lord's mercy except such as go astray?'

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَفْطِنُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا
الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] He inquired, 'So what is your errand O ye, envoys?'

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ
﴿٥٧﴾

[58] They replied, 'We have been sent to a people guilty.'

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] Except for Lut's folk. We shall save them all.

إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجِّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ
﴿٥٩﴾

[60] But not his woman. We have decreed⁵⁴ that she will be among those who lag behind.'

إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَا لَهَا لَمِنَ الْعَاثِرِينَ
﴿٦٠﴾

haq, one is inclined to prefer Mujahid's lone opinion expressed in Qurtubi (Dhariyat, verse 28), to the effect that the allusion is to Isma'il. In that case we cannot allow ourselves to assume that the woman referred to in Dhariyat and other places was Sarah. It could have been Hajar. In any case, Arberry's rendering, in his otherwise fairly accurate translation, of the word "*alim*" of this verse as "cunning," should not be taken in the common sense but classic.

51. He was amazed to be promised a son when both he and his wife were in advanced years (Ibn Jarir).

It is in human nature that when a

man hears something entirely unexpected but delightful, the first reaction is expression of a joyful disbelief. When that happens the carrier repeats the news and leaves no doubt about what was heard on the first occasion, thus lengthening the joy that accompanies it (Shabbir, slightly modified).

52. To paraphrase the words using Asad's rendering, "We have given you the glad news of something that is bound to come true."

53. Since Ibrahim's first surprised reaction apparently sounded as if he had lost hope, the angels added this caution (Thanwi), which was a little

[61] At length when the envoys came to Lut's folk,

﴿٦١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ آلَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] He said, 'Behold! You are a folk unknown (here).'⁵⁵

﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] They said, 'Rather, we have brought you what they have been doubting.

﴿٦٣﴾ قَالُوا بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] We have brought you the truth. And indeed we speak truly.⁵⁶

﴿٦٤﴾ وَأَتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] Therefore, set forth with your home-folk during a portion of the night, yourself following them in the rear.⁵⁷ And let none of you turn around;⁵⁸ keep going to where you are commanded.'

﴿٦٥﴾ فَأَسْرِبْ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

out of place. In Ibrahim's own words: "Who despairs of his Lord's mercy except such as go astray" (Au.).

54. When the angels said, "We," they were speaking on behalf of Allah (Razi). Asad further explains, "... qaddarna - which, in the sense of 'We have ordained' or 'decreed', is an act attributed in the Qur'an invariably, and exclusively to God. ... God's 'ordaining' a sinner to commit a sin or His 'decreeing' that he should remain deaf to the voice of truth is metonym for the natural law instituted by Him (that the rejecters are not shown the truth: Au.)."

55. The original "*munkarun*" carries the connotation of a slight distaste, as if Lut (*asus*) was not too happy with their visit. Qurtubi has some-

thing close to say.

Another possible rendition is: "You are a strange people." And Lut only said that when he did everything possible to save them from the city-men raiding his house, but he observed that the guests themselves sat out coolly, quite unconcerned and pretty well-composed. So, as if Lut told them, "You are a strange people. I am working so hard to avoid the crisis, but you sit there complacently?" They replied, "Do not worry, we are angels and have been sent to destroy the towns" (Shabbir).

56. Perhaps Lut was finding it hard to reconcile himself to the fact that his people will be destroyed, root and branch (Au.).

[66] And We decreed to him the affair that the roots of these people will be severed by the morning.

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هَؤُلَاءِ
مَقْطُوعٌ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] And the town folk came rejoicing.⁵⁹

وَجَاءَ أَهْلُ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] He pleaded, 'These are my guests. So put me not to shame.

قَالَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ صَنِيْفِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ
﴿٦٨﴾

[69] Fear Allah, and disgrace me not.⁶⁰

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] They said, 'Have we not forbidden you about all and sundry?'⁶¹

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] He said, 'Here, these are my daughters, if you will be doing.'⁶²

قَالَ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ
﴿٧١﴾

For greater details of the story, summarized here, see Hud, verses 77-83.

57. That is, let none of you turn back when you hear the blast seize them (Ibn Kathir).

Why were they commanded not to look back? Mawdudi explains, "This does not mean that as soon as they looked behind, they would be turned into pillars of salt, as the Bible says (*Genesis*, 19: 26). What was being asked was simply that they should not be prompted by the noise behind them to pause and see what was going on."

58. That is, 'keep yourself at the rear as you set off, preventing anyone from falling out for any reason.

59. Majid remarks, "(They were pleased by) the news of the arrival of young and handsome strangers."

60. This happened earlier, before he knew that they were angels, but sequence is not important here (Ibn Kathir). Nevertheless, it is also possible that when Lut came to know that they were angels and sent to destroy his people, he went out to the men to plead for sensibility, for one and the last time. Who knows, they could avoid the punishment? (Au.)

61. They reminded him that they had instructed him never to accept guests (who were their own right for their own purposes: Au.) nor offer them protection (Qatadah and others: Ibn Jarir).

[72] By your life,⁶³ verily, in their drunkenness they were stumbling blindly.

لَعْمَرُكَ إِتْمَهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] So a cry seized them by the sunrise.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] And we turned its uppermost bottom-most and rained on them stones of baked clay.

فَجَعَلْنَا غَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] Surely, in that are signs for those who mark.⁶⁴

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

62. He meant their own women, calling them his daughters because a Prophet is the father of his nation (Zamakhshari).

63. Qadi Abu Bakr b. `Arabiyy has said that the unanimous opinion of the commentators is that Allah swore by the life of our Prophet as a mark of honor, for, his own people, the Quraysh, were drunk in power, also stumbling blindly. However, Ibn al-`Arabiyy has added that there is no reason why Allah (*swt*) would not have sworn by the life of Lut. That of course will not reduce our own Prophet's status (Qurtubi).

Qurtubi also points out that according to Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal and Malik, for us humans to swear by the life of the Prophet is a sin, calling for expiation, to which Ibn Khuwayzmandad has added that unless the meaning were to be, "by the Lord of

Muhammad" in which case it would be allowable.

Majid comments on Allah swearing by the Prophet's life, "It is the absolute purity of the holy Prophet's life that is cited here as witness."

64. It is akin to saying, 'When you come across their story during your study of history, place a mark there' (Au.).

Asad comments: "In its full significance, the term *mutawassimun* denotes 'one who applies his mind to the study of the outward appearance of a thing with a view to understanding its real nature and its inner characteristics' (Zamakhshari and Razi).

This is also the meaning given by the *Salaf* who said that it means, "mutafarrisin" meaning as given by Asad above. The Prophet (*saws*) has said in a *hadith* of Tirmidhi al-Hakeem,

[76] And it⁶⁵ is right on the high-road.⁶⁶

وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] Surely, in that is a sign for those who believe.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

إن الله عز وجل عبادا يعرفون الناس بالتوسم

“There are some slaves of Allah who know the people by (their) marks.” Another *hadith* says,

اتَّقُوا فِرَاسَةَ الْمُؤْمِنِ، فَإِنَّهُ يَنْظُرُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ

“Beware of the believer’s sight of eye. He sees by the light of Allah” (Tirmidhi, who declared it weak).

Ibn ‘Abbas said, “It never happened that someone asked me a question and I did not know whether the man is learned or not.”

And, it is reported that once Imam Shaf`i and Muhammad b. al-Hasan (Abu Hanifa’s pupil) were in the Ka`bah yard when a man entered the Haram gate. One of them said, “I think he is a carpenter.” Another said, “Rather, I believe he is a blacksmith.” Someone who had heard their remarks went up and asked the man what he did for his living. He said, “I used to be a carpenter, but now I work as a blacksmith.” It is reported of ‘Umar that when the Madh-hij tribe visited him with Ashtar as one of them, he looked hard at him and

remarked, “I see in this man tribulations for the Muslims.” (Ashtar later played his role in the martyrdom of Hasan).

It is also reported that once Malik b. Anas passed by the market-place where he stared at a beautiful woman. When he entered upon ‘Uthman (b. ‘Affan) he remarked, “One of you enters upon me while he has marks of adultery in his eyes.” Malik remarked, “What! revelation after the Prophet?” He replied, “Rather not, but signs and penetrating eyes.” Many such incidents have been reported of the *Salaf* (Qurtubi).

65. That is, the city of Sodom (Ibn Jarir).

66. Now the city lies under the Dead Sea, as is in everybody’s knowledge (Ibn Kathir).

Asad writes: “The existence of that road, which led from northern Hijaz to Syria, skirting the Dead Sea - to the north-east of which Sodom and Gomorrah were situated - has received startling confirmation through aerial photographs recently published by the American School of Oriental Re-

[78] Certainly, the dwellers in the Thicket were inveterate evildoers.⁶⁷

وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لظَالِمِينَ

﴿٧٨﴾

[79] So we inflicted Our retribution on them. And they both⁶⁸ lie on a high-way, open.

فَاتَّقَمْنَا مِنْهُم وَإِنَّهُمَا لِيَّامَامٍ مُّبِينٍ

﴿٧٩﴾

[80] The dwellers in Hijr⁶⁹ also rejected the messengers.

وَأَلْقَدُ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

﴿٨٠﴾

search (New Haven, Connecticut). These photographs clearly show the ancient road as a dark streak winding northwards, more or less parallel with the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.”

Yusuf Ali adds: “The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed, and even their precise position cannot be identified. But the brimstone plain of the tract still exists, right on the highway, between Arabia and Syria. To the traveler in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea the whole locality presents a scene of dismal desolation which truly suggests the awful punishment for unspeakable crimes.”

67. The word ‘aykah is for an orchard thick with trees (Ibn Kathir). According to Qatadah, they were one of the two nations to whom Shu‘ayb (*asws*) was sent, the other being Madyan. These people are referred to as the dwellers in the Thicket (*As-hab*

al-`aykah) because they owned huge orchards and whose economy largely depended on fruit production. It is said that when Allah (*swt*) decided on their destruction, He sent upon them a scorching heat lasting for a week. Thereafter He sent a piece of cloud. They gathered under its shade. A fire came down from the cloud and they were all burned. Hence the Qur’ānic reference to the punishment elsewhere as (26: 189), “punishment of the day of Shade” (Ibn Jarir).

However, another opinion is that ‘Aykah was the name of a town (Shawkani).

68. Although Ibn Jarir writes that the allusion by “the two” is to the cities of Lut and Shu‘ayb (Au.), it could also be to the two cities of Shu‘ayb: the Thicket City and Madyan (Kashshaf and Razi).

69. The reference is to the nation of Saleh, the Thamud. When the

Prophet (*saws*) passed by their ruins on his way to Tabuk he instructed,

لَا تَدْخُلُوا مَسَاكِينَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونُوا بَاكِينَ ، أَنْ يُصَيِّبَكُمْ مِثْلُ الَّذِي أَصَابَهُمْ

“Do not enter the dwellings of those who wronged themselves except that you should be crying, and if you cannot cry then do not enter their dwellings at all, lest you are seized by what seized them.” Then the Prophet prodded his mount and hurried past the place until it was left behind. (The *hadith* is in Bukhari and Muslim: Shawkani).

He also said,

إِلَّا رَجُلًا وَاحِدًا كَانَ فِي حَرَمِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَيْلَ مَنْ هُوَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ هُوَ أَبُو رِغَالٍ فَلَمَّا خَرَجَ مِنْ الْحَرَمِ أَصَابَهُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَهُ

“(These dwellings belonged to the nation of Saleh whom Allah destroyed) except for one of them who was in the Haram, saved from Allah’s wrath.” They asked him, “Who was it, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Abu Righal” (Ibn Jarir).

Sheikh Shu`ayb al-Arna`ut said that the above *hadith* of the Musnad has a strong chain (Au.).

In fact, a report in Bukhari coming through Ibn ‘Umar says that the Prophet advised his Companions to not even use water from their wells, rather, from the well which Saleh’s miraculous camel used to drink from. Some of them had already kneaded dough with water from the wells used by the Thamud. He instructed them to feed it to the cattle. The following few fiqh points therefore, says Qurtubi, have been derived:

- i. It is undesirable to enter the dwellings that have been destroyed by Allah, in chastisement of their rejection of a Prophet.
- ii. What is unlawful for humans, is not necessarily unlawful for animals. In this case, the Prophet allowed that the kneaded dough be fed to camels.
- iii. Prayers (*Salah*) are not allowed in such places.

[81] We gave them signs but they always turned away from them.

وَأْتَيْنَاهُمْ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] They hewed mountains for homes (to live) in peace.

وَكَانُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] So the cry seized them at the morning.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّبْحَةُ مُنْصِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] Of no avail to them was what they were earning.

فَمَا أَعْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

[85] We have created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, save in truth. Verily, the Hour is coming. So forgive, with graceful forgiveness.⁷⁰

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأْتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] Surely, Your Lord is the Great Creator, All-knowing.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَالِقُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

iv. Ablution with water from such places is also disallowed (i.e., when it is from the very wells that were used by the destroyed: Au.).

[الجاتية : ١٤]

“Say to the believers that they forgive those who do not hope for Allah’s days.”

70. Dahhak has said that forgiving was to be the way during a certain stage of the Prophetic mission. Several verses of similar nature were sent to the Prophet in that phase. One of them said (43: 89),

The import contained in these verses was abrogated by the verse in *Surah Tawbah* which said (9: 5),

فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُواهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ [التوبة : ٥]

“So seize them and besiege them, and sit in wait for them at every point of ambush.”

فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ [البرخرف
١٨٩ :

“Forgive them, and say, ‘Peace.’ Soon they shall know.” And (45: 14),

Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah said that the verse under discussion, and others of similar nature, remained in force until a time when the Prophet said,

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ

[87] *Indeed, We have given you seven of the oft-repeated,⁷¹ and the Mighty Qur'ān.* وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾

أنا محمد وأحمد أنا رسول الرحمة أنا رسول الملحمة
أنا المقفي والحاشر بعثت بالجهاد ولم أبعث بالزراع

“I am Muhammad and Ahmad, I am the Prophet of mercy. I am the Prophet of slaughter (Nabiyyul Malhamah). I am Muqaffa (the last of the Prophets) and Hashir (Resurrector [after whom Resurrection will take place]). I have been sent to conduct Jihad, and not to cultivate (the lands)” - Ibn Jarir.

The above *hadith* is in several collections, with the earlier part declared *sahih* by Dhahabi in notes on Hakim (Au.).

Nevertheless, how is “*safhun jamil*” (“graceful forgiveness”) to be understood? Alusi, and from him Thanwi, quotes Muhammad b. Hanafiyyah the words of ‘Ali that “*safhun jamil*” is “to forgive without reproach, without any feeling of rancor for the wrongdoer and a return to the relationship that prevailed before the wrong was committed.”

71. Exegetes such as Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbas have said that the allusion by the words “oft-repeated seven” is to the seven long chapters of the Qur`ān, (the Tiwal: the long ones): Al-Baqarah, Al-‘Imran, Al-Nisa’, Al-Ma`idah, Al-An`am, Al-A`raf, and Yunus. These contain most of the important legislative principles of Islam. Sa`id b. Jubayr, Mujahid and Dahhak are also widely reported of the same opinion. However, ‘Umar, ‘Ali, Ubay b. Ka`b, and in a second opinion of Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn ‘Abbas, as well as Hasan, Mujahid, Qatadah and several others, the allusion is to Sura *Al-Fateha*. In fact, there is a *hadith* to this effect (Ibn Jarir). See *Surah Al-Fateha*, “Merits of the *Surah*.”

However, there is no reason why, Ibn Kathir adds, that both the opinions cannot be true, as both are oft-repeated and both have several characteristics in common. A similar example is that of the two mosques, the Prophet’s in Madinah and the other in Quba. When asked, sometimes the

[88] (Therefore), stretch not your eyes⁷² toward what We have bestowed on certain classes of them.⁷³ And grieve not over them, and lower your wing unto the believers.⁷⁴

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا
مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Prophet said that the “mosque built on piety” was his mosque, while at other times he said it was the Quba mosque: because both share some qualities.

72. The message hidden is: after the priceless Qur’ān you do not need any other wealth (Au.).

Ibn ‘Uyaynah has explained this verse with the famous *hadīth* of the Prophet which appears in *sahih* works including a part of it in Bukhari as chapter-heading:

ليس منا من لم يتغنّى بالقرآن

And the meaning, as understood by Ibn ‘Uyaynah is, “He is not of us who does not feel that the Qur’ān is sufficient for him (in the face of material possessions)” (Ibn Jarir).

This is the meaning Qurtubi derives. It is supported by many scholars of the past such as Anas, Sa`id b. Musayyib, Hasan, Ibn Sirin, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Nakha`i and others who disapproved that the Qur’ān be sung out. However, Imam Shafe`i, a powerful linguist, believed that the mean-

ing of the *hadīth* is, “He is not of us who does not sing out the Qur’ān.” The translation is literal. What is meant by “taghanni” is beautifying the recitation of the Qur’ān with a good voice (while observing the rules of Tajwid) [‘Ayni, ‘*Umdatul Qari*, Fada’il al-Qur’ān, *hadīth* 42].

The above does not appear as a *hadīth*, but it is accepted as true of meaning in view of another *hadīth* which appears in the *sahibayn* and other books. It says,

مَا أَدْنَىٰ اللَّهُ لَشَيْءٍ مَا أَدْنَىٰ لِلنَّبِيِّ أَنْ يَتَغَنَّى بِالْقُرْآنِ

“Allah has not ordered the Prophet anything as He ordered that the Qur’ān be sung out.”

73. Most of the commentators have understood “azwaj” of the text as “asnaf”, i.e., “kinds,” or “classes” (Razi and others). Asad adds: “The philological authorities are unanimous in opinion in that the plural azwaj denotes here ‘kinds’ of people, or ‘some’ of them, and not - as certain modern translators of the Qur’ān have assumed - ‘pairs.’”

Ibn Abi Hatim reports from Abu

Rafe` as context of revelation:

أَصَافَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ضَيْفًا ، فَلَمْ يَلْقَ عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا يُصْلِحُهُ ، فَأَرْسَلَ إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ ، يَقُولُ لَكَ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : أَسْأَلُكَ دَقِيقًا إِلَى هِلَالِ رَجَبٍ ، قَالَ : لَا إِلَّا بِرَهْنٍ ، فَأَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَأُخْبِرْتُهُ ، فَقَالَ : أُمُّ وَاللَّهِ ، إِنِّي لَأَمِينٌ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَمِينٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ ، وَلَوْ أَسْأَلُكَ ، أَوْ بَاعَنِي لِأَدْبِثَ إِلَيْهِ ، فَلَمَّا خَرَجْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ تَرَلْتُ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ : { وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ }

“Once the Prophet had a guest. He did not have anything suitable to offer him. So he sent someone to a Jew asking him to lend some flour which he would return by the first of Rajab. The man said, ‘Only on mortgage.’ I (the narrator) brought back the message to the Prophet. He remarked, ‘By Allah, I am the trustworthy in the heavens and the trustworthy on the earth. Had he lent me, or sold me, I would have surely returned it.’ In response this verse was revealed: ‘Stretch not your eyes toward what we have bestowed on certain classes of them’” (Ibn Kathir).

The above report was declared weak by Haythami. However, every *Da`eef hadith* is not rejectable simply because a distrusted narrator happens to fall in line. It is not unoften that

internal evidence in a *hadith* speaks of its authenticity. Those who have abridged Ibn Kathir, removing the so-called *Da`eef ahadith*, have not done justice to scholarship (Au.).

The implication of the verse is, says Qurtubi, that one ought not to be entirely engrossed in this world, or give it precedence over the demands of the Hereafter. After all, the Prophet himself said,

حُبِّبَ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا الْبَسَاءُ وَالطِّيبُ وَجُعِلَ قَرَّةَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ

“Of your world, women and perfume have been made dear to me, and the coolness of my eyes has been placed in Prayers.” (According to Al-Arna’ut, the *hadith* is Hasan: Au.).

It is another thing that today the unlawful has so permeated everything that it is better, although asceticism is disapproved in Islam, to avoid indulging in the world. It is better to stay as far away from it as possible. The Prophet himself has said,

يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَكُونَ خَيْرَ مَالِ الْمُسْلِمِ عَنَّمَا يَبِيعُ بِهَا شَعَفَ الْجِبَالِ وَمَوَاقِعَ الْفُطُرِ يَفِرُّ بِدِينِهِ مِنَ الْفِتَنِ

“A time will come when the best of wealth for a believer would be to follow a few goats up the top mountains, and places of rain,

[89] And say, 'Indeed I am a clear warner.'⁷⁵

﴿٨٩﴾ وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ

[90] As We sent down⁷⁶ (revelations) on those who divided.⁷⁷

﴿٩٠﴾ كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ

escaping from the trials of the world.”

We have brought in a *hadith* slightly different in word from that quoted by Qurtubi. This one is from Abu Da'ud, treated trustworthy by Arna'ut (Au.).

74. “*Khafada Janahayhi*” means, to be gentle, to be easy to deal with, compliant, etc. Yusuf Ali writes: “The metaphor is from a bird who lowers her wing in tender solicitude for her little ones.”

75. That is, if you are gentle and easy to deal with O Prophet, your followers should not assume that they can treat their personal affairs with ease and comfort. Warn them that the questioning in the Hereafter will not be an easy affair (Au.).

76. The elliptic beginning has the following words concealed: “We have revealed to you this Qur'an, (just as We sent revelations to those who divided)” - Zamakhshari. Thanwi however believes the meaning is, “Say, indeed I am a clear warner (and I am told to convey from Allah, who

says that He will surely send down), ‘as We sent down on those who divided.’”

77. Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said that the allusion is to the People of the Book: Jews and Christians, (and the report is in Bukhari: Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). These people divided the Qur'an into parts, believing in some and rejecting others, saying, (Alusi adds), ‘this portion agrees with our Scriptures, and therefore, is true, but the other portion does not, and, therefore, it is false.’

Ibn Jarir suggests however, that the reference is to the pagan Quraysh who gave different names to the Qur'an, some calling it poetry, others stories of old and yet others a sooth-saying, which was also the opinion of Qatadah and some others.

On the other hand, Mujahid's opinion was that the textual “muqtasimin” is in the sense of “mutahalifin”, that is those who swore to each other that they will oppose the Prophet. The Qur'an said about them (16: 38),

[91] *Those, who have split the Qur'ān into fragments.*⁷⁸

﴿٩١﴾ الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ

[92] *By Your Lord, We shall surely call them to account, one and all.*

﴿٩٢﴾ فَوَرِّكَ لَسْنَا لَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

وَأَفْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ
[النحل : ٣٨]

“And they swore by Allah, their strongest oath, that Allah will never raise the dead.”

Another example of such usage, Ibn Kathir adds, is the Qur'ānic verse (27: 49) about Saleh`s people,

قَالُوا تَقَسَّمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ [النمل : ٤٩]

“They said, ‘Swear one to another by Allah that we shall strike him and his homefolk by the night.’”

Zayd b. Aslam was also of this opinion (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Similar tendencies are noticeable among the secularly educated Muslims who divide the Qur'ān into parts: parts acceptable, parts subjected to reinterpretation, i.e., rejected (Au.).

78. The textual word “idin” is the plural of “udwun” which means parts. As noted above, Ibn ‘Abbas

and some others have said that the allusion is to the Jews and Christians who divided the Qur'ān, believing in a part of it and rejecting the rest. However, Ibn ‘Abbas is also reported by Ibn Is-haq that once Walid b. al-Mughira got the Quraysh together (sixteen of them: Alusi) and suggested that before the forthcoming Hajj they must agree on a single version of denial and not let every man air his own opinion. Some suggested they should say to the pilgrims that the Prophet (*saws*) is mad, others that he is a poet, yet others that he is a magician. A fourth opinion was that they should agree about him as a man possessed by the Jinn. A fifth opinion was that they should say he is a soothsayer. They disagreed with most of the opinions, while most of them agreed that they should refer to the Prophet as a mere poet and the Qur'ān as a poetical production. So Allah revealed, “Those who have split the Qur'ān into fragments.”

[93] Concerning what they were doing.⁷⁹

﴿٩٣﴾ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

[94] So proclaim what you are commanded,⁸⁰ and turn away from the idolaters.

فَأَصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

[95] We are enough for you (against) the mockers.⁸¹

﴿٩٤﴾

إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

Yet another opinion is that of 'Ikrimah and Qatadah, who thought that the root word is "al-'addah" meaning "magic." That is, people have termed the Qur'an as a piece of magic (Ibn Jarir).

79. The meaning and application is general: everybody will be questioned about faith, and about deeds after faith. A *hadith* in Ibn Abi Hatim records the Prophet as saying,

يا معاذ إن المؤمن يسأل يوم القيامة عن جميع سعيه
حتى عن كحل عينه

"O Mu`adh. On the Day of Judgment a believer will be questioned about everything he did, including the kohl he applied into his eyes..." (Ibn Kathir).

The evaluation of the *hadith* above could not be traced (Au.).

This verse does not contradict the other verse which says (55: 39),

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ [الرحمن
: ٣٩]

"That day neither men nor jinn will be

questioned about their sins," because, (i) men will pass through various stages in the Hereafter, until entry into Paradise. At some stages they will not be questioned, while at some they will be subjected to questioning, and (ii) the questioning of the present verse is of the nature of "Did you do, or did you not?" In contrast, the questioning that is denied is the nature of "Why did you do it? Could you not have avoided it?" This is the kind of questioning that the verse of *Surah Al-Rahman* denies. However, some scholars have expressed exactly the opposite meaning, viz., people will not be asked if they did a thing or not, they will only be asked, why they did it. The contradiction in any case can be resolved (Au.).

80. "So proclaim what you are commanded," i.e., proclaim the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*).

The implication is, Islamic truths are something that must be proclaimed and nothing should be concealed (Thanwi from Ruh).

[96] *Those who set up along with Allah, another god. Soon they shall know.*

الَّذِينَ يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَسَوْفَ
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] *And, certainly We are aware that your heart constricts at what they say.*

وَلَقَدْ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا
يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] *Therefore,⁸² celebrate the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate themselves.*

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُن مِّنَ السَّاجِدِينَ
﴿٩٨﴾

[99] *And worship your Lord⁸³ until the certainty comes to you.⁸⁴*

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴿٩٩﴾

81. Scholars like 'Urwah b. Zubayr, 'Ikrimah and Sa'id b. Jubayr have identified the foremost among the mockers as five: Walid b. al-Mughirah, 'As b. Wa'il, Aswad b. 'Abd Yaghus, Aswad b. al-Muttalib and Harith b. Qays (according to 'Ikrimah: Harith b. Ghaytilah). They all died before the battle of Badr. (Although normally the Prophet did not supplicate against the Makkans, he felt so hurt from them that) he supplicated for their destruction. Ibn Is-haq says once they were circum-ambulating the Ka'bah when Jibril came and stood by with the Prophet's side. As Aswad b. 'Abd al-Muttalib passed by, Jibril threw a green leaf on his face. He became blind. Then, Aswad b. 'Abd Yaghus passed by him. He pointed to his stomach which swelled and he died of dropsy. Next Walid b. al-Mughira appeared. He pointed at a wound he had re-

ceived earlier in his heel. It opened up and he died of it. Then, as 'As b. Wa'il passed by, he pointed at the hollow of his sole, and he was killed by a thorn that pricked into his sole, as he was going to Ta'if. Lastly, as Layth passed, he pointed at his head. It got filled with pus that killed him (Ibn Jarir). The story is also in Ibn Hisham and there are many versions about the number of people and the manner of their destruction.

When Zuhri heard that Sa'id b. Jubayr named one of the five as Harith b. Ghaytilah, while 'Ikrimah named him as Harith b. Qays, he remarked, "Ikrimah was right. The man was Harith b. Qays. Ghaytilah (some say Tulatilah) was the name of his mother (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

82. That is, the hearts' cure from constriction has to be searched for in prostration and prayers.

83. Accordingly, whenever the Prophet faced a difficult situation, he resorted to Prayers (Ibn Jarir, Zamaḥshari).

84. The rendering of “yaqin” as death is following the understanding of Mujahid, Qatadah, Hasan and others. In fact, in a *ḥadīth* the Prophet also used the word in this sense (Ibn Jarir).

Allah (*swt*) said about the people of the Fire (74: 45),

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ (٤٣) وَلَمْ نَكُ نَطْعِمُ
الْمِسْكِينَ (٤٤) وَكُنَّا نَحْوُضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ (٤٥)
وَكُنَّا نَكْذِبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٤٦) حَتَّىٰ آتَانَا الْيَقِينَ
[المدثر : ٤٣ - ٤٧]

“They said, ‘We were not of those who Prayed, nor did we feed the poor. We used to indulge (in diatribe against Islam) along with those who indulged, and we used to cry lies to the Day of Judgement, until death came to us’.”

The meaning, therefore, that the misguided people have derived, viz., “yaqin” is in the sense of “ma`rifah” is unacceptable. They say that one might Pray until he has acquired “ma`rifah.” Once he reaches the state of “ma`arifah” he need not attend to the obligations, which are for people of lower order. Apart from the fact that none of the classical scholars has derived such a meaning, nor does the Qur`ān support it, but also, none of the *Salaf*, the highest in “ma`rifah”, the most knowledgeable after the prophets, ever claimed any such status for themselves. If anyone therefore, deserved that the obligations should be abrogated for him, then, the Prophet and the Companions should have been allowed that. But we find that they were the most devoted to acts and rituals of worship, even more than the ordinary people (Ibn Kathir, Alusi, Thanwi). ﷺ



Surah 16

*Al-Nahl*¹

(The Bee)

Makkan²

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

Sayyid Qutb's passionate words might be difficult to translate, but, in keeping with the Arabic proverb, 'What cannot be had in its whole, may not be missed in its sum and substance,' we make an attempt: "Like most other Makkan chapters, this one also deals with important articles of faith: Divinity, revelation and resurrection. It also touches on related topics e.g., concept of Divine Oneness - which is the main link that connects the religion of Ibrahim with that of Muhammad (peace on them both) .. It also touches on Allah's will, and men's attitudes concerning belief, unbelief, guidance, misguidance... As it also deals with the mission of the Prophets and Allah's ways with the rejecters ... It further deals with the question of the lawful and the unlawful and the pagan misconceptions regarding these issues... It deals with *Hijrah* in Allah's path, Muslims' tribulations in this

path, renunciation of faith after its acceptance, and Allah's retribution for these acts. Thereafter, it turns to issues pertaining to human actions and interactions: justice, being good, expending in the way of Allah, being true to the word of promise - and other related topics. Thus the chapter is filled with a variety of subjects.

"As for the framework and background in which it deals with these issues, and the wide scope in which it operates ... it is that of the heavens and the earth, waters pouring down, trees growing, the night and the day, the sun, the moon and the stars, seas and mountains, waymarks, paths and rivers - it is the world, whole of it, with its events and movements which forms the background, and yet, there is another: that of values and perceptions, that of the Unknown with all that goes with it, and its reach into the depth of souls and space.

[1] Commeth Allah's command,³ so seek not to hasten it.⁴ Glorified is He above that which they associate (with Him).⁵

أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ سُبْحَانَهُ
وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١﴾

“It is in this background that the contents of the chapter are embedded: one massive strike to turn men’s direction, to impress on the soul, to awaken the mind and conscience ... an unobtrusive but sustained attack. Yet, it plays on various chords, and despite its mildness, strikes at every impulse, provokes every mind, while it touches upon instincts. It coaxes the eye that it may see, the ear that it may hear, the senses that they may become conscious, and the intellect that it may consider. To achieve this end the *Surah* mobilizes the whole of the world: its heavens and its earth, its sun and moon, its day and night, its mountains, seas, narrow gorges, rivers, shadows, retreats, plants and fruits, animals and birds, as it also draws upon the present world and the next, its known and the unknown. With all these instruments it strikes at the chords of the heart and mind - varied strikes: that no soul can refuse to be affected by, unless it were a closed mind, a lifeless heart and a muddled perception.”

1. The chapter is also known by the name “*Al-Ni`am*” (“Favors”), from the number of blessings mentioned

in it (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi, Shawkani).

2. Except for a couple of verses, said to have been revealed on the way to Madinah, the rest of the *Surah* is Makkan by common consensus.

3. Jalaluddin Suyuti has said: Consider how the previous chapter is connected with this one. The previous chapter ended with the words, “And worship your Lord until death comes to you,” while this one starts with, “Commeth Allah’s commandment” (Alusi).

As regards immediate context, this verse addressed the Makkans who often demanded to know when the Hour would strike. Nadr b. al-Harith in fact said (8: 32), “O God. If this be true from You, then rain down stones upon us” (Au.).

In Yusuf Ali’s tender words, “This is an answer to the taunts of the Pagans, who said, ‘If there is a god, the One true God, as you say, with unified control, why does He not punish the wrong-doers at once?’ The answer is: ‘The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes,

[2] He sends down angels with the Revelation⁶ by His command upon whom He will of His slaves (saying):⁷ 'Warn that there is no God except I. Therefore, fear Me.'

يُنزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٢﴾

you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

4. According to some of the *Salaf*, the “*amr*” of the text alludes to “the Hour” and, the two events being so close, also to the raising of the Final Messenger. Ibn ‘Abbas said that when Jibril was sent with the first message to the Prophet, he remarked, “Allah is Great. The Hour has arrived” (Qurtubi).

Mawdudi has an opinion worth consideration. For ease we shall use sentences from him, mixing with ours: Since this chapter was revealed during the last days of the Prophet’s stay at Makka, a few days before his migration to Madinah, and since the pith of the Makkan argument against him was, ‘Muhammad (peace be on him) claims that we have deviated from the truth. He also claims to be a Prophet designated by God. If both these statements are true, we should by now have been seized by God’s scourge’... in view of above ‘the judgment’ (command in our rendering: au.) refers to Prophet’s Muhammad’s migration from Makkah.

Shabbir however understands “*amr*” as command alone, which here alludes to the command by which the Muslims would ultimately gain upper hand, emerge triumphant, and the unbelievers routed. The time is close for it. Nor is it too far from the Hour of Resurrection, so, what’s the point in seeking to hasten it?

5. Many commentators have said that those who are warned of the Hereafter, usually rely on someone who will save them - if the promised Hereafter really comes through. So Allah (*swt*) warned them, “Glorified is He above that which they associate (with Him).”

6. Ibn ‘Abbas has said that the textual “*Al-ruh*” refers to revelation. Qatadah cites both “revelation” as well as “mercy” in explanation of the term (Ibn Jarir).

Revelation has been called “*Al-ruh*” (spirit, soul, or life) because there-with is the life of the hearts (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Shawkani).

Razi cites an instance in the Qur’an where the word “*ruh*” is used in the sense of revelation. Allah said (42: 52),

[3] He created the heavens and the earth in truth.⁸ Exalted is He above that they associate (with Him).

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ تَعَالَى
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] He created man from a sperm-drop. And lo, (there) he is, an open disputer.⁹

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ
مُبِينٌ ﴿٤﴾

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا [الشورى : ٥٢]

“That is how We have revealed to you, a “ruh” (revelation) by Our command.”

He also said (40: 15),

يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ [غافر : ١٥]

“He casts His “ruh” (revelation) by His command on whomsoever of His slaves He will.”

Mawdudi expands: “The ‘spirit’ (revelation in our rendering: Au.) mentioned here is the spirit of prophecy. The Messenger is infused with it, and it animates all that he says or does. Revelation and the spirit of prophecy have the same significance in man’s moral life as does the ‘soul’ in the physical life. Hence, the Qur’ān has used the term ‘spirit’ for it. Since the Christians were unable to grasp this, they were led to believe in the Holy Ghost and to make him one of the three persons constituting a Trinity.”

7. Mawdudi comments: “The unbelievers took strong exception to the choice of Muhammad (peace be on him), .. for this divine assignment. How could he be so appointed when there were outstanding scions in the leading families of Makka and Ta’if who, in their view, were much better suited for such a position.”

8. That is, everything in the universe attests to the great Truth that it has a single Originator and Sustainer and that there is no room for false gods as proposed by the polytheists. Had there been more than one God, an ordered universe would have never come into existence, instead, chaotic fragments would have been flying about (Au.).

9. Most of the commentators understand the verse as translated above. Nonetheless, Ibn Jarir understands the textual word “*mubin*” as meaning someone capable of expressing himself skillfully and rationally. Zamakhshari also sees the same possibility. Asad has worded it thus: “.. after having been a [mere] drop of

[5] And the cattle - He created them for you. In them is warmth¹⁰ and (various other) uses, and of them you eat.

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] And there is beauty in them for you when you drive them home in the evening and take them to pasture in the morning.¹¹

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

sperm, a particle of matter without consciousness or motion, man becomes highly articulate (mintiq), able to argue on his own [for or against a proposition], courageously facing disputes, and clearly formulating his arguments: [and herein lies] an indication of God's creative power."

Another meaning is also possible: Although man has such a lowly origin, he grows so arrogant with time that he challenges his very Creator. With this meaning in view, Shabbir quotes another verse (36: 77-78):

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٧) وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ [يس : ٧٧ ، ٧٨]

"Has man not considered that we created him from a sperm-drop, and then, lo, he is an open disputer. He strikes examples for Us, forgetting his creation, he says, 'Who will quicken the bones when they are dust?'"

10. The allusion by "dif'un" is to warm clothes made from animal

hide, wool, or fur (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari).

The above point is of course obvious. But could the allusion also be to the common knowledge that animals' flesh gives warmth to human body? (Au.).

11. Only those can appreciate this verse who have seen in the natural surroundings the beauty of a flock driven back by the evening or being taken out into the fields in the morning. And it is only he who has made a keen observation that will appreciate why the Qur'an spoke first of the cattle being driven back: fed, fat, quiet, slow and playful, the shepherd shooing-shaa-ing from the rear, to control them, while in the morning, lean, heads down, bleating, hurrying to the pasture grounds, in submission, the shepherd simply following them. Further, the evening return is more visible than the early morning quick march.

And, in the beauty of the scene is the evidence of Allah's existence. One

[7] And they bear your burden unto places you could not have reached but with great difficulty to the souls. Verily, your Lord is Most Kind, Most Merciful.

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَالِغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

[8] And (He created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride,¹² and for adornment.¹³ And He creates what you know not.¹⁴

وَالْحَيْلِ وَالْبِغَالِ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

can somehow explain away the creation, but can he ignore the beauty noticeable in every creation? Who is the creator of this beauty? (Au.).

“On the day of Khayber, the Prophet prohibited us flesh of domestic donkeys but allowed horse’s meat.”

12. In view of the use stated here, of these three kinds of animals: horses, mules and donkeys, viz., “for ride,” in contrast to the use stated for cattle, viz., “of them you eat,” Ibn ‘Abbas disapproved of their meat. Some went so far as to declare horse’s meat as unlawful. However, scholars like Aswad and Ibrahim did not treat horse’s meat as unlawful. Jabir reported, “We used to eat horse’s meat during the time of the Prophet.” He was asked, “What about mules?” He answered, “Mules, no.” As for donkey’s meat, there is no difference in opinion that the flesh of the domesticated ones is prohibited. There are clear *ahadith* to this effect (Ibn Jarir). In fact Jabir has reported a *hadith*, preserved in the *sahihayn* which says,

Muslim has a report coming from Asma’ bint Abi Bakr which says,

نَحَرْنَا فَرَسًا عَلَىٰ عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَنَحْنُ بِالْمَدِينَةِ فَأَكَلْنَاهُ

“In Madinah we slaughtered a horse during the time of the Prophet, and we all ate thereof.”

(A similar report in Tabarani has the additional words, “(we slaughtered the horse) as it was about to die”: Qurtubi).

As for mules, the Prophet rode them because they were available, otherwise he disapproved of crossing donkeys with horses (Ibn Kathir).

Imām Abu Hanifah was with ‘Abbas in saying that horse’s meat is *makruh* (Qurtubi, Shafi’).

13. Whether it is a horse, a camel, or a car, man has always been proud of them and their beauty (Au.).

تَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمَ خَيْبَرَ عَنْ حُومِ الْحُمُرِ الْأَهْلِيَّةِ وَأَذِنَ فِي حُومِ الْحَيْلِ

[9] And upon Allah is the description of the path¹⁵ while some (of them) swerve away.¹⁶ Had He willed, he would have guided you all together.

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمَنْهَا جَائِرٌ وَآلُو
شَاءَ هَذَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩﴾

Thanwi writes that in view of the words, “And there is beauty in them,” and in the words, “(He created) horses, mules, and donkeys ... an adornment” there is nothing wrong in indulging in the good things of life if the aim is to counter inferiority complex, or simply to please one’s inner self, but if one can avoid the pitfall of pride.

14. Shafi`, Asad and others have pointed out the shift in the form of the verb: from “*khalaqa*” (He created: in the past) to “*yakhluqu*” (He creates, or will create), to include all future creations of vehicles and means of transport. In Asad’s words, “The use, in this context, of the aorist *yakhluqu* implies the future tense (“He will create”) in contrast with the past tense *khalaqa* employed in the preceding passages. Since this reference to God’s continuing creation comes immediately after a mention of primitive means of transport (i.e., animals domesticated by man to this end), it obviously relates to other - as yet unknown - things of the same category: that is to say, to new means of transport which God unceasingly

creates through the instrumentality of the inventiveness with which He has endowed man’s mind. Inasmuch as every successive stage of human development bears witness to new, previously undreamed-of inventions in the realm of transport, the Qur’anic statement that ‘He will yet create things of which [today] you have no knowledge’ is valid for every period - past, present and future - of man’s history.”

15. The translation follows the understanding of Ibn ‘Abbas, Qatadah, Dahhak and others as in Ibn Jarir. This is how Razi and Qurtubi understand it. Shawkani notes another possibility: “Upon Allah is the guidance of him who seeks the path of guidance.” But Mujahid thought it meant that the path of truth leads to Allah (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir thinks Mujahid’s interpretation is more plausible.

16. That is, not all paths lead to Him. In fact, most of the paths skirt off and lead away from Him (Ibn Jarir). However, if we are to follow Mujahid’s opinion then Ibn

[10] It is He who sends down to you out of heaven water: for you a drink thereof, by which the trees (grow) and wherewith you pasture (the flock).¹⁷

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] He causes to grow for you thereby: crops, olives, date-palm, grapes and all manner of fruit. Surely, in that is a sign for those who reflect.

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] And He subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon. And the stars are subjected to His command. Surely, in that are signs for a people who reason.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] And in what He spread out in the earth, in various hues.¹⁸ Surely, in that is a sign for a people who remember.¹⁹

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Mas`ud's commentary fits well the context who explained the last part of the verse as, "yet there are some who swerve away from it" (Zamakhshari). In fact, 'Ali read the original as "*minkum ja'ir*" that is, some of you swerve away (Shawkani).

17. The translation reflects the understanding of Ibn 'Abbas, 'Ikrimah, Dahhak, Qatadah and others as in Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani and others.

18. Everything that Allah has provided of His bounty such as, ani-

mals, plants and minerals, with all their varieties, is included in the verse (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

19. Note the sequence. Allah first spoke of the creation of the heavens and the earth (verse 3), man (verse 4), animals (verse 5-8), plants (verse 11), laws of nature (verse 12), and, finally, just about everything else that He created (verse 13) - Au.

20. For man to be able to ride over the seas and make uses of them in a variety of ways is his subjection of it (Qurtubi).

[14] And it is He who subjected the seas²⁰ so that you may eat out of it tender meat and seek from it ornaments that you wear.²¹ And you see the ships ploughing through it,²² so that you may seek His bounty and haply you will give thanks.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَازِرَ فِيهِ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

[15] And He cast in the earth mountains, lest it shakes with you,²³ as (He also placed) rivers, and paths, so that you might be guided.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] And waymarks. And by the stars they are guided.²⁴

وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

21. That is, 'your womenfolk.'

Shanqiti writes: As Ibn Hajr has written in Futh, it is not allowed for men to wear clothes adorned with pearls and rich stones in view of the *hadith* which prohibits that men and women adopt dresses specific to the other gender and thus look alike.

However, a piece or two, of pearls or rich stones, should not matter, since (a) that cannot be termed an imitation of women, which is disapproved, (b), the above Qur'anic verse is unconditional, that is, it does not exclude men, (c) there is no *hadith* prohibiting it, as there are *abadith* prohibiting gold for men and (d) there is no consensus among the fuqaha' over its prohibition (Au.).

22. "Mawakhir" has its root in "makhr" which is for cleaving through, or splitting something, as

the boat splits water and air while it moves forward.

23. Qays b. 'Ibad and Hasan said that when the earth was created, it was very unstable. Angels remarked that no one could live on it. So Allah pitched the pegs and it became stable (Ibn Jarir). 'Ali ibn Abi Talib however added, "Now it is stable, (but only) as stable as a piece of trembling flesh" (Ibn Kathir). It might be noted how close the description comes to what modern geologists say in connection with the theory of Plate Tectonic, viz., that the upper crust consisting of some seven plates is in slow motion, whose friction against each other causes earthquakes as well as creates mountains (Au.).

24. In the country side waymarks help in locomotion. What about deserts and the seas? The answer is, stars serve that function.

[17] Is He then who creates, like him who does not create? Will you not receive admonition?

أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لَّا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] And, if you were to count His blessings, you will not number them. Verily, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Kind.²⁵

وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] And Allah knows what you conceal and what you reveal.²⁶

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسْرُونَ وَمَا تَعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] As for those they invoke besides Allah, they do not create anything. In fact, they themselves are created.

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] Dead. Not alive;²⁷ and know not when they will be resurrected.

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرِ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] Your God is one God. As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts are in refusal,²⁸ and they wax proud.²⁹

إِهْلَكُمْ إِلَهَ وَاحِدٍ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مُّنْكِرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

25. That is, since you will not be able to number Allah's blessings, you will not be able to thank for them, but Allah is Most Forgiving, if you fail to do that, Most Kind (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari).

26. That is, if punishment does not follow the rebellion, it is not because Allah is unaware of what's going on in the earth. Equal unto him are the concealed thoughts and the revealed acts. But He grants respite.

In general terms, man owes to Allah profound thanks for the countless favors He bestows on him, every moment of his existence. But, instead, he shows stubborn ingratitude and crosses all limits by attributing the favors to someone other than Him. In consequence, he deserves to be destroyed. But if he is alive, and thriving, it is because Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Kind (Au.).

27. Those to whom the people devote themselves are either lifeless idols carved from wood, mud or stone, in short, inanimate objects, or saints and religious figures who are also dead, long reduced to dust. What is the point in worshiping either? (Shabbir, Mawdudi).

28. That is, their hearts are committed to refusal of Allah, His Oneness, His bounties, life after death, and of

[23] *There is no doubt about it that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal.³⁰ Surely, He does not approve of those who wax proud.³¹*

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] *When they are asked, 'What has your Lord sent down?' they answer, 'Tales of the ancients.'³²*

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَآذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

the fact that worship is due to Him alone (Ibn Jarir).

29. Alusi writes that every failure of the people can be concealed, but not arrogance. The arrogant can be exposed, to which Thanwi adds that, arrogance is the root cause of disbelief.

It is interesting to note that Prince Charles, the British queen's son, has said in a recent statement that "arrogance is the root cause of the insurmountable moral, social and ecological problems that the Western peoples face."

But, is there anyone ready to listen any better than the Quraysh did?

Majid quotes: "The monotheistic idea,' says Palmer, 'was not new to the Arabs but it was distasteful, and particularly so to the Quraish, whose supremacy over the other tribes, and whose worldly prosperity arose from the fact that they were the hereditary guardians of the national col-

lection of idols kept in the sanctuary at Mecca.' And the cry of Islam therefore naturally 'sounded like a revolutionary watch word, a radical-party cry, which the conservative Meccans could not afford to despise and which they combated very energetically' (Palmer, *The Qur'an*, Intro. p. xlix)."

30. That is, you might cleverly conceal your pride and arrogance with the help of outward humility. But Allah sees beyond the smoke screen (Au.).

31. It is reported of Hasan b. 'Ali that he would sit in the company of the poor and the humble and say, "Allah does not approve of those who wax proud" (Ibn Jarir).

32. This is the answer Quraysh leaders gave to the pilgrims and visitors to Makkah, when they wished to know their opinion about the Qur'an (Kashshaf).

[25] So that they may bear, on the Day of Judgment, their own burdens in full, as well as some of the burdens of those they misled³³ without knowledge.³⁴ Lo! Evil is that which they shall bear.³⁵

لِيَحْمِلُوا أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمِنْ
أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّونَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ أَلَا سَاءَ
مَا يَرْتَوُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Sayyid writes: “Those of the pagans who waxed proud, whose hearts were filled with refusal and rejection, did not think it necessary that when asked by their compatriots, ‘What has your Lord revealed?’ they should reply in a most natural manner. They could in reply recite a few verses that they knew, or quote their substance, and honestly tell the inquirer what the content of the message was, whether they believed in it or not. But an honest response was not in their nature. So they said, ‘Tales of the ancients.’ And tales of the ancients are filled with myths, fantasies and superstitions. So, that’s how they described a Qur’ān which cures sick hearts, deals with life’s problems, people’s behavior, matters pertaining to social interactions with reference to human condition in the past, present and the future!”

33. A report from the Prophet (preserved by Abu Da’ud, Ibn Majah and Musnad Ahmad: H. B. Ibrahim) helps us understand this verse,

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلَالَةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا

“Whoever invited to a righteous thing will have the rewards equal to the rewards of those who followed him, without their rewards being reduced. And whoever invited to an error will bear the sins of all those who followed him, without their burdens being lessened” (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir). That is because it was binding upon everyone to make his own inquiry about the truth of the matter and reach his own conclusions, instead of blindly following other people’s opinions (Zamakhshari).

34. A possibility exists that the term “without knowledge” is the attribute of those who are led to error: the blind followers. It is their ignorance that makes them vulnerable (Kashshaf, Alusi).

[26] Those who went before them did also plot.³⁶ So Allah came to their buildings from the foundations,³⁷ the roof fell down on them from above them³⁸ and the punishment came from a quarter they did not perceive.³⁹

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَآتَى اللَّهُ بُيُوتَهُمْ مِنَ الْفَوَاقِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ مِنْ قَوْفِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Then, on the Day of Judgment He will humiliate them, and ask them, 'Where are those that you associated with Me, concerning whom you would vehemently dispute?'⁴⁰ Those who were given knowledge⁴¹ will speak out, 'Assuredly, this day humiliation and the (accompanying) evil is upon the unbelievers.'

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُ أَأَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تُشَاقِقُونَ فِيهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

35. For an illustration of how the burdens would be borne on the Judgment Day, see *Al-An'am*, note 50 of this work.

36. That is, past nations also tried similar plots to thwart the entry and growth of truth in the hearts of the people. But Allah failed them and destroyed them by striking at their foundations (Au.).

37. In the Arabic language the idiom, "He came to their buildings from the foundations" refers to a complete destruction (Ibn Jarir).

38. When a roof falls, it falls from above. Why then did Allah say, "and the roof fell down on them from above them?" That is because, Razi and Qurtubi explain, in Arabic they will say, "The roof fell upon us"

whether the speakers were under the roof or not when it fell. But if it fell when they were under it, then they will say "the roof fell down on us from above us."

39. Asad comments: "This is obviously a metaphor (Razi) describing the utter collapse of all endeavors - both individual and social - rooted in godlessness and false pride."

40. "Shaqqa" of the original denotes (acrimonious: Alusi) argumentation between two individuals or parties (Ibn Jarir).

41. Those are meant who, in the words of Asad, "availed themselves of the knowledge of good and evil, which God offers to mankind through His prophets."

[28] Those, whose lives the angels took while they were wronging themselves, they offered surrender (saying), 'We were doing no evil.'⁴² (They were told), 'Nay, Allah is aware of what you were doing.'⁴³

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي
أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَأَلْقَوْا السَّلَامَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ
سُوءٍ بَلَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ
﴿٢٨﴾

[29] Enter then the doors to Jahannum to abide therein forever. Surely, evil is the abode of those who wax proud.'

فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
فَلَبَسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] While, (when) the godfearing are asked,⁴⁴ 'What has your Lord sent down?' they reply, '(All that is) good.'⁴⁵ For those who do good in this world, there will be good. But the abode of the Hereafter is better, and surely, excellent (is the) abode of the godfearing.

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا
خَيْرًا لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا
حَسَنَةٌ وَلَدَارِ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ
الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Eternal gardens that they will enter, underneath which rivers flow. For them therein, whatever they wish. That is how Allah rewards the godfearing.

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ هُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ كَذَلِكَ
يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

42. 'Ikrimah has said that the (immediate) application at the time of revelation was to those who had embraced Islam in Makkah but did not migrate. They were dragged into the battle of Badr, although quite unwilling, and got killed there. Allah revealed about them (16: 28), "Those whose lives the angels took while they were wronging themselves. They offered surrender (saying), 'We were doing no evil'" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

43. Asad writes: "Implying that their plea of ignorance is rejected in view

of the fact that they were offered God's guidance through His revealed messages, which they deliberately scorned in their false pride and dismissed out of hand a 'fable of ancient times.'"

44. Although Razi's own opinion is that the term "righteous" (ittaqaw of the original) is applicable to every Muslim who bore the Islamic testimony, he reports Qadi as of opinion that the term is applicable only to those who lived by every obligation of Islam, and shunned everything forbidden by it. Only such as those

[32] *Those whose lives the angels take while they are good (and pure), saying, 'Peace upon you; enter Paradise for what you were doing.'*⁴⁶

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ
سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] *Are they waiting except that the angels should come to them or your Lord's command should come?*⁴⁷ *So did those who went before them. And, Allah wronged them not, but rather, they were wronging their own souls.*

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ
يَأْتِي أَمْرٌ رَبِّكَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

who do that are true believers and to whom the term “*muttaqi*” is applicable.

45. Ibn Abi Hatim narrates through Suddi, “The Quraysh got together and said, ‘Muhammad has a sweet tongue. When he speaks to someone, the man loses his head. Look for well connected men and send them to stand at every entrance to the town, for a day or two to send back anyone coming in to see him.’ So they stood guard at every entrance. Whenever someone showed up, sent by his tribe to find the truth about Muhammad, the man at the passage would say, ‘I am so and so. Let me tell you what Muhammad is. He is a liar. None but the dregs of the society, fools or slaves have followed him. As for the chieftains, they have distanced themselves away from him.’ So the delegated man would return. Hence Allah said, “When they are

asked, ‘What has your Lord sent down?’ they answer, ‘Tales of the ancients.’” However, if the envoy that was sent happened to be someone Allah had decided to guide, and they said to him what they said to everyone, he would say, ‘An evil messenger I would be if, after a day’s travel, I should return without having met the man himself, hear what he has to say, and relay the information to my people.’ So he will enter Makkah, ask a believer if he met one, ‘What does Muhammad say?’ He would be told, ‘(All that is) good...’ (Sayyid).

46. The reference could be to the soul’s entry into Paradise immediately with death - final, bodily entry into it to take place only after the Resurrection and Reckoning (Thanwi).

47. But, writes Thanwi, embracing faith then, at that time, would be of no avail.

[34] Therefore, the evil results of what they did struck them, and that hemmed them, which they were mocking.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم
مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Said those who associated (others with Allah), 'If Allah had willed, we would not have worshiped anything other than Him, neither we, nor our forefathers, nor would we have forbidden anything following other than Him.⁴⁸ Thus did those who went before them.⁴⁹ So, is there anything upon the Messengers beyond manifest deliverance?⁵⁰

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا
مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَحْنُ وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا
حَرَمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا
الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٣٥﴾

48. This they said, writes Shawkani, although they did not believe in it, to only escape from being labeled as irrational. They knew they had no rational grounds to defend their idol-worship. So they tried to turn the table on the Prophet. They argued that 'if all that happens in the world is, as you say O Muhammad, by Allah's will, and that nothing can escape His decree, then it follows that we have His approval for doing what we do, viz., worship of the idols, or declaration of this or that as unlawful.'

49. Majid shows the fallacy in the argument: "The fallacy, which the pagans' argument involved, lay in their confusion of the 'will' of God - the liberty He has allowed mankind in the choice of their actions - with His pleasure or command; in not distinguishing between the physi-

cal laws of God's universe from His moral law. Because He in His grand Plan, has created venomous reptiles, it does not follow that He approves of men being stung by the snakes. Because He has endowed men with power to steal and capacity to kill, it does not follow that He is pleased with house-breaking and murder."

50. The message is clear (*Mubin*) "in three senses; (1) a Message clear and unambiguous, (2) one that makes all things clear to those who try to understand, because it accords with their own nature as created by Allah, (3) one preached openly and to everyone" (Yusuf Ali).

The scientists are fond of saying that, "The most amazing thing about this universe is that it can be understood" (Au.).

[36] Indeed, We raised a Messenger in every nation⁵¹ (with the proclamation) that, 'Worship Allah alone and shun the Taghut.'⁵² Then, among them there were some whom Allah guided, while there were others among them, for whom error became inevitable.⁵³ Go about therefore, in the land and see what was the end of those who cried lies.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

51. On the question of Messengers sent to every nation, see *Surah Yunus*, note 76 of this work.

52. For the meaning of this term, see *Surah Al-Baqarah*, note 553 and *Al-Nisa'*, notes 172 and 189 of this work.

53. Error became inevitable for them, by the decree of Allah because He found them insisting on it, incapable of, and disinclined to any good (Zamakhshari). Shawkani thinks however, presenting an argument from Zajjaj, that although Allah ordered the people to believe in His messages, He did not will that everyone should accept.

In other words, Razi adds, Allah's "command" (*amr*) and will (*maShi'ah*) are two different things. He may "command" but only that happens which He wills. So, He commanded belief in Him, but for some He willed that they shall believe while for others that they should not.

Qada' and Qadr

What Razi wrote is the standard viewpoint of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. For some it can be intriguing because people mix up two issues. The issue of Allah sending His Messages wishing mankind to seek salvation through it, and leaving it entirely to the choice of men to either accept or reject the Message. Men have been given the power of intellect and various senses to employ, as well as the ability to choose between one and the other and act in full freedom. This is one issue.

The second issue is that of *Qada'* and *Qadr*. In everyday life, the second issue comes up only after people have made their choice - and not before. Whatever they choose, whether to accept or reject, is, they are told, by Allah's Will, since, ultimately, it is His Will that prevails. Now, they cannot see how Allah's Will could prevail, since they are, apparently, in full control of their destiny. Con-

sequently, since this is something of an unsolvable mystery to them, they are told to simply believe in it. Hence, *Qada'* and *Qadr* are a matter of faith. No action is demanded in consequence.

In other words, the concept of *Qada'* (Divine decree) and *Qadr* (fore-ordainment) are only brought into picture after a man has made his choice and not before. To further simplify: people are free to choose in their affairs any of the several options available to them. All the same, once they have made their choice, have acted according to it, and have seen the consequences, they are told that whatever happened, was by *Qada'* and *Qadr*. But the misguided ones reverse the order, keep doing what they wish, but place the responsibility on Divine Decree.

Nevertheless, since the unbelievers do not see Allah's will getting the better of them, nor do they believe in any such mysterious hand working against them, the responsibility cannot be shifted to Allah. They were absolutely free to choose either of the two courses: submission to Him or rebellion against Him. It is only when they had made the choice that a new aspect of thought, and not of action, was introduced: that

of Allah's Will. But men should not be unduly disturbed by this concept because they are absolutely sure they made the choice following their own good judgment.

Further, the issue does not end there. If someone believes that he made the wrong choice because God's Will influenced him, then, he might remember that he is still free to tilt the scale back into his favor. He can say to himself that he shall act against God's Will, and reverse his decision, after the first choice, to embrace the right course rather than the wrong one in keeping with the demands of his second opinion. After all, he hasn't lost his freedom to retreat his steps. Has he? Now, if he does not do that, then should he not bear the responsibility for his choice, no matter what he learns from the believers in Islam about *Qada'* and *Qadr*? (Au.)

All the same, Imām Razi also reports Ka'bi, of opinion that the "word" of misguidance came true on some people by Allah's decree because they chose to go off the course. Alusi is also inclined to this meaning. In his words: "One opinion is that Allah does not 'create' guidance and force it on a person while he chooses to create misguidance in himself."

Sayyid is clear about this issue: “Allah the Most High does not intend that anyone should worship other than Him, or forbid unto oneself of the good things that He has not forbidden, nor does He approve of any such thing, when they are done. This is made manifest through a variety of means, primarily through Prophets raised to preach His Oneness. Allah said, ‘Indeed, We raised a Messenger in every nation (with the proclamation) that, ‘Worship Allah alone and shun the Taghut.’ This was His command and this was His intention. Allah will not order a thing carried out by anyone when He knows that they have no power to do it. His disapproval of this is proved by the verse, ‘Go about therefore, in the land and see what was the end of those who cried lies.’

“Allah willed that He should create the human race with the intrinsic capacity for both right and wrong and left it entirely to their will to choose between either one, or the other. He endowed them with intelligence in order that they could weigh out the pros and cons of both. In addition, He spread in the world such signs of truth as the eye, the ear, the mind, the heart and the senses can observe - all about them, in every direction, visible by the day and by the night.

Further, Allah did not wish that the intellect He endowed to the human beings be left alone to operate. He sent down His guidance to function as a criterion against which the human mind could always balance its own decisions whenever in doubt. He did not send the Messengers as tyrants to impose His guidance upon the people. Yet, He sent them as the conveyers of the truth.”

Se`di also tries to clear the picture: “The pagans laid blame on Allah’s will for their idol-worship: a false argument. Had it been true, Allah would not have chastised them. Allah commanded them (tawhid) and prohibited them (the idols). He gave them powers to choose and act. And, this is something that every human being has a natural cognizance of: that he indeed has the power to do something if he wills it. There is no difference in opinion over this issue at all. So, they used the issue of “*Qada’* and *Qadr*” only to argue out the Muslims and defeat the truth that the Messengers brought. But, once the Messengers had delivered the message, no excuse remained valid. Messengers were not there but to deliver, which they did. Hence, in face of their persistent intransigent behavior, Allah said (16: 35),

[37] If you eagerly covet their guidance, then (you may know that) Allah does not guide one whom He sends astray.⁵⁴ And they have no helpers.

إِنْ تَحْرَصْ عَلَىٰ هُدَاهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] And they swore by Allah stubbornly, 'Allah will never raise up those who die.'⁵⁵ Nay, it is a promise (binding) upon Him, in truth, but most people know not.⁵⁶

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

فَهَلْ عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ [النحل : ٣٥]

“So is there anything upon the Messengers beyond manifest deliverance?”

54. The translation follows the preference of Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir. However, some of the *Salaf* understood the verse as meaning, “Allah does not guide those who choose to go astray.”

55. That is, such were the characteristics of the people that the Prophet wanted to show guidance but they denied vehemently that Allah will be able to resurrect them. Therefore Allah led them astray (Au.).

Asad has a good piece of commentary that relates to the modern situation. He writes: “This categorical denial of resurrection - implying as it does of God’s ultimate judgment of good and evil - is characteristic of a mental attitude which refuses to admit the reality, or even possibility, of

anything that lies beyond the range of man’s actual or potential observation. Since such an attitude is an outcome of an intrinsically materialistic outlook on life and the ‘false pride’ referred to in verse 22-23 above, it is anti-religious in the deepest sense of the word even if it is accompanied by a vague - because non-consequential - belief in the existence of God.”

56. In this context goes the *hadith* reported by Abu Hurayrah:

قال الله: سبني ابن آدم، ولم يكن ينبغي له أن يسبني، وكذبني ولم يكن ينبغي له أن يكذبني فأما تكذيبه إياي، فقال (وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ) قال: قلت (بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا) وأما سبه إياي، فقال: (إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ) وقلت (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ) وَمَنْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ)

“Son of Adam insults Me - which he has no right to do - and he cries lies to Me - which he has no right to do. As for his crying lies to me, he says (in the words

[39] So that He may make clear unto those who differed thereon, and so that the unbelievers realize that they were liars.⁵⁷

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يُخْتَلَفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] Indeed, Our word to a thing, when We wish it, is that We say to it, 'Be,' and it is.⁵⁸

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَكُونَ لَهُ
كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٠﴾

of the *Qur'ān* 6: 109), 'And they swore by Allah their strongest oath, that He will never resurrect the dead,' whereas I have said (16: 38), 'Nay, a promise upon Us, in truth.' As for his insulting Me, he says, 'Allah is the third of the three', while I have said, 'Say, He, Allah, is One. Allah, the Eternal. He beget not, nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable to Him'" (Ibn Jarir). The *hadīth* is also in the *sahih* works but differently worded (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn 'Abbas was told that some people from Iraq held the opinion that 'Ali will be raised before the Judgment-day, and they cite this verse in evidence. (That is, they argued that the verse refers to 'Ali). Ibn 'Abbas said, "They lie. The verse is of general meaning. By my own life, if 'Ali was expected to come back we would not have married his wives and distributed his wealth amongst ourselves" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Also see *Al-Baqarah*, note 205 of this work, for previous occurrence of this narration with a few other details.

57. Mawdudi writes: "Life-after-Death, ... is also a moral requirement. A great many people have been party to differences... Some of them were oppressors and wrongdoers while others were victims of oppression and wrong-doing. Some people made sacrifices while others subjected them to these sacrifices. In addition, everyone adopted according to his likes, a moral philosophy and attitude which affects - for good or bad - the lives of billions, even trillions of other human beings. Now, a time must come when the moral consequences of these attitudes should be visible in the form of reward or punishment. If the present world is not so constituted that the true and full moral consequences of man's actions can become apparent, then there must be another world to ensure that this is so."

58. That is, the unbelievers deny the resurrection because in their imagi-

[41] Those who emigrated in Allah's cause,⁵⁹ after they were wronged, We shall surely lodge them in this world in a goodly (lodging),⁶⁰ but, truly, the rewards of the Hereafter are greater,⁶¹ if they knew.⁶²

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا
لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَلَا جُزْءَ الْآخِرَةِ
أَكْبَرَ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

nation it is so difficult a feat that the God of their imagination cannot accomplish it. But it is easy for the One, the sole Lord of the universe, who, when He wishes to create a thing, brings it into existence instantly (Au.).

The verse emphasizes the quick pace of creation when Allah wills a thing, and not that He has to say the word “*kun*” (Au.). “There is no interposition of Time or Condition between His Will and its consequences, for He is the ultimate Reality. He is independent of the proximate or material causes, for He Himself creates them and establishes their laws as He pleases” (Yusuf Ali).

59. Although a literal translation should be “in Allah”, but Alusi explains, with an example from *hadith* usage, that in this kind of construction the meaning would be “in Allah's cause.”

60. The allusion is to the emigration to Madinah, escaping persecution at Makkah (Ibn ‘Abbas and Qatadah: Ibn Jarir). But it could as well be to

the earlier emigration to Abyssinia. Some eighty men and women, including the Prophet's own daughter Ruqayyah and son in law ‘Uthman and his other relatives such as Ja'far b. Abi Talib - the *Siddiqun* and the *Siddiqat* of this *Ummah* - migrated when staying in Makkah became impossible for them. Allah's promise came true and they became “leaders of the pious” (Ibn Kathir).

61. It is widely reported that during his caliphate when ‘Umar distributed wealth from the state treasury he would say to the emigrants, “Here take it. This is what Allah had promised you as rewards of this world. As for what is in store for you in the world to come, it will be much more” (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

62. The verse might be addressing those who had already emigrated, or were in the process of making up their minds (Au.).

Thanwi extends the rule contained in the verse: “In the like manner of those who abandon their homes for

[42] (It were) Those who observed patience⁶³ and placed their trust in their Lord.⁶⁴

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And, We did not send before you except men,⁶⁵ revealing unto them. Ask then the people of Remembrance - if you do not know.⁶⁶

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

the sake of Allah, those will also be rewarded in both the worlds who abandoned things prohibited by Him.”

63. That is, those Makkan Muslims who bore oppression patiently.

64. Shafi` takes us back to Qurtubi's discussion under verse 100 of *Surah Nisa'*. He wrote there that there are several kinds of *Hijrah*:

- (i) From the land of the unbelievers to the land of Islam; this becomes obligatory when it is not possible to follow Islam even in important affairs.
- (ii) From the land of innovations (*dar al-bid'ah*). Imām Malik has written that it is not allowed to live in a place where pious scholars of the past are insulted following the rule that if you cannot remove wrongs, remove yourself from the wrongs.

• (iii) From a place where the unlawful is overwhelmingly prevalent.

• (iv) To escape persecution

• (v) For reasons of health

• (vi) To save one's wealth - if it is threatened.

65. When the pagans said that Allah could not choose a man to be a Messenger, rather, he should have been one of the angels, Allah revealed this verse (Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir). In fact, Jiba'i has said that Allah did not send angels to the Prophets, carrying His commandments, except in the form of human beings (Razi, Shawakani).

As regards the question of women raised as Prophets refer to *Surah Yusuf*, note 153.

66. That is, the pagans could get over their skepticism by referring to the People of the Book (Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and other others: Ibn Jarir). Zajjaj however has removed

all doubts that accompany the question whether the People of the Book could be consulted (Au.), by saying, 'ask anyone who will reply in the light of knowledge and research' (Razi).

Yusuf Ali's explanation further clarifies: "If the Pagan Arabs, who were ignorant of religious and other history, wondered how a man from themselves could receive inspiration and bring a Message from Allah, let them ask the Jews, who had also received Allah's Message earlier through Moses, whether Moses was a man, or an angel, or a god. They would learn that Moses was a man like themselves, but inspired by Allah." (It could) "also mean any men of wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters."

Taqlid

(Although it is a matter of common sense, but it needs to be reiterated because of people's habit to lose sight of some basic principles in religious affairs: Au.). A wider implication of the verse is that, there is no alternative for the common man but to follow a reputed scholar (*mujtahid*). Apart from other, several reasons, the following verse (no. 44) gives the guideline:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ [النحل : ٤٤]

"We have sent down unto you (O Muhammad) the Remembrance, that you may make clear unto the people what has been sent down for them."

So, the people needed Prophetic words to explain to them Allah's revelation. Now, further down the line of argument, who will explain to the people the utterances of the Prophet? Or those statements of the Qur'an that pertain to the Law? Obviously, not everyone can do it unto himself. We know what will happen if the constitution of a country was published in newspapers, and people told to follow 'the laws of the land,' as best as they understood. There would be less injury to the body if laymen prescribed drugs for themselves, instead of the doctors, than there would be to their souls if they worked out the law by themselves, without referring to the scholars. Alusi writes, "Jalaluddin Syuti has said in his 'Ikli' that the common people should follow the scholars in fru`at (minor details). But, the condition of 'fru`at' is unwarranted. For, the verse itself is unconditional. The truth is, as is reported of the other Jalal (Jalal al-Mahalli, the co-writer of Tafsir Jalalayn along with Jalaluddin

[44] (We sent them) with clear signs and Scriptures. And (similarly) We have sent down unto you (O Muhammad) the Remembrance,⁶⁷ that you may make clear unto the people what has been sent down for them,⁶⁸ that haply they may reflect.

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ
لِلنَّاسِ مَا نَزَّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Do those then who plot evils,⁶⁹ feel secure that Allah will not cause the earth to swallow them, or chastisement comes to them from quarters they did not reckon?

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ
اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ
حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] Or He might seize them in (the midst of) their to and fro movements, and they will not be able to frustrate (Him)?

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ فِي تَقْلُبِهِمْ فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

al-Suyuti: Au.) that a *mujtahid* may be followed in all matters: in principles as well as details, in law as well as in creed, whether the *mujtahid* be dead or alive. Jalal as well as others have also stated that a non-*mujtahid* may not be followed. Hafiz ibn Hajr has added another condition: the madh-hab (school of fiqh) of the *mujtahid* being followed has to be a well documented and preserved one, that meets the conditions of trustworthiness, and not such of those as Imām Al-Awza`i, Thawri or Ibn Abi Layla and others (whose rulings do not meet these conditions). Further, if a school other than the four well-known ones is followed, then that should only be in one's own private affairs. As for offering religious rulings in its light, that would not be

correct. That should be done in the light of the four schools of law alone. This last condition, states Alusi, is only a precautionary step.

Razi advances another step and says that even a *mujtahid* should follow a more knowledgeable *mujtahid* when in doubt. This, he adds, is, if not obligatory, then, to say the least, certainly permissible.

67. That is, this Qur'an (Ibn Jarir).

68. The Qur'an consists of two kinds of verses: the *muhkam* and the *mujmal*. *Muhkam* (those whose meaning is well established) explain themselves. The *mujmal* (synoptic) were explained by the Prophet (Razi).

69. The direct allusion is to Makkan pagans who plotted against the spread of Allah's message (Ibn Jarir).

[47] Or He might seize them little by little (through gradual depletion)?⁷⁰ Indeed, your Lord is All-clement, All-compassionate.⁷¹

أَوْ يَأْخُذْهُمْ عَلَىٰ تَخَوُّفٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

It could also be to the assassination they were plotting after they had begun to suspect that the Prophet might emigrate to another place (Au.).

Asad writes: “To my mind, by ‘evil schemes’ are meant here systems of God-denying philosophy and of perverted morality.”

70. “*Takhawwuf*” of the text expresses gradualism, to which Farra’ (the famous grammarian) added that it implies taking away (something) from borders and edges (Ibn Jarir). Thus, a beautiful term that expresses first the pagan’s territorial losses that were to come over the next ten years at the hands of the Prophet, and then the rest of the world’s losses in another twenty years at the hands of his followers (Au.).

Ibn Kathir however prefers the meaning involving fear. That is, seize them while they are in fear, or dreadful, or apprehensive, that they’d be seized. But, since this implies foreknowledge of the descending chastisement,

Zamakhshari and Shawkani do not approve of this meaning in view of the words of the passage which said, “from quarters that they did not reckon.”

Zamakhshari in fact narrates that once ‘Umar asked the people how they understood the term “*Takhawwuf*.” Nobody answered except for an old man of the Hudhayl tribe. He said his tribe would understand it as meaning gradualism. ‘Umar asked him if he could support it with a poetical piece. When the man did, ‘Umar remarked, “People. Do not neglect pre-Islamic poetry, for therein lies the meaning of the Qur’an.”

71. These words were both the statement of a fact as well as a promise that, since ‘your Lord is All-clement, All-compassionate’ He will allow the second option to prevail, that of gradual annihilation, which proved to be less painful, than a one-stroke destruction threatened in the earlier two verses (with a point from Ibn Jarir).

[48] Do they not see that all things⁷² that Allah has created, how their shadows incline towards right and left,⁷³ in prostration to Allah,⁷⁴ and they are humbly submitted?

أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلَالُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ
سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] And to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth of the moving creatures,⁷⁵ and (so do) the angels - and they do not wax proud.

وَاللَّهُ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

72. Asad clarifies, “In view of the separate mention, in the next verse, of animals and angels, the ‘things’ referred to here apparently denote inanimate objects and perhaps also living organisms like plants.”

73. The textual word is in plural (lit., “lefts”). Ibn Jarir quotes some poetical pieces to show that usage of this kind was not uncommon in earlier times. In fact, Shawkani says, it is right there in the Qur’ān also. It said (*Al-Baqarah*, 7),

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ [البقرة : ٧]

“Allah has sealed their hearts, and their hearing” where “hearts” in the original is in plural, but “hearing” in singular.

Imām Razi quotes other examples from the Qur’ān, for e.g. (54: 45)

وَيُؤَلِّقُ الدُّبُرَ [القمر : ٤٥]

“They will show their back” (instead of backs, adbar).

74. The accepted meaning is that the shadows of all things prostrate to Allah, and their prostration is manifested by their movement from left to right as the sun rises and then sets throwing shadow of everything from one extreme (left) to another extreme (right) - Ibn Jarir.

In other words, add Zamakhshari and Razi, “*yesjudu*” of the text implies submission. In Asad’s words, “... is obviously a symbolism expressing the intrinsic subjection of all created beings and things to God’s will.”

75. The textual word “*dabbah*” draws the following comment from Asad, “The term *dabbah* denotes any sentient, corporeal being capable of spontaneous movement, and is contrasted here with the non-corporeal, spiritual beings designated as angels.”



[50] They fear their Lord above them⁷⁶ and do as they are ordered.

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] And Allah said, 'Take not (for worship) two gods.⁷⁷ He is the One and only God. So, stand in awe of Me, Me alone.'⁷⁸

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٥١﴾

76. The translation of the words “*min fawqihim*” is literal. Another possible meaning, as Zajjaj has said, is that this is for exaltation (*ijlal*), just as in verse (*Al-An`am*, 18),

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ [الأنعام : ١٨ :

“And He is the Irresistible, above His slaves.”

Or (*Al-A`raf*, 127),

وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ [الأعراف : ١٢٧ :

“We are above them, irresistible” (Kashshaf, Shawkani).

Imām Razi refutes here the idea of some of the anthropomorphists that the *fawqiyah* (above-ness) is in the physical sense. Rather, the “*fawqa*” of the text is the “*fawqiyah*” of rank, honor, power and irresistibility (Razi).

This kind of usage is common in every language. We say, “He has officers above him,” which does not mean they sit above him in the upper floor (Au.).

Also see note 8 and 29 of *Surah Al-An`am* for further explanation.

77. Majid has a note missed out by most other commentators, and touched upon it in passing even by the contemporary ones. But, seeing how ideas and religious beliefs have a habit of recurrence, it is important to note. He writes: “This repudiates ‘dualism’ in all its forms and shades, especially the Zoroastrian doctrine of two gods or two ultimate principles, Ahriman and Ormazd. ‘At the beginning of things there existed the two spirits who represented good and evil. Both spirits possess creative power, which manifests itself positively in the one and negatively in the other.’ (Ebr. XXII, p. 98). Dualism, however, is not confined to the Zoroastrian religion. Its ‘rudimentary forms ... the antagonism of a Good and Evil deity are well known among the lower races of mankind.’ (PC, II, p. 316). ‘Now, in earlier ages mankind has been found believing in many gods, or in two original spiritual principles or gods, the one good

[52] To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. His is the religion for ever.⁷⁹ Will you then, fear other than Allah?⁸⁰

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ
وَاصِبًا أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

and the other evil, which are at conflict in the universe. The latter belief, which we call dualism, is so congruous with part of our experience, both within ourselves and without ourselves, that it is always reviving. Nevertheless, I think that, like polytheism properly so-called, it is rationally impossible for us today. The science of nature has demonstrated the absolute unity of nature. Good and evil, as we know them in experience, mind and matter, the world of moral purpose and the world of material things, are not the product of two separate original forces. They are knit into one another as phases in one whole, results of one force, one system of interconnected law. The universal material and spiritual is, as Spinonza said, one and (in some sense) of one substance: and God, if there be a God, in part manifest and in part concealed nature, is one only.' (Gore, *Belief in God*, p. 53)."

In the same vein, one might add that the physicists are now of opinion that the four forces of nature, the electro-magnetic, the gravitational, the weak and the strong nuclear forces, are manifestations of a single,

Super force. They believe a theory of physics is possible (called as Grand Unification Theory, or GUT) which will express the various forces in one formula. Some advances have already been made. Weinberg-Salam theory demonstrates that electromagnetic and the weak force are in fact two parts of a single force. Thus, we will arrive at the "oneness" of physical laws that rule the world (Au.).

78. Asad comments: "This is a striking example of the fluctuation to which personal pronouns are subjected in the Qur'an whenever they refer to God. As already pointed out ... such abrupt changes of pronoun ("He", "I", "Us", "Me", etc.) indicate that God is limitless and, therefore, beyond the range of definition implied in the use of 'personal' pronouns."

79. The translation reflects the understanding of Ibn 'Abbas, 'Ikrimah, Mujahid and others as in Ibn Jarir. The Qur'an said (37: 9):

وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ [الصفات : ٩]

"And for them will be eternal punishment."

[53] Whatever good thing you have, is from Allah. When an adversity touches you, then, unto Him it is that you groan.⁸¹

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّن تَعَمَّةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجَاوَزُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] Then, when He removes the adversity from you, lo, a party of you begins to associate others with their Lord.

ثُمَّ إِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] To show ingratitude for what He gave them. So, enjoy yourself (a little), in time you will come to know.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] And they assign to things they do not even know, a share out of what We provide them.⁸² By Allah, you will be questioned for what you were fabricating.

وَيَعْلَمُونَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ تَاللَّهِ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Two other meanings of “wasib” have also been reported of the *Salaf*: (i) “obligatory” and (ii) “sincerity.”

kind, and in his restoration will base the power of rewarding them’ (PC, II, p. 329).”

80. Majid once again, “It should be borne in mind that a good many pagan nations while believing in One Supreme Being have also offered worship to the Evil One through the motives of fear. The practice is ‘familiar to many barbaric races.’ There is still a ‘numerous though oppressed people in Mesopotamia and adjacent countries’ known as Yazidis or Devil-worshippers. ‘This remarkable sect is distinguished by a special form of dualism. While recognizing the existence of a Supreme Being, their peculiar reverence is given to Satan, chief of the angelic host, who now has the means of doing evil to man-

81. That is, the unbelievers, although deny One, true God, turn to Allah alone when they are faced with serious threats to life and property, pleading, groaning and crying in supplications (Ibn Jarir).

82. That is, the pagans assign a share from what Allah bestows on them to their deities about whom they do not even know whether they will be rewarded for, or not (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Zamakhshari).

Another possible meaning is, ‘the idols do not even know that the pagans are ascribing divinity to them (Razi).

[57] *And they assign to Allah daughters - Glory to Him - and for themselves what they desire.*⁸³

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهِ وَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] *When one of them is given the good news of a female, his face turns dark as he suppresses (his anger).*

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] *Hiding from the people because of the ill of which he was informed:*⁸⁴ *(debating within himself) should he preserve it in humiliation or should he bury it in the ground?*⁸⁵ *Lo! Evil is that they decide.*⁸⁶

يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَتَمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] *Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, theirs is an evil similitude while the loftiest similitude is for Allah. He is the Most Powerful, Most wise.*

لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السُّوءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

Asad relates the verse to a wider context: "... (the verse) bears a wider, more general meaning: It connects directly with the three preceding verses of this *Surah* - namely, with the attribution of a share (*nasib*) in God's creativeness - and thus of a decisive influence on one's life - to 'causes' or 'powers' other than Him. This view has also been advanced by Razi (with a special reference to astrological speculations)."

83. The allusion is to the pagan suggestion that the angels are female and daughters of Allah, while they preferred sons for themselves (Au.). They ascribed "feminism" to them perhaps because they were not vis-

ible, like women, who stay in the inner quarters, invisible to the outsiders (Razi). "The tribes of Khuza'ah .. in particular used to call angels the daughters of God" (Majid).

84. He did not wish to face the people because his wife had given birth to a female.

85. There were several ways in which the pre-Islamic Arabs disposed off their new-born female children. Some of them dug a hole in the ground and buried the infant alive. Others threw them down a cliff, yet others slit their throat, etc. Qays b. 'Asim told the Prophet, "Messenger of Allah. I buried eight female infants in pre-Islamic times." He re-

[61] And, if Allah were to seize the people for their wrongdoing, He would not have left thereon a single creature.⁸⁷ But, He rather gives them respite until a stated term. Then, when their term arrives, they will not be able to delay for a moment nor hasten up.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

plied, “Free a slave for each one of them now” (Razi).

According to Qatadah, it were the Mudar and Khuda`ah tribes that regularly buried their female infants - the Tamim tribe being the severest. But their world knew of some kind-hearted men also. Sa`sa`ah b. Najiyah, Farazdaq’s uncle, was one of those who bought off the lives of those destined to die in return for camels (Qurtubi).

All polytheistic religions, whether Indian, African, or some other variety, evince similar characteristics. Newspapers have reported that in 2000, some 7 million abortions were carried out in India, majority of them because the fetus was female (Au.).

86. “Evil is that they decide”: That is, although they hate daughters for themselves, to the point of burying them alive, in an evil judgment, they attribute them to Allah as His daughters (Thanwi, Shafi`).

Asad thinks of another possibility. He writes, “I.e., either of these alter-

natives is evil: to keep the child as an object of perpetual contempt, or to bury it alive.” And Alusi writes that a Muslim should feel happier at the birth of a daughter, if nothing else, then, in opposition to the pagans.

87. The textual word “*dabbah*” is applicable to every living body that moves or creeps, although originally meant for large animals. (See note 75 above).

The translation as “animal” or as, “insects” would still fit the verse since many animals commit wrongs on others - by which we are not referring to larger animals killing smaller ones for food, following the instinct placed in them. Rather, to wrongs done to their own kind and species.

Abu Salamah says once Abu Hurayrah heard someone say that a transgressor wrongs no one but himself. Abu Hurayrah turned to him and said, “Rather, the transgression of the transgressor can sometimes kill the hawk in its nest” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi). The report is

[62] And they attribute to Allah what they dislike (for themselves); and their tongues ascribe lies that the good is for them.⁸⁸ No doubt that theirs is the Fire, and that they will be left there and forgotten.⁸⁹

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ مَا يَكْرَهُونَ وَتَصِفُ
أَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ لَا جَرَمَ
أَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَأَتَتْهُمْ مُفْرَطُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

preserved by Bayhaqi, 'Abd b. Humayd, Ibn Abi Dunya and others (Shawkani).

So, one might ask, why should animals be punished? The answer is given by Shabbir and others, viz., if, for example, rains are held back because of men's sins, will not the animals be destroyed in their nests?

88. Mujahid, Qatadah and others have thought that the term "al-husna" of the text alludes to sons. The pagans assigned daughters to Allah and unto themselves sons (Ibn Jarir).

But a more general meaning possible is: the unbelievers think they will have a good life here on this earth, and, if there happens to be a Hereafter, a good life there also. In the like manner of the orchard owner mentioned in *Surah al-Kahf* who said (verse 35-36),

مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا (٣٥) وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ
قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُجِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا
[الكهف : ٣٥ ، ٣٦]

"I do not think that this will ever perish. And I do not think that the

Hour will ever strike. If indeed I am brought back to my Lord, then surely, I shall find (for myself) better than this when I return to Him" (Kashshaf [who quotes another example], Ibn Kathir).

Asad adds: "... (this) connects logically with the statement in the next verse that 'Satan had made their own doings seem goodly to them.'"

89. The translation of the term "*mufratun*" as "left and forgotten" has the backing of Sa'id b. Jubayr, Mujahid, Qatadah and others. Another connotation of the term is, "to be hastened on (to something)." A *hadith* says,

أَنَا قَرِطُكُمْ عَلَى الْحَوْضِ

"I shall precede you at the Pond"
(Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

The *hadith* is in Bukhari and others (Au.).

But, obviously, reconciliation is possible. They will be hastened into the Fire and then forgotten there (Ibn Kathir).

[63] By Allah, We surely sent to nations before you. But Satan decked out fair to them their deeds. So He is their ally today⁹⁰ and for them is a painful chastisement.

تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ الْيَوْمَ وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] And We did not send down to you the Book but that you might make clear to them that in which they differ - and a guide and a (source of) mercy for a people who believe.

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] It is Allah who sends down out of heaven water. Then He quickens the earth thereby after its death.⁹¹ Surely, in that is a sign for a people who listen.⁹²

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Another possible meaning is, 'they are being hastened to the Hell-fire, even now, as the days pass by' (Shabbir).

90. "Today," that is, now, in this world (Ibn Jarir). Some others have said that the allusion is to the Day of Resurrection, when those who befriended Satan in the world will be taunted by him (Razi, Qurtubi). Alusi writes that the allusion is to the day when Satan decks out fair evil deeds to them and misguides them.

91. Just as He sent down water, which gives life to the earth, Allah (*swt*) has now sent down the Qur'an as a drink for the thirsty souls (Au.).

92. Mawdudi elucidates: "Man witnesses an instructive spectacle every year. He observes that during the course of each year a time comes

when the earth turns altogether barren, becoming bereft of every sign of life and fertility. One does not even see a blade of grass, nor plants nor leaves, nor vines nor flowers, nor even insects. Then suddenly the rainy season sets in. The very first shower causes life to well up from the depths of the earth. Innumerable roots that lay crushed under layer upon layer of earth are suddenly revived, causing the plants which had appeared on the surface a year ago and had then withered away, to make their appearance once again. Likewise, innumerable insects, every trace of which had been destroyed by the heat of summer, make their reappearance. Men observe this spectacle year after year - that life is followed by death and death by life.

[66] And, verily, in the cattle (too) there is a lesson for you.⁹³ We give you to drink⁹⁴ of what is in its bellies,⁹⁵ from between digested fodder⁹⁶ and blood, milk: pure and easy-flowing⁹⁷ for the drinkers.⁹⁸

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ قَرْتٍ وَدَمٍ لَبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

“Despite all this, when the Prophet (peace be on him) tells that God will restore people to life after death, they are struck with surprise. This reaction clearly indicates that their observation of the phenomenon of life following death is one akin to the observation of irrational brutes who can hardly make any intelligent sense of what they see.”

93. The word “*ibrah*” has its root in “*abar*” which means, to move over, to cross over, etc. The connotation therefore is that “*ibrah*” is a movement from ignorance to knowledge, from heedlessness to heedfulness (Alusi).

94. Ibn Jarir points out, with Razi seconding him, the difference between “*asqaynakum*” (the normal way of putting it) and “*nusqikum*” which is the occurrence here. In contrast to the former, the latter, has the connotation of permanence: a continued act, a recurring bestowal.

95. Once again, linguistically it is allowed, as Ibn Jarir demonstrates with the help of pre-Islamic poetry, that

the pronoun be in singular while the noun is in plural, or noun feminine while its pronoun masculine. (But the latter case is only allowable for non-humans: Razi). Or, perhaps, the allusion by the article “it,” (instead of “their”) is to the “cattle” as a species (Zamakhshari and others).

The meaning, moreover, Ibn Jarir further explains, of the words “*mimma fi butunih*” is that, “We give you for drink through those of them that yield milk, since, not every cattle yields milk.” In other words, the translation of the words “*mimma fi butunih*,” as, “out of what is in their bellies”, (as in the verbal translation above because of complications in expression), is, according to Ibn Jarir, not very accurate. Differently stated, according to the ancients, “*mimma fi butunih*” should be understood to mean, “out of those that (carry milk) in their bellies.”

96. For want of another, more suitable word, the translators have used the word “excretion,” as we shall also employ it or its synonyms in notes

that follow. Otherwise, the textual word “farth” is different from “rawth.” The latter is for animal dropping, discharge, faeces, or dung. “Farth” on the other hand, is the material which would have left the animal intestine, but not yet excreted. After excretion, it is not referred to as “farth” anymore, rather, as “rawth.” Many modern commentators seem to have missed the difference, pointed out by the *Salaf*.

Ibn ‘Abbas described the formation of the three: blood, milk and farth, in the following order: with the fodder entering the animal’s intestine, the first to form is blood, then milk, and then “farth” (which is finally ousted out as “rawth”) - Razi, Qurtubi.

One wonders at Ibn Abbas’ source of the correct statement of this sequence (Au.)>

Imām Razi is not far behind in his concepts. He states that blood enters by many veins into the udders where it is converted into white, wholesome milk.

What does the statement milk “from between excretion and blood” mean? Imām Razi explains that it simply means that of three things involved: the fodder consumed, the blood produced, and, finally, the farth.

To put it briefly from a scientific point of view, once the fodder is consumed and digested, the blood collects and transports the substance so formed to various organs, including to mammary glands. Blood comes into contact with the contents of the intestine, on their walls. Of course, part of the digested food is absorbed by the intestines themselves, but a part is taken to mammary glands where milk is formed.

The interesting point is that the Qur’ān used a perfectly scientific term for the digested substance, i.e., farth (from which milk is extracted), and not rawth (animal droppings), which is the waste ejected. Thus, a simple sentence becomes scientific (Au.).

97. Here again, the meaning of the ancients is different from the meaning apparent to today’s reader. Ibn Jarir states that the meaning of “*sa’iqh*” is “pure” and of the whole sentence, “We give you for drink, milk that happens to be ‘pure’ - with no traces of dung or blood in it.”

However, “easy-flowing”, “easy to swallow” are other connotations of the word “*sa’iqh*” that have been mentioned by several commentators.

Zamakhshari adds: This verse is the basis of some jurists’ opinion that se-

[67] And of the fruits of the palm trees and vines, you extract therefrom strong drink and wholesome food.⁹⁹ Surely, in that is a sign for a people who contemplate.

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ
مِنْهُ سَكْرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

men is not impure: it has no traces of either blood or urine, just like milk that has no trace of either.

98. That is, it does not choke the drinkers, as food chokes them. It is said that nobody was ever choked on milk (Ibn Jarir). Another possible connotation of the term “*sa'igh*” is that the glands in the udder that secrete milk, have many other kinds of liquid secretions. But, upon suction by the infant, it is milk alone that secretes out, without any adulteration and hence flowing easily out of the glands (Au.).

99. Ibn ‘Abbas has been reported through a variety of sources, as well as Ibn Jubayr, Mujahid, Hasan and others, that the allusion by “*sakar*” is to intoxicants that were later declared unlawful, and by “*rizqan hasanan*” to dates and grapes that remained lawful. In other words, the first part of this Makkan verse was abrogated in Madinah. However, Sha`bi and Mujahid were of the preferable opinion, that by “*sakar*” the allusion is to “*nabidh*” (non-intoxicant but a bitter drink) and vinegar, since “intoxi-

cant” is only one of the several connotations of the word “*sakar*” (Ibn Jarir). Treating, therefore, this verse as not abrogated, scholars like Ibrahim Nakha`i, Imām Tahawi, Sufyan Thawri and others have declared “*nabidh*” as lawful. The important qualification of such a drink is that it should be non-intoxicant, whether consumed in small or large quantity (Qurtubi).

“Even if we accept the textual word ‘*sakar*’ as meaning ‘intoxicants,’ writes Mufti Shafi`, the hint that it is disapproved of, and that it will be banned later, is hidden in the adjective ‘good’ added to the noun ‘provision.’ In other words, the verse in discussion becomes the first in a series of steps towards the ultimate ban placed on wine.”

In Yusuf Ali’s words, “If *sakar* is to be taken in the sense of fermented wine, it would refer to the time before intoxicants were prohibited, for this is a Makkan *Sura* and the prohibition came in Madinah. In such a case it would imply a subtle disapproval of the use of intoxicants and mark the

[68] And your Lord inspired the (female) bees¹⁰⁰ that, 'you take (unto yourselves) houses¹⁰¹ among the mountains, trees, and what they build.'¹⁰²

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ
الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ
﴿٦٨﴾

first of a series of steps that in time culminated in total prohibition.”

That non-intoxicant beer is lawful is proven by the *hadith* of Muslim which reports that the Prophet's slave-girl used to leave raisins (dried grapes) into water overnight which the Prophet drank the next morning. When it became stronger by the second or third day, it was thrown away. It is also reported of 'Umar that he sought the digestion of camel meat with the help of “*nabidh*.” Another report in Nasa'i, however, states that the “*nabidh*” that 'Umar drank was merely water mixed with vinegar (Qurtubi).

100. Razi writes: A simple trigonometric exercise shows that no other shape works better than a hexagon, so far as space economy is concerned. This shape is built effortlessly, neatly, and to great accuracy, by the bees that make thousands of cells in the shape of hexagons in their hive. In contrast, human beings would need the help of several measuring instruments to achieve the same level of accuracy. Obviously the design and

the working have been placed in the intuition of these insects, which seems to have been referred to as, literally, revelation to it. Another wonder is that one of them, the largest, performs the functions of a chieftain. It is noted that when the chief gets tired of the hive, it abandons it by flying off and the rest follow him to the new destination. However, when music is played near the hive, it returns to its old hive. These, and many others, are signs of Allah's instructions embedded into the bee's mind (Razi).

The *Sufis* hold, however, that the textual “*awha*” is in the literal sense of “He revealed” since, in contrast to other class of scholars, they believe that insects are communities and have their own prophets, messages, law, and so forth. (Alusi).

It is of interest to note that even Imām Razi, who is usually quite advanced on the contemporary scientific knowledge, as well as Alusi, employ masculine noun to describe the bee as well as the queen, whereas the Qur'an employs feminine form. But

[69] Then feed on all manner of fruit¹⁰³ and tread the paths of your Lord made smooth.¹⁰⁴ There issues forth from its bellies¹⁰⁵ a drink of diverse colors wherein is a relief for the people.¹⁰⁶ Surely, in that is a sign for a people who reflect.¹⁰⁷

ثُمَّ كُلِّي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلَالًا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

they can be excused. Even Shakespeare used masculine form for the bees. That, except for a couple of drones (which are male), the rest of the thousands in any hive are all females, led by a queen, is a piece of information that only recent research has yielded. Obviously, another proof that the Qur'an could not have been written by Prophet Muhammad (Au.).

101. Majid quotes: "The apartments which the bee builds are here called "houses" because of their beautiful workmanship and admirable contrivance which no geometrician can excel' (Bdh)."

102. That is, what the humans build - a suggestion perhaps that the bees are primarily man friendly, building their hives right in the vision of the humans, in contrast to other insects that conceal their nests (Au.).

103. One of the lexical meanings of "thamar" is "trees" (Alusi).

104. The allusion by the textual "zulal" ([the path) made easy, or

smooth), is to the fact that the bee leaves its hive, flies through vast spaces of wilderness, crossing valleys and mountains (in search of flowers), and yet comes back to its hive without losing the way (Ibn Kathir).

105. Imām Razi is of opinion that the bee regurgitates honey from its mouth. On the other hand, Qurtubi is not sure if the honey is regurgitated from the mouth or comes from its rear. He says that the ancient Greeks tried to ascertain by keeping the bees behind a glass, but then it refused to work. Modern research however, confirms that the Qur'an was right in using the term "stomach" (*batan*, pl. *butun*). The bee has two stomachs: one for normal food that goes through the intestine and is fully digested, and another, special one, which is like a pouch within the stomach where honey is collected, enzymes added, the flower nectar half digested, and then honey regurgitated into the comb cells for drying and storage.

106. Allah did not say, “*al-shifa*” rather, “*shifa’un*” which implies that it is a cure for some people, for some disorders, and not for all the people, for all kinds of disorders (Ibn Kathir).

It is said that a man went to the Prophet and complained that his brother was suffering from diarrhea. The Prophet told him to administer him honey. The man came back saying it had increased. The Prophet told him to give him some more honey. The man came back to say that his diarrhea had worsened. The Prophet said, “Allah spoke the truth and your brother’s stomach has lied. Give him honey.” The man did it, and the person recovered (Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* is in Bukhari and Muslim. And the medical people have explained that perhaps the man had a lump of undigested food in his stomach, which the honey attacked and initially caused increase in diarrhea, but finally cured him of it (Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

Or, perhaps, the Prophet knew by revelation that the man would be cured by honey, otherwise, as we know, Imām Razi and others add, that honey is not good for diarrhea. In fact, its large quantity is known to cause diarrhea.

The *sahihayn* also report that the Prophet liked sweets and honey. Bukhari has another *hadith* which reports him as having said,

إِنْ كَانَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ أَدْوِيَّتِكُمْ أَوْ يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ
أَدْوِيَّتِكُمْ خَيْرٌ فَفِي شَرْطَةِ مِحْجَمٍ أَوْ شَرْبَةِ عَسَلٍ أَوْ
لَدَعَةِ بِنَارٍ تَوَافِقُ الدَّاءَ وَمَا أَحَبُّ أَنْ أَكْتَوِيَ

“If there was any (healing) in your medicines any good ... then, in cupping, (removal of blood), a honey-drink, and branding with fire (cauterizing) [if they coincide with the disease], but I do not like to be cauterized.” Another report in Ibn Majah, of a good chain of narrators, names the Qur’an and honey as curing agents (Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi states that there were many of the *Salaf* who treated themselves with nothing but honey. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar was one of them. He applied honey even to wounds and swellings. And, many of them were cured thereby. So, how to explain when Allah Himself did not mean that honey is a cure for every ailment? The answer is, Qurtubi says, that a strong faith brings results that weak faith does not. (After all, modern medicine is quite aware of placebo effects: Au.). Ibn al-‘Arabiyy has said, “He whose faith is weak and whose habits (of mind) overrule

religious instructions, will follow the words of medical men.” Nevertheless, for ordinary men, the established fact remains that honey is not a cure for every ailment. Indeed, this is proven by no less than *hadith* itself. The Prophet said,

لِكُلِّ دَاءٍ دَوَاءٌ ، فَإِذَا أَصَابَ الدَّوَاءُ الدَّاءَ بَرَأَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

“Every ailment has a medicine. So, when the right medicine is administered, the victim is cured by Allah’s will.”

The words of another *hadith* are:

تَدَاوُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَصْعَ دَاءٌ إِلَّا وَضَعَ لَهُ دَوَاءً غَيْرَ وَاحِدٍ : الْهَرَمُ

“People. Use medicine. Allah did not place a disease but also provided its medicine, except for one disease: old-age.”

The above *hadith* is in Abu Da’ud, Tirmidhi and others, which Tirmidhi declared trustworthy (Au.).

There are several other *ahadith* that speak of this or that thing of the Prophet’s contemporary world as holding cure for the diseases of his time. In short, the Prophet spoke of things other than honey as curing agents. Indeed, Ibn ‘Umar himself used to give medicinal potions to his children when unwell, cauterized himself when struck by facial pa-

ralysis and blew charms on his ailing children.

Commentary from Qurtubi ends here.

The rest of the world too, ancient or modern, has not missed the point on the usefulness of honey. Majid quotes and comments: “‘To the ancients honey was of very great importance as an article of diet ... It was valued by them also for its medicinal virtues’ (Ebr. XI, p. 716). ‘Pliny gives a long list of bodily disorders for which it was believed to be an efficacious remedy. The Greeks regarded a diet in which honey was the chief element as especially efficacious in securing longevity’ (ERE, VI, p. 770).’ And to come from the ancients to the modern: ‘Vienna Dr. N. Zaiss, a leading physician here, says honey is the best healer of wounds and superior to all ointments. He has treated several thousand cases with honey, and has not had a single failure. It soothes pain, hastens healing, and acts as an antiseptic. It is also highly effective with burns and carbuncles’ (The Sunday Express, London 28th April, 1935).”

On the lighter side, it is reported that one of the *Shi’ah* said to caliph Mahdi (d. 775 A.C.) that by the term “bee” the allusion is to Banu

Hashim, from whose stomachs issues forth (“honey”, that is), knowledge. One of the exasperated courtiers quipped to a general laughter, “May Allah feed you on what issues forth from their stomachs” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

107. Apparently, there has not been “fruitful” reflection on the bee for, as Majid comments: “The bee, said Virgil, has in it something of the Divine nature; it was the sacred symbol of Ephesus, and was considered a type of goddess. ‘The priests of Ephesus Arteris were called “king bees”; the princesses of Develer, Prosperine, and the Great Mother were known as “bees” ... In European folklore the bee is everywhere sacrosanct.’ (ERE, I, p. 504).”

The Bee

While on the topic, we might as well say a few things about bees and their life.

A bee can be of any size between the tiny 2 mm long one, to the 20 mm giant bee. There are some 20,000 species of them. Although there are exceptions, the bee is primarily a social insect. That is, it leads its life as a community, rather than individuals. Sometimes they can number a million in a single comb but a normal

colony may consist of 40-60,000 bees. And they are highly organized. They are led by a queen, the largest of them. Every comb has a single queen. The queen’s function is no more than to lay eggs. She lives for about five years, mates only once in her lifetime and can lay as many as a million eggs. She lays as many as 2,000 eggs a day, about one every 43 seconds.

The queen, however, is discreet about the gender and caste of her offspring. After mating, which happens in flight, (preceded by release of a smelly substance that attracts the drones), she keeps the sperm in a sack where the liquid can remain alive and viable in a fluid medium for several years. During the process of laying eggs, the queen determines the sex of the offspring. If she decides on a male (drone), she does not fertilize the egg. But, if she intends a worker bee, she fertilizes it with the sperm in store as the egg passes down the oviduct. She lays eggs one in a cell. Thereafter, the worker bees take charge of the cell and the developing young in it.

The queen, who lives in special apartments, identifies herself in a hive by releasing what is called as the “queen substance.” This secretion is

passed along by certain workers in minute portions to all hive inmates. This secretion gives every hive its identity by giving it a specific smell. Further, it inhibits ovary development in the young larvae. But when the queen gets old, or sick, or flies out for good, then in consequence the substance is no longer produced and substitute queens are immediately bred from the young larvae. If two or more queens emerge from the larvae, they will fight it out among themselves. These queen bees have a special curved sting which they use to kill each other. The one that manages to survive after the general fight, takes charge.

The queen normally leaves the hive when it gets overcrowded. When she goes, she takes half of the worker bees with her. To make the task easier, all the departing workers are provided with honey as they move out. The old hive is relinquished to a newly hatched queen. Initially, the swarm moving out may crowd around a branch while the scouts search for a site for a new hive. When the scouts have located a suitable site, they come back and perform their dance to indicate the distance and direction of the site it has found to other scouts. The scouts then investigate one another's sites. At a signal, the

entire swarm travels to whichever site seems best. The queen follows.

A colony consists mostly of female workers. Males are few and hang around doing nothing more than being fed by others. They do not have a long tongue like the female bees have and so cannot feed on flowers by themselves. Therefore, they depend on the female bees to feed them. Their only job is to mate with the queen when the time comes. Nonetheless, they might never mate with the queen in their hive. With the release of the pheromone by a queen bee, of any hive, they fly out hoping to mate. In autumn, when food becomes scarce, female bees stop feeding the drones and drive them out of the hive to die. Female worker bees attends to all tasks. That involves nest building (with the help of wax that they themselves secrete), feeding and brooding the young - from the time the egg is deposited into a cell to the day they emerge as adults. The feeding is done with a special substance produced by the bee called the royal jelly.

From the day of deposit, until after 21 days, when the young finally emerges, the egg goes through various stages of larva and pupa. A specific area is allotted in the hive and cells

are marked where the eggs are deposited and bred. However, in autumn, when the young have emerged, the same cells are cleaned and used for storing honey.

The defense of the nest is also the job of female bee. And, of course, it is they who gather nectar and process it to make honey. They also attend to keeping the hive clean and tidy, and, on warm or cold days maintain a certain temperature. For example, on a hot day they might bring in drops of water, sprinkle all over the hive and fan across the place to keep it cool. Whatever the outside temperature, hive temperature is precisely regulated, otherwise the eggs would be lost. The female bee also act as guards at the entrances, identifying each bee with the help of a chemical that exudes a certain kind of odor, and let in only those that belong to the hive. Finally, they attend to the repair of the hive. For example, if cracks appear (because of weight), the bees produce a special glue (bee glue) with which they fill the crack.

The division of labor between the female bees themselves is also done in a highly organized manner. Their age plays a fundamental role in what tasks will be assigned to them. The tasks match physiological changes

in the bee's body, as they grow after emergence from the larvae.

Capable of seeing blue, yellow and ultraviolet rays, the bee can fly out to long distances in search of food, at an average speed of 20-25 km/hour. She can fly forward, sideways, backward and hover over a flower while it collects nectar. Her sorties can take her as much as 10 km from the hive. She uses perhaps both the sun and the earth's gravitational force to determine her way up and back. Once a source of food is discovered, the scout-bee returns to the hive, loaded with the nectar, and passes the information about the source, the distance, the quantity and quality, with the help of the famous "bee dance." The figure she makes during the dance, the direction she takes in the hive, the manner in which she wags her tail, and the sound she emits during it, communicate information to others about the new source. The others do not wander around as they leave the nest. They fly straightaway in the direction of the new source. While they collect the nectar, they also gather pollen in pollen sacks attached to their hind legs and deposit them into other flowers. They are thus the most important pollinating agent for the plants. The pollen

is also consumed by the bees and is an important source of fats, proteins, vitamins etc. The nectar brought in is regurgitated and handed over to other bees, or deposited into a cell. The worker bees then add some enzymes to it to convert it into honey. The cell is left open for the water to escape, and the residue becomes thick honey. The cell is then sealed.

Honey consists almost entirely of sugars, but it also contains a number of minerals, B-complex vitamins, and amino acids.

Honey is easily assimilated in the human body because it has been pre-digested: bees temporarily store the nectar in a special part of their stomachs, where it is partially digested. The bees' digestive fluids contain enzymes that transform the nectar into honey. Bees later regurgitate the honey into the cells of their honeycomb, where the honey dries and thickens. To produce about 1 pound (0.5 kilogram) of honey requires 25,000 trips between the hive and

flowers. In its whole lifetime, a little less than a year, a bee collects about 45 gm of honey. A pound of honey contains the essence of about 2 million flowers.

Finally, a bee performance! This writer was shown a couple of combs taken out recently from a bee farm in Saudi Arabia and preserved in the refrigerator. They were preserved because when honey was removed, everyone was amazed to see that the bees had carved the word Allah in Arabic. The letters were about 8 cm long, 1 cm wide and 5 mm deep. And, the script was so clear that a child would not have any difficulty in reading it as 'Allah.' Apart from the fact that the farm owner happened to be an extremely religious person, to an engineer's eye it was apparent that, given the extreme brittleness of wax, it would have been impossible for any hand to achieve the engraving so absolutely neatly. In fact, slight touch with the finger was distorting the wax. How could any human have done it by hand or machine? (Au.).

[70] And Allah created you, then He deals you death; and, among you are some who are returned to the feeble age, so that he might not know anything after having known (much).¹⁰⁸ Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-powerful.

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرَدُّ
إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ
شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

108. Hence the Prophetic supplication as recorded in Bukhari:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبُخْلِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَأَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ
وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَفِتْنَةِ الدَّجَالِ وَفِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ

“O Allah, I seek Your refuge from miserliness, dormancy, extreme old age, senility, punishment in the grave, tribulation at the hands of Dajjal and trials of life and death” (Ibn Kathir).

In any case, Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi and others point out that extreme senility does not seem to strike Muslim scholars.

From another angle, loss of memory in old age is something inscrutable. Scientifically, there is no reason for it. The data is there in the mind, but man is unable to recall it at will, and remembers when reminded. There is no explanation for this except that Allah has willed it that way (Au.).

As usual with a few universal phenomenon, science has no satisfactory explanation for old age. Writes a scientist: “Old-age is a disease of universal incidence. Nothing can

stop the creeping enfeeblement, the increasing brittleness of the bones, the weakening of the muscles, the stiffening of the joints, the slowing of reflexes, the dimming of sight, the declining agility of the mind. The rate at which this happens is somewhat slower in some people than in others - but, fast or slow, the process is inexorable.”

Further down, “What is old-age anyway? So far there are only speculations. Some have suggested that the body’s resistance to infections slowly decreases with age .. Others speculate that clinkers of one kind or another accumulate in the cells .. These supposed side products of normal cellular reactions, which the cell can neither destroy nor get rid of, slowly build up in the cell as the years pass, until they eventually interfere with the cells metabolism so seriously that it ceases to function. When enough cells are put out of action, so the theory goes, the body dies” (Issac Asimov, New Guide to Science, Penguin pub., 1987, p. 693).

[71] And Allah has favored some of you over others in provision.¹⁰⁹ So, those who have been favored are not going to return their provision¹¹⁰ to those their right hands own, so that they are equal therein.¹¹¹ So, will they dispute with Allah's favors?¹¹²

وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادِّي رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ أَفَبِعِزَّةِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

Although hectic research is going on in several biological fields, they all concentrate on delaying the ageing process and not on stopping it altogether. The most optimist is quite pessimistic about avoiding old-age altogether. However, there has been some noticeable progress in postponing old age. Although, people seem to be living longer in modern times, nobody knows for sure why. Another scientist writes, "In spite of the tremendous progress by researchers studying cultured cells, free radicals, longevity determining genes and other promising avenues, the aging process in humans is still largely a black box" (Rick L. Rusting, *Why Do We Age?*, Scientific American, December 1992, p. 95).

109. Since common observation reveals, Imām Razi comments, that many intelligent, efficient and hard-working people remain poor, despite their efforts, in contrast to the not-so-clever men, who possess wealth in abundance, it can be deduced that distribution of wealth is in the hands

of Allah and has not much to do with intelligence and abilities.

110. In the usage of the term "return," instead of the plain "give," is perhaps the hidden implication that the labor class makes a major contribution towards the creation of wealth, and hence, anything given to them, is being "given back" to them, or being returned (Au.).

111. The message is: You do not like to associate your slaves with yourselves in your wealth, yet approve of association of other creations with Allah! So, you approve for Allah what you do not approve for yourselves? (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

As Allah said at another place (30: 28):

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ [الروم : ٢٨]

"Allah strikes for you an example from your own selves. Do you have partners from among your slaves that share in what We have bestowed on you, so that you are

equal, and you fear them as you fear yourselves?" (Ibn Kathir).

112. Mawdudi removes a misunderstanding. He writes, "According to ... (some) people (of the recent times), the true purpose of the verse is to tell those who have been granted ample worldly provisions to return them to their servants and slaves so as to make them equal sharers of those provisions. It is contended that if they fail to do so, they will be guilty of denying God's favor."

"The point that is being emphasized here is that people know the basic difference between master and slave. They also maintain such a distinction between the two in their practical lives, and make an effort to keep the two apart. However, they seem to brush all this aside in God's case. Instead, they insist on associating His creatures - those who are His born servants - with Him. They also insist on giving thanks to God's creatures for the favours that He alone bestowed on them."

Mawdudi's reference is to the ruling Muslim classes of the last century who, fired by initial successes of the socialist system in the Soviet block, were looking for its justification in the Qur'an, to counter the Islamists who disapproved of them and their

political agenda. Indeed, this class of men was not even communist. These people were a bunch of bankrupt anti-Islamic materialists with no brains of their own. Having rejected Islam, and being unable to organize a modern state on healthy lines, more of show boys wearing show neck-ties - that they are down to this day - than efficient administrators, they adopted a system that allowed them tyranny as a tool for suppression, rather than a tool for equitable distribution of wealth and services. Hence, it is no surprise that they cling to the tyrannical system even after the fall of communism in the Soviet block. Some of them, in fact, chided the Russians for abandoning socialism and are sorrier for its demise than the true socialists themselves were.

Nevertheless, while we accept Mawdudi's criticism as valid, and reject the communistic theory as wrong, we may still point out that of the earliest commentators, Zamakhshari states, "Allah favored you by bestowing provision on you in greater measure than on the slaves you possess, although they are humans like you and are your brothers. It would have been becoming if you had returned your wealth to them and become equal with them in matters of food and clothing. It is report-

[72] And Allah has made for you of your own kind mates¹¹³ and from your mates produced for you children and grandchildren,¹¹⁴ and has provided for you sustenance from the good things. Then, in falsehood will they believe, and Allah's favors deny?¹¹⁵

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً
وَزَرَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفِئَابًا طَائِلٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ
وَيَنْعَمَتِ اللَّهُ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] And, (do) they worship besides Allah those that have no command over any sustenance for them in the heavens or in the earth, nor do they have any power?

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ
رِزْقًا مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَلَا
يَسْتَعِطِئُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

ed of Abu Dharr that since he had heard the Prophetic words, ‘They (the slaves) are your brothers. Clothe them with what you clothe yourself with, and feed them with what you feed yourself with,’ his slaves were never seen in shirts and trousers any different from his own.” And the implication is, Alusi adds, that by way of thanks to Allah for having favored you over others, you ought to return excessive wealth unto the less fortunate so as to become equal to them in outward, material terms, (although some of you may remain superior to others in moral terms).

113. According to some scholars the allusion is to the creation of first woman Hawwa, who was created out of Adam. But a better explanation is that the allusion is to the fact that the humankind’s spouses have been created from within their species,

which is the prime cause of mutual love and understanding (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Razi and others).

In view of this verse the jurists have ruled that marriage between men and Jinns is not lawful. Several cases of men marrying Jinns in pre-Islamic times have been reported, including about Bilqis (Queen of Sheba) one of whose parents was widely reported to be a Jinn. Shanqiti however, examines all such narrations and concludes that none of the reports of humans marrying Jinns is wholly trustworthy.

114. Ibn Jarir says that the term “*hafadah*” has been variously interpreted. ‘Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Qatadah, Sa`id b. Jubayr and others have said that the allusion is to son-in-laws. Some others, such as ‘Ikrimah, Hasan, Mujahid and others have thought that the allusion is to ser-

[74] Therefore, strike not similitudes for Allah.¹¹⁶ Verily, Allah knows while you know not.

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

vants. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Abbas is reported of both the opinions: grandchildren as well as son-in-laws. It is apparent that a general meaning fits the context. And a general meaning of “*hafadah*”, from “*hafid*” is, those who serve a man, be they his sons, servants, wives, or others. Hence the words of supplication prescribed for the Qunut Prayer:

وَالَيْكَ نَسْعَى وَنُخْفِدُ

“... and towards You do we strive, and (You) do we serve” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari).

115. Mawdudi comments: “To charge the unbelievers that they ‘believe in falsehood’ means that they subscribe to beliefs which are totally baseless and devoid of all truth. They subscribe, for instance, to the belief that it is gods, goddesses, jinn, and saints of the past who have full powers to make or mar people’s destiny, to respond to their invocation, to bless them with offspring and the means for their livelihood, to effectively help them in any litigation and preventing them from falling prey to disease.”

“The Makkan polytheists did not deny that they owe to God all the bounties which they had received. They also had no hesitation in gratefully acknowledging God’s favours. However, their mistake lay in the fact that, in addition to giving thanks to God for those favours, they also gave thanks to others whom they considered to be His partners. The Qur’ān considers this to be tantamount to denying God’s favours... (Thus) the Qur’ān enunciates another principle ... that any gratuitous assumption that the benefactor did not bestow favour out of his benevolence, but did so at the behest or intervention of someone else, also amounts to denying the favour of the true benefactor.”

116. “Therefore, strike not similitudes for Allah”: To say for instance that, ‘Just as the earthly rulers, who need aides to rule over their kingdom, God also needs aides to rule over heaven and earth. Therefore, we worship these aides so that they might plead our case with Him’ (Shafi’). Asad puts it more elaborately. He writes, “Do not blaspheme

[75] Allah strikes the example of a slave, owned (by another), with no power over anything, and one whom We gave a goodly provision from Ourselves, so he expends (freely) thereof in open and secret - are they equal? All praise for Allah, but most of them know not.¹¹⁷

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

against God by regarding anyone or anything as comparable with Him, or by trying to define Him in any terms whatsoever' - since 'definition' is, in the last resort equivalent to delimitation of the qualities of the object thus to be defined in relation to, or in comparison with, another object or objects: God, however, is 'sublimely exalted above anything that men may devise by way of definition."

117. Yusuf Ali explains, "The first parable of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the dominion of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in every way, and is most generous in bestowing out of his opulent wealth (material as well as intangible), privately and publicly, without let or hindrance; for he is his own master and owes no account to any one. The first is like the imaginary gods which men set up, - wheth-

er powers of nature, which have no independent existence but are manifestations of Allah, or deified heroes or men, who can do nothing of their own authority but are subject to the Will and Power of Allah; the second describes in a faint way the position of Allah, the Self-Subsistent, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in the heaven and the earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures."

Mawdudi adds: "The unbelievers are fully aware of the difference between the powerful and the powerless among their fellow beings. Nor do they fail to distinguish between these two categories of people in their practical lives. So it is astonishing that when it comes to applying this reasonable distinction to Creator and created, they show utter foolishness and stupidity insofar as they fail to recognize the essential difference between the two."

[76] Allah strikes (another) example of two men: one of them dumb with no power over anything, and moreover, he is a (wearisome) burden on his master: wherever he is sent, he does not bring back any good.¹¹⁸ Is he then equal with one who bids to justice, and is (himself) on a straight path?

وَصَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمٌ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجَّهُهُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] And to Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. And, the matter of the Hour is no more than a twinkling of the eye, or it might be closer.¹¹⁹ Verily, Allah has power over all things.

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا أُمِرَ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

118. That is, he is neither good for himself, nor for others (Shawkani); rather, a slave of his carnal, miserly self (Au.).

119. The apparent abrupt change in the subject draws the following note from Mawdudi, “The question of the After-life has been introduced with seeming abruptness in this discussion for a good reason. The purpose is to drive home to people that the choice between monotheism and polytheism is not just a theoretical issue. They should rather be conscious, quite conscious, that the Day of Judgment will suddenly overtake them and decide man’s success or failure in the Next Life. With this note of warning, the discourse on God’s unity is resumed.”

Yusuf Ali comments: “Lures of this world and its fleeting pleasures often make man forget that the life hereafter is an imminent reality. Many of those who claim to believe in the life to come act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no relevance to their present activities and mode of living. The Qur’an repeatedly reminds man that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment. The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and watchful and steer clear of all forms of sin and impiety, for when the Promised Hour comes it will come all of a sudden and without any prior notice.”

[78] Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He gave you the (power of) hearing, sight¹²⁰ and hearts,¹²¹ that you might give thanks.

وَاللّٰهُ اَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْ بُطُونِ اُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

﴿٧٨﴾

[79] Have they not seen the birds poised in the middle of the heavenly air.¹²² No one holds them (from falling) except Allah. Surely, in that is a sign for a people who would believe.

اَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوْى السَّمَاءِ مَا يُمَسِّكُهُنَّ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

﴿٧٩﴾

[80] And Allah has made for you out of your homes a repose, and made for you from the cattle's skins houses that you find light (to handle) the day of your travel and the day of your encampment,¹²³ and, of their wool, their fur, and their hair,¹²⁴ furnishing¹²⁵ - a provision for a while.

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ جُلُودِ الْاَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّوْنَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ اِقَامَتِكُمْ وَمِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا وَاَوْبَارِهَا وَاَشْعَارِهَا اِنَّهَا وَمَتَاعًا اِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٨٠﴾

120. Note once again, as everywhere in the Qur'an, the power of hearing always precedes that of sight, for without hearing, one cannot speak, and unable to speak, one is unable to learn, whereas being without the sight of eye is comparatively less disadvantageous. Again, hearing comes in singular but sight in plural, because in a wider view, one can see several things at a time, whereas one can never hear more than one voice: two complete sentences of fair length from two speakers, at one time (Au.).

121. The allusion by the word "af'idah" of the original is to the spiritual-based intellect (Au.).

122. The addition of the words "heavenly air" suggests that the conditions that prevail in the atmosphere are different from those on the surface of the earth. The air is purer and more refreshing (Au.).

123. Majid comments: "The reference is to the portable dwellings or tents, which formed an essential factor not only of the nomad life of the ancients but also play an important part in the camp-life of the moderns. Leaving aside the pastoral tribes of the interior of Asia, who have necessarily to be tent dwellers, 'in Western countries tents are used chiefly in military encampments, by trav-

[81] And Allah made for you out of what He created, shades,¹²⁶ and made for you of the mountains shelters, and made for you garments that protect you from heat and garments that protect you from your own violence.¹²⁷ Even so He perfects His blessing upon you, that haply you will submit.¹²⁸

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلَالًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ اَكْنَانًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُم بَاسِكُمْ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسَلِّمُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] But, if they turn away then upon you is only a clear delivery (of the message).

فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٢﴾

elers and explorers, and for temporary ceremonial occasions and public gatherings' (Ebr., xxvi, p. 634, 11th ed.)."

The importance of tents does not need overemphasis. The removal of tents from everyday life on any given day, whether in the east or in the west, will cause unknown inconvenience to millions of people (Au.).

124. Yusuf Ali writes: "Suf, wool, is what we get from sheep. Sha`r, hair, is what we get from goats or similar animals, for weaving into fabrics. *Wabar* is the soft camel's hair of which, also, fabrics are woven; they may be considered intermediate between the other two; by extension and analogy the term may be applied to furs and such things, by way of illustration."

"*Wabar*" in fact, as Asad points out, "is the soft wool growing on the

shoulders of camels ("camel-hair") used in the weaving of fine cloth and sometimes also of bedouin tents."

125. Wealth, furniture and leather clothes are various interpretations of the textual word "*athath*" (Ibn Jarir). That is, carpets, clothes, articles of convenience and comfort, etc. (Ibn Kathir).

126. Shades: such as of the trees.

127. E.g., coats of mail of the past civilizations, and bullet proof vests of the modern times (Au.)

128. "All these blessings, which have both a physical and (by promoting the good of man) a spiritual purpose, should teach us to rally to Allah and tune our will with His Universal Will, which is another name for Islam" (Yusuf Ali)

'Ata al-Khurasani has said something worth reporting. He said, 'Do

[83] They recognize Allah's blessings, yet they deny them,¹²⁹ and most of them are ungrateful.

يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

you notice that Allah said, “And Allah made for you out of what He created, shades and made for you of the mountains, shelters,” although, what He provided the humankind as valleys is more and better. That is because the first to be addressed were people who lived among mountains. And, consider Allah’s words, “And ... of their wool, their fur, and their hair furnishing - a provision for a while,” although He has provided to mankind more of other materials than mentioned here. That is because the first to be addressed were people who depended heavily on wool and fur. Again, consider Allah’s words (24: 43), “And He sends down from the sky mountains (of clouds) in which is hail,” although snow and ice are greater wonders. But, rain and hail were sufficient means of wonder for the people addressed, who knew nothing about snow and ice. Again, see how Allah addressed them with words (16: 81), “clothes that protect you from the heat,” although clothes that protect mankind from cold are worthier. But Allah chose to mention clothes against heat because the first of those addressed were people

who faced the harshness of heat and spared them of a talk that they would not have fully appreciated” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

129. Another possible meaning, and of Ibn Jarir’s preference, as originally expressed by Mujahid, Suddi and others, is that they recognize that the Prophet (*saws*) is a Messenger of Allah, a great blessing unto them, yet they deny him.

Ibn Abi Hatim has recorded,

عن مجاهد؛ أن أعرابياً أتى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فسأله، فقرأ عليه رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: { وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا } قال الأعرابي: نعم. قال: { وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ } قال الأعرابي: نعم. ثم قرأ عليه، كل ذلك يقول الأعرابي: نعم، حتى بلغ: { كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ } فولى الأعرابي، فأنزل الله: { يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ }

that once a bedouin came to the Prophet and inquired about Islam. The Prophet told him, “Allah made your homes a (means of) comfort?” He said, “Yes.” Then the Prophet recited, “And He made for you homes out of the skins of the cattle?” He replied, “Yes.” The Prophet recited

[84] And (beware) the day We raise up a witness from every people¹³⁰ - then, to the unbelievers no leave shall be granted (for excuses),¹³¹ nor shall they be allowed to make amends.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤَدُّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

[85] And once the wrongdoers have seen the chastisement, it shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be allowed respite.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

the rest of the verses and the bedouin kept on saying yes, until when he recited, “That is how He completed his favors so that you may surrender,” the bedouin turned his back and went away. The Prophet then recited, “They recognize Allah’s favors and then deny them” (Ibn Kathir). But Alusi drops a hint that it might be a weak *hadith*.

in the wider sense of the term *Ummah*, within every civilization or cultural period - will symbolically bear witness to the fact that they had delivered God’s message to their people and explained to them the meaning of right and wrong, thus depriving them of any subsequent excuse.”

Durr al-Manthur has the *hadith*, but is Mursal (Au.).

131. The addition of the word “excuses” in brackets is supported by another verse of the Qur’an which says (77: 36),

وَلَا يُؤَدُّنَ هُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُونَ [المرسلات : ٣٦]

130. Qatadah has said that the witnesses alluded to are the Prophets that were sent to the peoples of the past (Ibn Jarir). Majid writes: “God’s messenger (or messengers) to every nation will bear witness on the Day of Judgment that God’s message was conveyed in full to that particular people.” In Asad’s words, “An allusion to the Day of Judgment, when the prophets whom God has called forth within every community - or,

“Then they will not be allowed that they make excuses” (Shawkani), which implies, Alusi writes, that the condemned ones will seek permission to offer excuses but will be denied the opportunity. Another possibility is that they will seek to be returned to the world so that they could behave better, but they will not be allowed.

[86] *And when those who associated (others with Allah) will see those of their associate (gods), they will say, 'Our Lord! These are our associate (gods) whom we invoked besides You.' But they will fling back the statement at them (and say), 'You are veritable liars.'*¹³²

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَائُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِكَ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] *On that day they will proffer their surrender to Allah, and lost from them will be what they had fabricated.*

وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَامَ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

According to Zamakhshari, but in the words of Asad, "... their being 'refused permission' to plead is a metonym for their having no valid argument or excuse to proffer."

132. That is, those that the unbelievers had served in this world - men like them, devils, angels, or inanimate objects - will fling back the statement to their accusers denying that they ever invited the people to their own worship (Ibn Jarir).

As Allah (*swt*) said elsewhere (46: 5-6),

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنِ دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ (٥) وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ [الأحقاف : ٥-٦]

"And who can be more misguided than he who calls upon those apart from Allah, who will not answer him until the Day of Judgment, and they are unaware of their in-

vocation? And, when the people are gathered, they will be their enemies, and will disown their worship" (Ibn Kathir).

If the false gods were stones, trees, etc., then, obviously, they never knew how they were being treated by the humankind. But, if it were prophets and righteous men who were worshiped after them, then, they would surely disown their worshipers. As for the devils, although they will lie and accuse their worshipers of lies, they too would not want to own up that they were worshiped. Thus, the worshipers of false gods will be left totally devastated by disappointments and left in despair (based on a point from Shabbir).

The conversation referred to in this verse will take place, Qurtubi writes, when, as in a *hadith* of Muslim, Allah will bring forth those that were deified or served. The people will

[88] Those who disbelieved and prevented from Allah's path, We shall add on to them chastisement upon chastisement,¹³³ for that they used to spread corruption.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
زِدْنَاهُمْ عَذَابًا غَدَابًا فَوَقَّ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا
يُفْسِدُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] And, the day We raise up from every people a witness against them, from among themselves, and bring you (O Muhammad) as a witness against these.¹³⁴ And, We have sent down to you a Book, making everything clear,¹³⁵ a guide, a mercy, and a glad tiding to those who have surrendered.

وَيَوْمَ تَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ
مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى
هَؤُلَاءِ وَتَرْتَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَيْمَانًا
لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهَدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً وَيُشْرَىٰ
لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

be told to follow those they served in the world. They will follow them, and those they served will lead them to Hellfire. (It is there perhaps that this conversation will take place: Au.).

خمسة أنهار تجري من تحت العرش على رؤوس أهل النار

“Five rivers (of fire) that will be let loose on the inhabitants of Hell” (Shawkani).

133. According to a *hadith* in Ibn Marduwayh and Khatib, when the Prophet was asked about the words, “We shall add on to them chastisement upon chastisement”, he replied that they refer to

The earlier *hadith* is in Bayhaqi, Hakim and Haythami who declared it a trustworthy report of Tabarani, and the latter in Haythami who declared it a trustworthy report of Abu Ya`la (S. Ibrahim).

عقارب أمثال النخل الطوال ينهشونهم في جهنم
وروي نحوه الحاكم وصحه والبيهقي وغيره عن ابن
مسعود

“Scorpions as tall large as date palm trees that will be stinging them in the Hellfire.” (That would be in response to they seeking relief: Alusi).

134. By the term “these” the allusion is to the Prophet’s own nation (Ibn Jarir). We have already presented Ibn Mas`ud’s report (see *Nisa`* n. 147) which says that once the Prophet asked him to recite that *Surah*. When he reached verse 41 which says, “How will it be when we bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness against these”, the Prophet said, “Enough”. When Ibn Mas`ud

According to another report in Ibn Marduwayh, the allusion is to,

looked up, the Prophet's eyes were filled with tears (Ibn Kathir).

It is reported of some of the Companions that they said, "When you see someone committing a wrong, prevent him. If he listens, good. If he does not, you will be a witness against him on the Judgment-day." It is also said that every age and epoch has its own witness (Alusi).

135. "A Book making everything clear": that is, everything pertaining to human guidance (Zamakhshari). Otherwise, when asked about the new moons, the revelation replied that they were for computing time (and did not explain the nature of the celestial body). And the Prophet said, in reference to a famous incident, "You know your worldly affairs better." Further, that there are a few other sources of guidance is proven by the Qur'an itself, such as, its repeated instructions that the Prophet be followed, or that the consensus of the Muslims be followed when it said (4: 115),

وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ تُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّى وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ
[النساء : ١١٥]

"Thereafter, he who followed a path other than that of the Muslims... (to the end of the verse)."

In other words, the Qur'an is the primary source of guidance which

approves of certain other sources of guidance (Alusi).

That the religion of Islam has sources other than the Qur'an, is something over which the Companions did not have any difference among themselves. For example, when once Ibn Mas'ud said, "Allah has cursed those women who tattoo ..." and a woman objected to the use of the word "cursed," Ibn Mas'ud said, "Why should I not curse someone the Prophet cursed. Moreover, it is in the Book of Allah." The woman said, "I have read the Qur'an cover to cover, but I haven't found any such statement in it." Ibn Mas'ud replied, "Had you read in the proper manner of recitation, you would not have missed it. Did you come across the verse (59: 7), 'And take what the Messengers gives and shun what he prohibits?' She said, "Yes." He said, "Then, know that the Prophet has cursed those women who tattoo" (Alusi).

The *hadith* is in Bukhari as follows (Au.):

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْوَائِمَاتِ وَالْمُوتَشِمَاتِ
وَالْمُتَنَمِّصَاتِ وَالْمُتَمَفِّلَاتِ لِلْحُسْنِ الْمُعَيَّرَاتِ خَلَقَ
اللَّهُ فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ امْرَأَةً مِنْ بَنِي إِسْدٍ يُقَالُ لَهَا أُمُّ يَعْقُوبَ
فَجَاءَتْ فَقَالَتْ إِنَّهُ بَلَغَنِي عَنْكَ أَنَّكَ لَعَنْتَ كَيْتَ
وَكَيْتَ فَقَالَ وَمَا لِي أَلْعُنُ مَنْ لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَتْ لَقَدْ

[90] Verily, Allah enjoins justice, good-doing,¹³⁶ and giving to kin. And He forbids the indecent, evil¹³⁷ and rebellion.¹³⁸ He admonishes you that perhaps you will be mindful.¹³⁹

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

قَرَأْتُ مَا بَيْنَ اللُّوحَيْنِ فَمَا وَجَدْتُ فِيهِ مَا تَقُولُ قَالَ لَئِن كُنْتُ قَرَأْتِيهِ لَقَدْ وَجَدْتِيهِ أَمَا قَرَأْتَ { وَمَا آتَاكُمْ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا } قَالَتْ بَلَىٰ قَالَ فَإِنَّهُ قَدْ تَهَىٰ عَنْهُ

136. For someone wishing to know the mind, spirit, approach and priorities of the ancients, in contrast to that of their followers, then, perhaps the commentary on this verse is one of the best to compare. The gradual slide from “the other-worldliness” to “this worldliness”, as the centuries pass by, can be easily noticed (Au.).

‘Adl and Ihsan

Ibn ‘Abbas has interpreted the textual word “*‘adl*” as the testimony (that there is no God, save Allah), and “*ihsan*” as “the Islamic commandments” (Ibn Jarir). Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah said that “*‘adl*” of the original refers to lack of contradiction between one’s public and private behavior and “*ihsan*” to the condition that one’s secret (acts) be better than his public (behavior). In contrast, “*fahsha*” and “*munkar*” mean that one’s avoidance (of evil) in private should be more intensive than his avoidance of them

in public (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Literally, adds Shawkani, “*‘adl*” is the middle path, i.e., a path in Islam that avoids the two extremes, while “*ihsan*” is to do better than simply following a rule. In a well-known *hadith* the Prophet (*saws*) said that “*ihsan*” is “to worship Allah, as if you can see Him, for, if you cannot see Him, He sees you.” Zamakhshari adds: Since it is impossible that a man maintain perfect “*‘adl*” in all his affairs, he should seek to achieve “*ihsan*” in a few other things in order to balance off as a whole.

Imām Razi has a long comment, with many examples, to demonstrate that “*‘adl*”, the middle or the mean path, is a hallmark of Islam. He writes that it is applicable both to matters of belief, as well as practice. For example, to deny God, or to suggest associates are two extremes: to believe in one God is “*‘adl*.” Hence Ibn ‘Abbas’ explanation that “*‘adl*” is the testimony “there is no deity save Allah.” Again, between two extreme views: that He does not exist, and, on the other hand, that he has

a body, parts or limbs, and is confined in a place, lies “*adl*” to believe that He exists without a body, parts and is not confined to a place. Or, to believe that God exists without attributes, or, that He acquires traits and undergoes changes are two extremes between which “*adl*” is to believe that He exists with permanent attributes that do not undergo changes. Similarly, to believe that one is free to do what he wants, or, alternatively, is completely bound, are two extremes. Between the two is the “*adl*” which is to believe that a man is free to do what he does but is dependent on the desire created in him by Allah. In the like manner, what applies to beliefs, also applies to acts and deeds, where the mean path is the best path. In fact, the physical world too seems to be following the path of “*adl*”. For example, the earth is situated at a certain distance from the sun. If this distance were to be increased by a margin, the earth would get too cold, and if decreased, too hot for life. Similarly, Razi continues, the various elements of the solar family seem to be at a precisely determined distances from each other and revolving at specific speeds. If any of the figures were altered, the system would collapse.

[Once again, one wonders at Imām Razi’s sources that enabled him to make the above statement in the 11th century. For, the discovery of the gravitational force, and the laws of motion which keep the planets together revolving endlessly around the sun, came to be discovered only in the 16th century. Also, that changing the distance of the earth from the sun, even marginally, would mean destruction of all life on it, is a recent discovery (Au.).]

Qurtubi expands on the meaning of “*adl*” as “justice.” He quotes Ibn al-‘Arabi: “Justice between a man and his Lord consists in that he should give his Lord preference over his own self, and prefer His approval over that of his base self. Allah said (79: 40),

وَتَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ [النازعات : ٤٠]

‘*And restrained his self from base desires.*’ It also means giving preference to the acts of obedience over fulfillment of the inner cravings, and to never give up being contented. On the other hand, justice between one’s self and other creations of Allah consists in being sincere towards them, not being dishonest to any extent, and to give them back everything due to them, not allowing oneself the liberty to do them evil to the slightest degree, neither in open nor

in secret, and to bear with patience their ill-will, the humblest order of which consists in being just, and denying oneself any right of injury to them or others.”

“Ihsan” on the other hand, continues Qurtubi, carries two connotations. One, to do everything that one does, well; and two, to be good to others. Both are meant in this verse. The famous *hadith* of Jibril (viz., “worship Him as if He sees you, for, if you do not see Him, then, He sees you”) is in the first sense and not the second. Again, “giving the kin” should be in material terms, especially if they are poor.

Finally, here is an incident that will tell us how kings and the ruling classes of the past understood the Islamic concepts which the educated class of modern times does not seem to understand. It is said that a group of citizens went to Abu Ja`far al-Mansur, the Abbasid caliph (2nd. Islamic century) complaining against one of his governors. But they could not muster sufficient proof, so the governor was able to defeat them in their arguments and refute their charges. At that a young man stood up and said, “Leader of the faithful. Allah commands ‘adl’ and ‘ihsan.’ The Governor might have done ‘jus-

‘adl’ but he did not achieve ihsan.” A surprised Mansur accepted the argument and removed the governor from his post.

Alusi tries another angle of distinction between “*adl*” and “*ihsan*”: “*adl*” is to do justice to others and seek justice from them, while “*ihsan*” is to do justice to others but not to seek justice from them.

Mawdudi’s is more down to earth in his expansion on the concepts of “*adl*” and “*ihsan*.” He writes: “The directive which has been so succinctly expressed enjoins on people three principles which provide the basis for the sound ordering of human society. The first and foremost principle is ‘justice’ which comprises two independent truths. One, that there be balance and right proportion among human beings in respect of their rights. Two, that every person be granted his rights without distinction.

“What justice really demands is balance and right proportion rather than absolute equality. True, in certain respects, equality among members of society, such as in respect of the rights of citizenship, is a requirement of justice. However, equality in certain other matters is diametrically opposed to the requirements of jus-

tice. For instance, it would be sheer injustice if we were to grant children equal rights with parents, or to equally compensate those who work hard and well and those who do not. Hence, what God has commanded is not equality in rights. He has rather commanded balance and right proportion. This requires that the moral, social, economic, legal, political and cultural rights to which a person is entitled should be granted to him with sincerity.

“The second principle is benevolence (to be literal, ‘doing good’) which broadly embraces all such good acts as politeness, generosity, sympathy, tolerance, courtesy, forbearance, mutual accommodation, mutual consideration, giving to others what is more than what is their due, and being content for oneself with a little less than what one is entitled to. This principle goes a step further than justice, and is hence, in some respects, even more for man’s social life than justice. If justice is the foundation on which the structure of a society should rest, then benevolence represents the beauty and perfection of that structure. Justice wards off the bitterness of discord and disharmony from human life. Benevolence adds to it the elements of pleasure and sweetness. No society can be

sustained merely on the principle that every member of it should be jealously watchful of, and insistent upon, receiving every bit of his right and be willing to grant others exactly what is their due, but absolutely no more. Perhaps such a cold and stark society might - thanks to the application of justice as above - be able to avoid internal conflicts. However, such a society will be utterly devoid of such life-giving and life-sustaining values as love and compassion, gratitude and magnanimity, and sacrifice and goodwill for others.

“The third principle enunciated in the verse is liberality to kith and kin. This is a corollary of the former principle - ‘benevolence’ - when it is applied to one’s relatives. This consists not only of sharing one’s joys and sorrows with one’s kin, and in helping and supporting the fulfillment of their legitimate desires within permissible limits, but also that one should recognize that one’s wealth ought not to be spent exclusively on oneself and one’s immediate family. Other members of the family also have a share in it.”

137. While “*fahsha*” is everything that Islam frowns upon, “*munkar*” is a stronger term embracing those acts that Islam disapproves. Zamakh-

shari defined it as something that “a man’s good sense rejects or disowns” (*ma tunkiruhu al-‘uqul*); by which, of course, Zamakhshari meant the “uqul” of the believers. In Asad’s words, “all that runs counter to reason and good sense.”

Qurtubi writes that every evil is “*fahsha*” while *munkar* is anything that the Shari`ah frowns upon.

138. According to Ibn ‘Abbas, by “*baghyu*” the allusion is to rebellion against Allah which manifests in disobedience (Ibn Jarir). But others have said that the allusion is to the oppression of the people. A *hadith* (of Ibn Majah: H. Ibrahim) says,

مَا مِنْ ذَنْبٍ أَجْدَرُ أَنْ يُعَجِّلَ اللَّهُ لِصَاحِبِهِ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي
الدُّنْيَا مَعَ مَا يَدْخُرُ لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْبَغْيِ وَقَطِيعَةِ
الرَّحِمِ

“There is no sin better deserving of Allah’s retribution hastened in this world, in addition to it being punished for in the Hereafter, than oppression and severing off relations with the kin” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* in Hakim’s Mustadrak, apart from other collections. Dhabhi evaluated it as trustworthy.

Shawkani adds that “*fahsha*” is any unsavory addition to ones words or deeds, “*munkar*” anything that Allah

and His Messenger have prohibited and “*baghyu*” is to commit excesses (which ultimately gives rise to pride, oppression, envy, etc.).

Qurtubi also maintains that primarily “*baghyu*” (rebellion) is to cross the bounds, or, to do injustice to others. Reportedly, one of the previous revelation said that “if a mountain oppressed another, Allah would reduce the oppressor of the two to dust.” It is also used in the sense of causing agitation, or stirring trouble. Imām Bukhari, while explaining this verse, has recorded the *hadith* which speaks of magic spell cast on the Prophet. When he was cured, ‘A’isha suggested that he should punish Labid b. A’sam, the sorcerer. But the Prophet only said, “Well, Allah has cured me. Personally, I do not like to stir evil among the people.” In other words, “*baghyu*” would include any evil brought to a people.

139. The verse is so rich in meaning that according to commentators, had Allah revealed only this one, in place of the whole Qur’an, it would have been sufficient for the mindful. Perhaps Yusuf Ali has the most comprehensive explanation, short but accurate. He writes: “Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But

religion asks for something warmer and much more human, the doing good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language 'have no claim' on you; and of course a fortiori the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognized in social life. Similarly the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognized as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form."

According to a report in the Musnad of Ahmad, treated as trustworthy, (although narrated by Shahr b. Hawshab), the Prophet once moved his eyes up and down (as if following someone descending and ascending) and said, "Jibril came to me just now and told me to place this verse, in this *Surah*, at this point" (Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Mas'ud is reported of the opinion that this is the most comprehensive verse of the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

'Ali in fact was of the opinion that the famous "muru'ah" of the Arabs (a package of good qualities), has now been superseded by this all-comprehensive verse (Alusi and others).

Accordingly, when 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz ordered removal of the pronouncement of curse on 'Ali that the Banu Umayyah had introduced in Friday sermons, he instructed that this verse be recited in place (Alusi).

Qurtubi adds that it was this verse that the Prophet had recited before Walid b. al-Mughirah and which had prompted him to say those famous words, "Surely, it (i.e., the Qur'an) is steeped in sweetness and carries grace. Surely, its root has the branching ability, while its upper portion is fruit-bearing. Surely, it is no man's words." But, according to some other reports it was 'Uthman b. Maz'un who had recited the verse to Walid.

And Hafiz Abu Ya'la has a report which says that when Ukthum b. Sayfi received the news of the Prophet's advent, he decided to go and see him. But his people told him not to humble himself, rather, send someone else. So two men were dispatched. They met the Prophet, told him that they were messengers of Ukthum b. Sayfi, and asked him who he was and what he was. He said, "As for who I am, well, I'm Muhammad, the son of 'Abdullah. As for what I am, well, I am a Messenger of Allah." Then he recited this verse, "Verily, Allah enjoins justice, good-doing, and giving

[91] And fulfill Allah's covenant when you have entered into it, and break not the oaths after their confirmation,¹⁴⁰ when you have declared Allah your surety.¹⁴¹ Surely, Allah knows what you do.

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْفُضُوا
الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ
عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ

﴿٩١﴾

to kin. And He forbids the indecent, evil and rebellion. He admonishes you that perhaps you will remember.” He made the two men commit it to memory. (Since the verse says, “perhaps you will remember: Au.). When they went back to Ukthum they reported, “Well, he was not very particular about saying who he was, but he did say what he had brought.” Then they recited this verse. Ukthum remarked, “He commands you the best of moral principles, so be the heads and not the tail-enders in accepting it” (Ibn Kathir).

140. The addition of the words, “after their confirmation” is to exclude commonly blurted words of oath such as, “by Allah,” “I swear”, etc. These are not oaths proper (Au.).

141. There is no contradiction between this verse and the report in Muslim which says,

لا حلف في الإسلام، وأما حلف كان في الجاهلية لم
يزده الإسلام إلا شدة

“There is no oath of alliance in Islam, and there is no oath made

during the pre-Islamic times but Islam reinforces it.” What is meant is that there is no need for the people to enter into oaths (and promise that they will remain good), as they did in pre-Islamic times. Now, with the declaration of faith in Islam, (one is in any case required to lead a virtuous life), and Islam reinforces everything that was good in pre-Islamic times.

Ahmad reports that when the people began to abandon Yezid b. Mu'awiyah, Ibn 'Umar gathered his family members in his house and told them, “We have entered into allegiance with this man in the name of Allah and His Messenger. And I have heard the Prophet say that,

إِنَّ الْعَادِرَ يُنْصَبَ لَهُ لَوَاءٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيَقَالُ هَذِهِ
عَدْرَةُ فُلَانٍ وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الْعَدْرِ بَعْدَ الْإِشْرَاكِ بِاللَّهِ
أَنْ يَبَايَعَ رَجُلًا رَجُلًا عَلَى بَيْعِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يَنْكُثُ
بَيْعَتَهُ

“The betrayer of his allegiances and oaths will have a flag hoisted next to him and said, ‘This is the betrayal of so and so.’ And the

[92] And be not like the woman who untwists her strands after it was strong into shreds,¹⁴² taking your oaths as a means of mutual deceit, that a community should be more numerous than another community.¹⁴³ Allah only tries you thereby.¹⁴⁴ And, He will certainly make it clear to you on the Day of Judgment that wherein you were differing.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ
بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا
بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ
إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

worst of betrayal of oaths would be - after association with Allah - that one should back off after having taken oath on Allah and His Messenger.”

Therefore, continued Ibn `Umar, “Let none of you do it now, or let him have nothing to do with me” (Ibn Kathir).

142. It is said that there was a foolish woman in Makkah who used to spin yarn (during the morning), and then, when it thickened (expressed in the term “quwwah” of the text), undo it to shreds (by the evening) - Ibn Jarir.

Majid adds: “In Greek mythology there is a lady known as Penelope who is credited with a similar feat.”

Ibn Jarir further writes: This is the example of someone who entered

into a covenant with Allah, and then broke it.

143. Of the several interpretations, one is that the verse is warning the early Muslims not to break their allegiance to the Prophet because they should find the Quraysh a party larger, stronger, and a more likely winner in the struggle against the Prophet (Zamakhshari, Shawkani).

144. This verse acquires special significance if we consider the fact that the Madinan Muslims were about to enter into a compact with the Prophet at `Aqabah, promising to protect him as they would their women and children, and the Prophet himself soon to migrate to Madinah and enter into several pacts with the adjoining tribes (Au.).

[93] Had Allah willed, He could have made you all one community. But, He leads astray whom He will¹⁴⁵ and guides whom He will.¹⁴⁶ And, you will certainly be questioned for what you were doing.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَلَتَسْأَلَنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

145. Explaining the words, “Allah leads astray whom He will”: Alusi writes: by creating in him misguidance (*dilal*), following the man’s own choices, itself being influenced by his inner potentials.

146. Explaining the words, “He guides whom He will”: Alusi writes: by creating guidance (*hidayah*) in him, following the person’s own choices, which themselves are influenced by his inner potentials, that in turn he trains on the right course of action.

He also writes: The Mu`tazila deny that error, or misguidance is by Allah’s will. They maintain that Allah (*swt*) wished that everyone should enter into faith, but what resulted (from the choice given to the people) is that they chose something that Allah did not wish. Accordingly, Zamakhshari wrote, had Allah willed to force people to become one nation, then, surely, He had the power to do it. But, His wisdom demanded that He guide to error (or, in simpler words, lead them to error) those

He knew would choose to remain in error and insist on it, and guide to righteousness those He knew would choose to be guided to it. In short, the issue has choice as the principal deciding factor, and the outcome depends on who deserves what. Allah has told us nothing about forcing a man do what he - the man - does not deserve. If men had no choice in the affair, forced either to error or to guidance, Allah would not say as He did in the words that follow, “And you shall certainly be questioned for what you were doing.”

‘Askari has a similar point to make. However, Alusi continues, the truth is, as written by one of the late scholars Kawrani (who wrote several treatises on this topic) that a man has effective, influencing power by the leave of Allah and not what is imagined, viz., he has no power at all to choose as the Jabriyyah say, nor a power to compare, but, for all practical purposes, ineffective, as the Ash`ariyyah have maintained, nor that he has effective and influ-

[94] And, do not take your oaths a means of mutual deceit lest a foot should slip after its firmness,¹⁴⁷ and you taste the evil¹⁴⁸ because you prevented from the path of Allah,¹⁴⁹ and (consequently) you have a mighty chastisement.

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُم
فَتَرِيَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثَبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا السُّوءَ بِمَا
صَدَدْتُمْ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

[95] Nor barter away Allah's covenant for a paltry price.¹⁵⁰ Surely, what is with Allah - that is better for you, if you only knew.

وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ
اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
﴿٩٥﴾

encing power, above that of Allah's will, as the Mu`tazilah say. Rather, he has the power (to choose and act) that itself he earns, following the demands of his potentials and inclinations that are in Allah's knowledge. In other words, a man is both free as well as bound and is questionable for his choices in areas he was free to choose and act.

147. Zamakhshari raises the question, why did Allah say "foot" in singular, and then answers that it is to emphasize that not a single foot should slip in error.

148. Asad has a useful comment on the words "taste the evil": "... the breaking of pledges unavoidably leads to a gradual disappearance of all mutual trust and, thus, to the decomposition of the social fabric."

It is this "evil" that men immediately taste, here, in consequence of their dishonoring the trusts, before the other, final evil, that they will face in the Hereafter (Au.).

149. What is the connection between breaking oaths and preventing people from the path of Allah? Alusi explains that when someone breaks oaths made in the name of Allah, then he sets a bad example to others of not heeding Allah's calls. That example spreads and people get used to ignoring the truth, justice, and what is right. Thus the first man becomes the cause of preventing the people from the path of Allah.

150. That was what the Quraysh offered - a paltry price - to those who would abandon the Prophet (Zamakhshari).

[96] *What you have will come to exhaust, but what is with Allah will abide. And, surely We shall recompense those who patiently persevered¹⁵¹ with better rewards than what they were doing.*

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ
مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] *Whoever did a good thing - of the male or female¹⁵² - and is a believer, such of them We shall surely pave the way for them to lead a goodly life,¹⁵³ and shall recompense them with better rewards than what they were doing.¹⁵⁴*

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ
أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

151. Mawdudi comments on ‘the patient and persevering’: “Those ... who adhere to truth and honesty in utter disregard of all temptations, desires, and lusts. They are the ones who endure all losses which accrue to them as a result of strictly confining themselves to fair and honest means and spurning all advantages which ensue from adopting unfair methods. Such persons are prepared to wait till the very end of their worldly life after which they will be able to observe the good consequences of their deeds.”

152. Although the article “mun” (whoever) is inclusive of male and female, e.g., “if you say whoever is in the house” then, women will be included in the term “whoever,” yet, the addition of the words “male and female” here in this verse, is for emphasis, and to remove any doubt that

the Qur’anic injunctions, although expressed in masculine, are for both men as well as women (Alusi).

153. Opinions have varied over what constitutes “*hayatun tayyibah*” (a goodly life), although, the various opinions can all be reconciled. Ibn ‘Abbas said it means lawful provision. (Whoever enjoys it, enjoys a goodly life). Hasan al-Busri thought it is contentment (*qana`ah*) that is meant. In a second opinion he said that “a goodly life” is something that will be obtained in Paradise alone. Yet others said that the allusion is to the life in Paradise. Ibn Jarir thinks contentment is the best answer, since, whoever is given this quality, is given all. “Indeed,” adds Ibn Jarir, “our experience is that those who devote themselves to living a righteous life, are rarely well-off in this world. Without contentment such a

life could not be characterized as a goodly life.”

In fact, we have a *hadith* in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad, which reports that the Prophet said,

فَدَّ أَقْلَحَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَرَزَقَ كَفَافًا وَفَتَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِمَا آتَاهُ

“Succeeded he who became a Muslim, was provided just enough (of the means of sustenance), and then Allah gave him contentment over what He gave him” (Shawkani).

Zamakhshari writes: “A goodly life” is what a believer always enjoys, whether he is materially well-off or not. If he is well-off, then of course the case is clear. But if he is badly-off, then, he perseveres with patience and is content with what Allah has provided him. Thus, he is blissful and tranquil in every situation. In contrast, the life of a “*fasiq*” is miserable in every situation. When he is badly off, then the case is clear. But if he is well-off, then too, greed does not allow him to sit in peace. The desire for more and more keeps him restless so that he never truly enjoys the fruits of his labor.

Ibn Kathir adds: Imām Ahmad and Muslim have a narration which says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مُؤْمِنًا حَسَنَةً يُعْطَى بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَيُجْزَى بِهَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَأَمَّا الْكَافِرُ فَيُطْعَمُ بِحَسَنَاتِ مَا عَمِلَ بِهَا لِلَّهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَفْضَى إِلَى الْآخِرَةِ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ حَسَنَةٌ يُجْزَى بِهَا

“Allah does not wrong a believer. He is rewarded both in this world as well as the next. In contrast, an unbeliever is rewarded in this world itself because of his good deeds, but when he lands in the Hereafter, he will have no good deed left in his account to be rewarded for.”

Alusi, however, after discussing various opinions at length expresses his readiness to accept Hasan al-Busri’s opinion that “a goodly life” will obtain, in the truest sense, in the Hereafter alone.

154. That will happen in the Hereafter. The translations adopted for this and verse 96 above follow the understanding of Ibn ‘Abbas, as in Ibn Jarir. Nevertheless, some scholars have thought that the meaning of this part of the verse is, “according to the best of what they were doing.”

[98] When you recite the Qur'ān, seek Allah's refuge from Satan the outcast.¹⁵⁵ فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٩٨﴾

[99] Indeed, he has no power over those who have believed, and in their Lord they trust. إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

155. 'Ata', as in Shawkani, and Thawri as in Alusi, were in the minority to maintain that recitation of the ta'awwudh or isti'adhah is obligatory. That is, to say,

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

Otherwise, to the great majority, the seeking of Allah's refuge with the help of this formula, before any recitation, is not obligatory. It is only recommended (Ibn Jarir). This is in view of the Prophet's own practice, who sometimes recited the formula and sometimes did not. Even within the Prayers (Salah) it is at best mustahab to recite it (Shafi').

In any case, write Razi and Ibn Kathir, such seeking of refuge is meant to drive away Satanic whispering of the wrong meaning into the mind during the Qur'anic recitation (and after the recitation is over). Hence, some of the scholars, including Abu Hurayrah, Muhammad b. Sirin and Ibrahim Nakha'i, as noted by Nawawi, have said that the "isti'adhah" should be done 'after' the

recitation of the Qur'ān (rather than before). The great majority however, believe that it must be said before the recitation.

In any case, Shafi' introduces the rejoinder, it must be remembered that the refuge-formula is spelled out only prior to Qur'anic recitation and not before any other act. For all other acts, it is enough to recite the "basmalah" (i.e., "Bismillahir Rahman al-Rahim)

Alusi comments: The standard words of "isti'adha" are as in this verse. The Prophet (*saws*) however used other words also. Bayhaqi has a *hadith* which says that when the Prophet brought 'A'isha the good news of her acquittal in the famous case of slander, he preceded the recitation of the revelation with the "isti'adha" of words as follows:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

"I seek the refuge of Allah, the Hearer, the Knower, from Satan the accursed."

[100] He has power over those alone who befriend him,¹⁵⁶ and those who associate others with Him.¹⁵⁷

إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

[101] And when We substitute a verse in place of another verse¹⁵⁸ - and Allah knows best what He should reveal¹⁵⁹ - they say, 'You are but a forger.' Rather, most of them know not.¹⁶⁰

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

Another *hadith* in the *sahihayn* reports that "when the Prophet stood up for Prayers in the pre-dawn session, he began it by saying the 'isti'adha' in the above words. These reports prove that it is allowed to use this second version of "isti'adha."

156. People befriend Satan by following his advice and prompting (Qurtubi).

A doubt arises: We often notice that such people as those who do not befriend Satan fall into his trap. How is this to be explained? Alusi deals with this question in some detail. But we prefer to reproduce here Shabbir's shorter note who writes that Satan's power over the virtuous works only for a short while. He is never able to overpower them completely, which is the purpose of the verse here. If a righteous man slips, it is not too late that he pulls himself up. Another Qur'anic verse can be presented to substantiate this. It says (7: 201),

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ [الأعراف : ٢٠١]

"Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember (Him) and at once they have insight."

157. The translation follows the preferred understanding of Mujahid (and Dahhak: Qurtubi). That is, the pronoun in "bihi" is for Allah although there have been other explanations (Ibn Jarir).

158. The reference is to abrogation, either of the text, or its meaning. That is, either a verse is taken away from memory so that people cannot recall it anymore, after having known it, or, Allah declares its meaning abrogated and replaces with another verse.

159. That is, Allah knew the wisdom behind abrogation.

There were several points of wisdom behind abrogation during early Islamic years. One, e.g., was to try

[102] Say, the Holy Spirit¹⁶¹ brought it down from your Lord in truth,¹⁶² in order to make firm those who have believed,¹⁶³ a guidance and good tidings to those who submit.

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

out the earliest followers, and see if they remained true to their faith or, were they betaken by doubts when abrogation came. In this manner, a band of tested and purified men and women was created who submitted to everything that Allah and His Messenger decreed. By virtue of that they became a body that can be followed as an ideal by Muslims of the later generations. They can be emulated, but never overtaken in piety and obedience. Another reason was that for centuries human societies lived a certain kind of life: the most beastly kind. Their situation could only be changed gradually. That required allowing certain things in the early stages of change and development, to be disallowed later. Later generations would not need the same measures because, the individuals of later generations would open their eyes, or enter as new Muslims, into an already transformed society, in which they would not need to struggle against the rest of the world to follow Islam (Au.).

160. It is stated in “*Kashf*” that Allah (*swt*) brought this verse immediately after instruction to seek refuge from Satan for the reason that to many readers of the Qur’ān abrogation in early Islam is one of the sources of grave doubts (Alusi).

161. `Amir Sha`bi’s following statement is transmitted on a trustworthy note, viz., for the first three years it was Mika’il who was entrusted with bringing down (non-Qur’ānic: Au.) ‘words after words’ to our Prophet. Thereafter, it was Jibril who brought down the Qur’ānic revelations to him. Further, we have a report in Muslim which says that *Surah* al-Fatihah was carried down by an angel who had never come down to earth earlier. Nevertheless, most of the commentators agree that it is Jibril who is meant by “*Ruh al-Quds*” at this point (Qurtubi).

As to why Jibril was referred to by this title, rather than by his name, Mawdudi explains, “By preferring to use this appellation rather than his proper name, the Qur’ān empha-

[103] We know indeed that they say, 'A man teaches him.' (But) the tongue of the one they refer to¹⁶⁴ is non-Arabic,¹⁶⁵ whereas this is a clear Arabic speech.

وَلَقَدْ تَعَلَّمَ أَتَمُّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ
لِّسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَذَا
لِّسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

sizes that the message of the Qur'an has been conveyed through the spirit which is free from all human weaknesses and imperfections."

162. That is, tell them O Muhammad, it is not I who causes the abrogation. The whole thing is a revelation brought down by heavenly beings, by the command of Allah. I have no power to reveal or abrogate (Au.).

163. Such as those who ponder over the reasons and the wisdom behind abrogation in early Islam. They are led to a better understanding of it and to a greater firmness in it (Alusi).

164. The textual word is "*yulhiduna*" with its root in "*lahada*," means, to incline, take sides, etc. Hence a "*lahad* grave": one which has a side box in which the dead body is tucked (Razi), giving the grave the shape of an "L" (Au.); and hence "*mulhid*" for an atheist who turns away from every religion of the world (Razi).

165. There is no consensus among the early commentators over the identity of the person whom the Quraysh al-

leged composed the Qur'an for our Prophet (Ibn Jarir and others). That was perhaps because the Prophet was on good, even if casual, terms with several of the Makkan, non-Arab slaves and laymen.

Further, the textual word "*ajami*" is not necessarily for a non-Arabic, non-Arab, or foreigner alone. The allusion, therefore, could have been to any of the several, or all of the Arab or non-Arabs that the Makkans at one time or another alluded to. For example, one of those named was a hawker at Safa with whom the Prophet occasionally spent some time chatting. He was originally a Yemeni, and hence an "*ajami*" for two reasons: one, because he was not eloquent in the Arabic language and, two, he was a foreigner.

They were obviously not of the kind that could teach the Prophet anything, let alone the eloquent Qur'an. Indeed, when one of those casual acquaintances of the Prophet was asked if he taught the Prophet, he replied, in all the simplicity of his class, "Rather, he teaches me" (Qurtubi).

Imām Razi and Qurtubi also explain: The textual word “*ajami*” has its root in “*ajama*” which is to be unable to express oneself properly. Animals are, e.g., “*ajmaa*”, because they cannot express themselves. The word is thus applicable to anyone who is not eloquent in Arabic. In this sense, many Arabs are also “*ajami*” since, although they can speak Arabic, they cannot explain themselves eloquently. This was the opinion of Farra’ and Ahmad b. Yahya. Further, it might be noted, Imām Razi writes, how short the Makkans must have been of reasons to reject the Prophet, that they had to rely on such silly allegations. Such doubts as they raised against the Prophet actually confirm his Prophethood rather than cast any doubt on it.

Alsui writes that in his times (the 19th century), some (Syrian) Christians believed that the Prophet repaired to the Hira cave every now and then, only to learn the Qur’ān from a pair of unknown Jew and Christian! How could it happen, Shabbir asks, that if another person wrote the Qur’ān, a great author of his kind was completely neglected, while he who supposedly re-told it, was accepted by millions as a Messenger of Allah?

Sayyid writes: A conference held by the Orientalists in Soviet Russia in 1945, concluded that it was unthinkable that Prophet Muhammad would have composed this Qur’ān singly. There must have been a whole group of people helping him in this feat. In fact, it did not seem possible to the participants that the whole of the Qur’ān was written in the Arabian Peninsula. Some of its parts must have been composed outside of it! (Because such wide and varied seem to be its sources, if it is assumed that the Qur’ān is a human production: Au.)

It is strange it did not occur to the Makkans, nor to their blind followers of the modern Western world, who raise similar doubts even today, that what could have prevented the other man (the original writer) from claiming the authorship of this wonderful, inimitable, masterly Qur’ān? Have these clever Orientalists never considered that, as authors, did they ever contribute a sentence to a book without expecting its acknowledgment in the preface? The truth is, there is nothing that they can think of as a good reason to reject the Qur’ān, but the Qur’ān’s contents rejects it. This is one ramification of the words, “Falsehood will not enter into it: neither from the front nor

[104] Surely, those who do not believe in Allah's signs, Allah does not guide them aright,¹⁶⁶ rather, for them awaits a painful chastisement.

[105] It is only those who do not believe in the signs of Allah that forge lies. It is they who are the liars.¹⁶⁷

[106] Whoever disbelieved in Allah, after his faith, except for he who was compelled, while his heart was firm in faith,¹⁶⁸ but he, who opened up for disbelief at heart's level,¹⁶⁹ it is upon them that Allah's anger rests, and theirs shall be a mighty chastisement.¹⁷⁰

[107] That is because they preferred the life of this world over the Next, and because Allah does not guide a disbelieving folk.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

from the rear.” That is, neither the earlier generations, nor the later generations can ever explain the Qur’ān, but in one way: that it is a Revelation. Gary Miller (a new Canadian Muslim) quotes from a recent publication of Catholic Encyclopedia, to the effect: “All that has been said so far about the Qur’ān, does not explain its origin to anyone’s satisfaction” (Au.).

166. That is, because of their refusal to believe, Allah does not guide such people to Paradise (Razi).

Ibn Kathir comments: Allah tells us that He does not guide those who are heedless to that which He revealed to His Messenger. This class of people

will never be guided to faith by any of Allah’s other signs either.

167. That is, those who impute a lie to the Prophet, are themselves confirmed liars. This verse befits the Western scholars, writers and journalists, who float lies for their laymen, who blindly believe in them in such matters of high importance, while treating all else that they write, about worldly affairs, with extreme skepticism, if not disbelief. It is this class of people who are the subject of the next verse (Au.).

168. The words, “while his heart was firm in faith,” is the basis of the opinion held by some that faith (iman) is the attestation of the heart

and that, its verbal pronunciation is not a condition. However, it will be more precise to say that although verbal assertion is not part of faith, it is necessary as a sign and confirmation of what is in the heart (Alusi).

169. Passing doubts, therefore, Thanwi points out, are not blameworthy (so long as not given permanent residence in the heart), since they are not the result of one's free will.

170. Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah and Abu Malik have said that the immediate reference was to 'Ammar b. Yasir. He was severely tortured by the pagans until he spelt the words of disbelief that they were demanding from him. Later he reported to the Prophet (in tears: Zamakhshari).

قَالَ : كَيْفَ بَجِدُ قَلْبِكَ؟ قَالَ : مُطْمَئِنًّا بِالْإِيمَانِ. قَالَ :
إِنْ عَادُوا فَعُدُّ.

The Prophet asked him, "How do you find your heart?" He replied, "Firm in faith." The Prophet told him, "If they repeat, you also repeat" (Ibn Jarir).

But of course, Zamakhshari writes, the allusion could be to all those who suffered persecution, notably Bilal, Suhayb, Khabbab, Salim, Jabr al-Hadrami, and, 'Ammar and his parents Yasir and Sumayyah. The brutality of the tortures can be gauged

from the fact that the last named Sumayyah was tied to two camels and then Abu Jahl thrust a spear in her vagina until she died. Yasir was also killed: the first two to die in the cause of Islam. In fact, under extreme torture delivered by his master, Jabr renounced Islam. However, his master himself later became a Muslim, and the two, master and slave, migrated to Madinah (Zamakhshari). (How fast Islam changes relationships! (Au.)

A narration in Bayhaqi says that unable to stand the tortures, 'Ammar disowned the Prophet and praised their deities. Hence the scholars have ruled that whoever is put to severe tortures might opt for one of the two ways of escape: either outwardly disown his religion, or, stay firm unmindful of what happens to him. Bilal opted for the latter and despite rocks on his chest, laid on hot desert sands, adhered to saying, "Ahad, Ahad" (One, One) and refused to say one word that would please the torturers. Indeed he said, "By Allah. If I knew another word that would madden them more, I would have said it." That is what Habib b. Zayd opted for when he and another Companion were caught (spying on Musaylimah the Liar: Shawkani). Musaylimah asked the other man if

he testified that Muhammad was a Messenger of Allah. He said, "Yes." Musaylimah next asked, "Do you testify that I am a messenger of Allah?" He said, "Yes." So he freed him. But when he asked Habib, "Do you testify that Muhammad is a Messenger?" Habib replied, "I do." He asked him next, "Do you testify that I am a messenger?" Habib said, "I do not hear you." When Musaylimah ordered that his body be severed, limb by limb, Habib still kept on repeating those words at every time he was questioned. The severing went on with each question and answer, until he died. Thus, Habib opted for 'azimah (firm resolve) - Ibn Kathir. But the Prophet did not censure the other person who escaped from Musaylimah the Liar (Zamakhshari). The report comes through Hasan al-Busri and is evaluated as Hasan (Shawkani).

In fact, continues Ibn Kathir, we have another incident worth mentioning. This is from Ibn 'Asakir who recorded it in the biography of 'Abdullah b. Hudhafa al-Sahmi, a Companion. Once he was captured by the Byzantines. They took him to the king. He proposed, "Become a Christian and I'll declare a share for you in my kingdom and give you my daughter in marriage." 'Abdullah re-

plied, "If you gave me the whole of your kingdom, and the whole of the Arab kingdom, on condition that I abandon my religion, just for a moment, I would not do it." The king threatened to kill him, got him fixed to the cross and ordered his men to shoot arrows around his hands and feet. He again offered him Christianity and again he refused. So the king got a large copper vessel filled with oil and heated up. Then one of the captured Muslims was brought and cast into it. 'Abdullah stood there watching him as he was fried to scorched bones. But 'Abdullah would not budge. So the king ordered that 'Abdullah be thrown into the vessel. 'Abdullah wept. The king thought 'Abdullah had softened. He called him and offered that he become a Christian. 'Abdullah said, "I only cried because I have command over only a single life. I wish I had as many lives as the hair on my body and each of them taken away in the path of Allah." Finally, the king suggested, "Kiss my forehead and I'll let you go?" 'Abdullah asked, "Will you free every Muslim prisoner?" The king said yes. 'Abdullah kissed his forehead and was freed along with all the Muslim prisoners. When he came back, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said, "It is 'Abdullah's right that ev-

everyone should kiss his forehead. And let me be the first to do it” (slightly shortened).

Qurtubi also points out that the legal implication of the verse is that its principle is extendable to other affairs of lesser importance. (If someone is forced to do something wrong, on threat to his life, he cannot be blamed for his actions). In fact, there is a *hadith* to this effect, which although lacks a strong chain of narrators, is correct in its import. It says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَحَاوَرَ لِي عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَأَ وَالنَّسْيَانَ وَمَا اسْتَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ

“Accountability is removed off my *Ummah* for things done by mistake, forgetfulness or what they are forced to do.”

Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq has said that from the point of view of its chain of narration also, the report is trustworthy. (Shu`ayb al-Arna`ut declared it as meeting with the conditions set by Bukhari and Muslim: Au.). In any case, the above does not apply to murder. Someone cannot murder another because his own life is under threat.

As a jurist, Qurtubi goes into many cases of law to explain as to when “being forced” is acceptable as an

excuse and when not - with or without a threat to one’s life. In today’s world where the Muslims are a target of repression, even in their own countries, a few examples given by Qurtubi could be used as guidelines. For instance, if someone knows that his words could harm an innocent Muslim, he can testify to a lie as did the Companion who, when asked by Musaylimah if he testified that he was a Messenger, said “Yes.” For example, in Tunis Abu Sa`id b. Ashras was asked by the ruler to swear that he had no idea where Malik was hiding. The king was, of course, after Malik’s life. The condition the ruler placed was that if Ibn Ashras was lying his wife would stand irrevocably divorced. Ibn Ashras readily swore, although he knew very well where Malik was hiding. When he went home he asked his wife to go away to her parents. Then he journeyed to Qayrawan to meet with Bahlul and discuss the issue. Bahlul told him that although Malik himself had a different opinion, according to Hasan (al-Busri) he was not required to honor the oath. That is, the divorce was not effective. Anas b. Malik expressed the same opinion when he was asked whether a man could swear falsely to save another innocent man’s life. He answered, “As for me, I would rather

swear false oaths seventy times than risk the life of a Muslim.” Similarly, it is reported that Walid b. `Abd al-Malik had a large force of secret servicemen spying on the people. Once, one of them participated in the lecture circle of the famous scholar R`ja` b. Haywah. He heard one of the participants criticizing Walid and reported to him. Walid sent for R`ja` and said, “I am criticized in your circles and you do not stop them.” Raja` denied that he was ever criticized. Walid asked him to swear, and he swore. So Walid got the secret serviceman whipped. The man later came to Raja` and complained, “O Raja`. You are used as the means of access (*wasilah*) for seeking rains, yet seventy stripes on my back?!” Raja` answered, “That you should get whipped seventy times is better than that a Muslim be killed.” And, Qurtubi adds, in all such cases, one need not even offer expiation for the false oaths. In the same vein, if one can escape from an ill-consequence of what he had said, he might say, as Ibrahim Nakha`i said, “By Allah. If I had said any such thing, Allah would have known it.” The listener presumes that the man did not say,

while he might have, yet he did not lie by swearing by Allah. A condition however is that one’s intention should not be to deceive anyone. When Ibrahim Nakha`i himself did not wish to see someone he would enter into his own little prayer-hall (*masjid*: place of prostration within the house) and tell his slave girl to say to the unwanted man, “By Allah. He is in the *masjid*.”

Nevertheless, (lest the permission be misused) Imām Abu Hanifah has warned, that the *hadīth* quoted above, is with reference to the accountability in the Hereafter. That is, forgetfulness, acting by error, or being forced to do something, could all prove to be acceptable excuses in the Hereafter. But, in the affairs of this world, they might not be sufficient. For example, if someone murdered another person by mistake, his plea will not release him from blood-wit. Similarly, if someone claimed that he did something because he was forced, the jurists will look into the surrounding conditions to determine the nature of the crime and nature of the forces acting on the man, and then pronounce the judgment (*Shafi`*).

[108] These, Allah has set a seal upon their hearts, their hearing and their sight. They it is who are heedless.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ
وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

[109] Without doubt, in the Hereafter, it is they who are the losers.¹⁷¹

لَا جَزَمَ أَتَّهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

[110] But, verily your Lord, unto those who migrated, after they were persecuted, yet struggled thereafter, and persisted in patience .. after all that, Your Lord is (unto them) All-forgiving, All-kind.¹⁷²

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
فُتِنُوا تُمَّ جَاهِدُوا وَصَبَرُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهَا لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

171. The reference is to those people who made up their minds about what they wished to do vis a vis the new message. When they made up their minds, Allah allowed that they act, in words and deeds, in accordance with their intentions. When He allowed them to act, and they had acted, in words and deeds, as they had wished, then, in consequence of this second wrong (first being their evil intention), they were barred from receiving any guidance. Subsequently, as they continued in their disbelief, totally blind to the call of reason and the truth that dawned upon them from time to time, Allah set a seal upon their senses. So, although materially well off now, they will be total failures in the Hereafter (based on Thanwi).

172. According to some reports, this verse came down in connection with

some people who had embraced Islam at Makkah but secretly. The pagans forced them out against the Muslims at Badr. Later, their well-wishing Madinan Muslims wrote to them the verse (4: 97),

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا
فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ
تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا [النساء : ٩٧]

“Indeed, those whom the angels take (in death) while wronging themselves, ask, ‘how were you in?’ They say, ‘We had been weakened in the earth.’ They say, ‘Was not Allah’s land vast so that you could migrate?’ So, these, their abode is Jahannum, an evil destination.” They wrote to them that they had no reason to stay back in Makkah. So a group of them left for Madinah. However, on their way they were caught up by the pagans. Fighting ensued. Some died, others

[111] (And recall) the Day when every soul shall come pleading for itself, when every soul shall be recompensed in full for what it did, and they shall not be wronged.¹⁷³

يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِجَادِلٍ عَنِ نَفْسِهَا
وَتُؤْتَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهَمْ لَا
يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

[112] And Allah strikes the parable of a town that was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in (ease and) abundance from every quarter. But it acted ungratefully for the favors of Allah.¹⁷⁴ So, Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear,¹⁷⁵ because of what they were doing.¹⁷⁶

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً
مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّن كُلِّ
مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعَمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ
لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ
﴿١١٢﴾

escaped. Then another verse was revealed (29: 10),

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ
جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ [العنكبوت : ١٠]

“And of the people are some who say, ‘We believe in Allah.’ But when one of them is harmed for Allah, he considers the trial of the people as a punishment of Allah.” So, the Madinans again wrote to the remnants in Makkah and they came out intending Madinah, and this present verse was revealed. A few other reports offer other reasons for the revelation of this verse (Ibn Jarir).

173. Tha`labi has said that the pleading will be of such order that even the body will argue for itself, against the soul, and the soul against the body. The body will say, “I acted on the soul’s command, otherwise I had no

power over my hands, feet, etc. So I am innocent.” The soul will plead, “I had no hands, feet, etc. of my own to commit sins.” It was the body which did everything. They will be told, “Your example is that of a disabled person unable to stand on his legs, and another, blind: both involved in theft. They were unable to steal fruits, each by himself. So, the blind man lifted the disabled on his shoulders so that he could pluck the fruits. Which one of them deserves punishment? Obviously, both” (Qurtubi).

Alusi cautions however that although some reports say that it was Ibn ‘Abbas who said the above, it is not likely that a scholar of his stature would have said it.

174. The obvious reference is to Makkah (Ibn Jarir).

[113] There came to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they gave him the lie. So a chastisement seized them, while they were transgressors.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ
فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

[114] So eat of what Allah has provided you, lawful and good,¹⁷⁷ and give thanks for Allah's favors, if it is Him that you serve.

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلالًا طَيِّبًا
وَاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ
تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

As custodians of the House of Allah, they enjoyed a privileged status among the Arabs. By virtue of that they moved about freely in a land where otherwise chaos reigned supreme. The economic advantage of free movement brought them ample wealth. They were in fact so rich that they offered a hundred camels, (equivalent of a hundred automobiles today) to anyone who could bring them the Prophet (in his migration journey to Madinah) dead or alive. Further, by virtue of Prophet Ibrahim's supplication, Makkah was well-supplied with fruits of all variety originating from various parts of the world. Finally, Allah preferred them over the peoples of the world by raising a Messenger among them. But they denied him and proved themselves unworthy of the favors. In consequence, they lost the position of leadership in piety, which went to the *Ansār* (originally from Yemen), and the *Muhajirun*, many of whom

were non-Makkans, and subsequently, to anyone who followed them in good faith (Au.).

175. That is, hunger and fear enveloped them as clothes envelope a man on every side (Razi and others).

After the Prophet had migrated to Madinah, the Makkans were visited by drought and famine which lasted some seven years. During that period, they were reduced to eating carrion. And, on top of that, the peace that they had enjoyed in the land was lost when, (in retaliation to their raids: Au.) the Prophet responded with raiding parties of his own (Ibn Jarir).

176. This refers to total Makkan opposition to the Prophetic message, persecution of his followers, the denial to the Prophet to carry forward his message, and, finally, attempts at his life (Au.).

177. A possible connection is that Allah is addressing the Makkan un-

[115] He has only forbidden carrion, blood, swine's flesh, and what has been hallowed to other than Allah.¹⁷⁸ But whoever is driven (to it), neither desiring (it) nor transgressing, then, surely, (unto such) Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Kind.¹⁷⁹

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ
الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلِيَ لغيرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ
غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
﴿١١٥﴾

[116] And say not to what your tongues falsely describe, 'This is lawful and that is unlawful,' to fasten lies on Allah.¹⁸⁰ Surely, those who fasten lies on Allah will never prosper.

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ
هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لِيَتَفَتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ
الْكَذِبَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

[117] A little enjoyment, but for them (awaits) a painful chastisement.

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾

believers, who were at that time passing through a phase of hunger and fear, that they could instead believe in Him and His Messenger and "eat of what Allah has provided you, lawful and good" (Razi).

178. That is, anything dedicated to, or hallowed for other than Allah, whether it is an animal, a food article, or something else. For example, in some parts of the Muslim world, a goat or ram is named after a Sheikh (peer), and sacrificed at his arrival to town or village. Now, they might spell Allah's name while slaughtering the animal, but since it was hallowed for someone other than Allah, the jurists declare its meat as unlawful to the Muslims, as well as the act of hallowing (Au.).

179. For commentary see *Al-Baqarah*, note 340, and *Al-Ma'idah*, note 24 of this work

180. It is a serious thing to say "this is lawful" or, "that is unlawful." Ibn Mas'ud has said, "Sometimes a man says, 'Allah has commanded this,' or, 'He has prohibited this,' but Allah says in reply, 'You have lied.' Or, a man says, 'Allah has declared this lawful,' or 'declared that unlawful,' but Allah says, 'You have lied'" (Shawkani).

The *Salaf* were, therefore, add Qur-tubi and Alusi, very careful about the use of the words "lawful" and "unlawful." It is only with reference to the prohibitions unambiguously stated in the Qur'an, that they would say

[118] Unto those who Judized themselves, We had prohibited such things as We have narrated to you earlier.¹⁸¹ And We wronged them not but they were wronging themselves.¹⁸²

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

[119] Nevertheless, surely your Lord, unto those who did evil deeds out of ignorance,¹⁸³ but repented thereafter, and made amends .. surely your Lord is, after that, Most Forgiving, Most Kind.¹⁸⁴

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾

with complete confidence that, “this is unlawful.” But, what was a derivative prohibition, or which relied on sources other than the Qur’an and *hadith*, they would rather use the word “undesirable” than the word “unlawful.”

182. It means that no wrong was done to the Jews, but rather, they deserved that those things as referred to in the verse of *Al-An`am* be declared unlawful to them (Sayyid).

181. That was done in *Surah Al-An`am*, in verse 146 which said,

183. It does not seem to be that by the term “ignorance,” (jahalah) the allusion is to the opposite of knowledge. Rather, it is to something that does not befit a man that he should do it. Alternatively, the allusion could be to crossing the bounds, acting savagely, dominating brutally, or tyrannize the people. The word has been used in this sense in the following *hadith*:

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْعَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوْ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ [الأنعام : ١٤٦]

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَضِلَّ أَوْ أُضَلَّ أَوْ أَزِلَّ أَوْ أُزَلَ أَوْ أَظْلِمَ أَوْ أُظْلَمَ أَوْ أَجْهَلَ أَوْ يُجْهَلَ عَلَيَّ

“As for those who Judaized themselves, We forbade (the flesh of) every cloven-hoofed (animal). And of the cows and sheep, We forbade them their fat, except what clings to the backs or the entrails or that which adheres to the bones. That is how We recompensed them for their rebellion. Surely, We are True.”

“O Allah I seek Your refuge that I should mislead or am misled, that I should slip or made to slip, tyrannize or am tyrannized, or

[120] Ibrahim¹⁸⁵ was indeed a nation,¹⁸⁶ devoted to Allah, (a man) of pure faith,¹⁸⁷ and not (at all) of the idolaters.¹⁸⁸

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَمَا يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

[121] (He was) Very thankful for His favors. He chose him and guided him to a straight path.

شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعَمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٢١﴾

act ignorantly, or that I should be treated ignorantly.”

Although the above report of Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and others was evaluated by Albani as *sahih*, Hauthamiyy had declared it weak (Au.).

And a Jahiliyy poet said,

ألا، لا يجهلن أحد علينا
فنجهل، فوق جهل الجاهلينا

Lo! Let no one act savagely towards us, or

We shall act more savagely than the most savage of us

(Alusi).

184. That is, no matter how serious a man's crime, that of disbelief, or that of declaring Allah's lawful as unlawful, or vice versa; if a man repents and makes amends, Allah is always most ready to forgive him (Razi).

185. Imām Razi writes on the connection: At various points this *Surah* recounted false beliefs of the Makkan pagans, their allegations against the

Prophets, unreasonable demands such as that the Messenger should have been one of the angels, declaration of what is lawful as unlawful and the unlawful as lawful, etc. Yet, they claimed allegiance to Ibrahim! So, in response, the *Surah* ends with the reminder that Ibrahim (*asws*) was an uncompromising monotheists, strongly devoted to Allah, pure of faith, no idolater and a leader worth following (which is what the Final Prophet was doing).

186. The translation as “nation” is literal. Several meanings have been suggested. In Majid's words, “an exemplar, a model to be followed in true religion and piety. *Ummah* is also used, (as in Lane-Poole's dictionary) in the sense of Imām.”

It is reported that Abu 'Abidayn went to Ibn Mas'ud and said, “If we do not ask you, then whom do we?” That humbled Ibn Mas'ud. Then the man asked, “Tell me about *Ummah*.” Ibn Mas'ud replied, “Someone who teaches people good things.” On an-

[122] And We gave him Good in this world.¹⁸⁹
And, in the Hereafter he shall be among the
righteous.¹⁹⁰

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

other occasion Ibn Nawfal heard Ibn Mas`ud say, “Mu`adh b. Jabal was an *Ummah*, devoted to Allah, pure in faith.” Ibn Nawfal said to himself, “Wrong. It was Ibrahim who was an *Ummah* ...” Ibn Mas`ud asked him, “Do you know what is an *Ummah*, and what is a qanit?” I said, “Allah knows best.” He said, “*Ummah* is someone who teaches good and qanit someone who is obedient to Allah and His Messenger.” This report has reached us through a variety of chains (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir). Abu `Abidayn’s narration is in several books as well as in Hakim who declared it as trustworthy (Shawkani).

Literally also, as Ibn al-A`rabi has said, *Ummah* is used in the sense of a scholar. Ibn `Abbas however has stated that since there was none but Ibrahim alone, on the face of the earth, following the religion of Islam, he was referred to as a nation by himself (Shawkani). Zamakhshari suggests that it could be that he had combined in himself the qualities of a whole nation, and, therefore, a nation by himself. Hence, Imām Razi

adds, the Prophet’s words about the well-known monotheists among the Makkans before his own advent, Zayd b. `Amr that, “Allah will raise him as an *Ummah*.”

Yusuf Ali adds other connotations: “Ummat: a model, pattern, example for imitation; but the idea that he was an Ummat in himself, standing alone against his world, should not be lost sight of.”

187. A “hanif” is someone who turns away from all else to devote himself to Allah alone. Upright is another word that could be used (Au.).

188. That is, he was not a pagan for the pagans of Makkah to claim allegiance to (Au.).

189. That is, someone whose alliance is eagerly sought - Qatadah (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari).

190. “Among the righteous” is a literal translation (Au.). The true meaning is, he is someone whose affairs would be made smooth in the Hereafter, who holds a high position with Allah, and who will treat him with great honor (Ibn Jarir). These words could be, Imām Razi adds, in

[123] Then¹⁹¹ We revealed unto you (O Muhammad) that 'You follow the religion of Ibrahim, (a man) of pure faith, and not (at all) of the idolaters.'

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
خَبِيثًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

[124] The Sabbath was only appointed for those who differed over it.¹⁹² Surely, your Lord shall judge between them on the Day of Judgment concerning that over which they were differing.

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ائْتَلَفُوا
فِيهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

response to Ibrahim's own supplication (26: 83), "O Allah, grant me wisdom and join me with the righteous."

191. Asad voices the opinion of some commentators on the article "thumma": "... this particle evidently alludes here to the climax of all revelation as manifested in the Qur'an.."

192. The Jews claimed to be on the religion of Ibrahim and that Sabbath observation was a part of the Ibrahimite religion. They were refuted by this verse (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali writes: "If Abraham's way was the right way, the Jews were ready with the taunt, 'Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?' The answer is twofold. (1) The Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham. It was instituted with the law of Moses because of Israel's hardness of heart (ii. 74); for they constantly disputed

with their Prophet Moses (ii. 108).

(2) Which was the true Sabbath day? The Jews observe Saturday. The Christians, who include the Old Testament in their inspired Scripture, observe Sunday, and a sect among them (the Seventh Day Adventists) disagree, and observe Saturday. So there is disagreement among the people of the Book. Let them dispute among themselves. Their disputes will not be settled till the Day of Judgment. Meanwhile, Muslims are emancipated from such stringent restrictions. For them there is certainly the Day of United Prayer on Friday, but it is in no sense like the Jewish or the Scotch Sabbath!"

What is implied by the words, "differed over it?" According to Qatadah, Suddi and Ibn Jubayr the allusion is to the fact that while some of the Jews accepted the Sabbath and its rules, others differed over it, and

broke its rules (Ibn Jarir). Rather, Zamakhshari and Razi write, when instructed by Musa, a few of them accepted Friday as the day they would reserve for devotions, but the great majority differed and chose Saturday for themselves, on the grounds that God Himself rested on Saturday. Qadi `Ayad was also of this opinion (Alusi).

The present day Bible confirms that God rested on the seventh day after His work of creation. It says (Gen., 2: 2-3): “And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had done” (Au.).

Ibn Kathir writes: Allah had originally instructed Musa to treat Friday as the day when they should put on hold all worldly activities to free themselves for devotional acts. But the Jews changed it to Saturday. Indeed, there is a *hadith* in Muslim to this effect. It says,

أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنِ الْجُمُعَةِ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَنَا فَكَانَ لِلْيَهُودِ يَوْمَ السَّبْتِ وَكَانَ لِلنَّصَارَى يَوْمَ الْأَحَدِ فَجَاءَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِنَا فَهَدَانَا لِيَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَجَعَلَ الْجُمُعَةَ وَالسَّبْتِ وَالْأَحَدَ وَكَذَلِكَ هُمْ لَنَا تَبِعَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَنَحْنُ الْأَخْرُونَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْأَوْلُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الْمَقْضِيُّ هُمْ قَبْلَ الْخَلَائِقِ

“Allah did not guide others before us in the matter of Friday. So that Jews have Saturday and for Christians Sunday. Then Allah brought us out and guided us to Friday. So He made Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That is how they will follow us on the Day of Judgment. We are the last to appear in this world, but will be the first in the Next, and the first to be judged before anyone else of the creations.”

A report close to this is in Bukhari also. Qurtubi however thinks that in view of the above *hadith*, (ref.: “Allah did not guide ...”) the Jews were not suggested any day. They themselves chose and chose the wrong day: Saturday.

[125] Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation; and reason with them with that which is better.¹⁹³ Indeed, your Lord knows very well those who have strayed away from the path as He knows well the rightly guided.¹⁹⁴

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ
الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِهِمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ
رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ
أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

193. The textual “*ahsan*” can be rendered both as “best” as well as “better.” Ibn Jarir understands it as “better.”

What is the implication of the word anyway? Zamakhshari answers that it is that manner of ‘calling’ in which the well-meaning attitude and sincerity of the caller is plainly manifest. In Mawdudi’s words, “... (it consists in) counseling people in such a manner that one’s deep sympathy, compassion and concern for the people in question does not go unnoticed by them. One should be quite conscious of the fact that ‘counseling’ people should not be allowed to be misunderstood as an act emanating from the presumption of one’s own status, or of the inferior status of the audience.”

Mawdudi also wrote, “Moreover, the arguments should appeal to good sense. Likewise, the statements made in the course of the discussion should be so couched as not to arouse obstinacy. In such discussions, one should

try to express one’s viewpoint in a straightforward and elegant manner, taking good care not to arouse adamancy and egotistical feelings in the audience. However, as soon as one realizes that the other party has been so provoked as to cling, out of sheer obstinacy, to his viewpoint, one should put an end to the discussions. For continuing it any further might cause the other person to veer even further away from the truth.”

We have a good example from the Imām of the callers of the last century: Mawlana Ilyas, founder of the Tablighi movement. While admonishing someone, he touched his hand. But the man, a coarse villager, reacted violently. He said, “How dare you touch my hand?” Mawlana Ilyas immediately caught his feet and said, “I am sure you will not be angry if I touched your feet.” The man of course crumbled and felt obliged to listen to his admonition. How many thousands did he not win on the strength of his sincerity alone! (Au.)

Imām Razi thinks, on good grounds of course, that broadly speaking there can be three kinds of people, each kind requiring a different approach from the caller: between wisdom (*hikmah*), goodly exhortation (*maw`izatu al hasanah*) to polemics (*mujadalah*). There is a kind of people that is of good knowledge, good nature. All that this class needs is a call blended with wisdom. A second kind is the corrupt, argumentative and incorrigible one: these people should be convinced with arguments better than theirs. Then there is a third kind, in between. They are neither scholarly, nor argumentative. They are the simple ones, on the nature on which they were created. They need to be addressed with goodly exhortation.

But Alusi and others have emphasized that the message of the verse is to call to Allah's path with words that penetrate the heart (*hikmah*), in the spirit of an admonition (*maw`izah*) said with extreme sincerity in an objective style (*al-hasanah*). And, if the discussion leads to debate, then, it should be conducted in a civilized manner, without hurting the opponent's feelings (*billati hiya ahsan*).

Mufti Shafi` has a long discourse on Da`wah. It needs attention at a time

when there is sufficient proliferation of Da`wah works, but few seem to be doing it the right way. He remarks that although the field is filled with the callers, the results are not commensurable. There are several reasons for the ineffectiveness of the efforts. Firstly, the world is far too advanced in corruption, obscenity and hedonism to be ready to listen to voice of reason and piety. Secondly, those who are truly qualified to do the work do not seem to give as much time to this activity as the need is. (So, the cause is taken over by those who, although not qualified, have the great urge to spread the word of Islam: Au.). Thirdly, some of those who take up the task do it quite badly. More often than not, it is forgotten that this is a noble work, for Allah raised Messengers and Prophets for this noble task, whose guidelines alone should the caller keep before his eyes. For example, Musa and Harun (Allah's peace on them) were instructed by Allah that as they go to Fir`awn, (20: 44),

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيْنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى [طه : ٤٤]

“Then say - the two of you - a soft word, haply he will accept admonition or will fear.”

Today, the people a caller addresses are neither as bad as Fir`awn was, nor

are they of the same status as the two Prophets. What right do ordinary mortals have then, to be harsh, criticize or taunt those whom he is supposed to reform? We might look at the conversations in the Qur`an between Prophets and their disbelieving nations. It is easy to see that in reply to the coarse talk, hurtful criticism, and vulgar taunts, the Prophets always responded with kind, considerate, and humble words. When the rejecters said, e.g. (7: 60),

إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ [الأعراف : ٦٠]

"We see you clearly misguided," they replied, in all earnest (7: 61),

يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ [الأعراف : ٦١]

"My people! There is no error in me. Rather, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds" Or, if they said (7: 66),

إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنُظَنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ [الأعراف : ٦٦]

"We detect in you some foolishness. In fact, we suspect you to be one of the liars," the undisturbed answer was (7: 67),

يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ [الأعراف : ٦٧]

"O my people! There is no foolishness in me. Rather I am a Messen-

ger from the Lord of the worlds." When Fir`awn asked in arrogant terms (26: 23),

وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ [الشعراء : ٢٣]

"And what is the Lord of the worlds?" Musa (asws) answered (26: 26),

رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ [الشعراء : ٢٦]

"Your Lord, and the Lord of your forefathers." Fir`awn retorted angrily (26: 27),

إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ [الشعراء : ٢٧]

"Indeed, the Messenger that has been sent to you is out of mind." But Musa's cool and collected answer was (26: 28),

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ [الشعراء : ٢٨]

"The Lord of the east and the west, and what is in between them, if you knew."

We see in these verses, whose citation can be multiplied, that a Prophet never responded to a taunt with a taunt. Our own Prophet observed decency in calling to Allah, and, in fact, never put anyone to shame, nor criticized in direct terms. When he observed any of his Companions doing wrong, he did not address him and did not name him during admonition. He would only say, "What is

wrong with the people that they do such and such a thing.” (Although, he might have noticed only one person doing it).

As for debates and polemics, Mufti Shafi` points out, they should not be, to begin, the first choice for a caller. He should resort to it only when forced by an opponent. And, when conducted, an important condition is that the objective should be to win the other man’s heart, and not create acrimony. As soon as it is discovered that the opponent is bent on obstinacy, he must be left alone to himself. For, if pressed further, it would only lead to hardened attitudes. On the other hand, the caller should examine himself. He should take care that as a consequence of a win over his opponent, (which is the only possible outcome, given the falsity of other religions: Au.), he should not be led to pride or arrogance, or self-conceit. These are major sins of the heart. Hence Imām Ghazali has said that just as wine is the mother of all external evils, to gain an upper hand in debates, and prove one’s mettle, for its own sake, is the mother of all internal evils. For, this leads to self-conceit, presumptuousness, arrogance, and happiness at other’s shortcomings. Imām Shafe`i has said, “Knowledge is a means of

love and understanding between the scholars. But, those who have made a tool of hatred out of it, who call others simply to follow their own schools of thought, who only aim at defeating others in debates and talks, how can such people ever create love between themselves and those whom they call?” Imām Malik used to say, “Argumentation and debates chase away the light of knowledge from the heart.” He was asked, “A man has the knowledge of the *Sunnah*. Should he not argue with it?” He replied, “No. Let him merely let them know. If it is accepted, good. If not, then let him be silent.” Finally, the Prophet has said in a *hadith* of Ibn Majah:

لَا تَعَلَّمُوا الْعِلْمَ لِتُبَاهُوا بِهِ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَلَا لِتُمَارُوا بِهِ
السُّفَهَاءَ وَلَا تَحْتَبِرُوا بِهِ الْمَجَالِسَ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ
فَالنَّارُ النَّارُ

“Do not learn in order to boast before scholars or to overwhelm the common people, nor seek a prominent place in the assemblies, (so as to turn people’s attention towards you). Whoever did that, then, Fire, Fire.” (The *hadith* is from the *sahih* of Ibn Hibban).

Quotation from Shafi` ends here.

194. Yusuf Ali’s comment is quite pertinent. He writes, “It may be that the Preacher sometimes says to

[126] And, if you retaliate, then retaliate with the like of which you were wronged. But, if you show patience, then, surely, that is better for the patient.¹⁹⁵

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

himself, ‘What is the use of teaching these people? They have made up their minds, or they are obstinate; or they are only trying to catch me out.’ Let him not yield to such a thought. Who knows how the seed of the Word of Allah may germinate in people’s minds? It is not for man to look for results. Man’s inner thoughts are better known to Allah.”

There seems to be a message hidden here that while calling, a caller may not fall into the belief that he is superior to the one being called.: Your Lord knows very well those who have strayed away from the path as He knows well the rightly guide. Who knows the one called will overtake the caller sometime in your future? (Au.).

195. After reporting a variety of opinions, Ibn Jarir is inclined to believe that the meaning and purport of the verse is of a general nature: Muslims are instructed that whenever they retaliate, they should do in the same measure as they were wronged, although, to forgive would be better.

The above general meaning seems to be more plausible if we consider the fact that soon after the revelation of these verses, the Muslims were to migrate to Madinah and were to be in a situation in which they could retaliate for wrongs done to them at Makkah (Au.).

Nevertheless, Imām Ahmad has a *hadith* of Ubayy b. Ka`b which says that sixty of the *Ansar* and six of the Immigrants were killed on the day of Uhud. The Companions vowed that if they got a similar opportunity, they would disfigure the pagans as their dead had been disfigured. So, on the day of the fall of Makkah, someone remarked, “After this day the world will not know the Quraysh.” But, a crier cried out, “The Prophet has given the promise of peace to every black and white, except so and so, so and so” - naming them. Then Allah revealed, “And, if you retaliate, then retaliate with the like of which you were wronged. But, if you show patience, then, surely, that is better for the Patient.” And the Prophet said,

[127] Endure then in patience;¹⁹⁶ yet your patience is not but with (the help of) Allah.¹⁹⁷ And do not grieve over them, nor be in any distress¹⁹⁸ over what they plot.

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرَكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

“We shall endure with patience, and shall not retaliate” (Ibn Kathir).

The above report is in Tirmidhi (to whom it was Hasan of status), ‘Abdullah b. Ahmad in Zawa’id, Nasa’i, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Khuzaymah in his Fawa’id, Ibn Hibban, Tabarani, Hakim (who declared it *sahih*), Ibn Marduwayh, Bayhaqiyy in Dala’il, and Diya’ in Al-Mukhtar (Shawkani).

Albani also declared it as *sahih* as did Dhahabi earlier (S. Ibrahim). Ibn Is-haq has, as noted by several commentators, said that the last three verses of this chapter are Madinan, while the rest are Makkan (Au.).

And the connection, between this and the last verse seems to be that the caller, who calls to Islam, will sometimes face situations as severely trying as the Prophet faced when he lost seventy of his men in one battle alone and his uncle Hamza’s body was disfigured. In such a situation, however, the most that is allowed is retaliation in equal measure, but, if he forgave it would be better for him (expanded on Alusi).

196. The earlier verse was for everyone. This verse specifically addresses the Prophet and all those who choose the higher order of moral principles, since observing patience in situations of severe trial, subdues the inner evil self (Thanwi and *Ruh*).

197. Thanwi selected the following from Alusi’s Bab al-Isharah for his “*Masa’il al-Suluk*.” Those who know Arabic might better draw on the original: Of patience there are various kinds:

(i) Patience for the sake of Allah (*sabr li’Allah*)

This *sabr* is a necessary part of faith. This is to demonstrate stoic acceptance at the calamities, and at the loss of a dear thing. This is the lowest form of “*sabr*”;

(ii) Patience in Allah (*sabr fi’Allah*):

This is to stay firm on the true path of Allah - by forcing the inner self to submit, accept hardships and give up the pleasurable things;

(iii) Patience with Allah (*sabr ma’Allah*):

[128] Verily, Allah is with those who are god-fearing, and those who do (things) well.¹⁹⁹

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
مُحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

This is for the *ahl al-Kashf* (those to whom some of the unknown is uncovered), who should take care not to be moved to an exceeding degree with the vision involving Allah's Acts and Attributes. This kind of *sabr* is achieved by keeping the heart under control. It is tough on the soul but pleasing;

(iv) Patience from Allah (*sabr 'ani'Allah*):

This is for those lovers, who, when they observe the Reality, are burnt in the fire of love, but, despite extreme desire for the repetition of the vision, do not lose their hold on patience and perseverance, and

(v) Patience with the help of Allah (*sabr bi'Allah*):

This is the highest form of "*sabr*." It is for those whose persons Allah dissolved completely, leaving no trace of low-order traits, bestowing on them a new personality altogether from Himself. It is the share of the perfect, the Prophets, and Messengers, and is not possible of achievement without Allah's own aid.

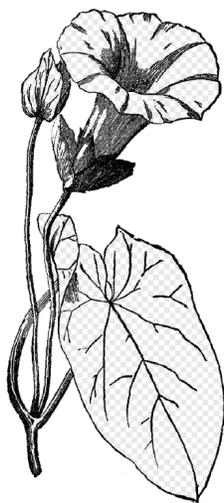
198. The textual word is "*dayq*" which is a worrisome condition of heart, of order lower than "*diq*" (Zamakhshari), hence our translation as "distress" rather than "constriction" (Au.).

199. It is reported that when Hayyan al-'Abdi was about to die people around him said, "Should you not leave a word of admonition and settle your will?" He replied, "I do not know what I should say or do. However, let me attempt. Sell my coat of mail and pay back my debts. If that is not enough, sell my horse. If that is also not enough, sell my slave. Finally, I admonish you with the ending verses of *Al-Nabl*, "Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation; and reason with them with that which is better. Indeed, your Lord knows very well those who has strayed away from the path as He knows well the guided. And, if you retaliate, then retaliate to the extent to which you were wronged. But, if you show patience, then, surely, that is better for the patient. Endure then in patience; yet your patience is not but with (the

help of) Allah. And do not grieve over them, nor be in any distress over what they plot. Verily, Allah is with those who are godfearing, and those who do (things) well” (Ibn Jarir).

Yusuf Ali has an appropriate note: “... the Sura ends with the highest consolation which the religious can receive; the assurance that Allah is with them. A double qualification is

indicated for so high an honor, - (1) that they should not yield to human passion or anger or impatience, and (2) that they should go on with constancy doing good all around them. To attain to the Presence of Allah in the sense of ‘I am with you’ is the culmination of the righteous man’s aspiration.” ﷻ



Surah 17

Al-Isra'¹

(The Night Journey)

Makkan²

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Glorified is He³ who carried His slave⁴ by night⁵ from the Sacred Mosque⁶ to the Farthest Mosque,⁷ whose surroundings We have blessed⁸ - in order to show him of Our signs.⁹ He is indeed the Hearing, the Seeing.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

1. The *Surah* is also known by the name "Banu Isra'il". According to a report of 'A'isha in Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ahmad, the Prophet (*saws*) used to recite it every night in his prayer (Asad). Indeed, 'A'isha's narration names two chapters that the Prophet recited every night: this one and *Al-Zumar* (Alusi and others). Tirmidhi however evaluated the *hadith* as *hasan*, (a kind of weak report) - Shawkani.

2. Except for two verses, this is a Makkan revelation. These two verses (numbered 76 and 80), in fact, were also revealed in Makkah, but, after its fall; to be precise, at the time the Tha'qif delegation had arrived seek-

ing peace with the Prophet (Razi). Qurtubi on the other hand says that three verses are Madinan: 76, 80 & 107. Alusi quotes Hasan's opinion as five verses, and Qatadah's as eight.

3. "*Sub-hana*" has its root in "*saba-ha*" which affords several meanings, the primary being,

a) "free and fast movement through water or air, such as, e.g., [21: 33]

كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ [الأنبياء : ٣٣]

"Everyone is swimming in its orbit." A few other connotations are:

(b) "distancing, or separating one (from another)" as in verse (73: 7),

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا [المزمل : ٧]

"Indeed, by day you have a prolonged occupation (which distances you from your Lord)."

(c) "prayers (and devotional acts)" as in verse (37: 143),

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ [الصفات : ٤٣ : ١]

"If only he had been one of those who prayed";

(d) "exception", i.e., to say, 'except that Allah wills' (in sha Allah), as in verse (68: 28),

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ [القلم :
٢٨]

"The moderate one said, 'Did I not say to you, if only you would (say) 'If Allah will.'"

(e), "Nur (light)" as in a *hadith* of Muslim:

حِجَابُهُ النُّورُ، وَلَوْ كَسَفَهُ لَأَحْرَقَتْ سُبْحَاتُ وَجْهِهِ
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَدْرَكَهُ بَصَرُهُ

"..(Light [Nur] is His veil; if He were to remove it, the Light of His Face would burn down everything, to the extent of His Sight" (Razi and Raghīb).

At this point, however, the meaning is to declare Allah (*swt*) free of any error or shortcoming (that humans can think of) - Qurtubi.

4. It is unanimously agreed by the scholars that the highest position one can occupy in the sight of Allah,

is to be referred by Him as a slave. Further, add Alusi and Thanwi, to mention the Prophet by this epithet, at this point, when he reached great heights, was perhaps meant to cure the Muslims of their habit of committing excesses in reverence of the Prophet. Finally, the journey helped the Prophet achieve perfect *ma`rifah*" And someone who achieved "*ma`rifah*" should better be designated an '*abd*'. This is in view of another verse which says (51: 56),

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ [الذاريات :
٥٦]

"We have not created the Jinn and mankind but that they should worship Me," where the phrase "*li-ya`budun*" has been explained by Ibn `Abbas as "*li-ya`rifun*" (i.e., they know Me).

5. The original word "*Asra*" has its root in "*Sara*" meaning, "he traveled by night." *Asra* therefore would mean, "he made (someone) travel by night."

"Why did Allah add *laylan* (a night)," - Zamakhshari raises a question, "when *Asra* itself means 'He carried (him) by night?'" and answers that it is to emphasize that the journey, although normally of several months duration, started and ended by the same night, in a part of it.

Majid therefore adds, quoting from Lane Poole's Lexicon: "*Laylan* is here used instead of *laylatan* because they say *Asra* *laylatan* meaning, he spent the whole night journeying," (while *laylan* means a part of the night: Au.).

That is, the journey did not occupy the whole night (Au.).

6. *Masjid al-Haram* is so named because a few acts that are lawful elsewhere are forbidden (*haraam*) in this Mosque, such as, e.g., hunting or uprooting grass. A proper rendering in English therefore would be, as done by Marmaduke Pickthal, "The Inviolable House of Worship." Further, although in a narrow sense the term *Masjid al-Haraam* is used for the mosque built around the Ka`bah, the term in its true sense, is applicable to the whole of the Haram area, which has been demarcated around the Grand Mosque (Au.).

7. The allusion is to *Bayt al-Maqdis* in Jerusalem. It has been called the Furthest Mosque because, of the three mosques that the Muslims are allowed to travel to for a visit, this one happens to be the furthest after those of Makkah and Madinah (Ibn Jarir). Moreover, Thanwi points out, by the term "*masjid*" it is the land that is meant, (i.e., the plot of land),

since, properly speaking, when we say *masjid*, the reference is not to the building but to the piece of land.

Was there a mosque when the Prophet visited the site? Ibn Jarir Tabari's "History" tells us that although the site had been converted into a garbage dumping area by the Romans, a part of the ruins of the original construction was still standing (Thanwi).

Asad adds: "The juxtaposition of the two sacred temples is meant to show that the Qur'an does not inaugurate a 'new' religion but represents a continuation and the ultimate development of the same divine message which was preached by prophets of old."

Ahadith tell us that it was built forty years after the construction of the Ka`bah. As stated above, it is one of those three mosques to which one could journey, specifically, for Prayers. The other two, according to a *hadith* in *Muwatta'*, are the Prophet's own mosque and the *Masjid al-Haram*. In view of this *hadith*, scholars have ruled that if someone vows to Pray in a particular mosque, but that requires him to journey to it, then he might not take up the journey, rather, Pray in any mosque. However, if he vows that he will pray in one of these three mosques, he

must travel to them to fulfill his vow (Qurtubi).

A Prayer in this mosque is equal to a thousand Prayers in other mosques. The report to this effect is in Ahmad, Abu Da'ud and Ibn Majah (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali gives us a short history: “. the Temple of Solomon (was) on the hill of Moriah. The chief dates in connection with the Temple are: it was finished by (started by David) Solomon about B.C. 1004; destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar about 586 B.C.; rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah about 515 B.C.; turned into a heathen idol-temple by one of Alexander's successors Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C.; restored by Herod, B.C. 17 to A.D. 29; and completely razed to the ground by the Emperor Titus in A.D. 70.”

(Presently there is no trace of the Temple. It was perhaps completely wiped out of existence by Titus. According to Tabari the present *Masjid* al-'Umar is the original site of the Temple. Near this *Masjid* al-'Umar stands the Dome of the Rock: - presently, the building with the yellow dome. It is so named because directly under the Dome is the rock from where, according to common belief, the Prophet took off for the heavens during his Nocturnal Journey: Au.).

Accurately speaking, *Masjid Al-Aqsa* refers neither to the Dome of the Rock, nor to the *Masjid* al-'Umar (the latter completed by 'abdu Malik in A.H. 68). It is the name of a plot of land, several acres in area, over which stand the *Masjid* al-'Umar, and, facing it, the Dome of the Rock. On one of the peripheries is a wall, known as the Wailing Wall, because the Jews come here to weep for the lost Temple. However, contrary to some people's belief, there is no proof that this wall is a part of the defunct Solomon Temple. All the diggings around and under *Masjid Al-Aqsa* have not given the Jews any clue about where the former Temple stood. And, tragically, without being certain of the site, their Temple cannot be built. Perhaps Divine Hand prevents Jews from re-building the Temple, destroyed when they rejected their Final Prophet - Jesus Christ - signifying that the spiritual leadership of the world is lost to them forever (Au.).

Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj (The Nocturnal Journey and Ascension)

Ibn Kathir takes the pain to collect together all the *ahadith* that are found, anywhere in *hadith* literature on this topic. Running into 35 pages, he presents, long and short,

some forty reports, of various grades, trustworthy as well as otherwise. Shawkani is at the other extreme. He expresses his unhappiness over the method adopted by Ibn Kathir, and himself does not narrate any of them, advising the reader to go to biography works. Now, since every narration has some features that are not found in others, we shall, as usual, present a single, combined report relying on trustworthy narrations. Biographical works, such as that of Dr. Mahdi Rizqallah, have also been used as source.

The word *mi`raj* is constructed on the same pattern as *mif`al*, and yields the meaning of a "device for ascending." Functionally, it is similar to a ladder. But it is not clear what exactly the *mi`raj* of the Prophet was.

Most narrations lead us to believe that the event took place after the tenth year of the Prophet's commissioning. Musa b. `Uqbah has narrated on the authority of *Zuhri* and `Urwah ibn Zubayr, that the journey took place a year before the Prophet's migration to Madinah.

This event followed the death of the Prophet's uncle (who had all along protected him from his enemies), the death of his wife (who gave him tremendous moral support), and after

he had received in Makkah and Ta'if tortures and afflictions of the worst kind ever.

It was in Allah's mercy to show a sign to the unbelievers before they could be condemned and punished. For Allah's message is not such that when it is sent through a prophet, it may or may not be accepted by the people without serious consequences arising from the responses. When it is sent, it must be taken seriously. Therefore, before the condemnation and punishment of those who cried lies, Allah showed a very convincing sign. It was by way of the Prophet's journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, from there to the Heavens and then back to Makkah, all within one night and with sufficient proofs for the most skeptic.

The journey started from Umm Hani's house where the Prophet (*saws*) was sleeping that night. Umm Hani was Abu Talib's daughter, his cousin. (Her real name was Fakhita: Alusi). She narrates: "The Prophet wasn't taken into his nocturnal journey but from my house. He did his night-prayers and then everyone went to bed. The next day we did the morning Prayer behind him. When it was over he said, "O Umm Hani. I did my night Prayer with you, as

you saw me. Then I went up to *Bayt al-Maqdis* and Prayed in it. And then I did my morning Prayer along with you as you can see me now" (Ibn Jarir).

Other reports lead us to believe that he was not taken to the journey directly from Umm Hani's house. He was first taken to the Grand Mosque. Anas b. Malik narrates a report preserved by Bukhari. It says, "One night three angels came down to him while he was sleeping in the Mosque. (That was before he was commissioned). The first of the three asked, 'Which one is he?' The middle one replied, 'He is the best of them.' And the last one said, 'Take the best one.' The Prophet next saw them only when they came to him that night (the night of the *mi'raj* journey). He was in a state in which the heart sees while the eyes sleep. That is how the Prophets are: their eyes sleep but their hearts are awake. They did not speak to him. They carried him to the Zamzam well where Jibril took over.

According to another report in Bukhari, the Prophet said, "The roof of my house was opened while I was in Makkah. Jibril came down ... I was in the Hatim" - or he said: "while I was in Hijr, lying down, when some-

one appeared and slit open (the breast: Au.)." He (Qatadah, the narrator) said, 'I heard him say, "he cut open from here to here;" I (Qatadah) asked Jarud (a listener) who happened to be by my side, 'What does he mean?' He said, 'From the cavity in the neck down until the navel.' I also heard him say, 'From the breast-bone up to the navel' - "He removed my heart. Then a golden tray filled with faith was produced. My heart was washed and filled with the contents of the tray. (Other reports say the breast was filled with faith and wisdom). Then a beast was brought: bigger than a mule, smaller than a horse - white." Jarud asked, 'Was that Buraq, O Abu Hamzah?' Anas replied, 'Yes.' It placed its (one foot on the ground, and another) foot where the sight ended (at the horizon). (It was saddled). According to a report in Bayhaqi, the Prophet said, "Prophets before me had also used it." I was asked to mount it. Jibril started off with me until we reached *Bayt al-Maqdis* (in Jerusalem). [The Prophet rode upon it with Jibril holding the stirrup and Mika'il the reins: Alusi].

Bayhaqi's report adds: "As I was traveling, a man called me from the right side, 'Here, Muhammad, I want to talk to you.' I did not answer. Then

(a little further) another man called me from the left side, 'Here, Muhammad, I want to talk to you.' I paid no attention to him. And, as I traveled further up, I saw a woman, well dressed and with all kinds of jewelry on. She said, 'Here, Muhammad, I wish to speak to you.' But I paid no attention." It was later explained by Jibril that the first was a Jew and the second a Christian. They both wished to distract him. As for the woman, she was the world. If the Prophet had paid any attention to her, his *Ummah* would have fallen for the world preferring it over the Hereafter.

"I tied it by the ring used by earlier Prophets. Then I entered the Mosque and offered two cycles of Prayer. As I came out Jibril brought me two bowls: one filled with wine and the other with milk. I chose milk. Jibril told me: 'Your choice fell on nature.' Then he took me up to the heavens." Other reports suggest that he Prayed with the previous Prophets before he ascended. Adam (*asws*) and all those Prophets who came after him had assembled for him to lead in the Prayers.

Then he ascended together with Jibril until they reached the heaven nearest to this world. (An angel called

Isma'il is its keeper: Bayhaqi). Jibril asked to be let in. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

So it was opened. As I entered I came across Adam. Jibril told me: 'This is your father. Greet him.' So I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous son and a righteous Prophet.'

According to other reports, he saw Adam with a multitude on his right and a multitude on his left. When he looked at those at his right he smiled; and when he looked at those at his left, he wept. Jibril explained that the multitudes on his right and left were the souls of his progeny. Those at the right were the people of Paradise and those at the left the people of Hell.

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the second heaven and sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I encountered Yahya and 'Isa. They were cousins. (Other reports add: "'Urwah ibn Mas'ud is closest to 'Isa in appearance. He was middle-sized, fair complexioned, with curly hair and of a sharp gaze).

Jibril said: 'These are Yahya and 'Isa. Greet them.' I greeted them and they returned the greetings. They said: 'Welcome to a righteous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the third heaven and sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I met Yusuf.

Jibril said: 'This is Yusuf. Greet him.' I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the fourth heaven and Jibril sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I met Idris.

Jibril said: 'This is Idris. Greet him.' I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous brother and a righteous Prophet.'

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the fifth heaven and Jibril sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I came upon Harun. He had a long beard almost extending up to his navel.

Jibril said: 'This is Harun. Greet him.' I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous brother and a righteous Prophet.'"

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the sixth heaven and Jibril sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was inquired: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I came across Musa. He was a huge dark man. His body thickly covered with hair.

Jibril said: 'This is Musa. Greet him.' I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous brother and a righteous Prophet.'"

As I left him behind he began to weep. He was asked: 'What makes you cry?' He replied: 'I cry because a young man sent after me will have greater number of followers entering Paradise than from my followers.'

"Then he ascended," (continues the transmitter), "until he reached the seventh heaven and Jibril sought it to be opened. It was inquired: 'Who is it?'

He replied: 'Jibril.'

It was asked: 'Who is with you?'

He replied: 'Muhammad.'

It was asked: 'Has he been invited?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

It was said: 'Welcome to him. The best one ever to be invited has arrived.'

As I entered, I came upon Ibrahim. (Another report adds, "He was closest to me in appearance.") Jibril said: 'This is your father. Greet him.' I greeted him. He returned the greetings and said: 'Welcome to a righteous son and a righteous Prophet.'"

(According to another report, Ibrahim was found resting against the Bayt al-Ma'mur (the Much-frequented House). Everyday 70,000 angels enter into it, and never have the chance to come back to it.

Then I was taken up further until I reached the Lote Tree at the farthest end (*Sidratu al-Muntaha*). I found its fruit (as large as) that of Hijr (a place in the north of Hijaz); and its leaves as large as the ears of an elephant. He told me: 'This is the Lote Tree at the Farthest End.' I found four rivers (springing out from) there: two internal and two external. I asked: 'What are these Jibril?' He replied: 'The internal ones are the rivers of Paradise, and the external ones are Nile and Euphrates.'

Then I was taken up to the *Bayt al-Ma'mur*. There I was presented with a cup of wine, a cup of milk and a cup of honey. I chose milk. Jibril remarked: 'That's the natural thing (you did). You and your followers shall follow it.'

Then fifty Prayers a day were declared obligatory for me. I returned and came across Musa. He asked: 'What have you been ordered?' I replied: 'I have been ordered fifty Prayers a day.' He said: 'Your followers will not be able to do fifty Prayers a day.

By Allah, I tested the people before you, and bore great pains with the Children of Isra'il. Return to your Lord and seek concession for your followers.'

I returned. Allah took off ten of them from me. I returned to Musa. He repeated what he had said earlier. So I returned. Allah took off ten more of them from me. I returned to Musa and he told me what he had told me earlier. So I returned and Allah took off another ten from me. I returned to Musa and he repeated what he had said earlier. So I returned and I was ordered ten Prayers a day. I returned but Musa said the same thing. So I went back and Allah ordered me five Prayers a day. I returned to Musa and he asked: 'What have you been ordered?' I said: 'I have been ordered five Prayers a day.' He said: 'Your followers will not be able to do five Prayers a day. I have tested the people before you, and bore great pains with the Children of Isra'il. Return to you Lord and seek further concession.'

"The Prophet replied to him," (continues the narrator): 'I have made requests to my Lord to the point of being reduced to shame. I would rather be satisfied and submit.'

(According to the version in Bukhari, he was told at one point, "O Mu-

hammad. My Words do not change. That is how it has been written for you in the *Umm al-Kitab* (Mother of the Book): Every good deed will be rewarded with ten of its like. These are fifty in the *Umm al-Kitab*, and they are five for you."

"The Prophet continued," says the narrator, "When I crossed (the heaven) a caller called out: 'I have kept my Word and have granted a decrease to My slaves.'"

Other reports offer us some more details. Such as, the Prophet's words, "On the night that I was taken on to my Night Journey, I passed by Musa. He stood in Prayer in his grave (Muslim)." Another narration reports the Prophet's words that when he ascended to the seventh heaven, he was taken up to a point from where he could hear the movement of the Pens. He also saw four rivers there: two hidden and two visible. He was told by Jibril, "The two hidden rivers are those of Paradise, while the two visible ones are Nile and Euphrates." Thereafter he spoke about the Prayers being made obligatory. "Then," he continued, "He took me further up until we reached the end of the Lote Tree. It was engulfed in indescribable colors. After that I entered into Paradise and lo, it was all domes and the ground all musk."

According to reports in Abu Da'ud and Ahmad, the Prophet passed by a people who had nails of copper with which they were scratching (their flesh out) from their faces and breasts. He asked who they were. Jibril told him, "These are those who ate the flesh of the people (i.e., committed back-biting) and slandered their honor." He also passed by a people who had before them good meat. But they chose to eat from the most foul-smelling, putrid, rotten meat. On enquiry he was told that those were a people who used to prefer the unlawful over the lawful in the life of the world. He also passed by a people who were eating red hot coals that they put in their mouths which came out through their anuses. He was told that these were people who devoured the wealth of the orphans. Allah said about them in the Qur'an (4: 10), "Surely, those who devour the property of the orphans, are filling their bellies with nothing but fire." He also came across women hung by their breasts. They were the adulterers. And, he came across men who had huge bellies, so huge that they were hampered in their movements. A horde of the Fir'awn's folk trampled them morning and evening (as they were driven to the Fire, morning and evening). The people

with big bellies were those who devoured usury.

It is also reported that the Prophet heard some noise. He asked what it was. Jibril replied, "This is Bilal's footsteps." He also noticed a very tall, red blue man. On inquiry he was told that he was the man who had slaughtered Salih's camel. He also saw Dajjal. He was very tall, broad, with a fair complexion. One of his eyes stood out like a shining star. The hair on his head looked like branches of a tree.

Reports give us to believe that the return journey was also via *Bayt al-Maqdis*. Tirmidhi recorded on the authority of Shaddad b. Aws, "... Then we moved on and passed by a Quraysh camel in such and such a place. Their camel had strayed away. So and so was in charge of them. I greeted them. Some of them remarked, 'This is Muhammad's voice.' Then I returned to my homefolk before dawn."

Buraq was the means of travel for the journey from Makkah to *Bayt al-Maqdis* and then back to Makkah. Whereas, for the journey up, to the heavens, the Prophet always used the words, "I was raised up" (*urija bi*) without mentioning the means. Some reports say, "A ladder was set

up" which he used for ascension. For sure, Buraq was not used for going up.

As it should happen, as the Prophet went out, he met Abu Jahl. He asked him mockingly, "Any news?" The Prophet told him about his journey. Abu Jahl did not wish to express his disbelief in fear of the Prophet retracting his story. So he asked him, "Supposing I gathered the people, will you repeat the story before them?" When the Prophet said yes, he hurried away to gather the people. When they came and the Prophet told them all that had happened, they greeted him with skepticism. Someone who had been to Jerusalem (while it was known that the Prophet had never been there) asked him to describe what *Bayt al-Maqdis* looked like. Allah brought it before his eyes so that he was able to see and describe the details they wanted. They said, "So far as the description goes, he is right." Nevertheless, they refused to believe on grounds that he could not go to Syria and come back within a single night when they took two months to do it. In fact, many Muslims also apostatized on that ground.

When Abu Bakr was told of the story, he said, "By Allah, if he claims that,

it must be true. Why should you be in doubt about it? Does he not say that he receives news from the heavens at any time of the night or day? Is that not more miraculous?" Then he went up to the Prophet and asked him to describe the places. When he had done that, he said, "I testify that you are Allah's Messenger." The Prophet told him, "You are Siddiq." And from that day Abu Bakr came to be known as the Siddiq.

Nature of the Journey

Qadi 'Ayad has written: "Scholars have differed between themselves over the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension. It has been said that all of it took place in sleep. (A'isha, Hasan al-Busri and Mu'awiyah are said to have held this opinion: Au.). But the truth on which the people are, along with most of the earliest scholars, most of those who followed them, jurists, traditionists and scholastics, is that it was a physical journey. Most narratives point to this. Varied opinions require evidence.."

Ibn Hajr said, "The Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place in the state of wakefulness, with the body and soul, after the Prophet had been commissioned. This is the opinion of the great majority of scholars, traditionists, jurists and scholastics. All

evidences point to this. It is not right to differ from this opinion. Reason plays no role in it for one to resort to interpretations."

'Urjun has said, "This *Ummah* is one in this - except for a few varied opinions which in fact have not come to us through trustworthy reports such as those of A'isha, Mu'awiyah and Hasan al-Busri. Allah opened the chapter (*Al-Isra'*) with the words of glorification to symbolically express His Powers and to emphasize that nothing is greater than His Power .. Any opening with the mention of the words of glorification is not employed (in the Qur'an) except for events extraordinary, such as those that the reason does not easily accept..." Then he added, "The word *'abd* in the starting verse is not used in the Arabic language but for body and soul together. So also, the words, "The eye did not deviate nor did it transcend" also speak of someone with body and soul. Now, Hasan al-Busri's narration was unknown during the time of the Companions. It is an entirely new opinion. As for A'isha, she was not yet the Prophet's wife, (Qurtubi wrote: Au.), she was too young at the time of the event. (At least less than 9 years old: Au.). She does not quote other people's opinion on which her own opinion

rests. In other words, this is not a *hadith*. Moreover, Khifaji has shown that the chain of narrators has Muhammad ibn Is-haq in it who was treated as a weak narrator by scholars like Imām Malik and others. In contrast, the narrations to the opposite view are stronger...” Zarqani has said, “A careful study of her words shows that she too was inclined to believe that the Ascension was with body and soul. For, she denied that Muhammad saw his Lord with his eyes. If she had been of the opinion that the Prophet was in his sleep, she would not have had to deny the Vision. (What she would have said is, “there is no point in discussing the Beatific Vision, since, to begin with, it was the soul that had ascended: Au.). As regards Mu`awiyah’s opinion, it was expressed after the opinion had been reached by consensus that the Journey was with the body and soul. (Therefore, attention cannot be paid to it: Au.). It is another thing that Mu`awiyah’s opinion lacks a strong chain of narration, coming down as it does, through Ibn Is-haq. Even if it is demonstrated that it was truly his opinion, it would not be of much weight since it is a personal opinion formed after the consensus of the Companions had already been reached. And, such an opinion can-

not cancel out the consensus. (In fact, he was an unbeliever at the time the event took place: Qurtubi). As for Hasan, two opinions have been reported as his. One of them says the Prophet was then awake.”

Again, if the Nocturnal Journey and Ascension took place during his sleep, there was no reason for the Quraysh to deny, nor would have some of the Muslims apostatized. What was the problem in accepting that the Prophet’s soul ascended? Finally, the manner and presentation of the incident in the chapter *Al-Isra’* is strongly suggestive of the Journey in wakefulness, in body and soul as `Urjun and others have maintained” (Dr. Mahdi Rizqallah).

Moreover, “the act of seeing” or “transgression” alluded to in verse 17 of *Surah Al-Najm*: “And the sight did not err, nor did it transgress,” are not applicable to souls (Qurtubi).

Further, some reports say that the Prophet’s bed was still warm. Why did they have to say that it was still warm if the body never left the bed? (Au.)

Finally, some people are misled by the words of a *hadith* in which Shurayk ended the narration by reporting the Prophet’s words, “then I woke up.” This has led some people

to think that perhaps the journey took place during his sleep. But there are several other narrations, passed on to us by more reliable narrators who emphasized the opposite. One way perhaps, of reconciling the two opinions, concerning the body and soul could be as follows: the journey took place several times, or, at least, more than once. Many scholars have expressed this opinion. Variant reports also suggest this. Therefore, we can say that it is possible that Allah first took his soul alone to the heavens, in order for him to be mentally prepared for the next journey with body and soul together (Thanwi).

The words, "Then I woke up" could also refer to the sleep after the journey had ended (Au.).

To continue: The next morning when the Prophet spoke of his journey to his aunt, she, although a believer, strongly urged him not to announce this to the Quraysh, to whom, she feared, this might become another point of ridicule. But the Prophet pulled his shirt off her clutching hands and left saying, "By God, I shall tell them."

Umm Hani's fears were true. The Quraysh had a good laugh. In fact even some Muslims, weak in faith, turned apostate. The strong in faith

were led by Abu Bakr who, when questioned if he still believed in the Prophet, said, "Why not! I believe in greater wonders. I believe that an angel comes down to him revealing the Qur'an." Wary of him and the likes of him, the Quraysh turned to the Prophet. They asked him both serious as well as absurd questions to which he replied in his usual calm manner. Finally they said: "Alright. You say you have been to Jerusalem. Agreed. Tell us what Jerusalem looks like." Now all the journeys that the Prophet had made to Syria prior to his prophethood were in the company of Quraysh. They were aware that he had never been into Jerusalem. So they thought that at last they had caught him on the wrong foot. But to their surprise he described the city in such detail as if it was before his eyes. In fact, it was then before his eyes, as he himself explained later. For, when they asked details, which only a person who had visited the city several times could answer, Allah brought the city before his eyes, so that he looked into it and answered them to their satisfaction.

He also told them that while on his way back from Jerusalem a camel belonging to a caravan, passing through such and such a glen, had bolted away "and I showed them where it stood."

Also, on the way back to Makkah, he passed by a caravan that had kept some water in a pitcher during the night halt. He had drunk out of it and replaced the lid. The caravan was advancing towards Makkah and was headed by a camel loaded with such and such goods. To the amazement of the Quraysh the caravan did arrive headed by the same kind of camel as described by the Prophet, and its people admitted that the water pitcher was found empty despite the lid. Later, when the other caravan was also back they inquired about the camel that had bolted away, and they said, "Quite right. A camel had bolted away and we heard a man calling us to it so that we were able to recover it!"

In the other chapter, *Al-Najm*, Allah spoke of the Ascension to the heavens and the benefits thereof. He said (v. 13-18),

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ تَزَلَّةً أُخْرَى (١٣) عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى
 (١٤) عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (١٥) إِذْ يُغْشَى الْبَيْدَرَةَ
 مَا يُغْشَى (١٦) مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى (١٧) لَقَدْ
 رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى [النجم : ١٣ - ١٨]

"Surely he saw him (Arch-angel Jibril) a second time (in his original form), near the Farthest Lote Tree. Thereat is the Garden of Abode. When the Lote was covering what was covering. The eye did not de-

viate, nor did it transcend. Surely, he saw great signs of his Lord."

Differences have also prevailed between the Companions over whether the Prophet saw Allah with his physical eyes. The opinion of the majority is that he saw Him with his inner vision and not with the physical eyes. As for Allah's words (53: 11-13),

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى (١١) أَفْتُمَارُونَ عَلَيَّ مَا يَرَى
 (١٢) وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ تَزَلَّةً أُخْرَى [النجم : ١١ - ١٣]

"The heart did not falsify what he saw. Will you then dispute what he saw? Indeed, he saw him at a second descent" - trustworthy reports coming from the Prophet tell us that the allusion here is to Jibril. The Prophet saw him twice in the form and shape in which he (Jibril) has been created. As for Allah's words in verse 8 of chapter *Al-Najm*:

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى [النجم : ٨]

"Then he came near and hung suspended," the words "near" and "hung suspended" are not related to the night journey at all. Also, they are speaking of Jibril who "neared" and who "hung suspended" as 'A'isha and Ibn Mas'ud (maintained). Allah said (*Al-Najm*, 5-8):

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى (٥) ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى (٦) وَهُوَ
 بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى (٧) ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى [النجم : ٥ - ٨]

"He was taught by one mighty in power (i.e. Jibril), very strong, who stood poised, being on the upper horizon. Then he came near and hung suspended."

Furthermore, just as any other human being, a "slave" is composed of two elements: the body and the soul. This is common knowledge. The journey then had to be with the combination. Nor is it an impossible feat for the intellect. If it is impossible to think of a human being ascending to the heavens, it is impossible for the angels to descend down from there. Such an assumption will lead to the denial of Prophethood itself.

Reports concerning the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey and Ascension, reach tawatur status. They were narrated by several Companions including such figures as `Umar ibn al-Khattab, `Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Malik b. Sa'sa`, Abu Dharr, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Sa'id, Shaddad b. Aws, Ubay b. Ka'b, Jabir, Hudhayfah, Buraydah, Abu Ayyub, Samurah b. Jundab, Umm Hani', `A'isha, Asma', and several others (Ibn Kathir and others).

A mutawatir report reaches the status of a Qur'anic verse in terms of belief requirement. In other words, it is as necessary to believe in a mu-

tawatir report as in a Qur'anic verse.

Nonetheless, it might also be noted, says Alusi, that the Qur'an only mentions "Isra" (the Nocturnal Journey). It does not mention "*Mi'raj*" (except by implication in *Surah Al-Najm*), perhaps out of Allah's mercy since the denial of an explicit statement entails disbelief (Thanwi).

Majid writes: "Asin, the Madrid professor of Arabic, has traced the great influence this Islamic literature had on Dante and other Christians of the Middle Ages. 'Embellished by later accretions, this miraculous trip still forms a favorite theme in mystic circles in Persia and Turkey, and a Spanish scholar considers it the original source of Dante's Divine Comedy' (Hitti, p. 114)."

8. The allusion is both to material, such as fruits and vegetation, as well as spiritual blessings, viz. the place is the burial ground of several Prophets and Messengers (Razi). A *hadith* of the Prophet reports that Allah said,

يا شام يدي عليك يا شام أنت صفوتي من بلادي
أدخل فيك خيرتي من عبادي

"O Syria. My hand is on you. You are the best of My lands and I shall drive the best of My slaves to you" (Qurtubi).

[2] And We gave Musa the Book and made it a source of guidance for the children of Israel that: 'take not unto yourselves a trustee besides Me.'¹⁰

وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِي وَكِيلاً ﴿٢﴾

[3] O¹¹ descendants of those We bore with Nuh. Surely, He was a thankful servant.¹²

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا ﴿٣﴾

[4] And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book¹³ that twice you will do mischief in the land,¹⁴ and you will rise exceedingly high (in arrogance).

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤﴾

Haythami remarked about the above report that it is fairly trustworthy (Au.).

9. The exact implication of the words “*min ayatina*” is: “some of my signs,” or, in other words, “a few of my signs.” For example, the Prophet said that when he was there above the seventh heaven, he heard the sounds of Pens, which implies that he did not see the Pens themselves. Thus, he was shown “some signs.”

10. Asad explains the term *Wakil*: “The term ‘*Wakil*’ denotes ‘one who is entrusted with the management of [another person’s] affairs’, or ‘is responsible for [another person’s] conduct.’ When applied to God, it is sometimes used in the sense of ‘guardian’ (e.g., in 3: 173), or ‘defender’ (e.g., in 4: 109), or - in combination with the phrase ‘*ala kulli shay*’ in (as, e.g., in 6: 102 or 11: 12)

- in the sense of ‘the one who has everything in His care.’”

11. The addition of “O” follows the understanding of many of the *Salaf* such as Mujahid (Qurtubi and others).

12. That is, ‘O the descendants of those whom We saved and carried in the ship with Nuh, follow the footsteps of your forefather and thank Allah for the blessing as he thanked.’ Indeed, a *hadith* of the Prophet in Muslim says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْعَبْدِ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ الْأَكْلَةَ فَيَحْمَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا أَوْ يَشْرَبَ الشَّرْبَةَ فَيَحْمَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا

“Allah is pleased with a servant who, when he eats or drinks something, thanks Allah for it” (Ibn Kathir).

13. That is, it was revealed and written in the Scriptures given to the Israelites that twice they will spread

[5] So, when the promise of the first of the two came to pass,¹⁵ We sent upon you Our slaves¹⁶ - those of great military might; and they entered the inmost parts of the homes.¹⁷ That was a promise that came to pass.

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ
عِبَادًا لَنَا أُؤْتِي نَاسِي شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا
خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ﴿٥﴾

great corruption in the land (Ibn Kathir), “.. probably applying to predictions contained in the *Torah* (Leviticus xxvi, 14-39 and Deuteronomy xxviii, 15-68) as well as prophecies of Isiah, Jeremiah, John and Jesus” (Asad).

14. Since we know from the Qur’ān itself that the Israelites had rebelled not twice but many times in the land, the allusion here therefore can only be to major rebellious acts, or, alternatively, as Asad put it, “to two distinct, extended periods of their history.”

15. The earlier and the later scholars could not come to any agreement over the identification of the first or second group which prevailed over the Israelites (Ibn Kathir). Ibn `Abbas, (in one of his two opinions), as well as Sa`id b. Jubayr, Hasan and Qatadah have identified Nebuchadnezzar as the one who led the first destructive assault. He destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple, burned down every copy of the *Torah*, leaving not one word in writing, killed

seventy thousand Israelites, and led away as prisoner-slaves a hundred thousand of them including such prominent personalities as Daniel, Ezra, and others (Ibn Jarir).

The Israelites remained in slavery in Babylon for seventy years. It was a Persian attack on Babylon that freed them. They then returned to Jerusalem. And, apart from the general corruption among the Israelites, the Divine anger was provoked by the following incident. The Israeli ruler wished (Herodotus: Ibn Jarir’s history), to marry his niece which Yahya, the son of Zakariyyah, declared unlawful. Enraged, the niece got her paramour drunk and demanded that he order Yahya’s head be brought on a tray. He complied, which signaled the beginning of the assault (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali writes: “... it may be that the two occasions refer to (1) the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried off into captivity, and (2) the destruction of

[6] Then We gave back to you the turn to prevail over them,¹⁸ and extended you with wealth and progeny and made you more numerous in manpower (than you ever were).¹⁹

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ
بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا ﴿٦﴾

Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, after which the Temple was never rebuilt.”

16. Majid writes: “In the *Bible* also the epithet ‘my servant’ is applied to Nebuchadnezzar (Je 25: 9).” It is also possible, writes Thanwi, that since Allah’s punishment was delivered at their hands, for a good purpose - removal of the corrupt from the lands - the attackers and destroyers were referred to as “Our slaves.” Nevertheless, note that as against *‘abdihi* (His slave), Allah (*swt*) did not say *‘ibadina*, rather, *‘ibadan-lana* which gives a sort of a generic sense (Shafi’).

Yusuf Ali further clarifies the surprise usage of the honorable term *‘ibad*: “They were servants of Allah in the sense that they were instruments through which the wrath of Allah was poured out on the Jews..”

17. “Jasu” affords several connotations. To go in and out of houses with the intention of destruction; to search; to go about looking if someone is left alive, etc., are the possible meanings, and, as Wahidi has said, the word could have been brought here to carry all these connotations (Razi).

18. Asad comments, “.. apparently a reference to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity in the last quarter of the sixth century B.C., the partial re-establishment of their state, and the building of a new temple in place of the one that had been destroyed.”

19. These words draw special significance when we keep the fact before us that a large number of the Israelites were killed during the first major assault on them, greatly reducing their population (Au.).

[7] If you did well, you did well for your yourselves; and if you did evil, then unto your own souls. Then, when the final promise came to pass .. (we set Our enemies upon you) to disfigure your faces²⁰ and to enter the Mosque as they (their forerunners) entered it the first time,²¹ and to destroy all that they ascended to, in utter destruction.²²

إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيَبْئُرُوا مَا وَعَدُوا
تَثْبِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

20. That is because the effects of the pain on the body and mind disfigure the faces (Au.: with a point from Alusi). In Asad's words, "Inasmuch as the face is the most prominent and expressive part of the human body, it is often used as a metonym for one's whole being; hence 'the evil done to one's face' is synonymous with 'utter disgrace.'

21. Thanwi notes from *Tafsir* Haqqani that history records several major episodes of the Israelites when they rebelled and received Divine punishment. The following six are outstanding ones that we reproduce more to demonstrate that our commentators were not unaware of history, rather than because they are accurate descriptions of the past events, if any such accurate description is possible:

i) When the Israelite rulers as well as their subjects adopted irreligious attitudes after Sulayman (*asws*), an Egyptian ruler raided Jerusalem, pil-

laged the city, carrying away its gold and silver, but did not destroy the Temple or the city.

ii) When, some four hundred years after that, the Jews began to worship idols, once again an Egyptian king descended, and destroyed part of the Temple and razed some buildings to the ground before retreating with the booty.

iii) A few years after that, Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city and partially destroyed it. He installed a new ruler, from among the Israelites before leaving.

iv) He came back when the new ruler rebelled against his authority. He killed a large number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and took away as prisoner-slaves the rest of them. They remained in Babylonian captivity for 70 years. They were released when the Persians attacked the Assyrians and overcame them. The new rulers allowed the Israelites to return to

Palestine and, in fact, returned them much of their looted wealth.

v) This happened when, after a while of righteous living, the Jews once again spread corruption in the land - some 170 years before the appearance of Jesus Christ. The king who had laid the foundations of Antioch, raided Jerusalem, caused wide scale destruction, killed some 40,000 Jews and enslaved as many. The newly built Temple was spared. However, the descendants of that king destroyed that Temple also while they attempted to wipe out the town. Finally, the city fell to the Romans who allowed the Jews to rebuild the Temple. Jesus Christ was born eight years after that.

vi) This happened when the Jews rebelled against the Roman authority. Titus destroyed the town completely, and demolished the Temple.

The question remains, adds Shafi`, as to which of the above six major events is the Qur`an referring to as the two very significant ones. It looks like the reference is to the fourth (involving Nebuchadnezzar) and sixth (involving Titus) incidents. The main point however is that the narration warns the Muslims that they would be treated in no better manner if they spread the kind

of corruption the Israelites spread, for, Allah's *Sunnah* does not change. A good case in point is the loss of *Bayt al-Maqdis* to an enemy hardly one tenth the Muslims in numbers and equipments. They will never get it back unless they return to Islam whole-heartedly.

Quotation from Shafi` ends here.

Majid quotes: "The raging flames, the infuriated soldiers, the groans of the wounded and the dying, all spoke with another voice. It was the judgment. The words of John the Baptist and of Jesus of Nazareth had come true. Thousands perished in the temple flames .. Then the wall fell their pride turned into helplessness and cowardice, and they sought to hide themselves in the subterranean passage. On the same day the Roman soldiers made their way through the Upper City, burning, plundering, and massacring' (Ebi. C. 2285). 'The slaughter within was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage. The number of the slain exceeded those of the slayers. The legionaries had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry

[8] It may be that your Lord will yet show you mercy. But if you revert (to sins), We shall revert (to punishment).²³ And We have made Jahannum a prison-bed²⁴ for the unbelievers.

عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا
وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا ﴿٨﴾

[9] Verily this Qur'ān guides to that which is most straight²⁵ and gives good tiding to the believers who do deeds of righteousness - that for them is a great reward.

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ
وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ
الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٩﴾

[10] And that those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared for them a painful chastisement.

وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ أَعدْنَا لَهُمْ
عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

on the work of extermination.' (Milman, History of Jews, II. P. 93). 'Titus crucified so many Jewish captives and fugitives during the siege of Jerusalem, that there was not sufficient room for the crosses nor sufficient crosses for the condemned' (Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 349)."

22. So, it is obvious that increase in wealth and progeny was neither appreciated and thanked for by the Israelites, nor did these favors serve them in any way when faced with Allah's wrath (with a point from Alusi).

23. According to Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah the Israelites indeed returned with sins (by rejecting the Final Prophet: Alusi), and, in consequence, Allah put them to defeat and banishment from Arabia at the hands of the Muslims. (They had already been banned from setting their

feet into Palestine by the Romans, some 500 years before Islam: Au.).

24. The translation of the word "*hasir*" as prison-bed follows the understanding of the *Salaf*, some of whom said that the word stands for a place where one is confined, while to a few others it means a thing to rest on. Ibn Jarir preferred the second meaning.

25. Yusuf Ali connects the theme: "The instability and crookedness of the Jewish soul having been mentioned, the healing balm which should have cured it is now pointed out. The Message of the Qur'ān is for all. Those who have Faith and show that Faith in their conduct must reap their spiritual reward. But those who reject Faith cannot escape punishment. Apart from what is past, apart from the question of national or ra-

[11] Man prays for evil (in the manner of his prayer for good).²⁶ Surely, man is given to haste.²⁷

وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا ﴿١١﴾

cial history, there is a Hope, - and a Danger - for every soul.”

26. That is, man curses others, seeking Allah’s punishment on them, saying, (sometimes against his own children), “O Allah, destroy him,” or “send your wrath on him,” etc. But, if Allah were to grant him his prayers of evil, just as He grants prayers of good, man would be destroyed. This is how Dahhak, Qatadah and Mujahid understood this verse (Ibn Jarir).

But the allusion could be to the call of self-destruction that the pagans made when the Prophet warned them of chastisement that would descend on them upon rejection (Zamakshari).

Accordingly, in a *hadith* of Muslim the Prophet said,

لَا تَدْعُوا عَلَيَّ أَنْتُمْ وَلَا تَدْعُوا عَلَيَّ أَوْلَادِكُمْ وَلَا تَدْعُوا عَلَيَّ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَوَافِقُوا مِنِّي سَاعَةً يُسْأَلُ فِيهَا عَطَاءٌ فَيَسْتَجِيبُ لَكُمْ

“Do not supplicate against yourself, nor against your children, nor against you wealth that you

be in agreement with an hour in which Allah accepts supplications – and so you are answered” (Ibn Kathir).

27. It is narrated by Salman Farsi and others that when the spirit was gradually entering into Adam (*asws*), it did not pass down but his body became bones, flesh and muscles. As the spirit entered into his head, he sneezed. Allah said in response, “May your Lord show you mercy.” It was afternoon before the spirit reached his navel. Adam bent down and his body pleased him. He tried to raise himself up but could not because the spirit had not yet reached his legs. He said, “O Allah hasten it to completion before sunset.” That was the first manifestation of the meaning of the words, “Surely, man is given to haste” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, with some variations). The report is in Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn `Asakir and Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani).

The above is not a *hadith* (Au.).

[12] We appointed the night and the day as two signs. Then We blotted out the sign of the night²⁸ and made the sign of the day shining,²⁹ that you may seek the bounty of your Lord, and that you may know the number of the years and the reckoning. And We have explained everything in detail.³⁰

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتٍ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ
الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا
فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ
وَالْحِسَابَ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلَنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا
﴿١٢﴾

[13] We have fastened every man's fate to his own neck,³¹ and We shall bring forth for him, on the Day of Resurrection, a record that he will find wide open.

وَكُلَّ إِنسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَائِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ
وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا
﴿١٣﴾

28. Apparently, the moon is the sign of the night. According to `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and quite a few others of the *Salaf*, it is the dark spots on the moon that are alluded to by the words “We blotted out ..” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

And, in one of the most incredible reports, as in Tabari and Ibn Kathir, Ibn `Abbas is reported to have said that earlier the moon also used to shine just as the sun shines until Allah blotted out its shine. In fact, adds Qurtubi there is a *hadith* which says that once there were two suns. The report to this effect is in Bayhaqi and Ibn `Asakir (Shawkani). But it is weak of narrators (S. Ibrahim).

Ibn Abbas' notion is incredible because scientists have no explanation for the origin of the moon. Despite moon rock samples, they cannot

determine how it came into orbit around the earth, or since when. One theory however, of our interest, is that the moon could have once been a burning body, like the sun, which cooled down (as the sun is also cooling down) and somehow wandered across the space for millions of years to get caught by the earth's gravitational pull and remained in its orbit.

29. “Shining” for mubsiratan is the understanding of Qatadah as in Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani).

30. That is, everything pertaining to Allah's oneness, evidences of the Prophet's mission, of the need of the accountability, etc., have all been explained in detail (Razi).

31. The textual word “ta'ir” has been explained by Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Ibn Jurayj and others as man's deeds

[14] Read your record. Sufficient is your own soul this day for reckoning against yourself.

[15] Whosoever receives guidance, receives it for his own benefit; and whosoever goes astray, does it to his own loss. No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And We were not such as to punish until We had sent a Messenger.³²

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ﴿١٤﴾

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

and destiny. And some have believed that this is the Book that will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection (Ibn Jarir).

Razi adds: Scholars have said that the neck is the most suitable place for anything to be hung around, whether it is something that honors a man or humiliates him. It is to the neck that a thing of shame is hung around as punishment, and it is around the neck that necklaces (as also medals, garlands: Au.) are hung around by way of decoration.

Yusuf Ali offers further explanation: "Ta'ir, literally a bird, hence and omen, and evil omen... The Arabs, like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds... Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds; good or evil, and they hang round our necks."

32. The question that arises in view of this verse is, if Allah does not punish a people before a Messenger has been sent to them, which of course is a most reasonable thing, then, what about those who did not receive the Message? Abu Hurayrah's opinion in this regard was that Allah will assemble together the souls of those who died between the advent of two Prophets, (and did not hear of the former), the insane, the dumb, deaf, the senile, and people of this class, and raise a messenger among them. He will command them to enter the Fire. They will retort, "How can we possibly do that when a Messenger never came to us?" By Allah, Abu Hurayrah added, if they entered they would find it pleasant and peaceful. Thus, those who would have obeyed him in this world, would obey him there also (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir discusses the issue more in detail. First he deals with the

hadith in Bukhari which ends with the following words,

وَأِنَّهُ يُشِئُ لِلنَّارِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَيُلْقُونَ فِيهَا فَ { تَقُولُ
هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ } ثَلَاثًا حَتَّى يَضَعَ فِيهَا قَدَمَهُ فَتَمْتَلِئُ
وَيُرْدُ بَعْضُهَا إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَتَقُولُ قَطُّ قَطُّ قَطُّ

“... Allah will create for the Fire a creation of the kind He will, that will be thrown therein. She will say, ‘Is there any more?’, three times until He will place His foot into it and it will get filled, some parts crushed against others and it will cry out, ‘Enough, enough, enough.’”

This *hadith* seems to contradict, also in Bukhari, as well as in Muslim which says,

لَا تَزَالُ جَهَنَّمُ تُلْقَى فِيهَا وَتَقُولُ هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ حَتَّى
يَضَعَ رَبُّ الْعِزَّةِ فِيهَا قَدَمَهُ فَيَنْزَوِي بَعْضُهَا إِلَى بَعْضٍ
وَتَقُولُ قَطُّ قَطُّ بِعِزَّتِكَ وَكَرَمِكَ. وَلَا يَزَالُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ
فَضْلٌ حَتَّى يَنْشِئَ اللَّهُ لَهَا خَلْقًا فَيُسْكِنُهُمْ فَضْلَ الْجَنَّةِ

“Hell will keep on receiving (dwellers of Hell) and keep asking, ‘Is there more,’ until the Lord places His foot into it and some of its part will get crushed against other and it will cry out, ‘Enough, enough by Your Power and Honor.’ And there will always remain space vacant in Paradise, until Allah will create a creation for it, placing them in the vacant spaces of Paradise.”

Some scholars have thought therefore, says Ibn Kathir, that the narrator of the earlier of the two above *ahadith* mistakenly replaced the word “*jannah*” with “*nar*,” as in the latter *hadith*. (That is, Allah will not create a creation specifically to fill the Fire, rather, He will do that to fill Paradise: Au.).

Apart from the above, there are a few *ahadith* that shed light on the issue of those who did not receive the message. One is in Ahmad. It reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

أربعة يحتجون يوم القيامة: رجل أصم لا يسمع شيئاً،
ورجل أحمق، ورجل هرم، ورجل مات في فترة، فأما
الأصم فيقول: رب قد جاء الإسلام وما أسمع شيئاً،
وأما الأحمق فيقول: رب قد جاء الإسلام والصبيان
يخدفوني بالعر، وأما الهرم فيقول: رب لقد جاء
الإسلام وما أعقل شيئاً، وأما الذي مات في الفترة
فيقول: رب ما أتاني لك رسول. فيأخذ موأتيقهم
ليطيعنه، فيرسل إليهم أن ادخلوا النار، فو الذي
نفس محمد بيده، لو دخلوها لكانت عليهم برداً
وسلاماً

“Four classes of people will dispute on the Day of Judgment: a deaf who could not hear anything, an insane, a senile person and a man who died during the time off the absence of a Prophet (*fatrah*). The deaf will plead, “My Lord, Islam came while I could not hear anything.” The insane will plead, “My Lord, Islam

[16] When We wish to destroy a town, We command the affluent thereof to work corruption in it.³³ Thus the word³⁴ comes true against it and then We destroy it in utter destruction.³⁵

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا
فَتَفْسُقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاَهَا
تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

came while children were stoning me with dung.” The senile person will plead, “My Lord, Islam came at a time of my life when I could not use my mind.” And the man during whose life no Prophet appeared will plead, “No Messenger of Yours ever came to me.” So He will take their pledge that they will obey Him. Then He will send word to them through a Messenger (raised among them) that they should enter the Fire.” Then the Prophet added, “By Him in whose hands is Muhammad’s life, if they obey, it would turn pleasant and peaceful.” According to another version, Abu Hurayrah said, “If they enter they would find it pleasant and peaceful. In contrast, he who refused will be dragged into it.”

The report is in Ahmad, Ibn Is-haq, Rahwayh, and Bayhaqi, and has been evaluated as trustworthy.

As for children, the Prophet said various things about them at different times. Once he said about pagan children who died before manhood

that Allah knows what they were going to do when they grew up. The *hadith* to this effect is in the *Sahihayn*. (The report that they will be in the Fire is weak: Alusi). On another occasion, he said that pagan children will be servants of the people of Paradise. At another time he said they will be along with their parents. On yet another occasion he said, “The children of the pagans as well as of the Muslims are in Ibrahim’s care” (Ibn Kathir).

The above last statement happens to be the opinion of the experts about those who died in childhood (Alusi).

33. Two opinions have come down from Ibn `Abbas in this regard. One, the affluent ones were commanded to obey Allah, but they refused. So they became deserving of punishment. A second opinion is that the wicked affluent ones were allowed to prevail over others. They continued in their wickedness until Allah’s word was realized. Hasan al-Busri was of this opinion. Both the opinions (along with a few others) are in Ibn Jarir who himself prefers the first as cor-

rect. A third opinion also attributed to the *Salaf* is that “*amara*” is in the sense of “*ak-thara*”, as in pre-Islamic usage, meaning, “We multiplied the affluent (i.e., increased their numbers), but they (only) spread corruption..” (Ibn Jarir and others). Zamaikhshari narrates an incident to corroborate this meaning. A pagan told the Prophet,

إني أرى أمرك هذا حقيراً فقال (صلى الله عليه وسلم
(: إنه سيأمر

“I see this affair of yours as insignificant.” The Prophet replied, “It will grow.”

In the above example, the Prophet used the word “*amara*” in the sense of “*ak-thara*” (أكثر).

The above report could not be traced in standard *hadith* books (Au.).

Thanwi notes from Alusi that just as nations, when Allah (*swt*) decides to destroy a man (for his past sins), he lets him run after his carnal desires. Ultimately he is destroyed by them.

34. “*Qawl* (of the original) has the sense of word, order, law, charge framed against one under a definite law” (Yusuf Ali).

35. There have been several explanations for the whole verse. One of them, that offered by Qaffal, as in

Razi, is as follows: When Allah decides to destroy a town because of its sins, He does not hasten the punishment immediate to the appearance of corruptions. But rather, He commands the affluent class to give up their evil ways. When they fail, (and following them the others also persist), they are punished. They have been specifically mentioned because it is these people, more than any other class, that need to be grateful to their Lord for His blessings. In any case, after the initial warning, He allows them several reprieves. But, when they persist in sins, the word of punishment comes true and they are destroyed.

Yusuf Ali’s plain words help us understand it better: “Allah’s Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then Allah’s Mercy and Justice act together. Those who are highly gifted from Allah - it may be with wealth or position, or it may be with talents and opportunities - are expected to understand and obey. They are given a definite order and warning. If they still transgress there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they are ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its ap-

[17] How many generations³⁶ We have destroyed after Nuh!? Sufficient is your Lord as One Aware and Observant of the sins of His slaves.³⁷

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ
وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

[18] Whosoever covets the immediate (reward), We hasten whatsoever of it We will, unto whomsoever We will, and then We appoint for him Jahannum wherein he will rest, blamed and rejected.³⁸

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا
مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ
يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿١٨﴾

[19] On the other hand, whosoever coveted the Hereafter, and strove for it in the manner of its striving - and he is a believer - those, their striving is appreciated (by Allah).³⁹

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ
مَشْكُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

plication is called for beyond doubt. Then it is that their punishment is completed.”

36. (The translation of “*qarn*” here as generations is for ease of understanding. Otherwise, in terms of a period, it is synonymous with a century) as in a *hadith* according to which the Prophet (*saws*) placed his hand over Bishr al-Mazini and said, “This boy will live up to a *qarn*.” And he lived for a hundred years (Ibn Jarir).

37. That is, the criterion is sins, and Allah knows best when the sins reach the limits after which chastisement becomes necessary (based on Kashshaf).

38. In view of the words, “We hasten whatsoever of it We will, unto

whomsoever We will,” (which do not promise a sure reward unto him who desires this world), it is more reasonable not to “desire” this world at all. For, if denied, then, one lives hankering after something not in his fate. The man’s life turns Hellish, before the Hell of the Hereafter (Zamakhshari).

Thus, one might strive without allowing the desired things to become dear to the heart. If one achieves what he strove for, good. But if he did not, then, he might remove them from the mind to allow the inner self to rest in peace (Au.).

39. Thus we have three conditions for acceptance of a deed: firm faith, correct intention, and right manner of doing it (Kashshaf).

[20] (Unto) everyone - these as well as those⁴⁰
- We extend (freely) the bounties of your Lord
- and the bounties of your Lord are not such as
to be denied (to anyone).

كُلًّا تُمِدُّ هُوَآءَ وَهَؤَآءَ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ
وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] See then how We give preference to some
over others.⁴¹ But surely, the Hereafter is
greater in rank and greater in excellence.⁴²

انظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ
وَلَا خَيْرَ مِنْ أَكْبَرِ دَرَجاتٍ وَأَكْبَرِ تَفْضِيلًا
﴿٢١﴾

The *Ahl al-Bid'ah*, remarks Shafi`,
may take note.

As regards the exact measure of re-
wards, there is no limit to it. Abu
Hurayrah was asked, "Have you
heard the Prophet say that Allah
could reward a man a million times
for a good deed?" He replied, "Rath-
er, Allah rewards a man two million
times for a good deed" (Qurtubi).

40. That is, the obedient and the dis-
obedient, the good and the evil, the
believer and the unbeliever.

41. That is, in this world. The Proph-
et has said,

الدُّنْيَا دَارٌ مَنْ لَا دَارَ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْ لَمْ يَمَعُ مَنْ لَا عَقْلَ لَهُ

"This world is the abode of him
who has not abode (in the Here-
after), wealth who has no wealth,
and he saves for it who has no
sense."

The above *hadith* of Ahmad and oth-
ers has Haythami's approval.

42. It said that once a group of former
Quraysh chiefs such as Abu Sufyan,
Suhayl and others sought permission
to enter into `Umar's presence dur-
ing his caliphate. Suhayb, Bilal and
a few others of the earliest Muslims
were also there. `Umar allowed Su-
hayb, Bilal and others to enter but
left the former Quraysh chiefs wait-
ing. Abu Sufyan remarked, "I have
never seen a day like this in my life.
The chiefs are left hanging around
while the slaves have been allowed
in." Suhayl, who was the most intel-
ligent of them said, "I see frown on
your faces. But, if you are angry, then
be angry with yourselves. When ev-
eryone was invited, they responded
immediately while you delayed..."
(Alusi).

The version offered by Zamakhshari
ends with the following words, "..
they were invited, and so were we.
But they responded immediately
while we delayed. Now, this is what
is happening at `Umar's door. What

[22] Do not set up along with Allah, another god; or you will sit back (in the end), condemned and forsaken.⁴³

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا
مَخْذُولًا ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Your Lord has decreed⁴⁴ that you shall worship none but Him,⁴⁵ and (that you shall treat) the parents with kindness.⁴⁶ Whether one or both of them attain old age with you,⁴⁷ then, say not to them (even) an 'Oof,⁴⁸ nor repel them, rather, speak to them noble words.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا
أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْنِيهِمَا
وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾

about when we are in the Hereafter? If you envy them today, then, you should know that what Allah has prepared for them in the Hereafter is greater.”

43. According to a Hasan *Sahih* Gharib report in Tirmidhi, which is also in Abu Da'ud, the Prophet said,

مَنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فَاقَةٌ فَأَتَرَهَا بِالنَّاسِ لَمْ تُسَدِّدْ فَاقَتَهُ ، وَمَنْ
أَتَرَهَا بِاللَّهِ أَوْشَكَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِالْعِنَىٰ إِمَّا يَمُوتَ عَاجِلًا أَوْ
غَنَىٰ عَاجِلًا

“Whoever is reduced to hunger and takes the matter to the people, will never have his hunger removed from him. But whoever takes it to Allah, will have it removed either because of an early death, or wealth hastened” (Ibn Kathir).

44. Quite often in Arabic, Qada is used in the sense of “he commanded” (Ibn `Abbas and Hasan). Ibn Mas`ud however, along with Ubayy

bin Ka`b and Dahhak have understood the word in the sense of admonition (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi writes: Qada has been used in the Qur`an in several senses:

- (1) command, as here,
- (2) creation, as in (41: 12)

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ [فصلت : ١٢]
“He created them into seven heavens,”

- (3) to pass judgment, as in (20: 72)

فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ [طه : ٧٢]
“So, judge as you wish to judge,”

- (4) to decide, or, something accomplished as in (12: 41)

فُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِينَ [يوسف : ٤١]
“The affair about which you inquire, has already been decided”, and (2: 200),

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتْكُمْ مَنَاسِكُكُمْ [البقرة : ٢٠٠]

"When you are done with the hajj-rituals,"

(5) intention, as in (2: 117)

وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ [البقرة : ١١٧]

"When He intends an affair, He says, 'Be', and it is," and,

(6) covenant, as in (28: 44)

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِ إِذْ فَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ الْأَمْرَ [القصص : ٤٤]

"And you were not by the western side when We took the covenant from Musa."

45. Mawdudi comments on the context and placement of these verses: "From here on, the basic principles which according to Islam ought to serve as the foundation of man's life are expounded. Put differently, these principles constitute the manifesto of the Prophet's mission. It is noteworthy that this manifesto was proclaimed at a highly appropriate moment - at a time when the Makkan period of the Prophet's life was coming to an end, and when the Madinan period was about to begin. This meant making the intellectual, moral, cultural, economic and legal bases of the Islamic society and state of the future known to the world."

He also explains the verse: "The verse does not merely have a negative

message - that we may not worship aught other than the One True God. It also has a positive message - that we should serve, worship and obey Him, and Him alone, and do so unreservedly. We should consider only His command as the command and only His law as the law that ought to be obeyed. We should recognize and submit to His sovereignty to the exclusion of any other sovereignty. This is at once a religious belief, a guidance for individual's conduct, as well as the cornerstone of man's entire life system encompassing moral conduct, political behavior and social relationship, a system that was to be established by the Prophet (peace be on him) in Madinah. The foundational concept of the new body-politic was nothing other than the principle that God alone is the Sovereign and Lord of the world, and that His law is the true law that ought to prevail."

46. Being kind to the parents would go to the extent of, Mujahid has said, cleaning their diapers just as they used to do when he or she was little (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

47. The words "with you" have the hint concealed that if they be with you, under your care.

48. Hussain b. `Ali is reported to have said that had there been a word

[24] Lower to them the wing of humbleness in mercy⁴⁹ and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them even as they raised me up (with care) when I was little.'

وَاحْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

smaller than “Oof”, Allah would have used it (Shawkani).

49. That is, do everything possible to please them, except for seeking forgiveness for them if they be pagans (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*).

Qurtubi quotes the following *hadith* in connection with kindness to parents. It is in Bukhari: `abdullah (ibn Mas`ud) said,

سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَفَيْتَهَا قَالَ ثُمَّ أَيُّ قَالَ ثُمَّ بَرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ قَالَ ثُمَّ أَيُّ قَالَ الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“I asked the Prophet. Which is the best of deeds in the sight of Allah?” He replied, “Prayers at their time.” I asked, “Which one after that?” He replied, “Treating the parents well.” I asked, “Which one after that?” He replied, “Fighting in the way of Allah.”

Hence, adds Qurtubi, cursing one’s parents is one of the major sins. The Prophet said,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَكْبَرِ الْكَبَائِرِ أَنْ يَلْعَنَ الرَّجُلُ وَالِدَيْهِ قَبْلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ يَلْعَنُ الرَّجُلُ وَالِدَيْهِ قَالَ يَسُبُّ الرَّجُلُ أَبَا الرَّجُلِ فَيَسُبُّ أَبَاهُ وَيَسُبُّ أُمَّهُ

“The greatest of great sins is for a man to curse his parents. It was asked, ‘Messenger of Allah. Can anyone curse his own parents?’ He replied, ‘Yes. He abuses other people’s parents, and in retaliation they abuse his parents.’”

(The word in the original is “*sabb*” which is literary to call names, or abuse: Au.).

Tirmidhi has reported `abdullah ibn `Umar as saying,

كَانَ تَحْتِي امْرَأَةٌ كَانَتْ عُمَرُ يَكْرَهُهَا فَقَالَ لِي أَبِي طَلَّقْهَا قُلْتُ لَا فَأَتَى رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَخْبِرَهُ فَدَعَانِي فَقَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ طَلِّقْ امْرَأَتَكَ قَالَ فَطَلَّقْتُهَا

“I had a wife that I was very fond of. But `Umar disliked her. So he my father told me to divorce her, but I refused. He spoke to the Prophet about it. He asked for me and said, ‘Divorce your woman.’ So I divorced her.”

(It is obvious that `Umar, who had an eye that penetrated appearances, must have seen something in her that `abdullah had not, apart from the fact that it did not become of a man like `abdullah, a remarkably

nah: Au.). He added that he had left his parents weeping. The Prophet told him,

ارجع إليهما وأضحكهما كما أبكىتهما

“Go back and make them laugh just as you made them weep.”

Another report says that an Ansari went to the Prophet to ask if there was anything he could do for his parents after their death. He replied,

نعم ، خصال أربع : الدعاء لهما ، والاستغفار لهما ، وإنفاذ عهدهما ، وإكرام صديقيهما ، وصللة الرحم التي لا رحم لك إلا من قبليهما

“Yes, four things: pray for them seeking their forgiveness, fulfill their promises, honor their friends and join those kin who are related to you through them. This is what is left of the good things that you can do after their death.”

(The report is in Ahmad, Abu Da'ud and Ibn Majah. Ibn Hajr has remarked that meaning wise, the *hadith* is *Sahih*).

Finally, a well-known *hadith* says that once the Prophet said “Amin” thrice on the mimber. He was asked the reason. He said, “Jibril came to me and said, ‘Woe unto a man before whom your name was taken but he did not send peace to you. Say,

‘Amin.’” So I said, ‘Amin.’ Then he said, “Woe unto a man upon whom the month of Ramadan entered and left, but he was not forgiven. Say, ‘Amin.’” So I said, ‘Amin.’ Then he said, “Woe unto a man who found one or two of his parents in old age, but they did not usher him into Paradise. Say, ‘Amin.’” So I said, ‘Amin.’” The *hadith* is in Muslim also.

Indeed, Ibn Kathir adds, many reports have come down to us from the Prophet concerning kindly treatment of parents. A weak report in Bazzar says that a man was going around the Ka'bah with his mother on his shoulders. He asked the Prophet, “Have I done my duty to her?” He replied, “Not a bit.”

With reference to the report about someone carrying his mother on his back, Zamakhshari says it was 'Umar who had said those words to the man. Zamakhshari also narrates that someone went up to the Prophet (*saws*) and told him that he was doing to his parents what they had done for him when he was little, that is, even cleansing them. He asked, “Have I repaid them?” The Prophet said, “No. Because, when they did it (cleaning your diapers), they did in hope that you will live. In contrast, you are doing it while you hope that

they will die soon.” (But this *hadith* could not be traced in any major work. Probably it is the statement of one of the *Salaf*: Au.). Hence, Zamakhshari adds, the scholars have said that a son might not enter with his unbelieving father into a temple or church, but if he asks him to take him there, he should do it. He should not offer him wine, but, after the father has drunk out of a cup, he might take it from his hand (to put it away). Abu Yusuf said, “If he (the non-Muslim father) asks him to lighten the fire under a pot which has pork, he should do it.” And Hudhayfah says he sought the Prophet’s permission to kill his father who was fighting alongside the pagans during a battle. He said, “Let someone else do it.”

Islam stands alone in its insistence on kind treatment of parents. The Gospel notes Jesus’ rebuke to his mother (John 2: 1-4): “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.’” The *Torah* has a single line on parents (Deut.,

5: 16): “Honor your father and your mother.” But little else. In fact, a modern day commentary of the entire Old and New Testament has two entries under the term “parents”, which deal with matters other than good treatment. Jews and Christians of today, therefore, promptly send the parents after their retirement to old-age homes. Imām Razi tells us about some people in his time who did not think their parents deserved kindness simply because they had fathered them. Was a son not a product and consequence of his parents’ search for sexual gratification? He mentions a man’s case who was beating his father and saying, “You are the one who brought me into this world of troubles.” Similar ideas are now current in the West and right at the level of lawmakers who do not see any difference between a son and a father, and allow no special status for a father in mutual rights against his son. The error is in imagining that the son is a by-product of carnal desire. Why is it supposed that a child is simply there because two people were looking for pleasure? Weren’t the parents free to have the pleasure but not the child? Weren’t the possibilities of abortion available to women throughout history? Weren’t the parents happy, distribut-

[25] Your Lord knows what is in your hearts:⁵⁰ if you be righteous,⁵¹ then He indeed is oft-forgiving to those who return (to Him in repentance).⁵²

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] And render the kinsman his right,⁵³ and the meek and poor, and the wayfarer. And squander not squanderingly.⁵⁴

وَأْتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ تَبْذِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾

ing cakes and sweets at the arrival of the child? Were the kinsfolk happy at the new arrival and congratulating the parents? Or were they offering them condolence? How can it be said that a child is the product of pleasure? (Au.)

50. (One implication of these words is), let not your respect for them be only an outward show, rather, it should be from your heart, for, your Lord knows what is in your hearts (Thanwi).

51. That is, if you are good of intentions (Sa'id b. Jubayr - Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

52. In other words, if you are good of intentions, and do things well, yet commit a wrong to them inadvertently, then Allah is forgiving of those who seek repentance (Alusi).

53. Rendering of rights to the kin should begin with the nearest, then reach out those who are farther, and

so on. In a *hadith* of Bukhari and Muslim the Prophet said,

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَبْسُطَ لَهُ فِي رِزْقِهِ وَيُسَأَّلَ لَهُ فِي آثَرِهِ فَلْيَصِلْ رَحْمَةً

“Whoever wishes that his provision be increased and his life prolonged, may join the kin (i.e., do good to them)” - Ibn Kathir.

And, one ramification of the usage of the term “his right” (of the Qur'anic text) is that if a person happens to be disabled then, his cost of living will be divided between the well-to-do members of the extended family. If they all happen to be of equal economic strength, then the costs will be divided over them equally (Shafi'). In other words, in Islam it is not the state which is responsible for the disabled rather the family and tribe. If the state does it, then, that eases the situation, but the care of the sick and the permanently disabled is primarily the duty of the kin (Au.).

54. The textual “*tabdhir*” has been explained as “*israf*” which is to spend, as Ibn Mas`ud and others have said, in wrong places and on wrong occasions, in short, in sinful affairs (Ibn Jarir). It is reported by `abdullah ibn `Umar that the Prophet passed by Sa`d while he was making his ablution.

مَا هَذَا السَّرْفُ يَا سَعْدُ قَالَ أَنِّي الْوُضُوءَ سَرَفْتُ قَالَ
تَعَمَّ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ عَلَى تَهْرٍ جَارٍ

He remarked, “Why *israf* O Sa`d?” Sa`d asked, “Is there *israf* in ablution also?” He replied, “Yes, even if you are at a running spring” (Zamakhshari).

The above *hadith* was evaluated weak by Shu`ayb al-Arna`ut (Au.).

Nevertheless, Ibn `Abbas has said, if someone spent all his wealth in an affair that has Allah’s approval, it will not be considered as *israf*. But if he spent a handful on a wrong cause, it would be *israf* (Ibn Kathir).

One of the *Salaf* was chided for spending heavily in a good cause. He was told, “There is no good in *israf*.” He replied, “There is no *israf* in good” (Zamakhshari).

Qurtubi has another point to bring out. He says that the Prophet himself

spent off all that he possessed, ending up tying stones to his stomach to support his back. Many of his Companions also followed his example and spent off all that they had in good causes. But the Prophet did not reproach them, although, apparently, the Qur`an recommends a middle course. That goes to show that the Qur`anic injunction is for ordinary men. Those who have the strength to spend away everything they possess, and bear the consequences patiently, can do it.

Hence, Ibn Kathir adds, the *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* in which the Prophet instructed Asma` bint Abi Bakr in words,

أَنْفِقِي وَلَا تُخْصِي فَيُخْصِي اللَّهَ عَلَيْكَ وَلَا تُوعِي
فَيُوعِي اللَّهَ عَلَيْكَ

“Spend: this way and that way. Do not save back, or Allah will save back on you. And do not count, or Allah will count on you.”

The *Sahihayn* have another report which says,

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ يُصْبِحُ الْعِبَادُ فِيهِ إِلَّا مَلَكَانِ يَنْزِلَانِ فَيَقُولُ
أَحَدُهُمَا لِلَّهِمَّ أَعْطِ مُنْفِقًا خَلْفًا وَيَقُولُ الْآخَرُ اللَّهُمَّ
أَعْطِ مُسْكًا تَلْفًا .

“There is not a day in which the creation do their morning but two angels come down from the heaven, one of them saying, ‘O

[27] Verily, squanderers are brothers of the Satans; and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.⁵⁵

إِنَّ الْمُبَدِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ
وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And even if you have to turn away from them, seeking your Lord's mercy which you expect (to come by), then say to them gentle words.⁵⁶

وَأَمَّا تَعْرِضْنَ عَنْهُمْ ائْتِعَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ
تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] And neither let your hands tied to your neck, nor outspread them wholly, or you will sit back blamed and broken down.

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا
تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا
مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

Allah. Bestow on the bestower.' The other says, 'O Allah. Destroy (the wealth of) the withholder.'"

Yet another report in Bukhari says,

مَثَلُ الْبَخِيلِ وَالْمُنْفِقِ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلَيْنِ رَجُلَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا جُبَّتَانِ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ مِنْ لَدُنْ تُدَيَّبُهُمَا إِلَىٰ تَرَاقِيهِمَا فَأَمَّا الْمُنْفِقُ فَلَا يُنْفِقُ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مَادَّتْ عَلَىٰ جَلْدِهِ حَتَّىٰ يُجِرَّ بِنَانَهُ وَتَعْفُو أُنْزَهُ وَأَمَّا الْبَخِيلُ فَلَا يُرِيدُ يُنْفِقُ إِلَّا لَرِمَتْ كُلُّ حَلْقَةٍ مَوْضِعَهَا فَهَوَ يُوسِعُهَا فَلَا تَتَّسِعُ وَبُشَيْرُ بِإِصْبَعِهِ إِلَىٰ خَلْقِهِ

"The example of a miser and generous is like two men with two iron coats of mail from their breast covering up until the neck. As for the generous, he does not spend anything but the coat expands on his skin until it loosens up to his limbs and is dragged at the rear. As for the miser, he does not intend to expend but every link shrinks. He tries to expand but it does not expand."

55. That is, to spend on wrong causes, or excessively on right causes when there is no need, is to be ungrateful to the Lord (Thanwi).

56. Such as, to say, 'I am hoping for something to come my way. When that happens maybe I will be able to help you' (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi elaborates on the spirit behind the injunction to spend: "The contents of (verses 26 and 27) above require that man should not consider his wealth to be exclusively meant for himself. Instead, after moderately meeting with his own needs he must spend it on his relatives, neighbors, and other human beings who are in need of it. Man's social life should also be permeated with a spirit of sympathy and recognition of the rights of others and a spirit of mutual co-operation. Relatives should be

[30] Surely, your Lord outspreads providence unto whom He will or restricts; surely, He is well-knowing and well-seeing of His slaves.⁵⁷

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] And slay not your children for fear of want: We shall provide for them and for you (as well); surely, slaying them was a major error.⁵⁸

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْءًا
كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

especially helpful towards each other. The 'haves' should extend to the 'have-nots' whatever aid they may be in a position to provide. If a traveler arrives in a city, town or village, he should find himself in the midst of hospitable people who are ready to act as his host and entertain him. The concept of the rights of others should be so pervasive that a person should consider those among whom he lives to have claims against him and his resources.

"If a person helps others, he should do so with a feeling that he is merely discharging the obligations he owes them rather than burdening them with a debt of gratitude. And whenever a person is unable to be of any service to someone who is in need of it, he should seek the latter's indulgence at his inability to do so, and should pray to God to bless him with the means that will enable him to serve him."

57. That is, Allah bestows and withdraws His favors following His knowledge and wisdom. A *hadith* reports Allah (*swt*) as saying, "There are some among My slaves to whom nothing suits but poverty. If I were to provide him, it will lead to destruction of his religion. While, among My slaves there are some whom nothing suits but affluence. If I impose poverty on him, it will lead to corruption in his religion" (Ibn Kathir).

A *hadith* of similar meaning was declared weak by Ibn Jawzi (Au.).

58. Accordingly, the *Sahihayn* have a *hadith* which reports that 'abdullah ibn Mas'ud asked the Prophet,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ الذَّنْبِ أَعْظَمُ قَالَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِلَّهِ نِدًّا
وَهُوَ خَلْقَكَ قَالَ قُلْتُ ثُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ أَنْ تَقْتُلَ وَلَدَكَ
خَشْيَةَ أَنْ يَطْعَمَ مَعَكَ قَالَ قُلْتُ ثُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ أَنْ تَزِينِ
بِحِلْيَةِ جَارِكَ

"Messenger of Allah. What sin is the most serious?" He replied,

[32] And go not near adultery;⁵⁹ verily, it is an indecency, and an evil way.⁶⁰ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّيْنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

“That you should declare Allah’s equal while He created you.” He asked, “Which one after that?” He answered, “That you should kill your child out of fear that he will share your food.” He asked, “Which one after that?” He replied, “That you should commit fornication with the neighbor’s woman” (Ibn Kathir).

59. “Zina” of the original is for any unlawful sex between a man and woman. It denotes both fornication as well as adultery (Au).

60. Ibn Abi Dunya has a *hadith* which says,

ما من ذنب بعد الشرك أعظم عند الله من نطفة وضعها رجل في رحم لا يحل له

“There is no sin greater - after association with Allah - than the drop of semen that a man places in a womb that is not lawful to him.”

The report is Mursal (Au.).

And Imām Ahmad has a report (*Sahih* according to Arna’ut: Au.) that:

عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ قَالَ إِنَّ فَتَىٰ شَابًا أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ائْتِدُنِي بِالزَّيْنَىٰ

فَأَجَبَ الْقَوْمُ عَلَيْهِ فَرَجَرُوهُ قَالُوا مَهْ مَهْ فَقَالَ اذْنُهُ فَدَنَا مِنْهُ قَرِيبًا قَالَ فَجَلَسَ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّهُ لِأُمِّكَ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ وَلَا النَّاسُ يُحِبُّونَهُ لِأُمَّهَاتِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّهُ لِابْنَتِكَ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ وَلَا النَّاسُ يُحِبُّونَهُ لِبَنَاتِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّهُ لِأُخْتِكَ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ وَلَا النَّاسُ يُحِبُّونَهُ لِأَخَوَاتِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّهُ لِعَمَّتِكَ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ وَلَا النَّاسُ يُحِبُّونَهُ لِعَمَّاتِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّهُ لِخَالَاتِكَ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ وَلَا النَّاسُ يُحِبُّونَهُ لِخَالَاتِهِمْ قَالَ فَوَضَعَ يَدَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَقَالَ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ ذَنْبَهُ وَطَهِّرْ قَلْبَهُ وَحَصِّنْ فَرْجَهُ فَلَمْ يَكُنْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ الْفَتَىٰ يَلْتَفِتُ إِلَىٰ شَيْءٍ

Abu Umamah reported that once a young man went to the Prophet and asked that he be allowed fornication. The people began to reproach him. But the Prophet told him to get near. He made him sit before him and asked, “Do you approve of it for your mother?” He said, “No by Allah, Messenger of Allah, may I sacrifice my life for you.” He said, “Of course no one will approve of that for his mother. Will you then approve of it for your daughter?” He said, “No by Allah, Messenger of Allah, may I sacrifice my life for you.” He said, “Of course no one will approve of it for his

[33] And slay not a soul that Allah has forbidden, save by right.⁶¹ Whoever is slain unjustly, surely we have given his heir an authority.⁶² But let him not exceed in slaying;⁶³ surely, he is helped (by the law).⁶⁴

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾

daughter. Will you then approve of it for your sister?" He said, "No by Allah, Messenger of Allah, may I sacrifice my life for you." He said, "Of course no one will approve of that for his sister. Will you then approve of it for your paternal aunt?" He said, "No by Allah, Messenger of Allah, may I sacrifice my life for you." He said, "Of course no one will approve of that for his paternal aunt. Will you then approve of it for your maternal aunt?" He said, "No by Allah, Messenger of Allah, may I sacrifice my life for you." He said, "Of course no one will approve of that for his maternal aunt." Then he placed his hand on his breast and supplicated, "O Allah, forgive him his sins, cleanse his heart and protect his private parts." The man returned. And it is reported that thereafter such a thought never occurred to him again (Ibn Kathir).

61. Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah and others have said that there are three "rights" by which a man's life becomes lawful to be taken: i) deliberate murder, ii) unlawful sexual intercourse, and, iii) apostasy (Ibn Jarir). And a *hadith* says,

لَزَوَالِ الدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ قَتْلِ رَجُلٍ مُسْلِمٍ

"The destruction of the world is lighter with Allah than the murder of a Muslim" (Ibn Kathir).

The *hadith* is in Ibn Majah and others treated by Haythami as *Sahih* (Au.).

62. The textual word is sultan. Ibn `Abbas, Dahhak and others, have understood it as the choice the closest of heir has between three options: life for life, blood-wit, or forgiveness. That is his sultan (Ibn Jarir).

It might also be noted that he alone has the right, and no one else on his behalf. For example, if someone else murdered the murderer, the second murderer will face the law of retaliation, even if the heir (one who had

[34] And go not near the wealth of the orphan save in a fair manner,⁶⁵ until he attains his full strength.⁶⁶ And fulfill the covenant; surely, (every) covenant will be questioned thereof.

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ
أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ
إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾

the sultan) said that it was he who had asked the second murderer to murder the first murderer (Alusi).

63. Who is meant by the words “let him not...?” The answer given by some of the *Salaf* is that since the revelation of this verse took place in Makkah, it was the Prophet who was meant, and, after him, his successors. They were not to allow retaliation except in just measure. However, a second opinion is that it is the heir who is meant by the words, “let him not.” That is because this *Surah* is Makkan. Muslims had no political power there, in fact, no power at all. They could be killed by Makkans at will. Naturally, they wished to retaliate. They were told that the heir had the authority. But he was not to exceed in slaying, or kill other than the murderer as they were wont to do in pre-Islamic times. (Also, they were not to torture the murderer before killing him). This was the opinion of Hasan, Dahhak and some others (Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

For laws pertaining to Qisas, (the law of just retribution) see note 365 of *Surah al-Baqarah* of this work.

64. That is, the heir will be helped by the authorities in his efforts to seek justice. This is how Qatadah understood this part of the verse (Ibn Jarir).

65. It is said that in view of this verse, the Companions were so careful about treatment of the orphans that they would not share their food, drink or mount, until Allah revealed verse 220 of *Surah al-Baqarah*. It said,

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ
تَحَالَطْتَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ
[البقرة : ٢٢٠]

“And they ask you about the orphans. Say, ‘The best thing (for them) is (promotion of) their welfare. However, if you mingle (your food, drink and other things) with theirs, then, (that is alright, for) they are your brothers. And Allah knows the corrupt from the well-meaning’” (Ibn Jarir).

[35] And fill up the measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. That is better and fairer in determination.⁶⁷

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ
الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] And do not indulge in what you have no knowledge of;⁶⁸ indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - all of them shall be questioned thereof.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ
وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ
مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

The Prophet however had warned Abu Dharr against going near the orphan's wealth. He told him,

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّي أَرَاكَ ضَعِيفًا وَإِنِّي أَحِبُّ لَكَ مَا أَحِبُّ
لِنَفْسِي لَا تَأْمُرَنَّ عَلَيَّ اثْنَيْنِ وَلَا تَوَلِّينَ مَالَ يَتِيمٍ

“O Abu Dharr. I find you weak. And I wish for you what I wish for myself. Never be an amir over even two people. And never accept the charge of an orphan's wealth” (Ibn Kathir).

The report is from Muslim (Au.).

66. For explanation of the term “ashudd”, see note 281 of *Surah Al-An'am* of this work.

67. Ibn 'Abbas used to say that he heard the Prophet say, “A man does not have power over an unlawful thing, yet avoids it merely in fear of Allah, - but Allah gives him in this world itself what is better for him than that” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi narrates it as a truncated report coming from Hasan.

68. That is, do not say, “I saw” if you have not seen, or “I heard” when you have not heard (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). A *Sahih hadith* says,

كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ كَذِبًا أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعَ

“It is enough of a lie for a man to should pass on all that he hears.” That is, one may not pass on what he hears without first checking its authenticity (Au.).

Mawdudi adds: “The purpose of this Qur'anic verse is that people should be guided by knowledge rather than conjecture both in their individual and collective lives. In an Islamic society, this direction found its reflection in ethics and law, in politics and administration, and in arts, sciences and education; in short in all spheres of human life. The perspective ensured that human thought and action were made safe from the many evil consequences which ensue from relying on guess works and conjecture instead of knowledge.”

[37] And walk not in the earth exultingly;⁶⁹ you will neither tear apart the earth, nor attain the mountains in height.

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ
الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

69. Before acting proud, one might fear what happened to someone of a previous nation. The Prophet said in a *hadith* of Muslim,

بَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ يَمْشِي إِزَارُهُ مِنَ الْحَبْلَاءِ حُسِيفَ بِهِ فَهُوَ
يَتَجَلَّجَلُ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

“While a man was strutting on the earth proud over a new mantle when the earth split and he went in. He shall be sinking until the Day of Judgment.”

Another *hadith* says,

من تواضع لله رفعه الله، فهو في نفسه حقير وعند
الناس كبير، ومن استكبر وضعه الله فهو في نفسه
كبير وعند الناس حقير، حتى هو أبعض إليهم من
الكلب والخنزير

“Whoever humbled himself for Allah, will be raised by Him. He might be insignificant in his own eyes, but great in the eyes of the people. And whoever waxed proud, Allah will bring him down. He might be a great man in his own eyes, but worthless in the eyes of the people. In-

deed, he might be more hateful to them than a dog or a swine.”

(Suyuti declared a similar *hadith Sahih* in his *Jami`* but Munawi demonstrates that it is weak; while some scholars thought that the second part could be a fabrication: Au.).

Bakhtari once saw a man of `Ali's family wax proud in his walk. He told him, “Man. The one because of whom you receive respect, did not walk like that.” The man gave up. And Bazzar has a report which reports the Prophet as having said,

إِذَا مَشَتْ أُمَّتِي الْمُطَيْطَاءُ، وَخَدَمَتْهُمْ فَارِسُ وَالرُّومُ،
سُلِّطَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

“When my *Ummah* learns to walk proudly, and the Romans and Persians are its servants, then Allah will impose some of them over others (as tyrants)” - Ibn Kathir.

The above tradition is in *Sahih* ibn Hibban (Au.).

[38] All are of those things whose evil is detestable unto thy Lord.⁷⁰

كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] This is of what Allah has revealed unto you of the wisdom. And set up not with Allah another deity or you will be hurled into Jahan-num, blamed and rejected.

ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] Has your Lord chosen you for males and of the angels He took (for Himself) females?⁷¹ Truly, you utter a dreadful thing.

أَفَأَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

70. The consequences of breaking Allah's laws have not been stated here. The *hadith* does it. For example, a *hadith* in Bayhaqi as well as in several other collections says,

لَمْ تَظْهَرِ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي قَدِيمِ قَطُ ، حَتَّى يُعْلِنُوا ، بِهَا إِلَّا فَشَا فِيهِمُ الطَّاعُونُ وَالْأَوْجَاعُ ، الَّتِي لَمْ تَكُنْ مَضَتْ فِي أَسْلَابِهِمُ الَّذِينَ مَضَوْا ، وَلَمْ يَنْتَضُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ ، إِلَّا أُجِدُوا بِالْبَنِينَ ، وَشَدَّةِ الْمُنُونَةِ ، وَجَوْرِ السُّلْطَانِ عَلَيْهِمْ ، وَلَمْ يَمْنَعُوا زَكَاةَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ إِلَّا مُنِعُوا الْقَطْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ، وَلَوْ لَا الْبَهَائِمُ لَمْ يُمَطَّرُوا وَلَمْ يَنْقُضُوا عَهْدَ اللَّهِ ، وَعَهْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا سَاطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ عَذَابًا مِنْ غَيْرِهِمْ

“Indecency never appeared in a people, to the extent that they did it openly, but they were visited by plague and diseases unknown to their forefathers. They never cheated in weights and measures

but they were overtaken by starvation, hunger and the tyranny of the rulers. They never refused to pay the zakah but rains were held back from the heavens. If not for animals they would not have received any rains. They never broke Allah's and His Messenger's covenant but Allah imposed their enemies on them” (Alusi).

The *hadith* is in Ibn Majah treated Hasan by Albani (Au.).

71. Asad comments: “.. an allusion to the pre-Islamic Arabian belief that the angels - conceived of as a kind of female sub-deities - were God's “daughters”, and this despite the pagan Arab's contempt of female offspring.”

[41] We have indeed propounded variously⁷² in this Qur'ān so that they might receive admonition; but it increases them not except in aversion.⁷³

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوا وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾

[42] Say, 'If there had been other gods along with Him, as they say, then, in that case, they would have sought a way to the Lord of the `Arsh.'⁷⁴

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لَأَبْتَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] Glory be to Him! High indeed is He exalted above what they say.

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٣﴾

72. The textual word “*sarrafā*” has the double sense of revealing little by little, as well as varying the revelation, i.e., presenting the reminder in a variety of ways (to gain hearing and acceptance) - Qurtubi.

Yusuf Ali adds: “Things are explained in the Qur'ān from all points of view, individual and national, by means of stories, parables, and figures of speech, and by way of categorical commands. But those who are evil, instead of profiting by such instruction, often go farther and farther away from the Truth.”

73. The textual “*Nufur*” has “*nafara*” in its root which means to bolt away in aversion.

74. The meaning, as given by Qata-dah is, if it is supposed, (although a far-fetched supposition, that there were deities besides Allah), then,

surely, Allah, the True Deity's powers are such that they would have unconditionally surrendered to Him (Ibn Jarir).

A second meaning is, says Razi, the pagans justified their worship of deities other than Allah on grounds that (39: 3),

لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ زُلْمَىٰ [الزمر : ٣]

“in order that they will take us nearer to Allah.” They are told that, if they could possibly take you nearer, then surely, they would seek nearness to Him for themselves.

A third possible meaning, as in Shawkani, and worded by Majid is: “these minor gods, if endowed with power and will at all, would surely have endeavored to contend with God, and would have asserted their independence or executed their own will.”

[44] The seven heavens, the earth, and whatever is within them, celebrate His glory. And, there is not a thing but celebrates His glory in praises. But you do not understand their glorification.⁷⁵ Verily, He is ever Clement,⁷⁶ ever Forgiving.⁷⁷

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ
وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ
كَانَ حَلِيمًا عَفُورًا ﴿٤٤﴾

75. Qatadah has stated that every biological organism including the trees enjoy some form of life, and glorify Allah (Ibn Jarir).

This is how the verse was generally understood by the Companions. (In fact, they believed that inanimate objects also glorified Allah). Ibn Mas`ud said,

كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ تَسْبِيحَ الطَّعَامِ وَهُوَ يُؤْكَلُ

“We used to hear the food glorifying Allah as we ate it.” The report is in Bukhari.

Another well-known report is narrated by Abu Dharr that he, Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman, all heard a handful of pebbles that the Prophet had picked up, sing Allah’s glory. According to a *hadith* in Ahmad, the Prophet once saw people chatting with each other while on their camels. He said,

ارْكَبُوهَا سَالِمَةً، وَاذْرُوا عَنْهَا سَالِمَةً، وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوهَا
كَرَاسِيٍّ لِأَحَادِيثِكُمْ وَمَجَالِسِكُمْ، فَلَرَبِّ مَرْكُوبَةٍ خَيْرٌ
مِنْ رَاكِبِيهَا وَأَكْتَرُ ذِكْرًا لِلَّهِ مِنْهُ

“Ride them safely and come down safely. Do not make chairs of them to chat in the streets or (chat) sessions. Sometimes the one rode is better than its rider and remembers Allah more than he does.”

Then, Nasa’i has a *hadith* which reports the Prophet as having said,

لَا تَقْتُلُوا الضَّفَادِعَ فَإِنَّ نَفِيْقَهَا تَسْبِيْحٌ

“Do not kill frogs. Their croaking is their glorification (of Allah).” (The *hadith* is *Sahih* of status: S. Ibrahim).

Some of the *Salaf* used to say that when water boils, it glorifies Allah, when the door creaks, it glorifies Allah.” However, when Hasan (al-Busri) was asked, “Does this dinner table glorify Allah?” He replied, “Once it used to.” What he meant perhaps is that when it was a green tree it used to glorify Allah. This is how many scholars have understood the famous *hadith* according to which once the Prophet (*saws*) planted two branch-

es on two graves and said, “Maybe they will be relieved of punishment so long as the branches do not dry up.” That is, the branches, so long as green, will glorify Allah and will prevent punishment of those in the grave (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Nonetheless, the important point is, it was the Prophet who planted them. He has not recommended that his followers should plant anything near the graves, or place flowers thereon (Au.).

Qurtubi writes further: Some people have thought that the glorification here is in the allegorical sense. (In the words of Yusuf Ali: “[The praises of the inanimate is manifested] in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of Allah.”) But several reports give us to believe, writes Qurtubi, that the glorification is in the real sense. That is, the inanimate objects sing glory vocally. The Qur’an tells us about a few inanimate objects that glorify Allah. It said (38: 17-18),

وَأَذْكُرُ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧) إِنَّا
سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحُنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ [ص
١٧ ، ١٨ :

“And remember Our slave Da’ud, a man of strength. Surely, he was oft-turning (to his Lord). We subjected the mountains that sang Al-

lah’s glory along with him in the evening and morning.”

The Prophet has said,

لَا يَسْمَعُ مَدَى صَوْتِ الْمُؤَدِّينَ جِنَّ وَلَا إِنْسٌ وَلَا شَيْءٌ إِلَّا شَهِدَ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Neither the Jinn, mankind, trees nor stones nor anything else hear the voice of the caller to Prayer but will bear witness for him on the Day of Judgment.”

He also said, according to a *hadith* in Muslim,

إِنِّي لَأَعْرِفُ حَجْرًا كَانَ يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيَّ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُبْعَثَ

“I know the stone in Makkah that used to greet me before I was commissioned.”

Further, had the glorification been in the allegorical sense, Allah would not have added the words, “But you do not understand their glorification.”

Again there is, adds Shawkani, the *hadith* of Bukhari which speaks of the date palm stem breaking down into sobs (when the Prophet abandoned it for the newly made mimber). There is another *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* involving ants and a Prophet of the past. It reports that the Prophet said,

أَنَّ نَمْلَةً قَرَصَتْ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ فَأَمَرَ بِقَرِيَةِ النَّعْلِ
فَأُحْرِقَتْ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ أَنِّي أَنْ قَرَصْتِكَ نَمْلَةً
أَهْلَكَتُ أُمَّةً مِنَ الْأُمَمِ تُسَبِّحُ

[45] And when you recite the Qur'an, We place between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, a veil obstructing.⁷⁸

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾

“An ant stung one of the Prophets of the past. He ordered that the ant-hill be burnt down. Allah revealed to him, ‘Did you, for the reasons of a single ant, burn down a whole colony of ants, that, after all, is one of the Umam that sing Allah’s glory?’”

Finally, Alusi points out, with Thanwi seconding him, such glorification on the part of the inanimate objects does not imply that they have souls, or intellect, or are capable of senses as other animate and living objects are. But rather, they might possess some sort of a low order consciousness.

76. Majid comments: “.. so that He does not seize you with His vengeance immediately” (despite your rejection).

77. Majid again: “.. so that He shall forgive you, if even now you repent and mend your ways.”

78. In Qatadah’s opinion, Allah (*swt*) creates a barrier between unbelievers and the meaning of the Qur’an so that they are unable to understand it. They may hear, but will understand

nothing. It is the direct result of their obedience of Satan (Ibn Jarir).

In fact, the Makkan pagans were a people who were proud of the barriers between them and the call to truth. They used to proudly say, in the words of the Qur’an (41: 5),

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَأَعْمَلْ إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ [فصلت : ٥]

“They said, ‘Our hearts are within coverings from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between you and us is a screen; so work, indeed we are also working’” (Zamakhshari, Shabir).

Sa`id b. Jubayr has reported that once, after the revelation of the chapter on Abu Lahab, the Prophet was sitting with Abu Bakar when Abu Lahab’s wife started walking down towards them,

يا رسول الله إنما امرأة بذية وأخاف أن تؤذيك فلو قمت فقال : إنما لن تراني فقالت : يا أبا بكر صاحبك هجاني قال : وما يقول الشعر قالت : أنت عندي مصدق وانصرفت فقلت : يا رسول الله لم ترك قال : لم يزل ملك يسترني منها بجناحه

Abu Bakr said, "Messenger of Allah, this is a vile woman. I am afraid she will annoy you, so if you could move off." the Prophet said, "She will not be able to see me." (When she got close she demanded to know), "Abu Bakr! Is it true that your companion has slandered me?" Abu Bakr assured her that the Prophet had done no such thing and that he never said any poetry. She said, "I believe in you." After she was gone Abu Bakr said to the Prophet, "It seems she did not see you." The Prophet replied, "Yes, an angel placed a wing between me and her" (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report is in Abu Ya'la, Ibn Abi Hatim, and Hakim who declared it *Sahih* (Shawkani).

According to other versions the Prophet began to recite this verse (17: 45) because of which she could not see him:

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا مَسْتُورًا

Qurtubi has a few other instances to report of the inability of the unbelievers to sight a Muslim they were looking for because of his recitation of the Qur'an.

He reports Ka'b as saying, "I taught a man in Syria the verses the Prophet used to recite for concealing himself from the unbelievers. He happened to travel to the Roman territories where he tarried for a while. But then he had to flee. They were after him in hot pursuit. When they got close, he began to recite the verses (I had taught). He reports that although they even walked by to him, they did not see him."

And, Tha'labi reported that having learnt the verses from Ka'b, he too taught them someone in Rayy. It should so happen that the man was taken prisoner in Daylam, and remained in custody for a long time. Finally he escaped. They went after him. He began to recite the verses. At one point they came so close that his clothes touched theirs. But they did not see him at all."

As regards the verses in question, Ka'b reports: "The Prophet used to conceal himself from the pagans through the recitation of three verses. First, the second part of the 57th verse of *Surah al-Kahf* which says:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ
وَقُرْآ [الكهف : ٥٧]

"Indeed We have placed a covering on their hearts that they should

understand it, and in their ears a plug."

Second, verse 108 of *Surah al-Nahl*. It says:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ
[النحل : ١٠٨]

"They are the ones that Allah has a set a seal on their hearts, ears and eyes."

And third, verse 23 of *Surah al-Jathiyah* which says,

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ
عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً [الجاثية
: ٢٣]

"Have you considered him who took as his god, his own desires. Allah led him astray on knowledge, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and placed a veil over his vision?"

"To the above, Qurtubi continues, we might add the first nine verses of *Surah Yasin*. They say,

يس (١) وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢) إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
(٣) عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٤) تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ
(٥) لِيُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤَهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ (٦)
لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧)
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ
مُقْمَرُونَ (٨) وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ
خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَعْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ [يس :
٩ - ١]

"Ya Sin. By the wise Qur'an. Indeed, you are (O Muhammad

from among the messengers - on a straight path. A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware. Surely, the Word has become true on most of them, so they do not believe. Indeed, We have put shackles on their necks, which are to their chins, so that they are with their heads held aloft. And We have placed before them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see."

"These are the verses that the Prophet had recited while leaving his house in Makkah on the day the pagans stood by the door to assassinate him. He asked `Ali to take his place on the bed and came out reciting these nine verses. He went by them, throwing dust onto everyone's head, but none of them was able to see him.

"I might, Qurtubi continues, narrate my own story. It happened during the siege of the Manthur Fort in Qurtuba (Cordova, Spain). I escaped from the enemy, and ran (into the open field). But in a short while two of their horsemen came after me. Now, I was in the open and nothing to conceal me. So I began to recite these verses of *Surah Yasin* along with a few from other parts of the Qur'an. They passed by me. Then, as they re-

[46] And We have placed a covering over their hearts - lest they understand it - and in their ears deafness;⁷⁹ so that when you speak of your Lord alone - as in the Qur'ān - they turn back in aversion.⁸⁰

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَوُوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِمْ تُفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾

turned, one of them remarked, ‘This is a Daybalah,’ which meant a Devil in their language. Allah blinded their eyes and so they failed to see me.”

Hussain Ahmad Madani has reported a similar incident involving Imdadullah Muhajir Makki. The British were after him for his part in the insurrection against them during their rule in India. He had gone underground and they got wind that he was in a certain town. One of Makki's followers - a Nawab - concealed him in his stable. When the British soldiers came he of course denied that Makki was around. The British insisted on searching the place. After they had done the main house, they noticed the stable. “That's only a stable,” the Nawab said in apprehension. The officer began to stroll toward the stable with a jerky Nawab in his company. They found a prayer mat spread on the floor and a pitcher of water, but no human being.” The Englishman asked, “What about this prayer-mat?” The Nawab answered, “You see, in our religion, we are required to conceal our non-obligatory

prayers from others. So, I do them here.” The man was not very satisfied, but there was nothing he could say since there wasn't any soul around. After the soldiers had left, the Nawab went back to the stable, and, for sure Muhajir Makki was there. He asked him where was he a while ago. “Right here; never left the place for a moment,” he replied (from Aseere-Malta).

Strange are Allah's ways however. A common, but committed Muslim, confided to this writer that he escaped notice by non-Muslim officials at an Indian airport, simply by reciting the above mentioned Qur'ānic verses. Although it was a minor issue, but that the official failed to see someone right before him was, according to him, simply amazing. Similar stories have emerged from Mujahidin in Iraq. Every Muslim ought to memorize these verses (Au.).

79. The covering and deafness were because of their own asking. A verse of a previously revealed chapter says (41: 5),

[47] We know very well how they listen, when they listen to you (O Muhammad),⁸¹ and when they conspire, when the evil-doers say, 'Surely, you are following not but a bewitched man.'⁸²

تَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ
إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَى إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ
إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ
وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ [فصلت : ٥]

"And they said, 'Our hearts are in a covering against what you invite us to, and in our ears a deafness; and between us and you is a veil'" (Au.).

Yusuf Ali comments: "The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of Truth, the result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are clogged so that they cannot hear. In other words the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out Allah's grace."

The *Bible* is not without similar rebuke and punishment. Majid quotes: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not. Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed (Is. 6: 9,10)."

80. That is, they hate to hear of Allah if He alone is mentioned. But, if their deities are mentioned along with Him, then they are happy to hear them mentioned. The Qur'an said at another place (39: 45),

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْتَمَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ
[الزمر : ٤٥]

"When Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink with aversion, but when those other than Him are mentioned, immediately they rejoice" (Shabbir).

81. Ibn Is-haq has the following story as the context of revelation. It is said that one night Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and Akhnas b. Shurayq concealed themselves around the Prophet's house to listen to his recitation of the Qur'an in his night-prayer. Each of them took up his position unaware of others. By dawn when the Prophet had terminated his Prayer, and they began to disperse, they came across each other in the street. They reproached each other. But by the next

[48] Behold, how they strike examples for you.⁸³ Thus they go astray and can never find the way.⁸⁴

انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا
يَسْتَتِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] And they said, 'When we shall be bones and crumbled pieces, shall we be raised a new creation?'

وَقَالُوا أَيَّذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا أِنَّا
لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Say, 'Let you be stones or iron.'

قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٥٠﴾

night they were all back to their positions. Once again they met in the street, to reproach each other. When it was the third time, they promised each other that they would never do it again. Next day Akhnas went to Abu Sufyan and asked him what his opinion was about what Muhammad was reciting. He said, "Frankly, I heard things that I understood and things that I did not." Akhnas agreed with him. Next he went to Abu Jahl and asked him what he thought of the Prophet's recitation. Abu Jahl said, "Look. We and the Banu `abd Manaf competed with each other. They fed the people, we fed. They provided, and we provided. They gave, and we gave. We were neck to neck, like race horses. Now they say, 'We have a Prophet who receives revelations from the heaven.' When shall we be able to say this? By God, we shall never believe in him."

82. Mawdudi comments: "This is an allusion to conversations between

the Makkan unbelievers. They were wont, surreptitiously, to listen to the Qur'an and then consult with one another as to how they could effectively refute it. At times they suspected that some among their ranks were gradually succumbing to the spell of the Qur'an. Whenever they became aware of this they approached the persons concerned and tried to dissuade them from taking the Prophet (peace be on him) seriously, arguing that he was under a magical spell and thus was given to saying crazy things."

83. Mawdudi writes again, "It is pointed out here that the Makkan opponents were not of one opinion. From time to time they made statements that were not only different but even mutually contradictory. At times they alleged that the Prophet (peace be on him) was himself a magician. On other occasions, they claimed that he was under the spell of someone else's magic. They also

[51] Or a creation bigger in your minds.⁸⁵ They will then ask, 'Who will restore us?' Say, 'He who originated you in the first instance.' They will nod⁸⁶ their heads at you and say, 'When will that be?' Say, 'Maybe it will happen soon.'

أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ فَسَيَقُولُونَ
مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى
هُوَ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ﴿٥١﴾

[52] The day when We shall call you and you will answer with praise to Him⁸⁷ and think that you had not stayed but for a little while.⁸⁸

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ
إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٥٢﴾

variously labeled him a poet and a lunatic.”

84. Yusuf Ali points out that the word used is “sabilan” meaning “a way” and not “the way.” That is, “In going astray, they have lost the way; but never can they find any means of getting back to that way.”

85. The earliest scholars such as Ibn `Abbas, Ibn `Umar, Hasan, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Dahhak and many others were of opinion that by the words “or a creation bigger in your minds” the allusion is to death. That is, if the pagans had some other creation, such as death itself in their minds, as what they could become to avoid being resurrected, they would still be resurrected since even death will also be resurrected and meet with its own death on the Day of Resurrection. On that day, it would be brought forth in the form of a fat ram and slaughtered. But Qatadah and Muja-

hid were of the opinion that the allusion is to some other creation that cannot be resurrected such as the heavens or the earth (Ibn Jarir, Qur-tubi, Ibn Kathir).

86. The textual yunghiduna implies an upward and downward shaking of the head (Ibn Jarir). One must appreciate the accuracy of the Qur`an. In English they would say in such a situation, “he shook his head.” But that implies a sideward shaking of the head, usually in refusal or denial. Whereas, an upward and downward movement is done to express, as Zamakhshari has said, wonder, disbelief, or mockery, which is the perfect image portrayed here with the help of a simple accurate word (Au.).

87. A report of Ibn abi Hatim nar-rates the Prophet having said,

وليس على أهل لا إله إلا الله وحشة في قبورهم
ولا منشرهم وكأنني أنظر إلى أهل لا إله إلا الله وهم

[53] Say to My servants that they should say that which is best.⁸⁹ Verily Satan provokes discord between them. And Satan is ever to man an open enemy.⁹⁰

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾

ينفضون التراب عن رؤوسهم ويقولون الحمد لله الذي أذهب عنا الحزن

“People of the testimony: ‘there is no deity except Allah,’ will not feel any desolation: neither in their graves nor in the Field of Resurrection. Indeed, I can as if see the people of the testimony: ‘there is no deity except Allah,’ shaking off dirt from their heads saying, ‘Praise be to the One who removed from us all worry’” (Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

The report is also in Tabarani, which has, according to Haythami, some problems in the chain of narrators.

Asad writes: “.. the reference to the erstwhile deniers of the possibility of resurrection as ‘answering God’s call by praising Him’ implies that as soon as they are resurrected they will become fully aware of His existence and almightiness.”

88. It is said that there will be an interval of forty years between the two blows of the Trumpet. Those punished in the grave will have the punishment removed from them

and will fall asleep. When the second blow is sounded, they will rise up saying (36: 52),

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ [يس : ٥٢]

“Who resurrected us from our places of rest?” It is then that they will think that they tarried (in the grave) but for a few moments” (Qurtubi).

Asad adds: “Man’s life on earth will appear to him ‘but as a little while’ in comparison with the unlimited duration of life in the hereafter (Tabari, Zamakhshari). A further implication is that man’s concept of ‘time’ is earthbound and, hence, has no meaning in the context of the ultimate reality.”

89. Mawdudi expounds: “In their discussions with the unbelievers and polytheists, in fact with all opponents of their faith, Muslims should restrain from losing their temper. Additionally, they should not resort to exaggerated and extremist statements. Even in the face of provocation from their opponents, Muslims should not utter even a word that

[54] Your Lord knows you very well. If He will, He will show you mercy, or if He will, He will chastise you.⁹¹ We have sent you not (O Muhammad) a custodian over them.⁹²

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يَرْحَمَكُمُ أَوْ إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُعَذِّبِكُمْ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَيْلًا ﴿٥٤﴾

is contrary to the truth; nor should they lose their temper at the vulgarities which are flung at them by their opponents, nor should they be provoked to the point of paying back their opponents in the latter's own coins. Instead, they should keep their composure and say only that which is balanced and true, and is in keeping with the grace and dignity of the faith which they seek to uphold.”

90. That is, do not be harsh while arguing with the unbelievers. That will have the opposite effect of raising tempers and creating hatred for the good word, killing the cause viz., the deliverance of the message (based on Alusi).

Tha`labi, Mawardi, Ibn `Atiyyah and Wahidi have reported as context of revelation that one of the pagans insulted `Umar ibn al-Khattab (of course at Makkah) and he intended to kill him. But that would have led to turbulence, so Allah revealed this verse (Qurtubi).

Yusuf Ali sums up: “The command refers to two situations. (1) Even to your enemies and the enemies of Al-

lah you should speak fair: who are you to judge others? Judgement belongs to Allah alone, for He knows you (i.e., all mankind) best, and your personal knowledge is at best imperfect. And Satan is always trying to divide mankind. (2) Amongst yourselves, also you should not entertain suspicions, but speak politely according to the best standards of human speech. A false or unkind word may destroy all your efforts at building up unity, because the forces of disruption are more numerous than the forces of unity.”

91. That is, Allah knows the condition of your hearts. If He wished He would show you light, or, leave you on your own and punish you for your disbelief. As regards the Prophet, he cannot do any more than deliver the message. He is not a guardian over you to force you to believe (based on Ibn Jurayj's understanding as in Ibn Jarir). That is, the verse addresses the unbelievers.

Zamakhshari also connects this verse with the previous one and understands that this is Allah's admoni-

[55] Your Lord knows very well all those who are in the heavens and in the earth. And We preferred some Prophets over others, and gave Da'ud the Zabur.⁹³

وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ
وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] Say, 'Call those besides Him whom you fancy.⁹⁴ They have neither the power to remove afflictions from you, nor to turn (them) away.

قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا
يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضَّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا
﴿٥٦﴾

tion to the unbelievers. The believers should tell them that which is good. They may also tell the antagonists, "Your Lord knows you very well. If He will, He will show you mercy, or if He will, He will chastise you."

An outside chance exists that it is the believers who are addressed by the words: "If He will.." In that case Mawdudi's explanation comes in handy. He writes, "The believers should never go about bragging that they are going to enter Paradise, or cockily name other persons or groups as the ones destined to enter Hell. For it is God alone who has the authority to decide on such matters."

Other commentators have pointed out that an unbeliever cannot be categorically judged as of the Fire until it is ascertained that he died on unbelief (Au.).

92. "Wakil" of the original has various connotations ranging from someone relied upon, trusted, a guide, a sup-

port, to someone to whom affairs are entrusted.

93. That is, explains Alusi, some of the Messengers were preferred over others in spiritual matters and not in material things (while the unbelievers think that material favor is all that matters: Au.).

Ibrahim (asws) was made a Khalil, Musa (asws) was directly spoken to, Da'ud (asws) was given a revelation that did not have any commandments, Sulayman (asws) was given a kingdom that no one else was ever given, 'Isa (asws) was created with the word kun, and our Prophet's earlier and later sins were forgiven. Further, he was sent to the entire mankind. Thus, every Prophet was singled out for a favor, and in that respect preferred over others (Qatada and Ibn Jurayj: Ibn Jarir).

94. Referring to the textual word "za'ama", often translated as "to fancy, allege, maintain, claim" etc.,

[57] Those that they call upon, they (themselves) seek means of access to their Lord as to which of them shall be nearest (to Him).⁹⁵ They hope for His mercy and fear His chastisement.⁹⁶ Verily, the chastisement of Your Lord is worth taking heed.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ
الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ
وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ
مَحْدُورًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Alusi demonstrates, with the help of several examples, some of which from the *hadith*, that “*za`ama*” need not necessarily be in the sense of “fancy, allege” etc. Quite often, especially in history works, it is commonly used in the sense of “belief, assertion or free of doubt.” Thus Alusi precedes in answering the allegations of the Orientalists that since Ibn Is-haq often uses the term “*za`ama*” while narrating traditions concerning life of the Prophet, the reports have a question mark before them. For example, A. Guillaume writes in his foreword to the “*Sirah*.” “A word that very frequently precedes a statement is *za`ama* or *za`amu*, ‘he (they) alleged’. It carries with it more than a hint that the statement may not be true..” (Life of Muhammad). This is how the Orientalists managed to plant doubts in the hearts of the Western educated Muslims. This also tells us that even translations of Islamic text by non-Muslims, especially Western scholars, may not be

accorded acceptance without a proper review (Au.).

95. `abdullah ibn Mas`ud is widely reported to have said, as also Qatadah, that the allusion is to some of the Jinn that the pagan Arabs worshipped. Those Jinn became Muslims, and began to seek Allah’s nearness, while their foolish followers remained worshipping them. This, says Ibn Jarir, is the correct opinion. Qurtubi points out that Ibn Mas`ud’s statement is in Muslim. In fact, adds Ibn Kathir, differently worded, it is in Bukhari also.

96. Commenting on the words, “They hope for His mercy and fear His chastisement,” Alusi points out that a believer’s faith should be well balanced between the two: hope and fear, throughout his life. However, with the approach of death, hope should become predominant. Alusi brings out another brilliant point here. He writes that it is reported of some of the devoted the words,

[58] And there is not a town but We shall annihilate it before the Day of Judgment, or shall chastise it with a terrible chastisement.⁹⁷ This is written in the Book.⁹⁸

وَإِنْ مِّن قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ
الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا كَانَ
ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٥٨﴾

“I do not worship Allah in the hope of Paradise or in fear of Hell-fire.” People have divided themselves over the statement into critics and eulogists. The explanation is as follows. If someone said these words expressing his freedom from the need of Allah’s bounty, then, he is in error and an unbeliever. But if he said it in belief that Allah deserves to be worshipped, for His own sake, even if there was no Paradise and no Hell-fire, then, such a person is a true gnostic, an ‘arif.

97. Asad expresses the opinion that the allusion by the textual “*qaryah*” (lit. village) could be to communities but some commentators have believed that the allusion is to the towns of the unbelievers. But others have believed that both believing and non-believing towns are alluded to. That is, if the town is of the believers, it will be destroyed because of the natural death of its inhabitants, but if it is inhabited by the unbelievers, then, through chastisement.

Shabbir explains that one need not be disturbed by the use of the word

“*halaka*” in reference to the believers. For, the word has been used in the sense of natural death in the Qur’an itself. Allah (*swt*) said (40: 34):

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا هَلَكَ قَلْبُكَ لَمَّا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا
[غافر : ٣٤]

“Until, when he was dead you said, ‘Allah will never send a Messenger after him.’” And, in a *hadith* the Prophet (*saws*) said,

كُلَّمَا هَلَكَ نَبِيٌّ خَلَفَهُ نَبِيٌّ

“Whenever a Prophet died, another Prophet followed him.”

Alusi writes: Maqatil has reported that he saw in Dahhak b. Muzahim’s book the following entry as explanation of this verse: Makkah will be destroyed by the Abyssinians, Madinah through starvation, Busra through flood, Kufa by the Turks, mountains through earthquakes and Khurasan through tremors. He also mentioned several other cities.

Wahab b. Munabbih on the other hand said that Mesopotamia will be in peace from destruction until Armenia is destroyed, and Armenia un-

til Egypt, Egypt until Kufa. And the Great War (Armageddon) will not come by until Kufa is destroyed. After the Armageddon, Constantinople will be (re-)conquered by a man of the Banu Hashim. (He also said that) Spain will be destroyed by the white race, Africa by Spain, Egypt because of being cut off from river Nile and due to differences among its armies, Iraq out of hunger, Ayla (Palestine) from the siege laid around the land and the sea, Rayy by the Daylam, Khurasan at the hands of the Nebatians, Nebatians at the hands of China, India and Yemen because of locusts and (poor) rulers. In fact, Alusi adds, Abu Hurayrah has reported through trustworthy sources the Prophet's words that "Madinah will be the last of the Muslim town to be destroyed." The above has been recorded by Abu Sa`ud.

However, with reference to the above a few points may be noted. Firstly, it is not a *hadith*. Secondly, and as Alusi himself has said, Wahab's reports are not always reliable (Au.).

Further, Alusi adds, it is not confirmed that Madinah will be destroyed because of starvation. A trustworthy report says wild beasts and vultures will destroy it. But the report that Makkah will be destroyed

by the Abyssinian could be trusted since a report in the *Sahihayn* says that an Abyssinian will pull down the Ka`bah, stone by stone. According to yet another report (Alusi does not state the source) he and his companions will then transport the stones hand by hand and throw them into the sea. It will never be circumambulated thereafter as no one would be left believing in Allah. With reference to Wahab's report, Alusi also writes that the implication of saying that Egypt will only be destroyed after Kufah, is that Kufah will be re-established, since by his time (Alusi's), Kufah already stood destroyed. Buni and others have predicted, relying on Sheikh al-Akbar's statements, that Kufah will be rehabilitated by the end of the 13th Islamic century. (Alusi died in 1270 A.H. but Kufah is still no more than a couple of huts while we are in the 15th Islamic century: Au.). Finally, Alusi continues, it might also be remembered that reliable reports say that after `Isa's death, the earth will be visited by a cold blast of wind coming from the Syrian side, that will kill everyone with an atom of faith in him. Thereafter, only evil people will inhabit the globe over whom the Day of Judgment will be called.

[59] And nothing prevented us that We should send signs, except that the earlier ones rejected them.⁹⁹ Indeed, We granted Thamud the she-camel as a clear (sign), but they did her wrong. And We send not signs except to frighten.¹⁰⁰

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ
كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ وَآتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ النَّاقَةَ
مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالآيَاتِ
إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾

98. The allusion by “the Book” is to the *Lawh al-Mahfuz* (Ibn Jarir).

99. The pagans said to the Prophet: “Muhammad. You admit there have been prophets before you. One of them had power over the winds. Another quickened the dead. So, if it pleases you that we should believe in you, then, transform Safa Mount into that of gold so that we can irrogate the place.” In response, Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir from Sa`id b. Jubayr and others).

And the meaning is, Qurtubi states, if Allah did not send down signs as they wished, it was because if they did not believe even after the signs, they would have to be necessarily destroyed; just like Thamud who rejected the camel that emerged from a rock on their demand. In the present case, it was known to Allah that there will be Muslims from among the Makkans - as well as from their progeny. The tree was therefore saved for the sake of its branches.

Miracles, therefore, began to be shown at a time when they were believed in as miracles, that is, during the Madinan period. The only miracle that the Makkans were shown, something everyone could check (apart from the Qur`ān), was that of the nocturnal journey to Jerusalem (Au.).

According to a report in Nasa`i and Ahmad, the Prophet was given a choice. If he wished Allah would show the sign they demanded. But if they did not believe they would be destroyed. Alternatively, they could be given reprieve. The Prophet preferred reprieve for them (Ibn Kathir).

The report is in Ahmad and Hakim who declared it *Sahih*. Dhahabi agrees with Hakim. Haythami also felt satisfied with the chain of narrators (S. Ibrahim).

100. Qurtubi writes that with reference to the words, “And We send not signs except to frighten,” five connotations are possible. First, the allusion

[60] And when We said unto you (O Muhammad), 'Surely your Lord has encompassed the people.'¹⁰¹ And the vision that We showed you,¹⁰² and the tree accursed in this Qur'an,¹⁰³ was not but a trial for the people. Thus We (aim to) drive fear into them. But it increases them only in great rebellion.¹⁰⁴

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ وَمَا
جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ
وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَنُحَوِّفُهُمْ
فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٠﴾

is to the miracles that the Messengers perform, to warn the unbelievers and drive fear into them. Second, verses threatening punishments to prevent the sinners. Third, the allusion is to the changes in a person's life: from childhood to youth to manhood and old age, so that people draw the lesson: this is Ibn Hanbal's opinion. Fourth, the allusion by "the verses" is the to Qur'an. And fifth, sudden death (Qurtubi).

101. E.g., the verse in *Surah al-Buruj* which said (85: 19-20):

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ (١٩) وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ
مُحِيطٌ [البروج : ١٩ ، ٢٠]

"The unbelievers are in a state of denial, but Allah is encompassing them from behind them."

102. In the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Hasan, Masruq, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Abu Malik and others, the reference is to the vision that the Prophet enjoyed when he was taken from Makkah to *Bayt al-Maqdis* and from there

to the heavens. Ibn 'Abbas was very specific. He said, "It was the vision of the eyes and not a dream." The report is in Bukhari and Tirmidhi (Qurtubi), as also in Nasa'i and others (Shawkani).

Qurtubi adds that if it had been a dream, and not a vision of the eye, it could not have become a means of trial for the people which the verse states was the purport.

Hasan al-Busri said, "The Prophet was taken to *Bayt al-Maqdis* where he prayed, and Allah showed him the signs that He willed, then he did his morning in Makkah. When he informed the people that he had been taken to *Bayt al-Maqdis* they replied, 'Muhammad. What's the matter with you? You did your evening here in Makkah. Then by morning you are telling us that you had been to *Bayt al-Maqdis* by night, traveling the distance of two months in a single night?' They were skeptically surprised. In fact, some (of the

Muslims) apostatized. (Hence Allah's words, 'And the vision that We showed you and the tree accursed in this Qur'an, was not but a trial for the people') - Ibn Jarir.

In contrast, Abu Bakr took a rational line. When told about the Prophet's claim, he remarked, "Well, if he says so, I believe in him." He was asked, "Do you believe in him before you have heard from him first hand?" He replied, "Where are your senses? I believe in him when he says he receives revelations from the heaven. Why I should I not believe in him when he says he had been to Jerusalem which is so close when compared to the heavens?" (Qurtubi).

In this connection, it may be noted that all the *ahadith* that have been narrated in explanation of the vision, to the effect that the Prophet saw Banu Umayyah in his vision as defiling his (prophetic) mission, are, according to commentators, untrustworthy. It is another thing that they were, as Alusi has stated, the first to bring corruption into the body politic of Islam. `A'isha is also reported to have made some adverse statements about them, before one of them.

103. Ibn `Abbas, Masruq, Hasan and others have said that the allusion by

the accursed tree is to the Zaqqum tree. According to Hasan the pagans said, "Is not Ibn Abi Kabsha (Prophet Muhammad) lying when he says that stones will be fuel of Hell-fire, and in the same breath that there will be a tree there called Zaqqum?" (Ibn Jarir). That is, how can a tree flourish in Fire? Thus it became a test for them. Will they believe, because Allah says so in His revelation, or will they trust their own minds and limited knowledge?

A tree is a hardy thing. There might be some cure for the rationalist's skepticism in the information that "viable bacteria have been recovered in the interior of an operating nuclear reactor, having survived intense fluxes of ionizing reaction." That is, a place where they should be disintegrated within seconds. Again, another finding that has sent the scientists home in amazement is that "bacteria can survive after exposures to pressures as high as 10 tonnes per square meter, and after flash heating under dry conditions at temperatures of up to 6000 deg. C." (Our Place in the Cosmos, Fred Hoyle and C. Wickramasinghe, Phoenix, p. 4). In view of this information, a tree in Hell seems to be a small-time story (Au.).

[61] And when We said to the angels,¹⁰⁵ 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam.' They all prostrated themselves, except Iblis. He said, 'Should I prostrate myself before someone You created out of clay?'

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا ﴿٦١﴾

But, although mentioned in two other places, where has the tree been accursed in the Qur'an? Zamakhshari answers that "la'nah" in Arabic is denial of Allah's mercy. Now, since Zaqqum tree will be in the Fire, far from Allah's mercy, the word "mal'un" has been employed. Another connotation, he adds, comes from the Arab usage who were wont to refer to any distasteful, harmful eatable thing as "mal'un."

The Lexicon writer Abdul Rashid No'mani writes under the entry Zaqqum that the Prophet (saws) said in a *hadith*, which Tirmidhi rated Hasan *Sahih*,

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ،
فَقَالَ : لَوْ أَنَّ قَطْرَةً مِنَ الرَّقُومِ قُطِرَتْ فِي بَحَارِ الدُّنْيَا
أَفْسَدَتْ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا مَعَايِشَهُمْ

"Fear Allah in the manner that Allah should be feared and die not but as Muslims." Then he added, "If a drop of Zaqqum were to be dropped into the seas of the earth, it would destroy the life of the peoples of the world" (*Lughat al-Qur'an*).

The above is from Hakim's Mustadrak and has Dhahabi's approval (Au.).

104. When the pagans were threatened with Hell-fire and a fruit that they would eat therein, about whose tree Allah revealed (37: 64-65),

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ (٦٤) طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ
رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ [الصفات : ٦٤ ، ٦٥]

"Lo! It is a tree that sprouts from the bottom of Hell. Its emergent fruits like the heads of the Devils," - when these words were revealed, Abu Jahl (in a report of Ahmad: Ibn Kathir), asked for some dates and butter and said, "Eat. This is the only Zaqqum that we know of." (In the Yemeni dialect dates [when taken] with butter was termed Zaqqum: Qurtubi). In response, Allah said, "We drive fear into them. But it increases them only in great rebellion" (Ibn Jarir).

105. Imām Razi's explanation of the connection can be reduced to as follows: the Prophet was facing hard times with the pagans in Makkah. He and his message stood rejected. (There were a variety of reasons).

[62] He also said, 'See You?! The one You honored above me - if You grant me reprieve until the Day of Judgment, I shall surely bring his descendants under my sway,¹⁰⁶ all but a few.'

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْت عَلَيَّ لَئِنِ
أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لِأَحْتَبِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] He replied, 'Go ahead.¹⁰⁷ Whosoever of them followed you, surely Johanna shall be your recompense - an ample reward.

قَالَ أَذْهَبَ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] And fool them gradually whomsoever of them you can with your voice,¹⁰⁸ and rally against them with your horse and foot soldiers,¹⁰⁹ and share with them in their wealth¹¹⁰ and progeny,¹¹¹ and promise them.' But Satan promises them not but delusion.¹¹²

وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ
وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِم بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ
فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ
الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿٦٤﴾

But two elements were obvious: pride and envy. These two elements prevented the pagans from accepting the prophetic message. So the Prophet was told that he ought to in fact expect it and, be unmindful of it, and should hold on to his good work. The very first man, Adam also faced difficulties in his life because of pride and envy.

106. One of the connotations of the "ihtinak" of the original is to put a rope around the lower jaw of an animal in order to lead it (Razi). Another connotation is destruction. The Arabs say,

احتنك الجراد الزرع

"The locusts destroyed the crops."

107. The translation of the word "idh-hab" as "go ahead" reflects the understanding of Imām Razi.

108. The allusion by "voice" is to idle entertainment, songs and music. That was the opinion of Mujahid. Ibn 'Abbas however said that the allusion is to any call to Allah's disobedience (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Thus, by implication, music is forbidden in Islam. (Qurtubi).

Zamakhshari writes that the meaning is: Satan will bring on his forces against those who accept his influence, pulling them out of their homes and resorts, with little regard or respect for their defenses, in short, with ease.

109. While Mujahid said that Satan actually has foot and mounted soldiers from men and Jinn, Ibn `Abbas said that the allusion is to everyone, on foot or mounted, who walks in the way of sin. In a second opinion Mujahid said the same thing (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

110. In the opinion of the earliest scholars, anything spent in a cause disapproved by Allah, is the share of Iblis (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

111. The allusion, according to Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak and others, is to children born out of sin. Hasan and Qatadah however felt that the allusion is to the parents baptizing their children in a false religion. Mujahid's opinion was that every child sacrificed at the altar, or killed from fear of poverty, or buried alive out of shame, is the share of Iblis (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

(Sins committed under *Shaytan's* evil influence are also, in a way, his share in a man's life: Au.). It is in this vein that, according to a report in the *Sahihayn*, the Prophet taught us that: "When one of you wishes to go into his wife he may say,

بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُمَّ جَنِّبِي الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا
رَزَقْتَنَا ثُمَّ قُدِّرْ بَيْنَهُمَا فِي ذَلِكَ أَوْ فَضِي وَلَدٌ لَمْ يَضُرَّهُ
شَيْطَانٌ أَبَدًا

'In the name of Allah. O Allah, keep us away from Satan and keep Satan away from what You will bestow us (of the progeny).' (That will assure the Prophet continued) that if a child has been decreed, Satan shall never be able to harm it" (Ibn Kathir).

112. "Satan does not promise them but delusions:" a self-evident truth that has echoed throughout the ages in the lives of individuals and nations, but few have been that would heed. Modern Western world is one of the best examples. In pursuance of their dreams, men and women have been working day and night, like ants around a dead cockroach, offering everything they can in sacrifice: time, energy, family-life, moral values, and the soul's yearning. But, and despite the amazing material developments, they are yet to experience a single day of peace and true happiness. Far from that, the cogs in the machine rarely experience a single day of relaxation. If not for drugs, wine and music, a large number of people would have gone mad from the relentless pressure on them. As it is, in America every week or so someone shoots a couple of innocent people to death and then commits suicide, to leave those spared pursue Satan's delusions (Au.).

[65] 'As for My slaves, you shall have no power over them.' And suffices Your Lord as a guardian.¹¹³

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ
وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] Your Lord it is who drives for you the ships in the sea, that you may seek of His bounty. Verily, He is ever Merciful unto you.

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُرْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ
لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا
﴿٦٦﴾

[67] When affliction visits you upon the sea, then those you call upon disappear except for He. But as soon as He has brought you safe ashore, you turn away. Surely, man is ever ungrateful.¹¹⁴

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ
تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَاهَهُ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ
أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] Do you then feel secure that He should not cause you to be swallowed up by a tract of land¹¹⁵ or let loose against you a pebble storm? Then you will not find for yourself a protector.

أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُخْشِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ
يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ
وَكِيلًا ﴿٦٨﴾

113. The implication of the words "And suffices Your Lord as a guardian" is that sinless is he who is preserved by Allah. Otherwise, it is not possible for a man to save himself from falling into sin. Allah said therefore that He suffices. He did not say, "the (good) men suffice for themselves" (Alusi).

114. Someone said to a scholar, "Give me a proof of Allah's existence; but not that of the contingencies." He asked him whether he had ever been into the sea. He said yes. Then he asked him if he ever faced a storm that threatened to drown everyone. The man said yes. Then he asked if he had lost hopes in those in the boat, or anyone on the land of being able

to rescue him. The man replied that yes such a situation had occurred. He asked him, "Did your heart then, in that moment of despair, when you lost hope in everything, cling to hope in something, someone, coming to your rescue?" When he replied with a yes he said, "That something is Allah." The man felt satisfied with the answer.

115. The commentators have explained that "*janib al-barr*" (lit. earth-side) has been used to contrast it with the "*janib al-bahr*" (sea-side). That is, if you escape from one side, that of the sea, how can you be in peace from your Lord's scourge on the other side, the land?

[69] Or do you feel secure that He should not return you to it a second time, and let loose against you a hurricane of wind and drown you for your rejection? Then you will not find for yourself against us anyone to follow up (the affair).¹¹⁶

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى
قَيَّرَ سَيْلَ عَلَيْنِكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيَعْرِفُكُمْ
بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا
﴿٦٩﴾

[70] Lo! We have honored Adam's progeny, borne them on the land and the sea, provided them with good things and preferred them greatly over many of those We created.¹¹⁷

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ
وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ
عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

116. The textual “*tabi`a*” lends several connotations: someone who could follow up the affair of the drowning to find out as to who holds the responsibility for the event, demand compensation, or sue the party that caused it, and so on. Alternatively it could mean someone who would avenge the action. Ibn `Abbas (as in Ibn Jarir) simply rendered it as “helper” (Au.).

117. Yusuf Ali comments: “The distinction and honor conferred by Allah on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding duties and responsibilities of man.”

Nobody ever disputes the fact of man's superiority over all other organic organisms. But whom does the credit go to? Here comes the denial. However a few have refuted some wild denials. Majid quotes: “In the language of modern anthropology,

‘the great superiority of man's mental manifestations over those of all other animals is too patent to be called in question by any serious worker in the field of anthropology. Indeed, according to some eminent psychologists, the gap between them cannot be bridged over by the doctrine of organic evolution’ (ERE, I. P. 569). “The attempt to minimize this remarkable disparity between man and brute has not met with much support from any class of investigation.” (ib.).”

It might be noted however, that Allah said that He favored man above most of His creations. He did not say He favored them above all creatures. Hence, and although the present verse does not lend help, the commentators have judged that: (i) Common but committed believers are superior to common angels. (ii)

[71] On the day when We shall call all men with their record,¹¹⁸ then whoso is given his book in his right hand - those shall read their book (with pleasure); and they shall not be wronged by a thread.¹¹⁹

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوْتِيَ
كِتَابَهُ يَمِينِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا
يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾

Messengers from among the humans are superior to the messengers from among the angels. (iii) Messengers from among the angels are superior to all common angels as well as committed believers. And (iv) Common angels are superior to common men (Alusi, Shabbir, Shafi').

118. "Imām" is anyone who is followed. So the Prophet is our Imām, the Qur'an is our Imām, and the followers of every religion have their own Imām. The Qur'an itself has used the word "Imām" in the sense of a book. It said (36: 12),

وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ [يس : ١٢]

"And everything We have recorded in a clear book" (Razi).

Mujahid and Qatadah were of the opinion that by the textual term "Imām" the allusion is to the Messengers sent to the nations. But Ibn 'Abbas, Hasan and Dahhak thought the allusion is to the Book of Deeds (Ibn Jarir).

A second opinion of Ibn 'Abbas as in Ibn Marduwayh, Ibn abi Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn abi

Hatim agrees with the earlier opinion that the allusion is to Messengers (Shawkani).

Qurtubi writes the opinion of Abu 'Ubaydah that the allusion could well be to the religious denominations (madhahib, in which people take pride and deride each other). They might be called as, "(Come forward), O Hanafiyy, O Shafe'i, etc."

Zamakhshari notes (while Razi and Alusi reproduce from him) that the Shi'a have interpreted "Imām" as the plural of Umm (meaning mother). In the light of this meaning they explain that on the Day of Judgment the people will be referred to by the names of their mothers. They also say that the wisdom behind this is that Jesus Christ could then be called by his mother's name, Hasan and Husain by their mother's name as well as a man out of adultery by his mother's name. Zamakhshari then throws the punch, "I don't know which of the two statements is more ridiculous: the interpretation itself or the wisdom cited."

[72] And whosoever is blind in this (world),¹²⁰ shall be blind in the Hereafter and more lost of the way.¹²¹

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

Alusi notes that `Uqayli has a report coming from Anas that he said, "The records (of deeds) are stored under the `Arsh. On Judgment Day Allah will send across a (powerful) wind that will fly the records into either the right hands or left hands of the people. The first line in it would read (17: 14),

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا
[الإسراء : ١٤]

'Read your record. Sufficient is your own soul this day for reckoning against yourself.'

Alusi is not too sure of the authenticity of this report but feels that it is supported by another in Ahmad brought to us by `A'isha. She asked, "Messenger of Allah. Will a lover remember his beloved on the Judgment Day?" He answered, "On three occasions, no." (The third occasion he mentioned as), "When the Records fly."

Incidentally, the Qur'an or *Sunnah* are not specific about angels handing over the Book of Records to the people (Au.).

119. "Fatil" is that little thread which is found in the cleft (central split portion) of date seed.

120. That is, blind to truth.

121. When asked by someone coming from Yemen, Ibn `Abbas explained that a man who is blind to Allah's signs in this world – to those signs that are spread around him – will be more so in affairs concerning the Hereafter (Ibn Jarir, Razi).

Another meaning is that those who are blind to Allah's signs in this world will be blind to the ways leading to Paradise in the Hereafter. But the reference could as well be to actual blindness in the Hereafter as in the verse (20: 124-126),

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ (١٢٤) قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي
أَعْمَىٰ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا (١٢٥) قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ
آيَاتُنَا فَنَسَيْتَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسى [طه : ١٢٤-١٢٦]

"And whoever turns away from My Reminder, shall have a livelihood of hardships, and We shall raise him up in the Hereafter blind. He will cry out, 'My Lord. Why have you raised me blind when I

[73] And indeed,¹²² they were close to tempting you away (O Muhammad) from that which We have revealed unto you so that you fasten upon Us something other than it. In that event they would have taken you as a close ally.¹²³

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا
إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ وَإِذَا لَا تَخَذُوكَ
خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٣﴾

was seeing?' He will reply, 'That is how Our signs came to you but you forgot all about them. That is how you will be forgotten today'" (Razi).

122. "In" here is a short form of "inna." It is called the lightened "in," and is usually without government (Majid).

123. As context of revelation Ibn `Abbas said that once the Thaqif tribesmen came to the Prophet and said, "Give us a year to receive the gifts that our idols receive. Thereafter we shall abandon them and embrace your religion." The Prophet was wondering whether he should allow them the reprieve when Allah revealed this and the next verse (Ibn Jarir).

Sayyid adds: "The allusion is perhaps to several efforts made by the Quraysh to soften the Prophet. On one occasion they asked him to give up criticizing their deities, in return of which they would include Allah in their worship. On another occasion they said that he should ap-

point a time when their chiefs and the honored ones could see him: a time when the lowly ones were not around. And so on.

"Those were efforts at a compromise of the kind that those in power of every age try to work out between themselves and the callers to Islam. The objective is to deflect them - a little to start with. Sometimes a caller is deceived by the offer, imagining that he is after all making a small concession. For, those in power do not ask that he give up the call altogether. They ask for minor adjustments that might make it possible for both of them to meet at a midpoint between the two ways: theirs and his. In consequence, the caller is most tempted, especially in view of what he sees as some advantages to the call. But a minor deviation at the beginning of the path leads to a total deviation at the end of it. The caller is unable to retrieve back what he surrendered, (and the list grows), adding to his weakness. In fact, his own willingness to give in, increases

[74] And, had We not strengthened you, you were about to tilt towards them a little.¹²⁴

[75] In that case We would have surely made you taste double (the chastisement) in life and double in death,¹²⁵ and you would not have found against Us a helper.

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكُنُ إِلَيْهِمْ
شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾

إِذَا لَأَذَقْنَاكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضِعْفَ
الْمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا بَجْدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا
﴿٧٥﴾

with every new compromise deal that he strikes.

“Indeed, the question is that of the caller’s own faith in his call. He who compromises, even though a little, and is silent about something that is wrong, even if apparently minor, does not have full faith in what he offers to others. Does he truly believe in the goodness and benefit of his call? For a true believer, every part of the whole is like any other part: neither less important nor more. There isn’t anything that is redundant. So, how can he give up anything? On the other hand, those in power first try to buy off a little. The process, once started, ends with a sell out of the whole.”

124. The addition of the word “a little” at the end of the verse implies that the Prophet did not incline to them even a little (Au.). Hence his prayer-words:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ

“O Allah, do not hand me over to myself even for a moment”
(Qatadah - Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* meets with the requirements of the Sheikha (Hakim: Au.).

125. The promise of double the punishment is to impress on us that the punishment from Allah is proportionate to the level of elevation: the more is one elevated in Islam, the greater the punishment for him (Zamakhshari).

Qurtubi adds, “Hence we have the verse (33: 30),

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبِينَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ
لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ [الأحزاب : ٣٠]

‘O womenfolk of the Prophet. If anyone of you comes with a clear indecency, the chastisement will be doubled for her.’”

[76] And they were close to scaring you from the land, to expel you from it. But then they would not remain after you except for a little.¹²⁶

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلافَكَ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] The way of those We sent before you of Our Messengers. You will not find any change in Our way.

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا
تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

[78] Establish the Prayer¹²⁷ at the sun's decline¹²⁸ until the darkness of the night¹²⁹ - and recital of the dawn.¹³⁰ Indeed, recital of the dawn is witnessed.¹³¹

اقِمْ الصَّلَاةَ لِلدُّلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ عَسَقِ
الَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ
مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٨﴾

126. The Quraysh in fact did not enjoy a long stay in Makkah after they had forced the Prophet out. They were destroyed at Badr (Ibn Jarir).

And the Makkans escaped with this lighter punishment because they did not exactly exile the Prophet, but rather, forced him out (Razi).

127. Commentators have pointed out the relationship of Prayers with hardships. In Mawdudi's words, "Reference to these (above) difficulties and hardships is followed by the command to establish Prayers. In a subtle way, this draws our attention to the fact that the patience and steadfastness required of a believer in times of such adversity can only be obtained by establishing Prayer."

128. Although several earliest authorities, notably 'abdullah ibn

Mas`ud, have thought that the textual "duluk" refers to sunset, most others, including Ibn Mas`ud in a second opinion, have believed that the allusion is to the decline of the sun from the zenith. Indeed, the Prophet himself is reported to have used the word in the latter sense. In effect, the allusion is to the *Zuhr* Prayers (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi and Razi add: Authorities have disagreed over the meaning of the term "duluk". Some say it is the time when the sun starts declining. Others have said that it is applicable to the sunset. Ibn `Atiyyah has said that "duluk" is for decline, therefore, applicable both to the decline beginning with the noon as well as to sunset. The word will thus cover the *Zuhr*, *`Asr* and *Maghrib* Prayers.

129. There is no difference in opinion among the scholars of the past that the allusion by “*ghasaq*” is to the period between sunset and appearance of the stars, that is, when darkness of the night takes hold (Ibn Jarir). Thus, if we accept the meaning of “*duluk*” as sun’s decline, and “*ghasaq*” as the early part of the night, then the four Prayers, *Zuhr*, ‘*Asr*, *Maghrib* and ‘*Isha*, are covered by the two terms (Qurtubi, Razi, Ibn Kathir).

130. The consensus of opinion is that by “the recitation of the dawn” the allusion is to Qur’ānic recitation in the *Fajr* Prayers (Ibn Jarir).

And the two, the recital of the Qur’ān and the Prayers have been equated to express the importance of recitation during the Prayers in general and the dawn Prayers in particular when it should be lengthened (Zamakhshari).

131. To the question, witnessed by whom?, the answer is, by the angels. According to a *hadith* reported by Abu Hurayrah, the angels of the night and of the day change their duties at this time and are thus, in Abu Hurayrah’s opinion, witnesses to the Qur’ānic recitation in dawn Prayers (Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* of Abu Hurayrah is in Bukhari which reports the Prophet as having said,

فَضَّلُ صَلَاةَ الْجَمِيعِ عَلَى صَلَاةِ الْوَاحِدِ خَمْسَ وَعِشْرُونَ دَرَجَةً وَيَجْتَمِعُ مَلَائِكَةُ اللَّيْلِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ النَّهَارِ فِي صَلَاةِ الصُّبْحِ يَقُولُ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ اقْرَأُوا إِنَّ شَيْئَكُمْ { وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا }

“A Prayer offered in congregation is worthier twenty-five times compared to that offered singly. And the angels of the night and day get together at the time of dawn Prayers.” Abu Hurayrah added, “Read if you wish, ‘And the recital of the dawn. Indeed, the recital of the dawn is witnessed” (Qurtubi).

The above *hadith* is in Bukhari.

In fact, versions in Tirmidhi, Nasa’i and others report Abu Hurayrah’s ending remark as the words of the Prophet. Another *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* says,

الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَتَعَاقَبُونَ مَلَائِكَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَمَلَائِكَةَ النَّهَارِ وَيَجْتَمِعُونَ فِي صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَصَلَاةِ الْعَصْرِ ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ الَّذِينَ بَاتُوا فِيكُمْ فَيَسْأَلُهُمْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ فَيَقُولُ كَيْفَ تَرَكْتُمْ عِبَادِي فَيَقُولُونَ تَرَكْنَاهُمْ يُصَلُّونَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ يُصَلُّونَ

“Angels follow you day and night. They meet each other during the *Fajr* and ‘*Asr* Prayers. As those who spent the night among you

[79] As for the night, keep vigil in a part of it: an additional (prayer) for you.¹³² It may be that your Lord will raise you to a Station of Praise.¹³³

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَى
أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ﴿٧٩﴾

ascend their Lord asks them, although He knows, 'In what state did you leave My slaves?' They reply, 'When we went to them they were Praying, and when we left them they were Praying'" (Ibn Kathir).

Imām Razi and Alusi discuss the best time for *Fajr* prayers. The evidences either for doing them in darkness or in brightness of the dawn are, apparently, inconclusive. A *Sahih* report of `A'isha says,

إِنْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِيُصَلِّيَ
الصُّبْحَ فَيَنْصَرِفُ النِّسَاءُ مُتَلَفِعَاتٍ بِمُرُوطِهِنَّ مَا يُعْرَفْنَ
مِنَ الْعَلَسِ

"The Prophet used to do his dawn prayer in darkness. Women also came in for the congregation wrapped in their veiling clothes and returned to their homes without being recognized because of darkness."

On the other hand, Tirmidhi has a *Hasan Sahih* report which says,

أَسْفَرُوا بِالْمَجْرِ فَإِنَّهُ أَكْبَرُ لِلْأَجْرِ

"Do your (*Fajr*) prayer in the brightness of the dawn, for, it is more rewarding."

It is also reported through a trustworthy chain of narration that Ibrhaim said, "The Prophet's Companions never agreed on anything like they agreed on doing the *Fajr* in the brightness of the dawn."

132. Linguistically, *tahajjud* has its root in "hajada" which lends the meaning both of "sleep" as well as "wakefulness." The word "*nafl*" on the other hand means an addition. In this context it means that the nocturnal prayer (*tahajjud*) [performed during the last third part of the night], was an additional obligation on the Prophet, while for his followers it was supererogatory (Ibn Jarir from Ibn `Abbas, Razi, Alusi).

On the contrary Mujahid has said that *tahajjud* was declared an "additional" prayer for the Prophet because his past and future sins were forgiven. They were then, additional to him, and not for atonement of sins. In contrast, his followers need-

ed to seek forgiveness for their sins. Therefore, *tahajjud* prayers are not “additional” prayers for them, rather a necessary means of atonement, (although not declared obligatory by Allah). Ibn Jarir, however, prefers Ibn `Abbas' opinion as more correct.

133. “Station of Praise:” What station is it? Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan, Qatadah and many others have said that the reference is to the grand intercession that the Prophet will be granted on the Day of Judgment. Naked, barefoot, unable to speak to one another, mankind will be awaiting the start of the Reckoning. Ultimately, after a long wait, the Prophet (*saws*) will be allowed by Allah to intercede with Him. That will be the Station of Praise. Indeed there is a *hadith* to this effect transmitted by Abu Hurayrah. It says,

يُبْعَثُ النَّاسُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، فَأَكُونُ أَنَا وَأُمَّتِي عَلَى
تَلٍّ وَيَكْسُونِي رَبِّي عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُلَّةً خَمْرَاءَ، ثُمَّ يُؤَدُّنِي لِي
فَأَقُولُ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ أَقُولَ، فَذَلِكَ الْمَقَامُ الْمَحْمُودُ

“People will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. I and my followers will be the first on a hill top. My Lord will clothe me with a green mantle. Then I will be allowed (to intercede). I will say what Allah wills (of His praise). That then is the Station of Praise. According to other reports, the

Prophet would be the last one to be approached for intercession after other Prophets would have refused (Ibn Jarir).

The above report is in Ahmad also. Further, *ahadith* similar in meaning are to be found in Bukhari. Muslim has a *hadith* which says, “Whoever said after the Prayer-call:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبِّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةُ النَّامِيَّةُ وَالصَّلَاةُ الْقَائِمَةُ آتِ
مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي
وَعَدْتَهُ إِلَّا حَلَّتْ لَهُ الشَّقَاءَةُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

‘O Allah, the Lord of this complete call, and of the Prayers about to be established, bestow on Muhammad the means of access and the bounty; and raise him to the Station of Praise that you have promised’ - whoever said that - will have my intercession on the Day of Judgment.” Tirmidhi has another *hadith*, termed “Hasan *Sahib*” by him, which has the Prophet himself answering when asked about the Station of Praise, that the allusion is to intercession (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

On the topic, it might be well to narrate a long *hadith* that is found in the *Sahihayn* transmitted by Abu Hurayrah. It says, “Some meat was brought to the Prophet. He lifted

an arm, his favorite, and took a bite. Then he said, 'I will lead mankind on the Judgment Day. Do you know why? Allah will gather the first and the last on that Day. They will hear a caller's call, and all eyes will see. The sun will close down on them and misery will become unbearable. Some will say to others, 'You can see how people are suffering. Why do you not find someone to intercede for you with your Lord?' (That is, to begin the accounting). They will suggest, 'Go to Adam.'

"They will go to Adam and tell him, 'O Adam. You are mankind's progenitor. Allah created you with His own hand and breathed into you a spirit from Him. He ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to you. Intercede, therefore with your Lord. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we are suffering?' Adam (*asws*) will reply, 'My Lord is so angry today as He never was in the past and will never be so in future. Further, He had forbidden me the tree but I disobeyed. So this day, myself, myself. Go to someone else apart from me. Go to Nuh.'

"So they will go to Nuh (*asws*) and say, 'O Nuh. You were the first of the Messengers to the people on the earth. Allah named you "the Grate-

ful Slave.'" Intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we are suffering?' Nuh (*asws*) will reply, 'My Lord is so angry today as He never was in the past and will never be so in future. Further, I was granted the acceptance of a single Prayer, which I have used against my people. Myself, myself, myself. Go to someone else. Go to Ibrahim.'

"So they will go to Ibrahim (*asws*) and say, 'O Ibrahim, you are Allah's Prophet, His Khalil from the peoples of the earth. Intercede with your Lord for us. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we are suffering?' He will reply, 'My Lord is so angry today as He has never been in the past, and will never be so in future. Then he will recall his lies (and say), myself, myself, myself. Go to someone else. Go to Musa.'

"Next they will go to Musa and say, 'O Musa. You are Allah's Messenger. He chose you for His messages and for talk with you apart from others of the mankind. Intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we suffer?' He will reply, 'My Lord is so angry today as He never was in the past and will never be so in future. Moreover, I killed a man that I was

not allowed to. Myself, myself, myself. Go to someone else. Go to 'Isa.' "Next they will go to 'Isa (*asws*) and say, 'O 'Isa, you are a Messenger of Allah, a Word that He blew into Maryam, and a Spirit from Him. You spoke to the people from your cradle although an infant. So, intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we suffer?' He will say, 'My Lord is so angry today as He never was in the past and will never be so in future. (However, he will not mention any of his sin, but say), myself, myself, myself. Go to someone else. Go to Muhammad.'

"Finally, they will go to Muhammad and say, 'Muhammad! You are a Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets. Allah has forgiven your past and future sins. So, intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see what we are in? Do you not see how we suffer?' So I will rise, take a position under the '*Arsh* and fall into prostration before my Lord, the Mighty, the Exalted. Allah will open (my heart) and inspire me with words of praise and exaltation that no one was ever inspired with before. Then it will be said, 'Muhammad, raise your head. Ask, you will be granted. Intercede, your intercession will be accepted.'

So I will raise my head and say, 'My people O my Lord, my people O my Lord, my people O my Lord.' It will be said, 'Muhammad, take those of your followers who are not required to undergo accounting by the right door of Paradise.' The rest of them will share with other nations other doors. Then he added, 'By Him in whose Hands is Muhammad's soul, the distance between two wings of the doors of Paradise is equal to the distance between Makkah and Hijr, or Makkah and Busra'" (Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi adds: In all, the Prophet will exercise intercession on five occasions. First, the general intercession (referred to in the above tradition, for the Reckoning to begin); second, leading a group of people to Paradise before the reckoning begins; third, in favor of those believers in Allah's Oneness who would deserve the Fire for their sins - he will be able to save some of them from the punishment (this is the intercession that the *Khawarij* and *Mu'tazilah* denied); fourth, in favor of those who would have entered the Fire. They will be rescued by the Prophets, angels and brother Muslims; and, fifth, for obtaining higher status in Paradise after entry into it.

The above said, there are other interpretations to the words "Station of Praise." One comes from Mujahid. He said it refers to Allah (*swt*) giving the Prophet a place on the 'Arsh on the Day of Judgment (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi adds that some scholars have not accepted two of Mujahid's interpretations. First, this one, and the second, his interpretation of the verse (75: 23), "Faces that Day will be shining; looking at their Lord," which Mujahid interpreted as "Faces that Day will be shining; waiting for their Lord." Mujahid stood alone in understanding "Nadira" as "waiting" instead of the commonly understood "looking." Nevertheless, some have accepted his opinion (about the Prophet being placed on 'Arsh) arguing that it is in fact a *hadith* - and of such strength that Naqqash reported from Abu Da'ud Sijistani that, "Whoever rejects this *hadith* is, according to us, himself untrustworthy. The traditionists have through and through reported this as a *hadith*."

Nevertheless, although Ibn Jarir is disinclined to accept Mujahid's interpretation (it is said that the public stoned Tabari's door for maintaining that: Au.), many of the classical scholars did not see anything wrong

in the statement that the Station of Praise refers to the Prophet given a place on the 'Arsh. Ibn Jarir himself writes that with reference to Allah and His creation, the general opinion is that once Allah existed and there was nothing in existence. Then He brought things into existence. However, after their creation He remained "apart from them." Nothing being in contact with Him. (He being in another realm altogether). Another school of thought says that it is true that all things are "apart from" Allah, and that they do not touch Him or come into (physical) contact with Him, but after Allah created 'Arsh for Himself, He is in touch with it (in what sense, they do not explain: Au.), though He is "apart from" it. Now, whatever opinion we go by, Mujahid's opinion that Allah will give our Prophet a seat on the 'Arsh is not impossible. Whether he will sit on a mumber of nur (as *Sahih* reports say), or on 'Arsh, or on the earth, is all the same. He does not "come in contact with Allah." But rather, remains a slave.

Qurtubi also agrees that there is no ground to reject Mujahid's interpretation. Allah is "apart from" and "out of (physical) contact" with His creations. Their existence or non-existence does not make any difference

[80] And say, 'My Lord! Allow me to enter a true entry, and allow me to exit a true exit.¹³⁴ And grant me from Yourself an authority to help.'¹³⁵

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ
وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ
لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيرًا ﴿٨٠﴾

to Him. He creates what He will. He created the 'Arsh and chose it for His "Istawa'." This "istawa" is in keeping with His greatness and should be interpreted as what behoves Him. He is definitely not sitting on it, occupying a part or whole of it. For, He is "apart from it" and other creations.. Therefore, His placing Muhammad on the 'Arsh does not affect Him in anyway, and cannot be said to be impossible. If some reports say that "He will make him sit with Him," then the "ma'" (with) of the text should be understood in the same sense as (29: 69),

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ [العنكبوت : ٦٩]

"Surely, Allah is with those who do good."

Alusi is also more or less with Qurtubi in the above interpretation.

It might be remembered here that Biblical sources say that on the Day of Judgment Jesus Christ will occupy a chair on the right hand side of God (The Bible, 40: 022: 044)

134. The verse was revealed just before the Prophet's emigration to Ma-

dinah. Qatadah and Ibn Zayd have said that by true entry it is "into Madinah" that is intended, and by true exit it is "from Makkah" that is intended. Ibn 'Abbas on the other hand thought that the allusion is to death and resurrection. (That is, Razi explains, 'allow me a good entry into the grave and a good exit out of it'). A third opinion, that of Mujahid, is that the allusion is to true entry into and exit from the affair of his Prophetic mission. Ibn Jarir prefers the first opinion as true, while there have been a few others apart from those we have mentioned.

135. The authority was (material) help from Allah, for without His help, it would have been impossible for the Prophet to overcome the opposition to His call. He himself has said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيَرْعُ بِالسُّلْطَانِ مَا لَا يَرْعُ بِالْقُرْآنِ

"Allah eradicates by means of authority, what he does not eradicate by means of the Qur'an" (Ibn Kathir).

The above is a Mawquf *hadith* (Au.).

[81] And say, 'The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely, falsehood was bound to vanish.'¹³⁶

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ
كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

Mawdudi adds: "This shows that the reform which Islam seeks to bring about cannot be accomplished merely by preaching and by sermons. Accomplishment of that reform also requires the use of political power and authority. Now, since God Himself taught the Prophet (peace be on him) to pray for such authority, it is quite evident that to seek governmental power and to strive for its acquisition so as to make the true faith prevail in human life, and so as to implement the Shari`ah and to enforce the punishments laid down in God's Law is not only lawful but is also both required and desirable."

136. When these words were revealed, they sounded like a tall order: given the weakness of the Muslims in the Makkan phase. But it was not a few years but the Prophet had entered Makkah victorious and reciting this verse, breaking the idols placed around the Ka`bah. The reference by "the truth" is to Islam while, by

"falsehood," it is to all that stands against Islam (Ibn Jarir and Mawdudi combined).

The report is in the *Sabihyan* which adds that the Prophet had a cane in his hand with which he poked into the eyes of the idols cemented to the ground. They fell back, one after another. Then he ordered them broken (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi adds: This verse is the basis of the rule that pagan idols and deities must be destroyed when Muslims overpower them, including such articles as are not used for any other purpose in Allah's disobedience, e.g., musical instruments. `Isa (*asws*) will do the same thing when he arrives a second time. He will break the cross, slaughter the swine and will not accept tribute. (That is, he will allow no other alternative between Islam and another religion, as presently Islam does. It will be either Islam or death: Au.).

[82] And We send down gradually of the Qur'ān that which is a healing¹³⁷ and a mercy to the faithful. But to the unjust it causes not but increase in loss.

وَنَزَّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ
لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا
﴿٨٢﴾

[83] And when We bestow Our favors upon man, He turns away and draws aside. But when he is touched by evil, he is ever (so) despairing. [

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى
بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا
﴿٨٣﴾

84] Say, 'Everyone works according to his manner. Your Lord knows well who it is that is best guided to the way.'

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ
بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

137. The reference could be both to moral, social, spiritual, as well as to the physical healing. Some of its verses are well-known for their healing qualities and have been successfully used for treating physical illnesses (Razi, Shawkani, Alusi).

A recent experiment conducted in Europe on hospital patients involving several scriptures, revealed that the recitation of the Qur'ān, although on unbelievers who had no idea what was being recited to them, had a soothing effect on them (Au.).

Qurtubi discusses this aspect quite at length, as does Alusi. The incident involving a Companion's treatment of a pagan chief stung by a scorpion is well known. The Prophet asked the Companion when the party returned to Madinah, "How did you know that (*Surah al-Fatiha*) is a

charm (*ruqyah*)?" The Companion replied, "It just occurred to me." Bukhari has narrated that the Prophet used to recite the last two chapters of the Qur'ān, blow on his two hands, and wipe his body therewith. As for what is known as "*Nashrah*", which is to write down either a few of Allah's Names, or some of the Qur'ān, wash it with water and then either drunk by the ill or his body wiped with it, Sa'id b. al-Musayyib allowed it. 'A'isha used to recite the last two chapters of the Qur'ān, blow them on a bowl of water and ask the ill to be washed therewith. However, Hasan and Ibrahim Nakha'i were opposed to it. They reported a *hadith* disapproving of it. But the *hadith* is weak. If proven true, it could be prohibiting a "*Nashrah*" in which other than the Qur'ān is used. Indeed, a *hadith* (of Muslim) says,

لَا نَاسَ بِالرُّقَىٰ مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ شِرْكٌ

“There is no sin in charms so long as words of Association (*shirk*) are not spelled.”

According to another report in Muslim, some people said:

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَتْ عِنْدَنَا رُقِيَّةٌ تَرْتِي بِهَا مِنَ الْعُقُوبِ وَإِنَّكَ تَهْتَبُ عَنِ الرُّقَىٰ. قَالَ فَعَرَضُوهَا عَلَيْهِ. فَقَالَ : مَا أَرَىٰ نَاسًا مِّنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَنْفَعَ أَحَاهُ فَلْيَنْتَفِعْهُ

“Messenger of Allah, we have a charm whereby we treat those stung by scorpions; but it seems you have prohibited charms.” And they recited (the charm) before him. He said, “I do not see anything wrong (in it); whoever of you knows, if he can help his brother, let him.”

In fact, Qurtubi continues, “Imām Malik has allowed that something be hung around the neck which has a few of Allah’s Names inscribed, if the intention is to obtain benediction (*barakah*). It is prohibited if it is meant to combat evil eye. In other words, the “*ta`widh*” (amulet) should not be hung before the evil eye has struck, but rather, after it has struck, as a means of removal, which, Qurtubi adds, is not different from medication. `A’isha herself is reported to have said that what is hung in the

necks after an evil has struck is not of the (prohibited) “*ta`widh*.” Nonetheless, a group of scholars have allowed that a “*ta`widh*” be hung if it does not contain other than the Qur’ān. The “*ta`widh*” that Ibn Mas`ud tore off his wife’s neck was other than the Qur’ān. Nor is that *hadith* applicable to it which says, “Whoever hung a thing is left to hang by it,” (that is, is entrusted to it); since, when one hangs verses of the Qur’ān, then he is hanging by Allah and His Speech. What’s wrong with that? How does that become equivalent of Association (*shirk*)? Dahhak and Ibn Sirin also did not see anything wrong in a “*ta`widh*” containing Qur’ānic verses, so long as it is removed before intercourse and when one goes to the washroom.

Notes from Qurtubi end here, to which Alusi adds, “this has been the practice of the Muslims since ancient times.”

Those who declare *ta`widh* as prohibited have a point. They fear that it opens the door for “deeds and beliefs of Association.” Experience tells us that. But on the other hand, who can prevent the parents of a child ill with an unknown disease that the best of doctors have, over the years, failed to diagnose, for trying a *ta`widh* of the approved type?! (Au.).

[85] They ask you about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of a command of my Lord.'¹³⁸ And you have not been given of knowledge but a little.'¹³⁹

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

138. To what is the allusion is by the term "Rub" here, at this point? The answer has varied. According to a report from Ibn `Abbas, the allusion is to an angel. Another tradition, (though weak: Ibn Kathir) reports him as transmitting from the Prophet that the angel is so large that he could swallow the heavens and the earth in one gulp. A similar report has come down from `Ali who said that this angel has "seventy thousand heads .." (Ibn Jarir).

Nevertheless, in a second opinion of Ibn `Abbas, and one that most commentators have adopted, is that it is the human soul that is meant. Several reports have come down from `abdullah ibn Mas`ud. Here is one,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ بَيْنَمَا أَنَا أَمْشِي مَعَ النَّبِيِّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- فِي حَرْثٍ وَهُوَ مُتَّكِيٌّ عَلَى عَسِيبٍ إِذْ مَرَّ بِنَجْرٍ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ سَأَلُوهُ عَنِ الرُّوحِ فَقَالُوا مَا رَأَيْنَاكُمْ إِلَيْهِ لَا يَسْتَفْهِلُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ تَكْرَهُونَهُ. فَقَالُوا سَأَلُوهُ فَقَامَ إِلَيْهِ بَعْضُهُمْ فَسَأَلَهُ عَنِ الرُّوحِ - قَالَ - فَأَسْكَتَ النَّبِيُّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- فَلَمْ يَرِدْ عَلَيْهِ شَيْئًا فَعَلِمْتُ أَنَّهُ يُوحَى إِلَيْهِ - قَالَ - فَكُنْتُ مَكَانِي فَلَمَّا تَزَلَّ الْوَحْيُ قَالَ (وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا)

"While I was walking with the Prophet through a field and he was resting by a date palm branch when a group of Jews passed by. One of them said to others, 'Ask him about the soul.' Someone said, 'Are you in doubt that you should be asking him?'" Others said, 'Do not let him answer you with something that will displease you.' Finally they decided, 'Ask him.' So they asked him about the soul. The Prophet made no reply. (At that moment) it became obvious that the revelation was about to come down. So I stood by. In a while it was revealed, "They ask you about the soul.."' (Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* is in Bukhari and Muslim (Ibn Kathir and others).

Another version from Ibn `Abbas tells us that the Prophet was asked about the nature of the soul, as to what it is and how it could be punished while residing in a physical body (Ibn Jarir).

The report would imply that this verse is Madinan. But that is not

correct. A report in Ahmad says that the Quraysh had asked the Jews to give them something by which they could defeat the Prophet's purposes. They told them to ask about the soul (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). The report is in Tirmidhi (who declared it *Sahih*), Nasa'i, Ahmad, Hakim (who declared it trustworthy) and Ibn Hibban (Alusi, Shawkani). It is likely that the Prophet was asked a second time at Madinah, by a different set of people (Ibn Kathir).

A contemporary commentary claims that the Polytheists had asked the Prophet: "What is the source of the Qur'an?" But commentaries of old do not have any such narration to this effect. He also claims that Ibn 'Abbas understood "*Ruh*" as "revelation" and that he used to conceal this opinion. He traces the report to Ibn Jarir. But Ibn Jarir has no such statement. Rather, Ibn Jarir reports that Qatadah understood "*Ruh*" to mean "Jibr'il" (and not revelation). Qatadah then adds that Ibn 'Abbas used to conceal this opinion. (But we do not know what exactly Qatadah means by "concealment." For, other narrators freely report that Ibn 'Abbas felt it was an angel who was alluded to. In other words, it is one thing to say Ibn 'Abbas used to conceal [while he did not] and another

to say [as Ibn Jarir has stated] that Qatadah thought Ibn 'Abbas used to conceal).

Nevertheless, in another opinion, also in Ibn Jarir, Ibn 'Abbas thought they were a special kind of creation not known to anyone. The great majority in any case believed, as Alusi has stated and which is apparent from discussions in "*tafsir*" works, that the reference is to "the soul" (Au.).

As regards the nature of the soul, Ibn Kathir writes that the term "*nafs*" is the basic subtle ingredient, like water in the plants, that, when it occupies a body is referred to as the soul.

Sayyid Qutb sees no point in discussing things that are of no practical benefit: "Discussion over the soul is a journey into the abyss and a waste of energies bestowed by Allah for better purposes. The soul is beyond human perception and understanding, one of the secrets of Allah, and man's knowledge is limited, not comprehensive. Just enough of it has been given, nor more, no less, that will suffice the needs of *khilafah* on the earth."

Majid comments and quotes: "This repudiates the position of those polytheistic religions which hold the spirit or soul of man to be an inde-

pendent self-subsisting entity, co-eternal with God. In several Indian creeds the fundamental principle is 'the dualism of prakrati and purusa, "matter" and soul" .. The result is a kind of trinity consisting of God, soul (or souls) and matter, each category of being having independent self-existence. God is eternal; so also is each soul; so also is matter (ERE, II, P. 60). The Greeks, and as their disciples, the early Christian Fathers, also shared the belief in the uncreated nature of the soul. 'Belief in the pre-existence of the soul prevailed widely among the Greeks from an early date, and at the later time became a theory of their philosophers. The influence of Greek thought in this respect was strongly felt in the early Christian Church, and is still apparent to some extent throughout the whole of Western Civilization (x. p. 236)."

139. Far from being able to explain the spiritual existence of man, modern science has failed to explain even the physical existence. A.J. Thomson was forced to admit, "The more we learn about nature, the more do we become aware of our own ignorance. Every problem that is solved, opens a fresh series of problems not hitherto thought of. The sphere of the Unknown is infinite. The sphere of

the Known maybe be expanding, but is always finite. We are no nearer to ultimate solutions than Thales or Pythagoras; the quest for ultimate solution is merely the symptom of a disordered mind (UHW, VIII, p. 5012)" - Majid.

In the field of biology men went from limbs, to parts, to cells, to the DNA in the nucleus, to the nucleotide base pairs, to end up staring at atoms with disbelief. Here is the central command, contained in lifeless atoms, getting such complicated things done, to such precision, as to defy illustration. The process of cell operations is so amazing and singular that nothing else in the universe can be cited as an example. The scientists always had the benefit of denying an effect by pointing to its cause. But here they are, looking at the atoms in the cell, not knowing which is the cause and which the effect in the highly complicated system.

As for physics, all there was to be discovered has been discovered, except for the answers to the perennial questions, where did the laws of nature come from? Why does the matter behave the way it does? Why, for example, an electron is 1836 times lighter than the proton, and so on. The worst scenario, and the best illus-

tration to the words, "And you have not given of knowledge but a little," is that as the Universe expands at the edges at speeds near equal to that of light, humans will never know what lies there, or how big is the world they live in. This is because, physical laws do not allow for the humans on the earth to receive the news of any body traveling away at near the speed of light. Light emanating from it will eternally travel in the direction of the observer on earth, without reaching it, denying us the knowledge of what lies out there. This is the final nail in the coffin of human limits to knowledge (Au.).

Another point of discussion among the commentators is as follows: That humans do not know the nature of the soul, is evident; but is it unknowable? Ibn Abi Hatim has reported 'abdullah b. Buraydah's opinion that, "The Prophet died without knowing the nature of the soul." Alusi disagrees with this statement in view of the famous "*hadith al-Manam*" (a trustworthy report) which says,

صَلَّيْتُ اللَّيْلَةَ مَا قُضِيَ لِي، وَوَضَعْتُ جَنِي فِي
 الْمَسْجِدِ، فَأَتَانِي رَبِّي فِي أَحْسَنِ صُورَةٍ، فَقَالَ: يَا
 مُحَمَّدُ، أَتَدْرِي فِيْمَ يَخْتَصِمُ الْمَلَأُ الْأَعْلَى؟ فَقُلْتُ: لَا
 يَا رَبِّ، قَالَهَا ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، قُلْتُ: لَا يَا رَبِّ، فَوَضَعَ
 يَدَهُ بَيْنَ كَتِفَيَّ فَوَجَدْتُ بَرْدَهَا بَيْنَ نَدْيِي، فَتَجَلَّى لِي
 كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَعَرَفْتُهُ

"This morning I rose up after the night and Prayed as much as I was destined to. Then I dozed off in my Prayers, until I felt heavy. And lo! I was in the presence of my Lord, the Exalted, the Supreme - in the best form. He asked, 'Muhammad! What are the angels of the upper-most constellation disputing over?' I said, 'I do not know, my Lord!' That happened three times. Then He placed His palm between my shoulders until I felt the coldness of His fingers over my breast, and everything became clear to me. And I knew.." (The words "I knew.." have been interpreted to mean that he knew everything pertaining to the spiritual world: Au.). In other words, the Prophet had learnt the nature of the soul, apart from other things, following the dream. Further, Alusi and others write, since the verse does not suggest that no one can ever know the nature of the soul there is every possibility that a few others - apart from him - could know.

It is another thing, that perhaps being a thing of the other world, subtle and incorporeal, even if some people knew what it is, they would not be able to describe what exactly they

know it as, except in abstract terms rendering the description vague and unintelligible. Hence the inadequate explanations presented by Razi and Alusi in their commentaries and Ibn Qayyim in his "Kitab al-Ruh" (Au.).

Notwithstanding that, the above three scholars have, apart from its nature, discussed various aspects of the Spirit, but, as one would fear, despite lengthy discourses they remain, for want of substance, little more than theoretical exercises. A few aspects discussed are: what exactly constitutes life? Does the soul die? Is it eternal or created? Does it undergo changes? Whether one is distinguishable from another or not? Etc. Another thing discussed is the difference between "*Nafs*" and "*Ruh*." The Sufi opinion, as in Alusi, is that "*Nafs*" is the primary element in a body (that gives it life). When it brightens up with Allah's remembrance, contemplation, and ascetic living, it is transformed into "*Ruh*." (This too, however, goes without any substantiation: Au.).

To be sure, as to the question, where do the souls go after death, evidences are not lacking. Qurtubi, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Alusi agree on the following: The souls of the Prophets and Messengers are in the upper most

zone of "*'Illiyun*." When the Prophet said, before his death, "O Allah, to those on High", that is the place he meant. Souls of the martyr are in Paradise, in birds that feed on fruits, seeking repose by the lamps hanging by the '*Arsb*. Something similar has been stated about the souls of the Muslim children. A report of Ka'b leads us to believe that the souls of martyrs other than those who fell in battles, such as those who died of plague, of stomach problems, or were drowned, etc., are in the form of green birds that are fed from Paradise morning and evening. Imām Shafe'i believed that the souls of the believers are in Paradise. Ka'b b. Malik, as reported by Imām Malik reported that the believers' souls are in the body of birds that live on the trees of Paradise. This report is in Ahmad, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah. On the other hand, souls of the unbelievers are in Sijjin. Umm Bishr's report tells us that the souls of the unbelievers are in the form of black birds in cages that eat of the Fire and repose in a nest in the Fire. They say, "Our Lord. Let not our brothers join us, and do not grant us what You have promised us." Ibn Hazm has spoken about the general body of the *Ahl al-hadith* that the souls of the dead are in the graves. They draw strength from the

[86] If We wished, We could take away that which We have revealed unto you;¹⁴⁰ then you would not find any thereover to plead against Us.

وَلَيْنَ شِئْنَا لَنُدْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلًا ﴿٨٦﴾

[87] Except for a mercy from your Lord. Surely, His bounty has ever been great upon you.

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ
كَبِيرًا ﴿٨٧﴾

Prophet's *hadith* which says, "When one of you dies, his place is shown to him morning and evening. If he is to be of the people of Paradise, then Paradise, but if he is to be of the people of the Fire, then the Fire. It is said to him, 'This is your place until Allah raises you.'" And when the Prophet visited the graveyard, he said, "Peace upon you: the place of the believers." But Ibn 'abdul Barr has pointed out that the above applies to ordinary believers. The souls of martyrs are in Paradise.

Perhaps all the above can be reconciled as in the book "*Al-Ifsah*" by saying that there are kinds and varieties of souls, treated variously. Some of them are in the form of birds in Paradise, others in cages of green birds, some take repose by the lamps under the *'Arsh*, others are in cages of white birds, some in the form of starlings in cages, others in other forms given in Paradise, some in shapes given to them in accordance with their deeds, others move around and visit their

(earthly) bodies, some are in the care of Mika'il, others in that of Adam, while yet others in the care of Ibrahim.

140. Ibn Mas'ud explained that a time will come when a wind will blow from the Syrian region after which nothing will be left of the Qur'an neither in print nor in the breasts. In support of his words, Ibn Mas'ud recited this verse (Ibn Jarir). This report is trustworthy (Qurtubi). The report is in Sa'id b. Mansur, Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani, Hakim, (who declared it *Sahih*), Ibn Marduwayh and in Bayhaqi's "*Shu'ab al-Iman*". (Dhahabi agreed with Hakim in ruling it as trustworthy: S. Ibrahim). The report has also come through Mu'adh b. Jabal, through Abu Hurayrah in Ibn Abi Hatim and Hakim who rated it *Sahih*, and through Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman in the collection of Abu al-Sheikh, Daylami and Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani).

[88] Say, 'If the men and Jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they will never produce its like, even if some of them were helpers unto others.¹⁴¹

قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ
يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ
كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] We have indeed variously expounded for the people in this Qur'ān every (manner of) similitude, yet most people refuse except (that they should be) unbelievers.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ
كُلِّ مَثَلٍ فَأَبَىٰ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا
﴿٨٩﴾

[90] They said, 'We shall never believe you until you break open for us a spring from the ground.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ
الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا ﴿٩٠﴾

[91] Or you have an orchard of date trees and grapes, and cause rivers to gush forth abundantly in its midst.

أَوْ تَكُونُ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ
فَتُفَجَّرُ الْأَنْهَارُ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٩١﴾

The report of Hudhaifah says,

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَدْرُسُ الْإِسْلَامُ
كَمَا يَدْرُسُ وَشَيْءُ التَّوْبِ حَتَّىٰ لَا يُدْرَىٰ مَا صِيَامٌ وَلَا
صَلَاةٌ وَلَا نُسُكٌ وَلَا صَدَقَةٌ وَلَيْسَ رَىٰ عَلَىٰ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِي لَيْلَةٍ فَلَا يَبْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْهُ آيَةٌ وَتَبْقَىٰ
طَوَائِفُ مِنَ النَّاسِ الشَّيْخُ الْكَبِيرُ وَالْعَجُوزُ يَقُولُونَ
أَدْرَكْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ هَذِهِ الْكَلِمَةِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَنَحْنُ
نَقُولُهَا فَقَالَ لَهُ صَلِّ لَهُ مَا نَعْبِي عَنْهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَهُمْ
لَا يَدْرُونَ مَا صَلَاةٌ وَلَا صِيَامٌ وَلَا نُسُكٌ وَلَا صَدَقَةٌ
فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ حُدَيْفَةُ ثُمَّ رَدَّهَا عَلَيْهِ ثَلَاثًا حَتَّىٰ ذَلِكَ
يُعْرَضُ عَنْهُ حُدَيْفَةُ ثُمَّ أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ فِي الثَّلَاثَةِ فَقَالَ يَا
صَلِّ لَهُ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ ثَلَاثَ

“The Qur'ān will get worn as the print on a cloth (gets worn) until a time will come when people will not know what is fasting, or Prayers, or Hajj, or charity. In that phase a time will come to pass on

Allah's Book a night after which not a verse will remain on the earth. Thereafter, very old men and women will say, 'We found our forefathers saying these words: "there is no god save Allah." They would not know what is Prayer, or fast, or Hajj, or charity.' At that Sila (b. Zufar) asked, "Of what benefit will the words 'there is no god save Allah' be to them?" Hudhayfah ignored the question. He asked him three times. Hudhayfah finally turned to him and said, 'O Sila. It will rescue them from the Fire.' He said it three times" (Qurtubi).

141. It is said that a group of Jews visited the Prophet and accused him

“And you have not been given of knowledge but a little”

The reference here is to Allah's words: *They ask you about the soul. Say, 'The soul is of a command of my Lord. And you have not been given of knowledge but a little.'* (17: 85)

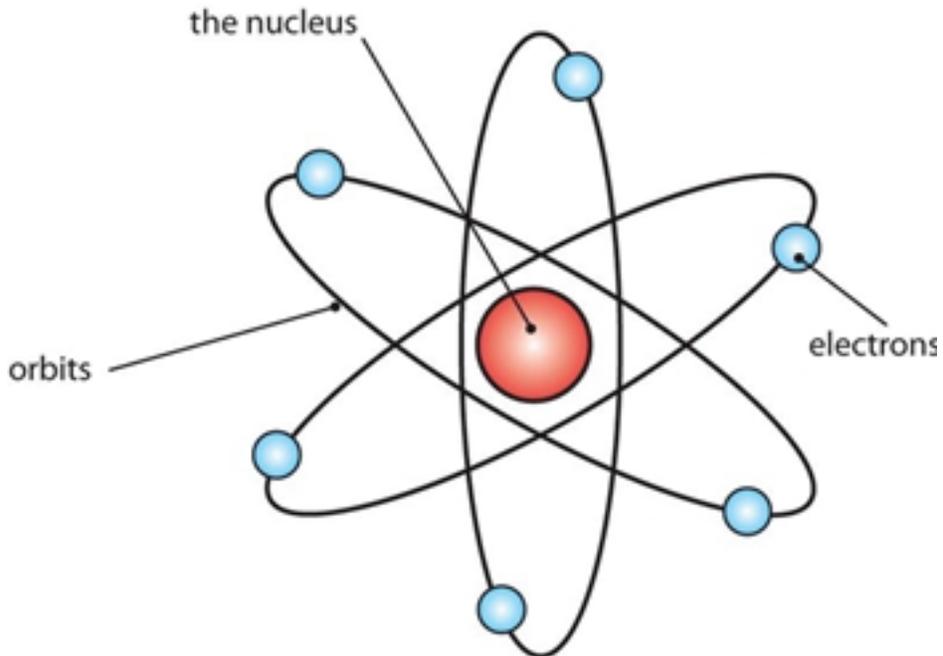
With the advancement of core sciences, the unthinkable has dawned upon Man: the limit to scientific knowledge has been achieved. They may make the best of the knowledge gained so far to develop newer technological tools, apparatuses and equipment. But science – pure science, the cutting-edge science – will go no further.

In space sciences, several key advances have halted at several fronts. The nature of gravitons; dark force, dark energy, size of the universe, the origin of matter, etc. refuse to yield any scientifically satisfactory answers.

In biological disciplines the limits at finding the secret of life and its development has not as not seen any progress. The discovery of DNA early in 1960's gave a huge push to studies. But, research makes it only more complicated. That complete information of an organism in its genes is an idea which is proving shaky: several other factors are playing their roles, but their exact role is difficult to determine – despite huge advances in gene-editing. What is life? What is the nature of the soul? Why death? Why evolutionary process is so fine-tuned? In fact, why evolution at all, when every organism and species flourishes on land and in sea?

Biological sciences however, can accept lesser responsibility for lack of progress because in physical science, which, in quest of the ultimate truths, is entrapped in a quagmire since over a hundred years with no progress in solving the riddles of quantum mechanics. This needs a little explanation.

Rocks or human beings, or any other thing, are all made of molecules; molecules are made of elements; elements (oxygen, tungsten, etc. – 109 of them), are made of a single kind of atom. Ordinarily, atoms cannot be further divided. They consist of a nucleus and electron(s) surrounding it.



An Atom of Rutherford Model

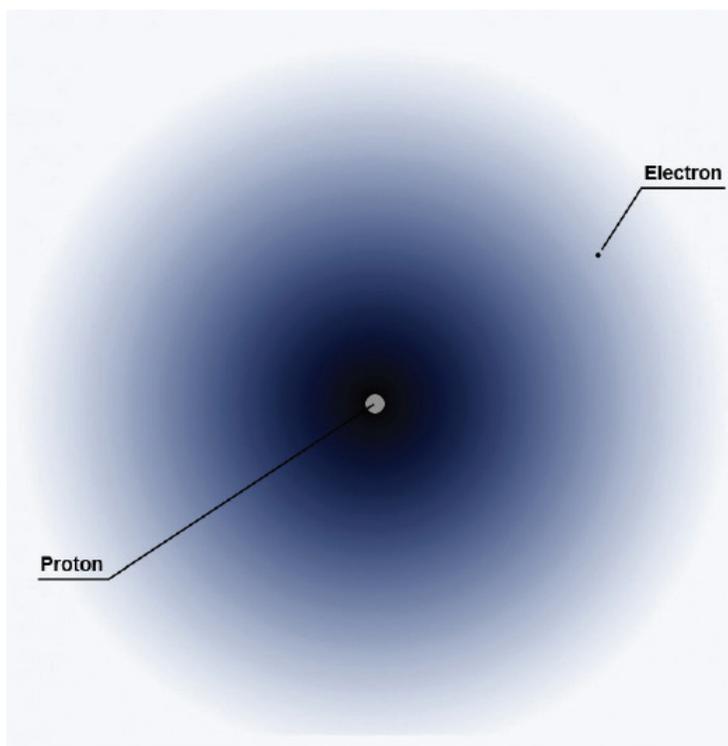
Here is a short history: Rutherford (d. 1937), a Nobel-prize winning, New Zealand-born scientist, discovered that atom consist of a very small nucleus at the center with electrons orbiting around it. The nucleus consists almost all of the mass of the atom. Hydrogen, the simplest atom has in its nucleus a single proton with a radius of 0.0000000000000175 meter. It is orbited by a single point-like electron in an orbit which is around 100,000 times larger than the nuclear diameter. The electron has a negative charge while the proton has a positive charge. Its electro-magnetic attraction keeps the electron around it in orbit. Atoms are largely empty space. If you imagine a nucleus scaled up to the size of a tennis ball, then the tiny electron would be orbiting it at a distance of a kilometer.

But other developments have abandoned this model

Niels Bohr (d. 1962), another Nobel-prize winning, Danish physicist, improved upon the Rutherford-model in several ways, one of which was to show that electrons emitted photons under certain conditions. (These, when in trillions, become light).

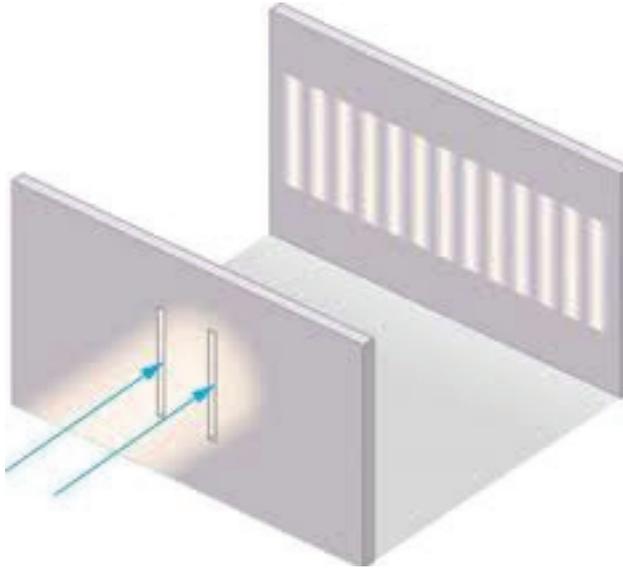
Then came along another Nobel Prize-winning, German theoretical physicist, called Heisenberg (d. 1976), who discovered the uncertainty principle and the theory of quantum mechanics. His uncertainty principle states that we can't know both the energy and position of an electron at the same time.

Gradually, thanks to scientific experiments and studies, the idea began to emerge that atoms and its parts enjoy a double identity. They are wave-like particles. Thomas Young's double-slit experiment had shown early in the 19th century that photons could play both the roles of solid, substantial, particles, as well as behave like waves. Modern-day experiments in which single photons can be fired through two closely set slots, can hit the screen behind both as particles as well as waves. Not only that, it has been discovered that a single photon appears to be choosing which slit to pass through, before hitting the screen.



An atom with nucleus and the electron as a wave around it.

This is weird. Can a thing be both a particle as well a wave? But it is weird no more in view of newer findings such as: An atoms, electrons, or photons, are waves so long as they are not observed. Under observation they become point-like particles. And, an observer need not be human, it can be an instrument, such as one set up to observe and photograph a quantum entity, near the slits. Without such an observing instrument, the passing quantum entity is a wave, but with the instrument in place, a particle.



The double-slit experiment

This is so weird that even Einstein refused to believe in it. His objection is famously quoted in his own words: “God does not play dice.” But, after more than two decades, and unflinching experimental results, he had to accept the fact of the dual nature of matter. (There are scientific reasons for why large amounts of matter, does not behave in this way).

Again, it has been shown that the Rutherford model does not accurately reflect the truth, since electrons around the nucleus are not rotating at all as little balls, but rather exist as waves. They are in various orbits and cannot be pin-pointed as to where exactly they are or any one is, since, experiments

also show that one of them can be located only at the point measurement is made. But finding it there is only a probability.

Eerie to a greater degree, research reveals that quantum particles can tunnel through objects placed before their path. Proteins normally exchange electrons between themselves in a biological cell. A protein needs, for example, a single electron to complete its manufacture within the cell. Without that single electron, the protein will not be complete and will not take the shape necessary for it to fold and take a shape necessary for its function. Another protein can lend that electron. But there are other entities in between. So, what's done? Well, because of objects in between, the electron will tunnel through and still arrive at the protein needing it.

It has also been experimentally observed that if, for instance, two photons are entangled, then separated, and one fired in one direction and another in another direction, then, when they are a great distance apart, the physical property of one is altered (say, energy from plus to minus), the energy of the other also changes (from minus to plus) so that, as if, one is aware of what is happening to the other, and, it appears, the information sent across by one to the other travels at speed greater than that of light, since the observed change is instant. Kenneth W. Ford, a retired director of the reputed American Institute of Physics, wrote:

"What is quantum mechanics?' It is an 'eerie theory.' ..Physicists often say that their heads swim when they think too hard on quantum mechanics .. Quantum mechanics is eerie not because it violates common sense. It is strange for deeper reasons: it deals with unobservable quantities; it shows that nature's fundamental laws are probabilistic; it permits particles to be in two or more states of motion at the same time; it allows a particle to interfere with itself; it says that widely separated particles can be entangled." (The Quantum World, p.247).

This has been going on since a century and a quarter and there is no hope of pinning down reality, or even to understand it, although quantum mechanics is responsible for formation of galaxies, for the Sun's shine, and everything that happens in the Cosmos.

The Qur'anic word is final: "*You have not been given of knowledge, but a little.*"

[92] Or make the heaven fall upon us in fragments, as you claim (will happen),¹⁴² or bring God and the angels face to face (before us).

أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا
كِسْفًا أَوْ تَأْتِيَنَا بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا
﴿٩٢﴾

[93] Or you have a house of gold,¹⁴³ or go right up into the heaven. Yet, we shall never believe in your going up until you bring down on us a book that we can read.¹⁴⁴ Say, 'Glory to my Lord. Am I anything but a human Messenger?'¹⁴⁵

أَوْ يَكُونُ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُحْرُفٍ أَوْ تَرْفَى
فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لِرُفْيِكَ حَتَّى تَنْزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا تَقْرَأُهُ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ
كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٣﴾

[94] And nothing prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them, but that they said, 'Has Allah sent forth a human as Messenger?'

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ
الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا
رَّسُولًا ﴿٩٤﴾

that what he had brought of the Qur'an was not revelation. They demanded that he should bring a true one, or they will bring something equivalent of what he had brought. In response Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir).

142. They were referring to the Qur'anic statement (34: 9),

إِنْ نَشَاءُ نَحْمِسِفْ بِحِمِّ الْأَرْضِ أَوْ نُسْقِطُ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسْفًا
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ [سبأ : ٩]

"If We wished, We could make the earth swallow them, or let the heaven fall upon them in fragments" (Zamakshari).

143. Although "ornament" is the literal meaning of the textual "zukhruf", most commentators, such as Ibn Mas'ud, Mujahid, Hasan, Qatadah

have explained it as meaning "gold" (Tabari).

144. As context of revelation, it is reported by Ibn Is-haq that once the Quraysh assembled in the Grand Mosque and decided that they should get Muhammad down there and persuade him give up his mission. When the Prophet was told that they wished to see him, he hurried down in hope that they might have at last made up their minds about embracing his message. But when he arrived, one of them said, "We do not know of any individual in our memory who brought such disaster to his own people. You have belittled our forefathers, found fault in our religion, insulted our reason, slandered our gods, and caused divi-

sion, in short, left nothing that could be brought upon us of the evil. Now, if all that you are looking for by this thing that you have brought is wealth, well then, we shall pool up enough money to make you the richest of us. If leadership is your aim, we shall declare you a leader. If you have territorial ambition, we will declare you a king over us. But, if it is a Jinn which has overcome you we shall treat you thereof."

A disappointed Prophet told them, "None of it. What I have brought is neither to get some wealth, nor power. But rather, I am Allah's Messenger sent to you. He has sent down a Book unto me and has commanded me to give glad tidings and warn. So, I have delivered the message. Now it is up to you to accept or reject. If you accept, that will be your good fortune in this world and the Hereafter. But if you reject, then I shall observe patience until Allah decides between me and you."

They said, "Look Muhammad. If you do not accept what we offer you, then, you are aware that ours is the most constricted land on the earth, the most poverty stricken, affording a life of great hardships. So, ask the Lord God who has sent you to remove the mountains, widen the

valleys, and break forth rivers like in Syria and Iraq. Also, let Him resurrect for us our forefathers, among them, especially, Qusayy b. Kilab, who was a renowned, trustworthy man. We shall ask him about your message. If he says, 'Yes, it is true,' we will readily accept it. If you did what we ask, and the resurrected acknowledge you, we will know that you have truly been sent by the Lord and shall in that event believe in you."

The Prophet replied, "I haven't been raised to perform things of this kind. I have been sent with a message. If you accept it, it will be your share in this world and the Hereafter. But if you reject, then I shall observe patience until Allah decides between me and you."

They said, "OK. If you cannot do that, then let the One who raised you send down an angel to attest your messengership. Further, let your Lord provide you with orchards, palaces and treasures to afford you a comfortable life and relieve you from going about in the market-place, which does not become of you."

The Prophet replied in more or less the same terms. Exasperated by his refusals, they said, "Alright then. Bring down the heaven upon us in

fragments, just as you threaten.” The Prophet told them, “That is in Allah’s hands alone. If He wishes He will do it.” They replied, “Your Lord knows what we asked. If you can not do these things, then we shall never believe in you, rather, shall oppose you until either of us is destroyed.”

So the Prophet left them. As he was returning `abdullah b. Abu Umayyah - a cousin of his - followed him and told him, “Muhammad. Your people asked you several things. But you refused all. Listen. By God, I shall never believe in you even if you went up into the heavens and brought down an open book, returning in the company of four angels attesting that you are a Prophet. Nevertheless, even if you did all these things, I don’t think I’ll believe in you.” Then he left.

Back in the assembly Abu Jahl said to others after the Prophet had departed, “Look, my people. Muhammad refused that he will stop insulting our deities. I promise you that if I see him around here prostrating himself, I shall throw a rock on his head” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others: slightly shortened).

It might be amusing to note that the same `abdullah b. Abu Umayyah later embraced Islam. After all, if a man is not fanatical, in the end reason prevails (Au.).

145. The exclamation, “Glory to my Lord” is in response to the pagan demand to bring Allah before them, while the rest of the words, “Am I anything but a human messenger?” are in response to their other demands (Razi).

Yusuf Ali has a nice comment, the last part of which can be neatly applied to many of today’s Muslims, who await for the final victory of Islam and Muslims to miraculously come about: “This ill-assorted and crude jumble of the sort of miracles which the Unbelievers wanted .. is throughout reminiscent of the materialistic imagination of Jewish sceptics, which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Jewish nation. For a thirsty people sojourning in a dry land, the finding of a spring of water as in the story of Moses or of the well of Zamzam is an appropriate miracle. But miracles are not for faithless crowds to gape at.”

[95] Say, 'If there were on the earth angels walking about peacefully, We would have surely sent down upon them an angel as a messenger.'¹⁴⁶

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ
مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا
رَّسُولًا ﴿٩٥﴾

[96] Say, 'Allah suffices as a Witness between me and you. He is, indeed, ever Aware of His slaves, ever Observant.'

قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّهُ
كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] Whomsoever Allah guides, is the rightly guided; and whomsoever He sent to error, you will never find for them protectors apart from Him.¹⁴⁷ And We shall gather them on the Judgment Day on their faces,¹⁴⁸ blind, dumb and deaf.¹⁴⁹ Hell is their abode. Whenever it subsides, We shall increase for them the Blaze.

وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ
فَلَنْ يَجِدَ لَهُم أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمِمًا وَبُكْمًا
وَصُمًّا مَّا وَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ
سَعِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] That is their recompense because they disbelieved in Our signs and said, 'Shall we, when we are bones and broken bits, be raised up again in a new creation?'

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالُوا
أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرِفَاتًا إِذَا نَا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ
خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٩٨﴾

146. This does not contradict the fact that the Prophet was sent to the Jinn as well as the humans, since his capabilities were of such class that he was a model for both Jinn and humans. In fact, the Qur'an has expressed only the undesirability of sending an angel to humans as a Messenger, and not the impossibility. Although some scholars, such as, Bayhaqi of the Shafe'iyah, Mahmood b. Hamza Kirmani of the Hanafiyyah, Zainuddin Iraqi, Razi and a few others, have thought otherwise, yet, scholars like Taquiuddin Subki of the Shafe'iyah,

Jalaluddin Mahalli, Ibn Taymiyyah of the Hanabilah, and Abdul Haq of the Malikiyyah were of the opinion that our Prophet was sent both to humankind as well as the Jinn. This view is supported by the Prophetic statement in Muslim, "I have been raised for the entire creation" (Alusi).

147. Mawdudi comments: "If the door to guidance has been shut against someone by God on account of his love for error and adamant opposition to the truth, and if God has allowed him to proceed along the path of error and evil which he

himself wanted to pursue in the first place, then it will be impossible for anyone else to bring him back to the right path. When someone turns away from the truth and feels satisfied with falsehood, God creates the circumstances which make it possible for his hatred for truth and his satisfaction with falsehood to mount. For God does not compel those who intentionally seek error to embrace the truth. Furthermore, it is beyond the power of anyone else to change their hearts.”

148. Since their hearts and spirits were totally inclined towards the earth, it was right that they should be resurrected on their faces (Razi).

How will people move on their faces? A report (in the *Sahihayn*: Ibn Kathir) says that somebody asked the Prophet himself. He answered, “The One who is able to move them on their feet is also able to move them on their faces.” Another *hadith* in Tirmidhi and Abu Da’ud narrates Abu Hurayrah as reporting the Prophet, “People will be resurrected as three kinds: walking, riding and on their faces (shortened).” Although this is a kind of weak report, it is strengthened by another coming from Abu Dharr of similar meaning and one

declared *Sahih* by Hakim (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

Those who still wonder about how humans will move on their faces, may consider the snakes (Au.).

149. In view of other Qur’anic verses, (18: 53),

وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاقِعُوهَا [الكهف
: ٥٣ :

“And the criminals will see the Fire and will know that they will fall into it”, or (25: 12),

إِذَا رَأَتْهُمْ مِنْ مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ سَمِعُوا لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَزَفِيرًا
-الفرقان : ١٢ -

“When it (the Fire) will see them from a distance, they will hear its fury and roaring,” or (25: 13),

دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُورًا [الفرقان : ١٣]

“There they will call for death,” ‘Ibn ‘Abbas has said that what is meant by the verse in question is that the condemned ones will not see or hear anything pleasant, nor would they be allowed to make any excuses (and not that these powers will be taken away altogether). In a second report he said that they will suffer these disabilities at some stage or the other on the Day of Resurrection - Ibn Jarir, Razi.

[99] Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and the earth, has the power to create the likes of them?¹⁵⁰ He has appointed a term for them, there is no doubt about it; but the transgressors refuse except that they should reject.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ
وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَأَبَى
الظَّالِمُونَ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾

[100] Say, 'If you possessed the treasures of my Lord's mercy,¹⁵¹ you would hold back in fear of poverty.¹⁵² Surely, man is ever so niggardly.¹⁵³

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذَا
لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ حَشِيئَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ
قَتُورًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

150. Seeing that the universe was created out of nothing, should it not be easier to resurrect man when he is reduced to dust? After all, whatever the form, the raw material is there in comparison to the heavens and earth for which there was no raw material? (Au.)

A report of the *Sahihayn* says,

كُلُّ ابْنِ آدَمَ يَبْتَلَىٰ، إِلَّا عَجَبُ الذَّنْبِ، وَفِيهِ يَرْكَبُ
الْخَلْقُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“There is nothing of men that does not become dust except the tail-piece of their back bone. It is from this that men will be resurrected on Judgment Day” (Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

Other reports add, “from an atom of the tail-piece” (Au.).

151. The allusion by the term “rahmah” is to blessings (Alusi).

152. The translation of “*infaq*” as poverty reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas as in Ibn Jarir. Otherwise, literally the meaning is “expending.”

153. The implied meaning seems to be that the economic discomforts and hardships that the Makkan claimed as the reason for asking what they asked the Prophet, do not have their reason in the constriction of the land, or lack of rivers, but rather, man's refusal to expend. His holding back wealth gives rise to poverty. He is in fact so niggardly that had he the treasures of the heavens and earth in his possession, he would hold them back from fear of expending them off, and thus poverty would remain. A second implication is hidden in the words “treasures of your Lord's mercy”, viz., “it is truly His mercy

[101] Indeed, We gave Musa nine clear signs:¹⁵⁴ ask the children of Israel, when he went to them and Fir`awn said to him, 'Indeed I believe, O Musa, you are bewitched.'

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ
فَاسْأَلْ نَبِيَّ إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ فَقَالَ لَهُ
فِرْعَوْنُ إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يَا مُوسَى مَسْحُورًا

﴿١٠١﴾

that must be coveted and not physical, material treasures” (Au.).

154. There has been difference in opinion over the nature of these signs. Some of the *Salaf* believed that the allusion is to the signs of the Book, i.e., its verses. Hence Tirmidhi and Nasa'i have a report by Safwan b. `Assal that a Jew said to another,

عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ عَسَّالٍ، أَنَّ يَهُودِيَّيْنِ، قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا لِصَاحِبِهِ: انْطَلِقْ بِنَا إِلَى هَذَا النَّبِيِّ، فَقَالَ: لَا تَثُلُ لَهُ نَبِيٌّ، فَإِنَّهُ إِنْ سَمِعَكَ صَارَتْ لَهُ أَرْبَعَةٌ أُعْيُنٌ، فَانْطَلِقَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَسَأَلَاهُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ”وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ“ [الإسراء ١٠١]، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ”لَا تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا، وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ، وَلَا تَزْنُوا وَلَا تَسْرِفُوا، وَلَا تَمْسُوا بِرِيءٍ إِلَى سُلْطَانٍ لِيُقْتَلَهُ، وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا، وَلَا تَقْدِفُوا الْمُحْصَنَةَ، وَلَا تَفْرُوا مِنَ الرَّحْفِ، وَعَلَيْكُمْ حَاصَةٌ يَهُودٌ أَنْ لَا تَعُدُّوا فِي السَّبْتِ“، فَقَبِلُوا يَدَهُ، وَقَالُوا: نَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: ”فَمَا يَمْنَعُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّبِعُونِي؟“ قَالُوا: إِنَّ دَاوُدَ دَعَا أَنْ لَا يَزَالَ فِي دُرَيْتِهِ نَبِيٌّ، وَإِنَّا نَخَافُ إِنْ اتَّبَعْنَاكَ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنَا يَهُودٌ.

“Let us go to this Prophet and ask him.” The other said, “Don’t utter the word Prophet. If he heard us he will develop four eyes.”

They went to the Prophet and asked him about Allah’s words, “We gave Musa nine clear signs.” The Prophet replied, “That you do not associate aught with Allah, do not take away a life that Allah has forbidden except by right, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not get an innocent killed by the ruler, do not devour interest, do not slander a chaste woman, do not run away from the battle-field - and for you especially, O Jews - do not desecrate the Sabbath.” They kissed his hands and said, “You are a Prophet - for sure.” He asked, “What prevents you from becoming Muslims?” They replied, “David had supplicated to the Lord that Prophethood should remain among his offspring. In addition, we are afraid that if we declared faith in you, the Jews will kill us.” Tirmidhi rated this as *Hasan Sahih*.

Nevertheless, there have been others who thought that the allusion by the

[102] He replied, 'You know very well that none has brought them down but the Lord of the heavens and the earth - eye openers. And indeed I consider you, O Fir'awn, doomed to destruction.'¹⁵⁵

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَآئِرٍ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ
يَا فِرْعَوْنُ مَثْبُورًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] He tried to unsettle them in the land,¹⁵⁶ so we drowned him and those with him, all together.¹⁵⁷

فَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْفِرَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَعْرَفْنَاهُ
وَمَنْ مَعَهُ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

nine signs is to physical signs that appeared at the hands of Musa (*asws*). But there are differences over what they were. From Ibn `Abbas we have several opinions. However, he, along with Matr al-Warraq, `Ata', Mujahid, Sha`bi and others believed that they were: His hand (which shone), the staff, the torrent, locusts, lice, frogs, blood, the years of drought, and destruction of crops (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

155. "Doomed to destruction" is one understanding of the *Salaf*. Another is "accursed" and a third, "overcome" (Ibn Jarir). To be sure, Musa's courage has not gone unnoticed by the earliest commentators. As if he was saying (Zamakhshari) that, "if you think I am mad, then, let me tell you what I think of you: you are accursed and doomed to destruction." To say that to an emperor, before a full court, was possible only for a Prophet.

156. In view of the fact that Fir'awn and his subjects needed the Israeli labor, we might understand that either he tried to expel Musa and perhaps a few others along with him, or, unsettle the Israelites through harsh measures of persecution. The original "is-tifzaz" lends all these connotations.

157. Mawdudi shows the connection, "It will be recalled that the unbelievers contended that their believing in the Prophet (peace be on him) was contingent upon the latter's performance of certain miracles. In response, they are told that in the past Pharaoh witnessed no less than nine miracles in succession. But since he was bent upon not believing, he was unable to change his views even after witnessing all those miracles."

Further down he writes, "(Moreover) this brings out the true moral of the narrative. The Makkan polytheists were intent upon uprooting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on

[104] We said after him to the Children of Israel, 'Settle down in the land. When the promise of the Hereafter comes to pass, We shall bring you back as mixed crowds.'¹⁵⁸

وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِنَبِيِّ إِسْرَائِيلَ اسْكُنُوا
الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ
لَفِيفًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

[105] And, with truth We have sent it down,¹⁵⁹ and with truth it has come.¹⁶⁰ And We have sent you not (O Muhammad) but a bearer of good tidings and a warner.

وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَّلَ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ
إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] A recitation that We have gradually unfolded so that you may recite to the people with deliberation,¹⁶¹ and We have sent it down progressively.

وَقَرَأْنَا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى
مَكْتَبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

[107] Say, 'Believe in it or do not believe. Those who were given knowledge before it, when (it is) recited upon them, fall down on their faces'¹⁶² in prostration.

قُلْ أَمِنُوا بِهِ أَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ
لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

him) and the Muslims from Arabia. They are told that Pharaoh intended to do the same with the Prophet Moses (peace be on him) and the Israelites. However, what really happened was that while Pharaoh and his people were annihilated, Moses (peace on him) and his followers became firmly established in the land which was earlier under Pharaoh's sway."

158. "According to Razi, the expression laff denotes a human crowd composed of innumerable heterogeneous elements, good and bad, strong and weak, fortunate and unfortunate: in short it characterizes mankind in all respects" (Asad).

159. That is, the Qur'an has been sent down containing the truth (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

160. That is, the message has been delivered without any addition or deletion (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

161. Ibn 'Abbas said that Allah sent down the Qur'an to the heaven closest to the earth, the whole of it, at once, in the night of Qadr and then gradually revealed to the Prophet over two decades. Ibn Zayd and Qatadah have also said something similar (Ibn Jarir).

162. Some commentators have pointed out that the textual word

[108] They say, "Glory to our Lord. The promise of our Lord had to come true."¹⁶³

وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

"*yakhirruna*" gives the sense of involuntary, uncontrolled prostration.

Further, the textual word "adhqan" literally means chin, and hence Hasan said that the meaning is they fell on their beards. Nevertheless, Ibn `Abbas and Qatadah understood the word as "face."

Razi adds: The word chin has been used perhaps to allude that when a man involuntarily falls - literally - into prostration, unable to control his emotions, then he rubs his whole face against the ground including the beard.

On the topic, Alsusi adds a few lines on crying. He reports a *hadith* of Tirmidhi. The Prophet said,

عَيْنَانِ لَا تَمَسُّهُمَا النَّارُ عَيْنٌ بَكَتْ مِنْ حَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَعَيْنٌ بَاتَتْ تَحْرُسُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

"Two eyes will not be touched by the Fire. An eye that cried in fear of Allah, and an eye that spent the night in guard (against the enemy)."

Although Tirmidhi himself evaluated it Hasan, Albani thought it was *Sahih*.

Nasa'i and Muslim have a narration which says,

لَا يَلِجُ النَّارَ أَحَدٌ بَكَى مِنْ حَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَتَّى يَعُودَ اللَّبَنُ فِي الضَّرْعِ وَلَا يَجْتَمِعُ غُبَارٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَدُخَانُ جَهَنَّمَ فِي مَنْخَرِيٍّ أَمْرِيٍّ أَبَدًا

"Fire will not touch a man who cried in fear of Allah until milk goes back to the udders, and dust that fell on the way of Allah and the smoke of Hellfire will not come together in the nostrils of a man." (According to another version, "in the nostrils of a Muslim").

163. What promise is it? The answer is that those who had received the previous revelations find in the Qur'an and in the Messenger who brought it, the promise of Allah fulfilled, viz., He will send His Final Messenger when its time arrives.



[109] They fall down on their faces in tears,¹⁶⁴ and it increases them in humble submission.'

وَيَجْرُونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَسْكُونَ وَيَبِيدُهُمْ حُشُوعًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

[110] Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon al-Rahman; by whichever (name) you call upon, to Him belong the beautiful Names.'¹⁶⁵ And, be not loud in your supplication, nor do it in low tones, but rather, seek a way in between.¹⁶⁶

قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُتُمْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١١٠﴾

[111] And say, 'Praise to Allah who has not taken a son, has no partner in His kingdom, and who has none as His friend out of weakness.'¹⁶⁷ And magnify Him with magnification.¹⁶⁸

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ وِليٌّ مِّنَ الدُّنْيَا وَكَبِّرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا ﴿١١١﴾

164. Accordingly, `abdullah al-Taymiy has said that he who did not cry at the knowledge given him, perhaps never received it (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

165. Ibn `Abbas, Mak-hul and Qatadah have said that the Prophet used to call on Allah in words, "Ya Rahman." The pagans said he was addressing his prayers to a man in Yamamah who was called Rahman (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

166. `A'isha, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Mak-hul and others have understood the textual word "salat" as meaning supplication. [A'isha's opinion is in the *Sahihayn* and others: Alusi]. However, in a second opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr and Dahhak, the allusion is to the Prophet's loud

recital of the Qur'an when he led in Prayers in the Haram area, which led the pagans to rebuke the revelation. He was told: "Be not loud in your Prayers" (so that the pagans do not hear), "nor do it in low tones" (so that the Muslims behind you do not miss to hear), "rather, take a way in between" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

167. Yusuf Ali has an appropriate comment: "A first step towards the understanding of Allah's attributes is to clear our minds from superstition, such as that Allah begot a son, or that He has partners," .. (or that He took friends because He needed protection: au.).

Shabbir's remark is worth reproducing: "Help can come from three quar-

ters: "From the lower to the higher, like a son helping his father; from someone equal; or from a stronger to a weaker, which entails humiliation. The verse refutes absence of all three reasons. First by saying, "He did not take a son," second by saying, "there is no partner in His kingdom," and third by saying, "who has none as His friend out of weakness." Incidentally, the verse also holds refutation of Christian, pagan and Jewish ideas. Of the Christians in words, "He did not take a son," of the pagans in words, "there is no partner

in His kingdom," and of the Jews in words, "who has none as His friend out of weakness" because the Jews claim that God could not beat Jacob in a wrestling match."

Israel's God is, in fact, in the words of Karen Armstrong "wedded" to Israel who laments when the Israelites pay homage to other deities (Au.).

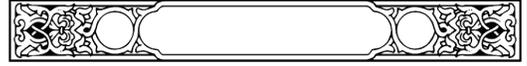
168. It might be observed that the chapter began with Allah's glory and ends on the note to magnify Him for His greatness and glory. ﴿عَلَّمَ﴾



Surah 18
Al-Kahf

(The Cave)

Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Merits of the Surah

The *Sahihayn* report that,

(عن) الْبَرَاءِ بْنِ عَازِبٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَرَأَ رَجُلٌ الْكَهْفَ وَفِي الدَّارِ الدَّابَّةُ فَجَعَلَتْ تَنْفُرُ فَسَلَّمَ فَإِذَا ضَبَابَةٌ أَوْ سَحَابَةٌ عَشِيْبَةٌ فَذَكَرَهُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ اقْرَأْ فَلَانُ فَإِنَّهَا السَّكِينَةُ تَزَلَّتْ لِلْقُرْآنِ أَوْ تَزَلَّتْ لِلْقُرْآنِ

“A man was reciting *Surah al-Kahf* with a beast nearby in the house. It began to behave unruly. He terminated (the prayer, and looked up to see) a piece of mist or cloud that had covered him. He mentioned this to the Prophet (*saws*) who said, ‘O so and so, keep reading. It was sechina that had descended for the Qur’ān.

The man was identified as Usayd b. Hudayr.

Muslim, Abu Da’ud, Nasa’i and Tirmidhi have a narrative which reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

من حفظ عشر آيات من أول سورة الكهف، عُصِمَ من الدجال

“Whoever memorized the first ten verses of *Surah al-Kahf* will be saved from Dajjal.”

Tirmidhi’s words are,

من حفظ الثلاث الآيات من أول الكهف

“Whoever memorized first three verses..” He termed the *hadith* Hasan *Sahih*.

Another report, however, of Muslim and Nasa’i, specifies the ending lines of the chapter as to be read. It says,

من قرأ العشر الأواخر من سورة الكهف عُصِمَ من فتنة الدجال

“Whoever recited the last ten verses of *Surah al-Kahf*, will be saved from trial at Dajjal’s hands” (Ibn Kathir).

The words of a report in Hakim, who declared it *Sahih* (Haythamiyy also declared it *Sahih*: S. Ibrahim) are,

من قرأ سورة الكهف كما أنزلت كانت له نورا يوم
القيامة من مقامه إلى مكة و من قرأ عشر آيات من
آخرها ثم خرج الدجال لم يسلط عليه

“Whoever recited *Surah al-Kahf* will have Nur spread out for him from his place to Makkah. And whoever recited its last ten verses, will not be overpowered by Dajjal if he appears then” (Shawkani).

Another report in Nasa’i is not specific about any part of the chapter. Its words are,

من قرأ العشر الأواخر من سورة الكهف عُصِمَ من
فتنة الدجال

“Whoever recited ten verses of *Al-Kahf*..”

Hakim’s report which he thought was of *Sahih* status, as well as of Diya’ Maqdisi, fix the day for recitation as Friday (Ibn Kathir).

Another report in Muslim says,

فَمَنْ أَذْرَكَهُ مِنْكُمْ فَلْيَقْرَأْ عَلَيْهِ فَوَاحِشَ سُورَةِ الْكَهْفِ

“Whoever encountered him (that is, Dajjal) might recite the beginning portion of *Surah al-Kahf*” (Qurtubi).

Context of Revelation

Ibn Is-haq has reported that once the Quraysh sent a few men to Madinah to find out from the Jews - people

of Torah - what they thought of the Prophet. The Jewish rabbis told them, “Ask him about three things. If he replies rightly, he is the sent one, otherwise deal with him as you wish. Ask him: (a) about a group of youth of the ancient times who left their homes, for theirs is an extraordinary story; (b) about a man who went from one end of the earth to another, and (c) about the human soul.” When they returned and told the Quraysh how they had been instructed, they in turn went up to the Prophet and asked him about these three things. The Prophet told them, “I shall let you know tomorrow.” But he did not say, “Allah willing.” They went away. But the next day passed and nothing happened. And then another, and another, but Jibra’il did not appear; until, to his great mortification, the Quraysh began to cast doubts on his mission and Makkah seemed to be in commotion. Finally, after full fifteen days of absence Jibra’il appeared to reveal the relevant verses of this chapter (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi adds, also from Ibn Is-haq, that the Prophet (*saws*) said, “I had begun to have my own fears.” Jibra’il answered with a Qur’ānic verse [when he asked him why he hadn’t come earlier],

[1] Praise to Allah who sent down upon His slave the Book, and has not placed any crookedness therein.²

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ
وَمَا يُجْعَلُ لَهُ عِوَجًا ﴿١﴾

[2] (A writ) setting right,³ that it may warn of a severe chastisement from Him, and give good tidings unto the faithful who work righteous deeds, that theirs will be a goodly reward.

قِيَمًا لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّن لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ
لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾

[3] Remaining therein forever.

مَا كَانَتْ فِيهِ آبَدًا ﴿٣﴾

وَمَا نُنزِّلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا
وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَمَا كَانَ رُبُّكَ نَسِيًّا [مریم : ٦٤]

“We do not descend except by the command of your Lord. He owns what is before us, what is behind us, and what is between them. And your Lord was not such as to forget” (19: 64). Hence Allah began the *Surah* with praise for revealing unto His slave and Messenger, which the Quraysh had begun to doubt because of the late response.

1. That this chapter is Makkan is the opinion of most of the commentators (Qurtubi), but not of all (Shawkani).

2. That is, there is neither any contradiction within it, nor anything that does not agree with what is sound and reasonable (Zamakhshari, Razi). In Asad’s words, “The above phrase is meant to establish the direct, unambiguous character of the Qur’ān and to stress its freedom from obscurities and internal contradictions..”

Yusuf Ali has an improved comment: “Some people’s idea of a Sacred Book is that it should be full of mysteries - dark corners, ambiguous expressions, words so far removed from human speech that they cover anything or nothing. Pagan oracles were couched in language which suggested one meaning to the hearer and claimed to have the very opposite meaning in the light of events which actually happened subsequently. They were distinctly crooked, not straight.”

3. That is, one that straightens up others; in other words, one that leads to the straight path of Divine guidance (Razi). That it is a guardian over other revealed scriptures, is another possible connotation (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

Thus, the lack of “*iwaj*” speaks of its internal perfection, while “*qayyim*” speaks of its quality of perfecting others, or straightening them up - Razi.

[4] And to warn those who say, 'God has taken an offspring.'⁴

وَيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾

[5] They have no knowledge of it (whatsoever), nor had their fathers; a monstrous word issuing forth of their mouths. They utter not but a lie.

مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ إِنْ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾

[6] Perhaps you will, (O Muhammad), destroy yourself⁶ in grief over them if they do not believe in this (new) discourse.⁶

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ مُتَمَسِّكٌ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا ﴿٦﴾

Ibn ‘Abbas (Ibn Jarir) however gave the meaning as reflected in the present translation.

“He did his utmost to wrest control of the lands (from the former rulers)” - Razi.

4. All three classes of people contemporary to the Prophet had attributed progenies to their Lord: Jews, who said, God had taken Ezra as His son; Christians, who declared Jesus as His son; and pagans, who said angels were Allah’s daughters (Razi, Qurtubi).

6. This refers to the Prophet’s inner condition at the time of the revelation. He was fearful that the Makkan rejection would cause Divine wrath to descend on them (Au.).

Majid adds: “The reference is .. especially to the Adoptionists, ‘who held that Christ was a mere man miraculously conceived indeed, but adopted as the Son of God only by the supreme degree in which he had been filled with the divine wisdom and power’ (EMK, IV, p. 1998).”

Asad expounds: “The rhetorical question is addressed, in the first instance, to the Prophet, who was deeply distressed by the hostility which his message aroused among the pagan Meccans, and suffered agonies of apprehension regarding their spiritual fate. Beyond that, however, it applies to everyone who, having become convinced of the truth of an ethical proposition, is dismayed at the indifference with which his social environment reacts to it.”

5. The textual word “*bakhi*” has, according to the experts such as Akhfash and Farra’, the sense of doing one’s utmost for a task. Hence ‘A’ishi’s words about ‘Umar

Although the following *hadith* of Muslim quoted by Mawdudi was

[7] We have indeed placed all that there is on the earth a glittering show for it,⁷ in order that We may try as to which of them is the best in conduct.⁸

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ
أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾

[8] We shall indeed reduce all that is thereon to barren dust.⁹

وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا
﴿٨﴾

perhaps uttered during the Madinan era, it reflects the Prophet's great concern of the Ummah. He said, "The analogy of me and of the people is something like this: a man lit a fire which illuminated the area around him, but this caused moths and other insects which (are inclined to) fall into fire to fall into it. The man tries to somehow pull them away (from the fire), but they overpower him and plunge into the fire. My position is that I seek to restrain you from the fire but you plunge into it."

7. Ibn 'Abbas has said in reference to the textual "*zinatan*" that the scholars are the ornaments of the earth. Hasan (al-Busri) has identified them as those who spend their time in obedience of Allah (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

Asad comments: ".. this passage implies that the real motive underlying men's refusal to believe in God's spiritual message (see preceding verse) is almost always their excessive, blind attachment to the goods

of this world, combined with a false pride in what they regard as their own achievements."

8. The trial is not for Allah's knowledge, who has foreknowledge of all things anyway, but in order that everyone learns about himself as to where he himself stands (Shawkani).

The Prophet has also warned us against falling prey to the world's glitter. Said he,

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا خُلُوعٌ خَضِرَةٌ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا
فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا وَاتَّقُوا النَّسَاءَ

"The world is green, sweet. Allah will surely give you sway there-over and see how you behave. Therefore, fear Allah and fear (falling into the trial involving) women" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The report is in Muslim (H. bin Ibrahim).

9. That is, without any vegetation, grass or plant, devoid of anything supportive of any kind of biological life (Au.).

[9] Or, do you think that the Companions of the Cave¹⁰ and the Inscription¹¹ were among Our signs a wonder?¹²

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ
كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿٩﴾

[10] When the youths retreated to the Cave saying, 'Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Yourself, and prepare for us a way (out) of our affair.

إِذْ أَوْى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا
آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا
رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

[11] So We cast (a cover of sleep) over their ears¹³ in the Cave for a (good) number of years.

فَضْرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ
عَدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

[12] Then We roused them that We might know which of the two parties kept the record of the period they tarried.¹⁴

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَى
لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

While the word "sa'id" has the sense of a flat infertile land, "juruz", gives the sense of a barren patch (Razi, Qurtubi).

10. An ordinary cave is "ghār" in Arabic, while "kahf" is used for a large one (Razi).

11. In explanation of "Raqim" various opinions have been expressed by the Salaf: the name of a valley, a village to which the youths belonged, the mountain range in which the cave was located, a book, the dog that followed them, etc. Ibn Jarir adopts "inscription" or, "a tablet with a writing on it" as the most likely intended meaning which was the opinion of Sa'id b. Jubayr and Mujahid. It draws its support from the Qur'an (83: 9) which used the word "marqum" for a written record.

It is said, adds Imām Razi, that the tablet had the story of the young men inscribed on it. But, (according to a report in Ibn al-Mundhir: Shawkani) Ibn Jurayj's opinion was that the tablet had dates inscribed on it of the young men falling into sleep and rising from it (Qurtubi).

12. That is, do you think the episode was a great wonder when there are so many other greater wonders in the heavens and the earth? (Ibn Jarir and others).

13. That is, He cast a heavy sleep on them, of a kind in which the sleeper hears nothing of the sounds around (Kashshaf).

14. Although one or two of the old experts have accepted the superlative meaning, Zamakhshari - the Arabic

[13] We narrate to you their story in truth. They were youths¹⁵ who believed in their Lord¹⁶ and We increased them in guidance.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ تَبَأَهُم بِآخِثٍ إِيَّاهُمْ
فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَا هُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾

[14] We strengthened their hearts when they stood up¹⁷ and proclaimed, 'Our Lord - the Lord of the heavens and earth - We shall never invoke any god other than Him; if (we did) we would have spoken an outrage.

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا
رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُو مِنْ
دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾

[15] These, our people, have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not bring forward a clear authority regarding them? Who can do greater wrong than he who fastened a lie on Allah?¹⁸

هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَوْلَا
يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ
مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٥﴾

language expert - does not believe that the textual "ahsa" is in the sense expressing comparative or superlative degrees. (That is, it does not mean: "which of the two groups kept the record better, [or best]"). He thinks it is a (quadrilateral: Qurtubi) word, on the pattern of "a`da" or "aflasa" (meaning: "he understood" or "comprehended"). Most commentators with a penchant for language have agreed with him and our translation reflects this understanding.

15. Linguistically, the use of the term "fityatun" indicates that they were less than ten in number (Se`di).

16. We see the trend repeated. It were mostly young men who had initially believed in the Prophet while the

older men of the Quraysh remained adamant, unmoved (Ibn Kathir).

17. Some misguided *Sufis* seek justification for their "standing" (in circles) from the words of Allah here, "They stood up and said.." But the two "standings" are entirely different. That of the youths was that of 'taking a stand' (a matter of resolve). What it has to do with the physical standing in circles, singing, dancing and whirling, as some of the *Sufis* do? In fact, many of the rightly guided *Sufis* have condemned the singing and dancing (based on Qurtubi).

18. Mawdudi writes in his introduction to the *Surah*, "It was pointed out (to the Makkans) that the people of the Cave believed in the same mono-

theism which was being expounded by the Qur'ān. Also, the situation of the People of the Cave was no different from the Makkan Muslims who were then being subjected to severe persecution. Likewise, the attitude towards the People of the Cave by their own people was quite similar to the attitude displayed by the Quraysh unbelievers toward the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers."

Sayyid has a few other things in mind. He writes: "These, our people, have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not bring forward a clear authority regarding them?": "This then is the way in matters of faith and beliefs: that a man should follow clear, dependable evidences. Evidences have their own grip on the mind. But, if there is no evidence, then it is a dirty lie; for, it is a lie against Allah: And who can do greater wrong than he who fastened a lie on Allah?"

"We also recognize here the stand taken by the youths: a clear, definite stand that is not overshadowed or weakened by any amount of diffidence.

"It is also noteworthy that they are young men: strong of body, strong of faith, and courageous in rejecting what their people clung to.

"Two approaches, two different methods come to light, and the two do not meet, nor go in company with each other in life; (i.e., that of the youths and that of their people).

"There is no choice for them but to escape with their faith. For, they are not Messengers of Allah sent to their people, who can, therefore, face the consequences while they invite them to the right beliefs. These are merely a group of young men to whom true guidance became evident while they lived among the unbelieving oppressors. If they openly profess their faith, they would not be allowed to live in peace. Neither can they escape from (the eyes) of their people, nor their people can from their eyes. Nor yet it is possible for them to worship their nation's deities outwardly and conceal their personal prayers to Allah. The text leads us to believe that they had already been discovered. Therefore, there was no choice for them but to escape with their belief, and choose to live in a cave against the ease and pleasures of town life.

"At this point, they appear as having already made that decision, and hence their words as they meet in secret, 'So, when you have dissociated yourselves from them and what they worship other than Allah, retreat to the cave.'

[16] So, when you have dissociated yourselves from them and what they worship other than Allah, then retreat to the cave.¹⁹ Your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy and prepare for your affair an easy disposal.²⁰

وَإِذِ اعْتَرَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ
فَأْوُوا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ
مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مَرْفَقًا

﴿١٦﴾

“And their decision tells us something about the amazing state of a believer’s heart.”

19. Qurtubi has a long discourse here on retreat to the caves when fearing religious persecution, or threat to life, honor, wealth or property. The Prophet himself had, in his effort to escape persecution, sought retreat into cave. The escape thus, is a *Sunnah* of the *Anbiya’* and *Awliya’*. However, seeking retreat need not necessarily be in caves. It can be on top of mountains, in the depth of valleys, on the borders, and even within one’s home; as the Prophet said,

إِذَا كَانَتْ الْفِتْنَةُ فَأَخْفِ مَكَانَكَ وَكُفِّ لِسَانَكَ

“When you fear tribulation, restrict yourselves to your homes and control your tongue.”

The above *hadith* is on the authority of Qurtubi and could not be traced in any major collection (Au.).

Another *hadith* of Bukhari says,

يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ خَيْرٌ مَالِ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ الْعَنَمُ
يَتَّبِعُ بِهَا شَعَفَ الْجِبَالِ وَمَوَاقِعَ الْقَطْرِ يَفْرُ بِدِينِهِ مِنَ
الْفِتَنِ

“A time will come on the people when the best wealth of a Muslim would be a few goats following them from one hill top to another, and to places of rain, fleeing (the towns) from religious persecution.”

Another of Hasan’s report (one of his Marasil: Au.) says,

يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ لَا يَسْلَمُ لِذِي دِينَ دِينُهُ إِلَّا مَنْ
فَرَّ بِدِينِهِ مِنْ شَاهِقٍ إِلَى شَاهِقٍ أَوْ حَجَرَ إِلَى حَجَرٍ
فَإِذَا كَانَ ذَلِكَ لَمْ تَثَلِ الْمَعِيشَةُ إِلَّا بِمَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا
كَانَ ذَلِكَ حَلَّتِ الْعُزْبَةُ. قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، كَيْفَ
تَحِلُّ الْعُزْبَةُ وَأَنْتَ تَأْمُرُنَا بِالْتَّرْوِيجِ؟ قَالَ: ” إِذَا كَانَ
ذَلِكَ كَانَ فَسَادُ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى يَدَيْ أَبِيئِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ
لَهُ أَبَوَانِ كَانَ هَلَاكُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْ زَوْجَتِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ
زَوْجَةٌ كَانَ هَلَاكُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْ وَلَدِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ
كَانَ هَلَاكُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْ الْقَرَابَاتِ وَالْجِيرَانِ. قَالُوا:
وَكَيفَ ذَلِكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: ” يُعْزِرُونَهُ بِضَبِيقِ
الْمَعِيشَةِ وَيُكَلِّفُونَهُ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ يُورِدُ نَفْسَهُ
الْمَوَارِدَ الَّتِي يَهْلِكُ فِيهَا.“

“A time will come upon the people when no one will be safe in

his religion except he who moved from mountain to mountain, one place of refuge to another. He will encounter a situation in which he will not be able to earn his livelihood but in Allah's disobedience. When that is the situation, then fleeing away is allowed to him." They asked, "How can fleeing (into wilderness) be allowed when you recommend that we marry women (and settle down)?" He replied, "In the situation (I am speaking of) a man's problems will be because of his parents. If he has no parents then his destruction will be at the hands of his wife. If he has no wife, it will be at the hands of his children. If he has no children, it will be at the hands of his friends and neighbors." They asked, "How will that be, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "They will rebuke him for his poor financial status and make demands on him greater than what he will be able to bear. In that situation a man will do things that will destroy him."

The above report is in Bayhaqi and few other minor collections. It is primarily on Qurtubi's authority (Au.).

The minimum, the scholars have said, in terms of seclusion and isolation is to isolate oneself from other people's evils. That is, a man remains with the people, but accepting their company in good affairs alone, away from them in evil matters. This is following the Prophet's words declared authentic,

الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي يُخَالِطُ النَّاسَ وَيَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ أَذَاهُمْ أَكْبَرُ
أَجْرًا مِنَ الَّذِي لَا يُخَالِطُهُمْ وَلَا يَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ أَذَاهُمْ

"A believer who mixes and interacts with the people, in patience, is better than he who does not mix, does not observe patience."

Accordingly, Badri Companions retreated to their homes after the murder of 'Uthman, leaving the houses only for their graves.

20. The textual word "*mirfaq*" is, 'literally a thing by which one profits, or gains advantage or benefit' (LL) - Majid.

Companions of the Cave

We do not have any trustworthy report directly from the Prophet (*saws*) detailing this story. Those narrated by the Companions seem to originate from Jewish and Christian sources. Their version of the story can be traced back to the first century after Jesus Christ, involving a few youths, of the elitist class, who

embraced the new Christian religion and were persecuted. But, Ibn Kathir is rightly skeptic about the youths being early Christians. For, it were the Jews who sent across the inquiry through the Quraysh to the Prophet about the young men. They were of course not interested in any story involving Christ, whom they cursed, and the Christians whom they persecuted, whenever possible. Asad is in agreement with Ibn Kathir. He writes, "It seems, however, that the Christian formulation of this theme is a later development of a much older oral tradition - a tradition which, in fact, goes back to pre-Christian, Jewish sources. This is evident from several well-authenticated *ahadith* (mentioned by all classical commentators), according to which it was the Jewish rabbis (*ahbar*) of Medina who induced the Meccan opponents of Muhammad to 'test his veracity' by asking him to explain, among other problems, the story of the Men of the Cave."

Yusuf Ali, Majid, Mawdudi and Asad point out (in the words of Mawdudi), "the earliest reference to the story is found in the Sermons of the Christian priest James of Sarug, a work which is in Syriac. He was born in .. 452 C.E. .. and the youths had woken up in 447 C.E. in the time

of the emperor Theodosius the Second.."

But, an event so amazing that took place so close in time and space (just 200 years earlier) could not have remained unknown to the Arabs, the collectors of stories and anecdotes. Further, the two accounts, the Qur'anic and of the Christian sources differ in so many respects that it led Gibbon (who reproduced the story entitled "The Seven Sleepers" in his "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire") to "dub the Prophet," in Mawdudi's words, "ignorant" – which of course Gibbon stated out of his own ignorance.

The Christian account dates the story as in the time of King Decius, a persecutor of the Christian faith, who died in 251 C.E. If the event truly happened during his reign, then, according to Qur'anic estimates the youths perhaps woke up in 551 C.E, 19 years before the birth of the Prophet in 570 C.E.! Could an event of such close occurrence be unknown to the Prophet, that he should be tested to unravel? Orientalists, the honest tribe, which is respected for its erudition, are inclined to believe in the Syriac account, although, it is common knowledge that there is not a single account in the *Bible* which is

trustworthy for its dates or, for that matter, its contents. But it is a curious habit of the Orientalists to accept any *Biblical* account as true, if it can discredit the Prophet in any way.

In any case, the story goes that somewhere, sometime in the ancient world, a few young men of a kingdom had embraced the true religion of the time. But the king was on the old time-honored pagan religion. He had sanctioned the worship of such idols alone as he approved: the great, venerable national gods. The people were to also slaughter their animals in their names. But, saying, 'Our Lord - the Lord of the heavens and earth - We shall never invoke any god other than He; if (we did) we would have spoken an outrage,' the youths refused, and broke away from the multitude. When faced with persecution (they must have been called unpatriotic) at the king's command who soon came to know about them, and who had given them 24 hours to think about it or face the gallows, they left town for mountains seeking retreat in a cave. They were followed by a dog which belonged to one of them. In the cave, Allah put them and their dog to sleep; and aroused them after several centuries. When they awoke, they felt that they had slept for a day or a night. Hungry,

they sent one of them to purchase food. As he entered the town, he observed that everything had changed: the people, their attire, language, culture, buildings, and everything. He tried to buy some food anyway. But when he thrust forward a coin, the trader recognized that it was ancient money - and the boy no less ancient, or his language. He suspected the lad had found a treasure. The lad insisted he had it on him since yesterday. A crowd gathered. Finally, they took him to the king. This man was a Muslim. After hearing the boy's story, he ordered old records checked and found that yes, at one time a few young men had been persecuted and had left the town. He asked the boy to lead them to his cave. He agreed. But as he entered, he and his companions died. Some people suggested, "Let us build a mosque here" (Au.).

Mawdudi throws light on the purpose - or one of many - of the narration in the Qur'an: "The story also dispels a serious misconception. At times people are led to the false belief that the apparent complex of causal relationships, which they call the laws of nature, are absolutely inalterable. What we call laws of nature are in fact the usual ways in which God lets things happen. He is not, how-

[17] You would have seen the sun as it rose, veering away from their cave on the right, and, as it went down, cut itself across their left side,²¹ while they (lay) in its spacious (area).²² That was one of the signs of Allah.²³ He whom Allah guides, is the rightly guided, while he whom He left unguided, you will never find for him a friend guiding aright.

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَوَارُؤُ عَن
كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ
تَقَرَّبُوهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ
مِّنْهُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ
فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي وَمَن يُضِلِلْ فَلَن يَجِدَ لَهُ
وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾

ever, bound by any such laws and has the power to set aside or alter these so-called ‘laws’ and to do whatever He will, in flagrant contravention of the usual ways in which things happen.”

21. That is, the cave was so situated that they were saved from the sun’s beat throughout the year (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). They would have thus been also saved from the observation of a passer-by (Mawdudi).

22. “*Fajwah*” is a wide, open space within a cave or between two cliffs (No`mani).

23. “That was one of the signs of Allah:” that is, the fact that Allah led them to the right kind of cave. When Allah guides someone, He guides him through and through (Au.).

Ibn Kathir remarks that Allah mentioned the position of the cave with reference to the sun. The position avoided its harmful effects. But He

said nothing about where the cave was located. Hence there is no point in trying to locate the cave after this lapse of time. All the more so because such far and wide places have been suggested: [Aylah (Ibn ‘Abbas), Nineveh (Ibn Is-haq), Roman territory, Spain (Qurtubi), Qumran Caves in Jordan (Asad) - Au.].

The question remains, what if we knew the place? If its knowledge had been of any profit, surely Allah would not have held it back from us. The Prophet has said, “There is nothing that can take you closer to Paradise but I have informed you about it, and there is nothing that will take you away from the Fire but I have informed you about it.”

Mawdudi writes, (under verse 22), “(The main point is Allah has power to resurrect). But instead of taking note of this, people often get embroiled in trivial and far-fetched questions. They ask, for example,

[18] You would have thought them awake although they were asleep,²⁴ while We kept turning them over to the right and left.²⁵ And their dog lay with its forelegs sprawled over the threshold.²⁶ Had you looked at them, surely you would have turned away fleeing and would have been filled with terror of them.

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ أَيْقَاظًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ
ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَكَلْبُهُمْ
بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ
عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ
رُعبًا ﴿١٨﴾

what was the total number of the People of the Cave? What were their names? What was the color of their dog? Such questions can only be of interest to those who concern themselves with the husk rather than with the kernel..”

We do not know who wished to know the color of their dog. But, a word thrown here, or a hint thrown there in the Qur’ān – that, going by the rule of “what is not profitable”, apparently are functionless - seem to provide challenges to the inquisitive human minds. They immediately accept the challenge and begin to investigate to unravel the mystery. It is the desire to uncover mysteries that accounts as an important factor in the progression of knowledge (Au.).

24. It has been suggested that while they slept their eyes were open which made them a fearful sight (Qurtubi).

25. Ibn `Abbas has said that if the sun had directly shined upon them, it would have burnt them, and had Allah not been turning them from side to side, the earth would have eaten them (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

26. It is not known to which of them the dog belonged. Apart from that, as far as we Muslims are concerned, we are prohibited from keeping dogs unless there is a need. Says a *Sahih hadith*: “Whoever kept a dog, except for hunting or for the flock, or for the farm, will have a Qayrat (or two Qayrats: a weighing measure) removed from his rewards everyday.” Also, some scholars have not failed to notice that even an ordinary dog can find mention in the Qur’ān for simply having been with the righteous. A Muslim too should seek their company and keep the righteous dear to himself (Qurtubi).

[19] And, that is how We raised them up²⁷ that²⁸ they might (be able to) question one another.. One of them who spoke asked,, ‘How long did you remain?’ They answered, ‘We remained maybe a day or a part of a day.’²⁹ They concluded, ‘Your Lord knows best how long you remained. Now send one of you with this money of yours³⁰ to the town to see what food is the purest; let him bring you a provision thereof. And, let him be cautious and let him not inform anyone about you.

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا

﴿١٩﴾

27. That is, just as We put them to sleep for such a long spell by Our power, We also awakened them once again by Our power.

28. The “lam” of “li-yatasa’alu” is not “lam al-sababiyyah”, but rather “lam al-sayrurah” which is a kind of “lam al-‘aqibah”, (best rendered in the present context as “that”: Au.). That is, they were not raised for the sake of questioning (Qurtubi).

29. That is because they had gone into the Cave in the morning and woke up - after a long spell - in an evening. Yet there were signs that told them that they must have slept longer than usual. Some commentators have said that they became suspicious from the growth of their nails and hair. But that does not seem very likely since, in three hundred years these things must have

grown very long indeed. That could be the reason why many prominent commentators did not mention this (Au.).

30. The word “waraq” has been commonly used in the *ahadith* for silver. Zamakhshari quotes a *hadith* to show that the term “waraqah” was also used in ancient times in the sense of silver, whether it was beaten into the shape of a note of currency or not. The *hadith* of his reference says, “A man had made an artificial nose from silver (“waraqah”) but it began to emit foul smell, so the Prophet allowed him to replace it with one made of gold.” Alusi doubts if the “waraqah” of the above *hadith* meant silver since silver does not emit foul smell although there is the possibility that the metal was adulterated and so got rusted.

[20] For, if they come to know of you, they will stone you (to death) or force you back to their religion, in which case you will never prosper.'

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] Thus We disclosed them so that they know that Allah's promise is true and that the Hour - there is no doubt about it.³¹ When they were disputing their affair between themselves; they said, 'Construct a building over them.' Allah knows them best. But those who prevailed over their affair said, 'We shall surely build a place of worship over them.'³²

وَكَذَلِكَ أَعْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَزَّعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا رَّبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢١﴾

In any case, there is another *hadith* in *Kanz al-Ummal*, chp. Riba wa Ahkamih, where the term "*waraqah*" has been employed in the sense of currency or coin (Au.).

31. Yusuf Ali comments: "Thus: in this way, by these means, i.e., by the sending out of one of the Sleepers with the old money to the town to buy provision. His old-fashioned dress, appearance, and speech, and the old un-current money which he brought, at once drew the attention of people to him. When they learnt his story, they realized that Allah, Who can protect His servants thus and raise them up from sleep after such long time, has power to raise up men for the Resurrection, and that His promise of goodness and mercy to those who serve Him is true and was exemplified in this striking way.

On the other hand, to the men of the Cave themselves, it became clear that Allah can change the situation before we are aware, and our hope in Him is not futile, and that even when we are on the brink of despair, a revolution is surely working in the world before the world itself realizes it."

It is said that those very days the people of the town - who had all become believers - were hotly disputing among themselves over the nature of Resurrection: whether it will be only the soul that would be raised, or, both body and soul - seeing that the body is eaten by the earth. Allah Most High raised the youths and said, "Thus We disclosed them so that they know that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hereafter" (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

32. Yusuf Ali remarks: “The perversity of man is such that as soon as ever a glimpse of truth becomes manifest, men fall into controversies about it.”

The Qur’ān does not offer any detail about the place of worship that was built, whether it was built at all or not, and if built, exactly at what spot (Au.).

In any case, in our *Shari`ah* it is disallowed to build a mosque that encloses a grave, or is built over it. The Prophet (*saws*) said during his last sickness, as in a report of the *Sahihayn*, “Allah cursed the Jews and Christians who took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.” In fact, it is even prohibited - following a *hadith* in Tirmidhi which he rated *Hasan Sahih* - to plaster a grave, or that it be given a concrete hump, it be sat upon, or a tomb be built over it. At best a muddy hump may be raised by a hand, or, alternatively, as Imām Abu Hanifah has said, a stone may be placed for recognition. It is reported that Fatimah,

the Prophet’s daughter used to visit Hamza’s grave every Friday and had got a stone placed over it for recognition.

On this topic, it might also be said that where the earth is very soft (and it is feared that animals will attack the corpse: Au.) it is allowed to use a coffin (Qurtubi). What about those graves that have already been raised? The answer is, if there is no fear of commotion, riots or feuds, they might be demolished (Au.).

Muslim has a report from Abul Hayaj al-Asadi. He said,

قَالَ لِي عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي عَلِيٍّ أُرْوَاهُ عَنْ أَبِي عَلِيٍّ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ لَا تَدَعُ تَمْنَأًا إِلَّا طَمَسْتَهُ وَلَا قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ

“Ali told me, ‘I would like to send you to do what the Prophet had sent me to do, viz., his instruction to the effect: “you will not find an image but obliterate it, and will not find a raised grave but level it off”’ (Alusi).

The above is Ahmad’s version (Au.)

[22] They will say, '(They were) three; their fourth their dog.' And they will say, '(They were) five; their sixth their dog' - guesswork at the unknown. Yet others will say, 'Seven, their eighth their dog.' Say, 'My Lord knows best their number.' None knows them except a few.³³ Therefore, dispute not over them, except in superficial terms, passingly,³⁴ and seek not a pronouncement about them from any of them.³⁵

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ
خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ
وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةً وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ قُل رَّبِّي
أَعْلَمُ بِعَدَّتِهِمْ مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ فَلَا
تُمَار فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَنَفِتْ
فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] And never say about a thing, 'I am going to do it tomorrow.'

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكَ غَدًا
﴿٢٣﴾

[24] Except (to add) 'if Allah so wills.' And remember your Lord whenever you forget,³⁶ and say, 'It may be that my Lord will guide me ever closer than this to the right course.'³⁷

إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ
وَقُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِّي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ
هَذَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

33. Ibn 'Abbas used to say, 'I am of those few (that the Qur'an mentioned here) and I can say with confidence that they were seven, with their dog their eighth' (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi). The statement of Ibn 'Abbas is trustworthy (Ibn Kathir).

34. The opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others was that such superficial argument should also be based on information that the Qur'an has supplied. That's the meaning of the present instruction to the Prophet (Ibn Jarir).

35. The implied lesson is, do not seek knowledge (of the truth) from non-Muslims (Qurtubi).

36. Forgetfulness is from Satan. So when a man remembers Allah, Satan departs. The person is then, in that situation, less likely to forget (Razi).

Commentators have said that if one forgets to say, "Allah willing," he might do it whenever he remembers; while others have said, which seems to be more correct, that the persuasion is to remember Allah. Ibn 'Abbas in fact said that if someone swore (to do something) but remembered that he did not say *in-sha-Allah*, he might do it later, even if it is after a year (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). That is, he might break his oath without atonement due. Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir however believe that

what Ibn ‘Abbas meant was that the *Sunnah* of saying *in-sha-Allah* be done by saying it whenever one remembered, but that does not mean one can break his oath.

In any case, the opinion of Imām Abu Hanifah in matters concerning human interactions was that an “*in-sha-Allah*” that is added afterwards (*al-istithna’ al-munfasal*), is invalid. According to him *in-sha-Allah*, must be uttered at the moment of the deal on the spot. Uttering the word later renders it null and void. (That is, by saying *in sha-Allah* later, one cannot make the deal vague). Mansur (the Abbasid Caliph) came to know of his opinion (and thought that for once he had caught him on the wrong foot). So he ordered him to appear in the court for explanation. But when he came, Abu Hanifah turned the table on him. He asked him, “Do you agree that when the people enter into allegiance with you here in the court (promising to obey you), then go back home, and uttering *in-sha-Allah*, break their oaths?” Mansur had no answer (Kashshaf).

Ibn Kathir reminds of an incident involving another Prophet who forgot to say *in-sha-Allah* and so things went awry for him. The report - in the *Sahihayn* - says, “Sulayman b. Da’ud said, ‘I shall go into all my

wives tonight, about a hundred, each of whom will bear a son who will fight in Allah’s cause.’ He was told, ‘Say *In-sha-Allah*.’ But he did not. So, although he went into all his wives none of them gave birth to anything except one of them, and she too brought a mangled child. The Prophet added, ‘Had he said *in-sha-Allah*, he would not have had to brake his oath, but would have achieved his objective.”

Sayyid Qutb is aware of the prevalent misuse of the words, and the misconceptions that accompany it. He writes: “This does not mean that (after saying ‘Allah willing’) a man should sit back doing nothing, neither planning his future, nor preparing for it. Or that he should live, moments after moments, day after day, in idleness. Or that he should not survey his past and compare it with his present (to draw the obvious lessons). Of course not. But rather it means that he should take account of the Unknown and the Unseen while he plans his course of action. He might resolve to do whatever he wishes, but he should seek the help of Allah’s Will over what he resolves. He should be conscious of Allah’s Hand over his own. It can never be ruled out that Allah’s resolve might be different from his own. If Allah

[25] *And they remained in their cave for three hundred years and added nine.*³⁸ وَلِشُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾

guides him to accomplish what he wishes to accomplish, well and good. But if Allah's Will does not correspond to his will, then, there need be no grief and no despair. The affair is, after all, Allah's - at the beginning, and at the end.

“So, let man think and plan whatever he wishes to accomplish. But, he should realize that what he thinks can only come true if Allah smoothens the way for him and that, what he plans is also by Allah's own Will. Further, he should also realize that he is incapable of accomplishing anything except that which is Allah's own resolve and Will. This, of course, should not lead him to laziness or procrastination, weakness, or inefficiency. In fact, contrarily, he should go forward with his endeavor in full strength, confidence, trust, self-assurance and strong resolve. However, if the veils from that which is in the Unseen are removed, and things do not appear the way he had planned, imagined and thought, then, he should accept Allah's decree cheerfully and submit himself completely..

“This is the spirit and approach that Islam approvingly places in the heart of a believer. A believer is never beset by doubts and uncertainties while he plans his affairs. Neither is he arrogant and self-assuring when he succeeds, nor is he in despair when he fails. Instead, in all cases he remains on good terms with Allah, drawing strength from Him, trusting Him, remaining grateful to Him, submitted to His decree: neither proudly optimistic, nor despairingly pessimistic.”

37. Yusuf Ali has an interesting illustration to offer: “In geometry the perfect circle is an ideal. Any given circle that we draw is not so perfect that we cannot draw one closer to the ideal. So in our life, there is always the hope of drawing closer and closer to Allah.”

38. Some people have suggested that since the number of years the young men tarried were 300 by the sun-calendar, it works out to 300 and 9 by the lunar calendar (Qurtubi).

[26] Say, 'Allah knows best how long they remained.³⁹ To Him belongs the Unknown of the heavens and the earth. How well observing, how well hearing!' They have no protector apart from Him, nor does He share anyone in His command.

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ أَبْصِرُ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعُ مَا لَمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ
مِنَ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا
﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no one to change His words,⁴⁰ and never will you find a refuge in other than Him.⁴¹

وَاتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ
لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ
مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

39. Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas (who put it quite strongly: Au.), Qatadah and others have said that the meaning is, "it was being said by the people that they remained in their cave for three centuries and nine years, but Allah knows best how long they remained." That is, the statement about the length of the period came from the people. Nevertheless, Mujahid, Dahhak and others have thought that it is Allah who is informing us that they remained three centuries and nine years in the cave, ending all speculations about how long they remained there (Ibn Jarir, Shawkani). The latter statement acquires strength from another statement of Ibn 'Abbas (in Ibn Marduwayh: Shawkani) that

first it was only revealed, "and they stayed in their cave three hundred;" so the people asked, "Days, months or years, O Messenger of Allah?" So Allah revealed, "... years and added on nine" (Au.).

40. The meaning is: Recite, O Muhammad, the Qur'an and follow its commandments, for there is no changing its words (of command and instruction) – Razi.

41. "Refuge": This is how Mujahid and Qatadah understood the word "multahada". The word has its root in "lahad" which means to incline; hence also a "lahad" grave: one that inclines to the side, (in an L-shape: Au.) - Ibn Jarir, Razi and others.

[28] And patiently bear your person⁴² with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His countenance.⁴³ And let not your eyes stray beyond them in search of the glitter of the life of this world.⁴⁴ Further, obey not him whose heart We have made heedless to Our remembrance,⁴⁵ so that he follows his base desires and whose affair is ever in excess.⁴⁶

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾

42. The translation of “*Isbir nafsaka*” above is literal. It could also be rendered as “retain yourself” or “restrain yourself” which is one of the meanings of “*sabara*” (Alusi and others), as e.g., “*qutila sabran*” meaning, “he was killed while in captivity” (Au.).

43. Sayyid comments: “(Allah is saying): Restrain yourself with these people (O Prophet), seek their company, spend time with them, and teach them. For, goodness is with them. It is the like of them who are the power base of the Call. The Call is not served by those who accept it because it is likely to prevail; nor by those who accept it in order to play a leading role; or those who have their own interests to serve; or those who will use it as a merchandise that they can buy and sell in the markets. But rather, the power base of the Call are such men as whose hearts are turned to Allah in sincerity, seeking neither

position, nor wealth, nor any other advantage. All they seek is Allah’s countenance and His approval.”

44. (The Prophet was never in search of glitter of the life of this world). The allusion here then is to his hope that Islam would be strengthened if the rich and powerful Quraysh embraced it (Thanwi).

Sahl b. Hunayf reports that the Prophet was in one of his houses when this verse was revealed. He came out looking for those whose company he should seek. He found some of his Companions huddled together, busy in remembrance of their Lord. Of them some had disheveled hair, others dried skins and yet others clad in a single piece of cloth. He sat down among them and remarked, “Allah be praised who placed among my followers such as those He commanded me to seek their company” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[29] And say, 'The truth is from your Lord. Therefore, let him who will believe, and let him who will disbelieve.'⁴⁷ Surely, We have prepared for the unbelievers a Fire whose tent (of flames) has hemmed them in.⁴⁸ If they implore relief, they will be helped with water like murky hot liquid.⁴⁹ it will scald their faces - an evil drink and an evil place of rest.⁵⁰

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ
وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ
نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِنَّ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَعِيثُوا
يُعَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ
الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] Verily, those who believed and worked righteous deeds, surely, We shall not waste away the reward of anyone who did a good work.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا
نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾

Tabarani has this report and according to Haythami, it is trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

The above would imply that although the *Surah* is Makkan, this particular verse is Madinan, of which we have many examples (Alusi).

45. Razi and Qurtubi point out that the construction "*aghfalna qalbahu*" can also lend the meaning of "We found him heedless". Examples of this kind can be found in classical literature.

Nonetheless, the direction is rather not to seek the company of the rich, powerful, and leading men of the Quraysh. One of them, 'Uyayna b. Hisn had told the Prophet, "Salman Farsi's smell is repulsive to us. So, appoint a day for us free of them, when

we can sit down and talk to you" (Ibn Jarir).

46. Mawdudi explains the dangers in following those who commit excesses: "The lives of all those who become slaves to their base desires as a result of relegating God to oblivion become devoid of balance and proportion. To obey such a person means that one should abandon one's own sense of proportion and indulge in immoderation and stumble in all directions in one's effort to follow leaders who are not bound by any limits."

47. This is a threat in the guise of freedom to choose (Ibn Jarir).

48. "*Suradiq*" is a canopied tent or an awning (Au.). Darraj Abu Samh has reported the Prophet as having said,

[31] For them are gardens of Eden,⁵¹ beneath whom rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold⁵² and wear green garments⁵³ of silk and brocade: reclining therein upon canopied couches.⁵⁴ How good a reward and how good a resting place!

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ
الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ
ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ
وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَّكِعِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ نِعْمَ
الْتَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾

لِسُرَادِقِ النَّارِ أَرْبَعٌ جُدُرٍ كُنُفٍ كُلُّ جِدَارٍ مَسِيرَةٌ
أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً

“The “*suradiq*” of the Fire of Hell has four walls. Each wall’s thickness is equal to forty years distance” (Ibn Jarir).

The *hadith* is also in Tirmidhi who rated it Hasan, *Sahih, Gharib*: Qur-tubi (meaning, trustworthy: Au.).

That is, Hell-fire is surrounded by four layers of wall, one after another (Au.).

Hakim also declared it trustworthy (Shawkani).

And Ya`la bin Umayyah reported that the Prophet said,

الْبَحْرُ هُوَ جَهَنَّمُ - ثُمَّ تَلَا - نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِنَّ سَرَادِقُهَا

“The sea is Jahannum” and then recited He was asked, “How’s that?” In response he recited this verse, “a Fire whose tent (of flames) has hemmed them in” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Haythami has treated this report as trustworthy.

‘Ajluni however, has written the opinion of some of the *Salaf* (*Kashful Khifa*, no. 883) that Jahannum is under the seventh earth. There are other opinions too, but all of them have something to do with the sea. We will have more to write under chapter 52, verse 6, Allah willing (Au.).

49. The translation reflects one of the several possible meanings of the term “*muhl*” which refers to what rises to the surface of any molten liquid - brass, copper, gold - heated to its boiling point (Ibn Jarir).

50. The term “*irtifaq*” originally meant to rest. Hence we have “*mirfaq*” for elbow and it is said “*bata mirtafaqan*” meaning, “He spent the night reclining on his elbow” (Alusi).

51. For explanation see *Surah al-Tawbah*, note 154 and *al-Ra`d*, note 45 of this work.

[32] Strike for them a similitude of two men: To one of them We provided two orchards of grapevines, and surrounded them with palm-trees. And We set amidst the two, sown field.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] Each of the two orchards yielded its produce, failing not thereof in the least. And We caused a spring to gush forth within them.

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَافَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] So he had fruit.⁵⁵ He said to his companion, as he was conversing with him,⁵⁶ 'I am more of wealth than you and larger in numbers.'

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمْرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

52. Muslim reports the Prophet as having said, "A believer's jewelry will reach up to the extent his ablution (water) reaches" (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

It was fashionable for the kings of the past to wear jewelry. Allah promises that the inhabitants of Paradise will be treated like kings (Qurtubi).

'Ikrimah has been reported as saying that the people of Paradise will be adorned with gold, silver and pearl bracelets. Yet they will not be heavy on them since they will be made of "Nur" (Alusi). Qur'anic verses support 'Ikrimah's statement about the kinds of jewelry (though not about its material). It said (22: 23),

{ يُحَلِّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا } [الحج: ٢٣]

"They will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls",

and (76: 21),

{ وَخُلُوعًا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ } [الإنسان: ٢١]

"And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver" (Qurtubi).

The allusion could as well be to women's adornment in Paradise (Au.).

53. Green garments symbolize ever freshness of life in Paradise (Au., with a phrase from Asad).

54. When a bed or couch is covered with a canopy then it is referred to as "arikaḥ" pl. "ara'ik" (Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

55. Some scholars of classical times, such as Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and Qatadah, have read the word "thamar" (meaning fruit) as "thumur" (meaning varieties of wealth). Ibn Jarir prefers this variant reading. But, Ibn Kathir believes "fruit" is a better understanding.

[35] *He went into his orchard wronging himself.⁵⁷ He said, 'I do not think this will ever perish. And I do not reckon the Hour will strike.*

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] *And, even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall surely find better than this as a retreat.⁵⁸*

وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّدِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] *His companion said to him, as he carried on the conversation with him, 'Do you deny Him who⁵⁹ created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, and then fashioned you into a man?'⁶⁰*

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] *But, for my part, Allah is my Lord, and I shall never associate anyone with my Lord.*

لَكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾

56. Some linguists have expressed the opinion that the construction of the sentence lends a sense of argument. That is, the two were discussing a subject, albeit somewhat heatedly, or, arguing over something, probably this life and the nature of its trials.

57. That is, he went into the orchard puffed up with pride and vanity (Au.).

Yusuf Ali writes: "It was not wealth that ruined him, but the attitude of his mind. He was unjust, not so much to his neighbor (i.e., companion), as to his own soul. In his love of the material, he forgot or openly defied the spiritual. As verse 37 shows, he took his companion with him, to impress him with his own importance, but the companion was unmoved."

58. What he meant is: "I deserve my affluence. It is a sign of my Lord's approval of me. Accordingly, when I return - if I ever have to - then, there should be a better deal waiting for me there in the new habitat also" (Au.).

59. Majid comments: "The man fondly imagined that his affluence was solely due to his merit and not to any beneficence on the part of God."

60. The human body is composed of some 100 trillion cells (100,000,000,000,000). Pregnancy starts with the fusion of two microscopic cells that become one. However, in no time the resultant single cell splits into two: each daughter cell being an exact replica of the mother cell. Each of the two daughter cells again split to become four: with each

[39] What if, when you entered your orchard, had said, "What Allah willed! There is no power except in Allah."⁶¹ If you see me that I am less than you in wealth and progeny,

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ
اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ ثَمْرِنَ أَنَا أَقَلُّ مِنكَ
مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾

new daughter cell an exact replica of the two mother cells. Then the four split to become eight, and so on. Initially, every new cell of the billions is a replica of the first cell. But after a while, variations start showing up: variations that are essential if the cells are to become the component parts of a variety of organs – hands, feet, nerves, heart, brain, etc. But this is amazing, something very unusual. For, every new cell has the same set of DNA: the coded chemical message that determine the size, shape, function, and life of the parts of the body. With the variation, (which affects only the outer structure, the nucleus housing the DNA carrying coded messages remaining unchanged), various organs start taking shape in different parts of the embryo: first the tip of the back bone, the heart, and later, the limbs, eyes, ears, and so on. This phenomenon almost gives the freedom to the cell to determine its future course of development, e.g., whether it will become part of the backbone, or the toe. The situation becomes more complicated when we realize that since the brain

is still not in place, and billions of cells are deciding their own fate, apparently, each by itself, there has to be some kind of communication between the trillions of them to determine the division of position and work. But, if there is, then, the question is, what central organ is there that controls the communication so that a brain cell does not become a heart cell or vice a versa. This is only one of the problems within the developing embryo. A study reveals that there are several such phenomenon explained very poorly by the biologists, in vague terms, with lots of holes in the arguments, studded with plenty of ‘perhaps’es’, ‘probably’s’, and ‘maybes’ which force us to pay greater attention to the verse at hand (Au.).

61. Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others write: The *Sahibayn* report that the Prophet said to Abu Hurayrah, “May I not lead you to a treasure from the treasures of Paradise? It is to say,

لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله

“There is no force nor any power save with Allah.’

[40] Then, it may be that my Lord will grant me better than your orchard⁶² and loosen upon it a thunderbolt out of heaven,⁶³ so that it is rendered a dusty slippery ground.

فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ
وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
فَتُصْبِحُ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] Or its water gets sunk deep underground, so that you are never able to seek it.'

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غُورًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ
طَلَبًا ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And its fruit was encompassed⁶⁴ so that by morning he was wringing his hands over what he had spent on it, while it lay fallen on its trellises, he muttering, 'Woe unto me. Would that I had not associated anyone with my Lord.'⁶⁵

وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَىٰ
مَا أَنفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا
وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا
﴿٤٢﴾

62. That is, in the Hereafter (Ibn Kathir).

63. Although literally, "accounting", but according to Ibn 'Abbas, Dahhak and Ibn Zayd, the textual word "husban" has been used here in the sense of a scourge (from the heaven: Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). In fact, writes Zamakhshari, literally also the word can mean scourge.

64. That is, it was destroyed by a scourge that descended on it by night (Qurtubi).

65. Mawdudi writes against an earlier verse, "The person concerned did not deny the existence of God.. (for) *kufir* does not merely consist in denying the existence of God. In ad-

dition, pride, arrogance, vainglory and denial of the Hereafter also constitute *kufir* of God; for the faith required of man does not merely consist of affirming God's existence; it also requires affirming Him as the Master, the Lord, and the Sovereign. Whosoever focuses his attention exclusively upon himself, who considers his attainments, his wealth and his high social standing not as gifts from God but the result of his own ability and effort, who thinks that his wealth will endure and that none has the power to deprive him of it, and who thinks that he is accountable to no one - such a person in fact does not believe in God in the sense in which he is required to.."

[43] And there was not a band for him to help him apart from Allah,⁶⁶ nor could he defend himself.

وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا كَانَ مُنْتَصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] There! Protective power belongs to Allah alone: the True One.⁶⁷ He is the best in reward and the best in outcome.

هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا
وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] And strike for them the similitude of the life of the world: like water that We sent down out of heaven.⁶⁸ The earth's vegetation mingled with it. Then it became straw that the winds scattered around. And Allah is ever Omnipotent over all things.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا
أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ
الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

66. That is, the manpower he had boasted of earlier, failed to protect his orchards (Ibn Kathir).

67. There have been at least four interpretations of the word “*walayah*”, of which of course only one could be chosen for translation.

68. Water has often been cited as illustrative of the life of this world. Why? Qurtubi transmits what the *hukama'* had to say: Several similarities can be noticed between water and this world, such as, water does not stay in one place. It keeps moving. So is this world. It keeps moving. Water never lasts. It disappears. So will this world. No one can enter into water

without wetting himself. Similarly, no one can enter into this world without polluting himself. Finally, so long as water is in proper measure, it is beneficial and under control. But when it increases in quantity, it acquires destructive properties. That is also the situation with this world. A measured quantity is beneficial. But its large portions are destructive. In a *hadith* of Muslim, the Prophet said,

قَدْ أَقْلَحَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَرَزِقَ كَفَافًا وَقَسَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِمَا آتَاهُ

“He succeeded who became a Muslim, and was given just enough and was content with what was given him.”

[46] Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of the world, but the things that endure, the righteous (deeds),⁶⁹ are better with your Lord in rewards and better in (good) hope.⁷⁰

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

69. *Al-Baqiyat al-Salihah* : Is it a general term or has it a specific meaning? The opinion of Ibn ‘Abbas, Sa`id b, Jubayr, Ibrahim and others was that the allusion is to five daily Prayers. However, in a second opinion of Ibn ‘Abbas, Mujahid, ‘Ata ibn abi Rabah, and many others, the allusion is to the words:

سبحان الله, والحمد لله, ولا إله إلا الله, والله أكبر

In fact, Abu Hurayrah reported a *hadith* to this effect. Nevertheless, ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan, Muhammad b. Ka`b al-Qurazi and others included a few other words to the above words to say, *Al-Baqiyat al-Salihah* are the following:

لا إله إلا الله, وسبحان الله, والحمد لله, والله أكبر, ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم

The above words are confirmed by a report in Tabarani, Ibn Shahin, and Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani) about which Haythami said that except for one narrator, the rest are trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

Nevertheless, Nasa’i has another report, declared *Sahih* by Hakim, which says that the Prophet said,

خذوا جنتكم قيل يا رسول الله من أي عدو قد حضر؟ قال: بل جنتكم من النار قول سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله أكبر فيأخذن بيأتين يوم القيامة مقدمات ومعربات ومجربات وهي الباقيات الصالحات

“Release your Paradise.” He was asked, “From what enemy that has showed up?” He replied, “Rather, your Paradise from the Fire, the words:

سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله أكبر

“for,” the Prophet continued, “on the Day of Judgment they will come as vanguards, rear-guards and the protecting ones. They are the *Al-Baqiyat al-Salihah*” (Shawkani).

The above report has been declared *Sahih* by Albani also (S. Ibrahim).

But, in a third opinion of Ibn ‘Abbas, seconded by Ibn Zayd, every good deed is *Al-Baqiyat al-Salihah*.

[47] *The day We shall set the mountains in motion, you will see the earth levelled,⁷¹ and We shall gather them all together, leaving out none of them.*

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً
وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا
﴿٤٧﴾

[48] *They will be presented to their Lord in rows: 'You have come to Us, just as We created you the first time.⁷² But you thought We shall never appoint for you a tryst.'*

وَعُرِضُوا عَلَى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا
كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَلَّن
نَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾

Now, Ibn Jarir writes, if it is asked, which statement is correct, the answer is, is there a contradiction between them?

With reference to the above words, viz., *Al-Baqiyat al-Salihah*, Imām Razi mentions Imām Ghazali's remarks, which we present here in a modified form:

Saying Subhana Allah means to express that Allah is free of all defects that a mind can imagine, or above any suggestion made that is unbecoming of Him. Al-hamdulillah means to express that He is the source of all that is good and beautiful, and hence, He must be praised. Saying la ilaha illa Allah is to acknowledge that the One who is the source of all that there is, is the "only" source of it. Finally, saying Allahu Akbar is to acknowledge that He is greater than that He could be understood by reason alone.

70. Wealth promises continuity of good life, and children. But, to fasten hope on rewards in the Hereafter is nearer to realizing one's dreams, than fastening hopes on wealth and children in this world. For, one might achieve wealth and children but not the satisfaction that was hoped for (with a point from Thanwi).

71. The allusion by the word "*barizatun*" is, according to the classical commentators, to the earth being rendered flat, barren, featureless and without a place for anyone to hide behind.

72. That is, you have come to Us today in a lonely state, without the worldly belongings that you were proud to possess, even as We created you at first: naked, un-circumcised, without a headgear or footwear (Alusi and Asad combined).

[49] Then the Book will be placed,⁷³ and you will see the criminals greatly alarmed at what it contains, saying, 'Alas for us! What's with this Book that it leaves out nothing - neither small⁷⁴ nor big - but has computed it.' They will find all that they did placed before them, and your Lord shall not wrong anyone.

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لِهَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Behold, when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam.' They prostrated themselves save Iblis. He was of the Jinn⁷⁵ and transgressed his Lord's command. Do you then take him and his progeny as allies other than Me, while they are enemy to you?⁷⁶ Evil is the exchange for the wrongdoers.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] I did not call them to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth nor their own creation. It was not for Me to take the misguiding ones as assistants.

مَا أَشْهَدْتُهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا ﴿٥١﴾

73. Most scholars have, on the strength of another verse, said that the allusion is to the Master Book of Records, in which the deeds of the creation are entered, even as they are entered in individual Record books. But a few have thought that the allusion is to the Records of the individuals that will be placed in the right or left hand of the people on the Day of Judgment.

74. Ibn 'Abbas said: Even such insignificant acts as a laugh would be found recorded in the Book of Deeds (Ibn Jarir). Ibn abi Hatim has, however, another report from Ibn 'Ab-

bas. He said, "A smile at a believer out of mockery or out of derision is the small thing referred to here, and a laugh in his ridicule the big one" (Alusi, Shawkani). When someone laughed when a man passed wind in the presence of the Prophet, he asked in exasperation, "Why should one of you laugh at something that another does?" (Alsui)

75. There have been many theories about Iblis, his nature and origin, and they are at variance with each other since none of them is supported by a *hadith* (Au.). The most we have is a *hadith* of Muslim which

puts it most clearly. ‘A’isha reports that the Prophet (*saws*) said, “Angels were created from *Nur*, Iblis from smokeless fire, and Adam from that which has been described to you (i.e., dust).” Iblis used to live with the angels, resembling them greatly in devotion, until he began to be counted as one of them and hence included in the command addressed to them to prostrate themselves to Adam. A few of the scholars have thought that actually he belonged to one of the families of the angels known as the Jinn. Yet others have thought he was of the angels and a treasurer for the Jinn and so came to be known as one of them. Hasan al-Busri on the other hand vehemently maintained that Iblis was never an angel, not even for a moment. According to him he was the originator of the Jinn as Adam was of mankind (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others).

There is also a difference in opinion over the question whether Satan’s offspring have been sired by him. Sha`bi said, “A man asked me if Iblis has a wife? I replied, ‘That is a marriage that I did not attend.’ But then I remembered this verse, ‘Do you take him and his offspring ..?’ and realized that without a wife he couldn’t have had offspring, and so I said, ‘Yes, he does have a wife.’ Some

others have said that Satans are his offspring and assistants. And a third opinion is that he is self-reproducing (i.e., without a spouse), and lays eggs. This last opinion draws its strength from a *hadith* in the *Musnad of Al-Barqani*, which recorded the Prophet as having said,

عَنْ سَلْمَانَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: “لَا تَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ السُّوقَ، وَلَا آخِرَ مَنْ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا، فَفِيهَا بَاضَ الشَّيْطَانُ وَفَرَّخَ”

Salman reported the Prophet: “Do not be the first to enter into the market, nor be the last to leave it, for, Satan laid his eggs there, and it is there that the eggs were hatched” (Qurtubi).

The above *hadith* could better be translated perhaps as: “..For, Satan lays his eggs there, and it is there that his eggs are hatched” (Au.).

The strength of the above *hadith* could not be established (Au.).

However, there is a *hadith* in Muslim and others close to the above:

عَنْ سَلْمَانَ قَالَ لَا تَكُونَنَّ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ السُّوقَ وَلَا آخِرَ مَنْ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّهَا مَعْرَكَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ وَهِيَ يَنْصِبُ رَايَتَهُ

“Do not be, if you can do it, the first to enter the market nor the last to leave it, for it is Satan’s battle and it is there that he pitches his flag.”

[52] The day He will say, 'Call on those you alleged as My partners.' They will call on them, but they will not respond to them, for We would have placed a (valley of) destruction between them.⁷⁷

وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ
فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا
بَيْنَهُمْ مَوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] The criminals will see the Fire and will be fearful that they are about to fall into it.⁷⁸ They will find no escape from it.

وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ
مُوقِعُوهَا وَلمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٣﴾

See also *Al-Baqarah*, note 5 of this work for further details.

76. If it is asked, why have Satans remained enemies to mankind after that original incident that took place so long back in time? One answer would be: take the example of Jews whose hatred of Muslims is proverbial. They may point out the defeats they suffered at Muslim hands early in the history of Islam as the cause. But, why has the enmity lasted so long? Further, for centuries when the Christian world persecuted them, they found good hosts in Muslims in Syria, Spain, Turkey, Yemen, Iraq, and North Africa. In fact, the golden period of their entire history, since the time of Moses is counted as those under Muslim rule in Spain and then later in Turkey. Thus if we can account for their unremitting

one thousand five hundred year old hatred, we can account for Satan's hatred of mankind (Au.).

77. "Mawbiqa" has been variously interpreted as gulf, perdition, a valley, etc., but of course pointing to the same reality. Asad adds: "... an allusion to the wide gulf of unreality that separates those sinners from the blasphemous figments of their imagination or, more probably, the gulf that separates them from the saintly persons whom they were wont to worship despite the fact that the latter had never made any claim to divine status."

78. A *hadith* in Ahmed says the unbelievers will see Hell-fire on the Day of Judgment from a distance of forty years (Ibn Kathir and others). Hakim has declared the report *Sahih* (Alusi).

[54] In this Qur'ān We have propounded for the people every kind of similitude, but man is ever contentious in most things.⁷⁹

[55] And nothing prevented the people from believing when guidance reached them, and seek their Lord's forgiveness, except that the way of the predecessors overtook them⁸⁰ or that the punishment should be brought to them face to face.

[56] We send not the Messengers except as giving glad tidings and delivering warnings. But those who disbelieve contend with the help of falsehood so as to defeat the truth thereby. They took My signs and what they were warned about as jest.

[57] And who can do greater wrong than he who is reminded of the revelations of his Lord but he turns away from them, and forgets what his hands have forwarded? Indeed, We have placed coverings over their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears, deafness. So that if you call them to guidance they will never attain to guidance.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٤﴾

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٥﴾

وَمَا تُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٦﴾

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾

79. "Man is ever contentious in most things," Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir illustrate this rhetorical remark with an incident involving `Ali b. abi Talib and recorded in Muslim. He himself reports that once the Prophet came to visit him and Fatimah at night. When let in he asked, "Will you two not Pray in this night (i.e., *tahajjud*)?" `Ali replied, "Messenger of Allah. Our souls are in Allah's

power. If He wills, He will wake us up." Obviously, the Prophet was taken aback by the answer. He retreated without a word. `Ali says, "I heard him slap his thigh as he walked back, saying, 'Man is ever contentious in most things.'"

80. That is, they followed the arrogant and intransigent ways of the past nations in rejecting Allah's Message.

[58] Yet your Lord is the All-Forgiving, Lord of Mercy. If He were to call them to account for their doings, surely, He would hasten the punishment on them. But rather, they have an appointed time, and they will not find beyond that a refuge.

وَرَبُّكَ الْعَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] Those towns, We destroyed them when they transgressed, and We had appointed an hour for their destruction.⁸¹

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَى أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَوْعِدًا ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] And when Musa said to his (attendant) lad,⁸² 'I will not cease until I reach the junction of the two seas,⁸³ or I shall keep going for ages.'⁸⁴

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرِحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾

81. The second half of the verse could alternatively mean, “And, for the destruction of these, [i.e., the newest rejecters], is an appointed hour” (Au.). Asad comments: “The “time-limit” [maw`id] signifies, in this context, the end of the sinners’ life on earth or - as in the next verse - the “point of no return” beyond which God does not allow them to sin with impunity.”

82. Musa was asked to seek a Servant of Allah who would instruct him in such knowledge as he did not possess. “This episode .. is meant to illustrate four points. (1) Moses was learned in (wisdom) .. Even so that wisdom did not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, in the sciences

and the arts, and in literature, (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual), does not include all knowledge. Divine knowledge .. is unlimited. Even after Moses received his divine mission, his knowledge was not so perfect that it could not receive further additions. (2) Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time, and such effort Moses is shown to be making. (3) The mysterious man he meets .. to whom Tradition assigns the name of Khidr .. has the type of that knowledge which is ever in contact with life as it is actually lived. (4) There are paradoxes in life; apparent loss may be real gain; apparent cruelty may be real mercy; returning good for evil may really be

[61] But when they reached the junction between them, they forgot their fish⁸⁵ which took its way into the river, burrowing.⁸⁶

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا
فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾

[62] When the two had passed over, he said to his lad, 'Bring out our morning-meal. We have indeed encountered hardship from this our journey.'

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِقَتَاهُ آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] He replied, 'Did you see?! When we took shelter at the rock, I forgot about the fish, and none but Shaytan made me forget that I should mention it. It took its way into the sea in an amazing manner.'⁸⁷

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتِ إِذْ أَوْيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ وَمَا أَنسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾

justice and not charity.. Allah's wisdom transcends all human calculation (Yusuf Ali).

83. There is no consensus in opinion over the place. Majid writes, "The most probable geographical location .. is where the two arms of the Red Sea join together, viz., the Gulf of Aqabah and the Gulf of Suez. They enclose the Sinai Peninsula, in which Moses and the Israelites spent many years in their wanderings (AYA)."

84. Although there are varied opinions about the period that "*huqubah*" (pl. *huqub*, *ahqab*) covers, from one to eighty years, Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah and Ibn Zayd have said that it is used for a very long period, or maybe something running into eternity (Tabari, Ibn Kathir).

85. The construction of the earlier part of the verse is a beautiful way of putting together two sentences in one. It implies that Musa forgot to ask his companion about the fish and his companion forgot to mention its mysterious disappearance (Au.).

86. Ibn 'Abbas explained the term "*saraba*" as meaning the fish left a trace of itself as it went into the water (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

87. Someone may ask, how could Yusha' forget such an important incident, that of fish coming alive and jumping into the river? Zamakhshari answers: We should not forget he was in the company of a great Prophet. How many strange occurrences he might not have been noticing in his company, all the while?

[64] He said, 'That was what we were seeking after.' So they returned, tracing back their footsteps.⁸⁸

قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ فَارْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا
فَصَصَا ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] They found a slave from among Our slaves⁸⁹ on whom we had bestowed mercy from Us, and had taught him knowledge proceeding from Us.⁹⁰

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ
عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

88. In all that preceded, it seems the hidden message is that knowledge requires some struggle to acquire. Allah could as well have arranged for Khadir to see Musa at the place he was. But rather, he was asked to travel to the junction of the two waters, at a precise point where his fish would disappear. But, after he reached the place, both he and his companion forgot about it. So, they moved on in their quest, until Musa felt truly fatigued. Yet, when they discovered the fish missing, they had to travel back, another cause of fatigue and the lesson that knowledge has its price (Mufti Shafi`, slightly modified).

89. That was Al-Khadir, (or, as some would say Khidr) meaning , “the Green One,” (implying, [according to popular legend] that his wisdom was ever-fresh: Asad). He was lying asleep, under a cloak covering himself from head to foot. He was given some knowledge of the hidden, un-

known, and the unseen (Tabari, Zamakhshari).

According to a *hadith* in Bukhari narrated by Abu Hurayrah, Khadir was so named because once he sat down on a dry grassy belt and it became green by his touch (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

90. Alusi speaks on the new term introduced here in the Qur’an: “*ilm al-ladunni*.” He points out that in truth there is no mystery about it. Al-Khadir was given a special knowledge through “*wahyu Ilham*” (“revelation through inspiration,” or “revelation through the blow”) which can be experienced both by Prophets as well as non-prophets. In this kind of revelation, an angel does not appear to the eyes. He does not speak out words, remains concealed, but inspires the recipient with whatever Allah wishes to send across of knowledge. Our Prophet also occasionally experienced this kind of revelation. For example, he said, “The Ruh al-

[66] Musa asked him, 'May I follow you on condition that you teach me of what higher knowledge you have been taught?'⁹¹

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ
تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] He answered, 'Assuredly, you will never be able to have patience with me.'

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا
﴿٦٧﴾

[68] How can you show patience over what you do not encompass in knowledge?'

وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا
﴿٦٨﴾

[69] He said, 'You will find me, Allah willing, patient; and I shall not disobey you in any command.'

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا
أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾

Quds (Jibril) blew into my heart that no soul will die without having obtained its share of provision. Therefore, fear Allah and employ fair means to obtain (it)." This too is "*ilm al-ladunni*." It is also known by the term "*ilm al-batin*" (the hidden or esoteric knowledge) by which term it is merely meant to contrast it with "*ilm-azzahir*" - the apparent or exoteric knowledge - which is so called because it is obtained by open means (such as study of books). In sharp contrast, "*ilm al-batin*" requires practice of what one knows, which opens doors to gates of knowledge hitherto closed. Sheikh 'Abdul Wahhab Sha'rani has written in his "*Al-Durar al-Manthurah*" the following: The special knowledge that the *Sufis* possess, is obtained

by no other means than by putting into practice what one learns of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Since *Sufis* do this diligently and spiritedly, they are able to obtain an in-depth knowledge, of which they speak out, saying things that another cannot say. For, the closer one gets to Allah, the more difficult the transmission of knowledge that one has of this nature, and all the more difficult for those to understand who do not have similar footing in the field."

Also see *Surah Al-Ma'idah*, note 187 for related discussions.

91. If it is admitted that Khadir was a *Waliyy*, then, does it imply that a *Waliyy* can be more knowledgeable than a *Nabiyy*, as some *Sufis* claim? The answer is, says Alusi, such an

[70] Said he, 'If you follow me, then do not ask me about anything until I myself speak to you about it.'

قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ
حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] So the two set out until when they climbed into a boat, he made a hole in it. He said, 'Did you make a hole in it so as to drown its people? Surely, you have come up with something very strange.'

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا
قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْت
شَيْئًا إِمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾

[72] He replied, 'Did I not say that you can never have patience with me?'

قَالَ أَمْ أَقُلُ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا
﴿٧٢﴾

[73] He answered, 'Do not take me to task for what I forgot and do not make my affair difficult.'

قَالَ لَا تَأْخِذْ بِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِي
مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] So the two set out until when they met a boy, he slew him. He said, 'Have you murdered an innocent soul without (retaliation) for another? Surely, you have come up with a deplorable act.'⁹²

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَضَمَّهُ
أَقْبَلَتْ نَفْسًا رَّكِيَّةً بَعِيرٍ نَفْسٍ لَّقَدْ جِئْت
شَيْئًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾

implication is incorrect. For Khadir might have had greater knowledge than Musa in a certain department, but Musa's knowledge exceeded Khadir's in every other department. Also, Alusi warns, do not read too much in Musa's exemplary humble attitude towards Kkadir. (That is how students must behave towards their masters: Razi).

92. The word Musa used at this point is "nukra" which is stronger in disapproval than the word he used earlier, "imra" (Alusi and others). Further, points out Shafi', Musa's objection

was entirely in order because it is not allowed for someone who knows the *Shari`ah* laws to remain silent when he sees them violated.

Another point of note: With this as precedence, some ignorant *Sufis* claim that just as a Khadir's act of murder of an innocent soul was lawful unto him, the *Awliya'* reach a stage in spiritual development when the *Shari`ah* is no more binding on them. They need not, e.g., do the five daily prayers. Their *Tariqah* requirements supersede the *Shari`ah* requirements. Not only they are

[75] He replied, 'Did I not tell you that you can never have patience with me?'⁹³

قَالَ أَمْ أَقُلُّ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

[76] He answered, 'If I ever ask you about anything after this, keep me not in your company anymore. You have indeed obtained an excuse from me.'

قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] So the two set out until when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked the town's people for food. But they refused that they should host the two.⁹⁴ The two found a wall there about to collapse. He set it up aright.⁹⁵ He suggested, 'Had you wished, you could have taken some wages for it.'

فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّقُوهَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ فَأَقَامَهُ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَاتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾

[78] He answered, 'This is the parting between me and you. Now I will tell you the truth of that you could not bear patiently.'

قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ سَأْتِيَنَّكَ يَتَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٨﴾

wrong in this but also in asserting that *Shari`ah* and *Tariqah* are two different realities. They are not. Even if there is some difference, *Tariqah* always remains subjected to *Shari`ah* whose laws are entirely inviolable (Alusi, Ma`arif).

93. Notice that Khadir used the same sentence as he did earlier, but this time he added "*laka*" (you) to impress on Musa a slightly stronger exasperation on his part (Zamakhshari).

94. According to moral notions prevalent at a time when there were no eating shops, the town's people

were obliged to host these strangers. Far from that, they refused to provide food even when asked. Hence Musa's indignation: you could have at least taken wages from these uncouth men, even if we did not need the money! (Au.)

95. According to a report in Bukhari, Khadir merely touched the wall and it became upright. (If this is correct then) in this is the proof of the possibility of miracles at the hands of the *Awliya'* (Thanwi).

Yusuf Ali remarks: "As they were refused hospitality, they should, as self-respecting men, have shaken

the dust of the town off their feet, or shown their indignation in some way. Instead of that, Khidhr actually goes and does a benevolent act. He rebuilds for them a falling wall.”

Musa (asws) and Khadir:

A *hadith* (in Bukhari: Ibn Kathir) gives us the whole story of Musa and Khadir. Ubayy bin Ka`b and others narrate (in several *ahadith* combined herewith): “Once Musa stood up to deliver a sermon among the Israelites. His speech brought tears into their eyes. Someone asked, ‘Who is the most learned of men?’ He replied, ‘I.’ Allah admonished Musa for failing to attribute (absolute) knowledge to Him. So He revealed to him, ‘I have a slave at the junction of the two seas who is more knowledgeable than you.’ He asked, ‘How am I to find him?’ He was told, ‘Take a fish with you, and put it in a (large) basket. Wherever you lose the fish, that is the place you will find him.’ So Musa took a fish, put it in a (large) basket and set out along with his attendant lad, Yusha` b. Nun (perhaps Joshua of the *Bible*), until when they reached the rock, they laid their heads on it and slept. Meanwhile, the fish wriggled out of the basket and betook its way into the river,

burrowing (its way through). Allah held the water around the fish’s passage as if it was a tunnel. [Or perhaps the river water had freezed into ice due to cold weather: Zamakhshari]. (According to another report, also in Bukhari, there was a spring at the rock, called “The Spring of Life.” Its water touched nothing but gave it life. A few drops fell on the fish and it became alive). When they woke up, Musa’s companion forgot to tell him about the fish’ disappearance. They moved on journeying through the day and the following night, until when it was the next day, Musa said to his attendant, “Bring out our lunch. We have indeed encountered hardship from this our journey.” “In fact, Musa did not feel fatigued until he had passed over the place which he was told to look out for. His attendant told him, ‘Did you see?! When we took shelter at the rock, I forgot about the fish, and none but *Shaytan* made me forget that I should mention it. It took its way into the sea in an amazing manner.’ [Note that Allah used the word *sarab* (a burrow) for the trace the fish left, but for Musa and his companion ‘*ajab* (an amazing thing)].’ Moreover, this part implies that Musa’s lad was awake when the fish jumped out.

Musa said, 'That is the place we were seeking after.' So they returned tracing their footsteps.'

They traveled back until they reached the rock. They encountered a man there, lying on the rock, covered with a cloak. Musa greeted him. Khadir asked in reply, 'Is there such a greeting in our land?' Musa said, 'I am Musa.' He inquired, 'Musa of the Israelites?' Musa answered in the affirmative and added, 'I have come to you so that you may teach me what you have been taught of the higher knowledge.' Khadir replied, 'Assuredly, you will never be able to have patience with me. O Musa! I have some knowledge from Allah which He has taught me and which you do not have, while you have some knowledge which Allah has taught you but which I do not have.' Musa said, 'You will find me, Allah willing, patient; and I shall not disobey you in anything.' Khadir said, 'If you follow me, then do not ask me about anything until I myself speak to you about it.' So both of them set out walking along the seashore. A boat passed by and they requested the boat crew to take them on board. The crew knew Khadir and let them climb in without charge. Khadir wasted no time but began to work on one of the planks from the bow

side and tore it out. (Alusi adds from the scholars: 'Eyes don't see Khadir'). Musa objected, 'Look! These people gave us a free ride but you broke their boat to drown its people? Surely, you have come up with something very strange. He replied, 'Did I not say that you can never have patience with me?' He answered, 'Do not take me to task for what I forgot and do not make my affair difficult.'

So, Musa's first (interruption) was because of forgetfulness, second conditional, and third intentional. (Another opinion is that the first was from forgetfulness, second intentional and third for parting ways: Alusi). Then a sparrow came and perched on the edge of the boat. It dipped its beak once or twice in the sea. Khadir said: 'Musa! My knowledge and your knowledge have not decreased Allah's knowledge except as much as this sparrow has decreased the water of the sea with its beak.' (Some reports say that the bird incident took place while the two were still at the river where they had met first).

In any case, they left the boat. And as they were walking by the shore, Khadir spotted a boy playing with a few other kids. (Ghulam of the text is used for a teenager also). He took hold of the boy's head and severed

it off (its neck). [According to other reports, laid him down and slit his throat]. Musa protested, 'Have you murdered an innocent soul without (retaliation) for another? Surely, you have come up with a deplorable act.' He replied, 'Haven't I told you that you will never have patience with me?' Musa said (to himself), 'This was a stronger (reproach) than the earlier one, and added, 'If I ever ask you about anything after this, keep me not in your company anymore. You have indeed obtained an excuse from me.' Then they set forth until when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked them for food. But they refused that they should host the two. The two found there a wall about to collapse. That is, it was leaning on one side. Khadir set it up aright. Musa spoke up, 'a people we went to, but they did not feed us nor hosted us. Had you wished, you could have taken some wages for it. He answered, 'This is the parting between me and you. Now I will tell you the truth of that you could not bear patiently.

"The Prophet then added, 'We wish Musa had shown patience so that we had learnt more from the two'" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others).

Khadir

With his usual thoroughness Alusi deals with the question of Khadir over a number of pages. Was he a Messenger, a Prophet, or a *Waliyy*? Quite a few scholars have believed that he was a Prophet but not a Messenger. As for whether he is still alive, some are of opinion that he is not, although he seems to have been alive at the time of the Companions. Imām Bukhari was asked about him and Ilyas, whether they were alive. He replied, "How can they be alive when the Prophet said a little before his own death, 'Of those present now, none will remain alive after a century?'" Muslim's version is, "There is not a breathing soul that will have a hundred years pass over it while it is alive." Ibn Taymiyyah and a few others were also of the same opinion. Another contention of these scholars is that the affair is of such important nature that if he was to remain alive until the end of the world, surely, the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* would not have failed to mention it. With reference to a few *ahadith* about Khadir's life, Ibn *Qayyim* has stated that none of them is trustworthy.

Nonetheless, majority of scholars believe he is alive and is between us, although normally invisible. This is also the opinion of the *Sufiya* who say that he will remain alive until

the end of all life on earth. Among those who said that the majority of scholars believe that he is alive, one is Nawawi. Ibn Salah (the famous author of Principles of *hadīth* Criticism) also stated that according to most scholars he is alive. Those who believe in his life reply to the *hadīth* of the “hundred years” that it speaks of those on the land while Khadir could have been on water; though Alusi does not accept this argument as very strong. As for Ibn Taymiyyah’s argument that if he was alive he would have gone to the Prophet to embrace Islam, (since he said that even if Musa was alive he would have followed his *Shari`ah*), it has been replied that if we do not know that he did not go, we cannot conclude that in fact he did not go. In conclusion Alusi quotes a passage from Sheikh al-Akbar, (Muhiyyuddin Ibn al-`Arabiyy) from his “*Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah*.” The *Sufi* and philosophical technicalities of the passage defy its successful rendition into English. Its sum and substance is that there are several realms of knowledge, Spirit, and existence. In the world of human existence (which itself has several layers of realms), the Messengers occupy the highest position. They are the Aqtab (sing. Qutb, poles), the Imāms, and the Pegs of this re-

ligion, and in turn by whose virtue the world of the humans remains in existence. One of these Messengers has to always remain on earth, (in one realm or the other) throughout, until the end of the world. He is body and soul. At the moment it is our Prophet. Apart from him, three other great spiritual figures: Ilyas, ‘Isa and Khadir, have been kept alive, although in a different world within our own. (In fact, the entire world in existence is so small that, within it, the beginning and eternity are merely a point away from each other). These four command different functions and hold different statuses. Our Prophet holds the highest status ever, in any existence, any realm. By these four and through them Allah keeps alive and in existence the four pillars of the religion of Islam: *Risalah*, *Nubuwwah*, *Wilayah* and *Imān* (faith). In making these statements, Ibn al-`Arabiyy speaks from a knowledge special to him, which, as he claims, even most *Sufis* are denied. Not only that, he would not ever speak of it, if he did not have the signal from on High. Therefore, Ibn al-`Arabiyy says, the reader may thank Allah for having allowed him to look into a secret otherwise closely held, “accept it, and do not reject it, for if you did that, you will lose the

benefit.” (He does not say what the nature of benefit is that we stand to lose! Or at least Alusi does not quote or explain).

Nevertheless, although Alusi himself believes in the life of Khadir, as also he gives credence to what he quotes of the Sheikh al-Akbar, he allows room for the skeptics by saying that the reader is free to accept or reject the above statements, since, after all, he will be questioned for his own honest judgment and not about what others had to state of their personal experiences. Hasn't `Ali said, “Look at what is said, and not at who said”? But, a fair manner is not to deny altogether since one will be then denying something that neither he experiences, nor would allow others the ability to experience.

We may also point out that Ibn al-`Arabiyy's claims are based on his kashf. But kashf enjoys no authority in the religion of Islam (Au.).

The above said, Alusi also warns that most claims of people, especially the pseudo *Sufis*, to the effect that they have seen or met Khadir, are incredulous. They claim, “Khadir told me this..,” “Khadir came to me..,” “Khadir admonished me in words..” and so on. They forget that Khadir was quick to part ways with Musa. Will

he part Kaleemullah's company, and prefer the company of these ignorant misguided guys whose company no one covets but the Devil?!

Khadir and Orientalists

Mawdudi has a few words for this honest tribe: “The Orientalists, true to their ilk, have attempted to explore the possible sources of this Qur'anic story as well. After strenuous efforts, they identify three possible sources from which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) may have composed the story and ascribed it to God's revelation. These sources are Gilgamesh epic, the Alexandrian romance in Syriac, and the Talmudic report..

“It is obvious that Orientalists share a common attitude: that one may be open to all assumptions except that the Qur'an is a revelation from God. That being definitely excluded, these scholars embark on this grand mission to dissect whatever was presented in the Qur'an (which, in their view, was definitely the work of Muhammad [peace be on him] rather than God) and to show how each fragment had some external source. They pursue this line of inquiry so brazenly and go to such absurd lengths that one feels instinctively repelled. Ironically, they term their

bigoted pursuit scholarly research. If such biased inquiry can be called knowledge or research, one might as well do without it.

“The true nature of their bigoted research would become fully evident if they were asked to answer the following four questions:

“Firstly, granted that there are similarities in the contents of the Qur’ān and the contents of several ancient texts, one might, nevertheless, ask: Is there any positive evidence to suggest that this similarity of content is the result of the Qur’ānic account having been taken from other sources?

“Secondly, the sources mentioned as the material for the Qur’ānic stories are quite numerous. Were all such sources to be added up, they would be so numerous to make a full-fledged catalogue of a fairly good library. Did any such library exist in Makka at the time of the Prophet (peace be on him)? And even if there had been an abundance of sources from which he might have drawn his material, is there any evidence to indicate that there existed a large team of translators available to the Prophet (peace be on him) whereby this wealth of information might have been brought to his knowledge? Now, since that is quite certainly not

the case, the allegations of borrowing simply rest on the two or three trade journeys which the Prophet (peace be on him) took to lands outside Arabia; journeys which were made a few years before his designation as a Prophet. In this respect, it is pertinent to ask: Did the Prophet memorize whole libraries during those journeys? Additionally, how does one explain that before being designated a Prophet, Muhammad (peace be on him) never displayed any such knowledge?

“Thirdly, the Makkan unbelievers as well as the Jews and Christians were always on the look-out to identify possible sources of the Prophet’s statements. Yet the Prophet’s contemporaries were unable to point to any definite source for the Prophet’s alleged plagiarism. The Qur’ān frequently challenges them by emphatically stating that the Qur’ān is from God alone, that its only source is revelation from God. The Qur’ān repeatedly asks its detractors to come forth with whatever proof they have to show that the Qur’ān is the product of the human mind. This challenge struck at the very root of their contention, and yet they failed to point to any plausible human source for the Qur’ān. Not only were they totally unable to point, in a persua-

[79] As for the boat, it belonged to a poor humble people⁹⁶ who worked at sea. I wished to damage it. Behind them⁹⁷ was a king seizing away every boat by brute force.⁹⁸

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ
فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ
مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾

sive manner, to any specific source from which the Qur'an might have been derived, they could not produce as much as a shred of evidence that would create any reasonable doubt about the matter. It is ironic that while the Prophet's contemporaries failed to point to any plausible source of the Qur'an, some pseudo-scholars of our times, animated by inveterate hostility to Islam, have the temerity to claim – a thousand and several hundred years after the Prophet's time – the so-called sources from which the contents of the Qur'an were derived!

“The last point to consider is the following. It is not possible for anybody to deny that there exists at least the logical possibility that the Qur'an might be the revealed word of God. It is logically possible that the information the Qur'an provides about past events might indeed be true whereas those reports commonly available to us about the past might be the distorted versions of oral reports of events over centuries, and hence unreliable. It should be noted that this possibility was arbitrarily

ruled out without any valid reason whatsoever.”

Mawdudi's comments end here. It might also be pointed out that if we assume that the Prophet had taken the story from the sources alluded to, then the question that arises is, why did the Jews or Makkan pagans had to ask him about Dhu al-Qarnayn and others? They would have better known the stories than the Prophet. But the problem with the Orientalists is that their research ends at the point truth begins to dawn (Au.).

Up to here in Dec. 2010

96. Imām Shafē'i has used this verse to arrive at the conclusion that a *faqir* is worse off than a *maskin*, since although the people of this instance owned a boat, Allah referred to them as *masakin* (Razi).

97. The word “*amam*” has the connotation both of behind as well as in front (Ibn Jarir).

98. That is, the king was confiscating every well-maintained boat but ignored this one because it was broken.

[80] As for the boy, his parents were believers. We feared that he would overburden them with rebellion and disbelief.⁹⁹

وَأَمَّا الْعُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا
أَنْ يُرْهِمَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] So we desired that their Lord give them in exchange (someone) better than he in purity and closer in tenderness.¹⁰⁰

فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِمَّنْهُ زَكَوَّةً
وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾

[82] As for the wall, well, it belonged to two orphan boys of the town. Beneath it was a treasure belonging to them.¹⁰¹ Their father was a righteous man.¹⁰² Your Lord willed that they should come of age and extract their treasure: a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do it on my own. This is the truth of that which you could not bear in patience.¹⁰³

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي
الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا
صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا
وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا
فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ
عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

99. An alternative rendering can be, “impose upon them rebellion and disbelief.”

Ahmed has a report that Najdah Hirawi (a Haruri [Khariji sect: Au.]: Alusi) wrote ibn ‘Abbas a letter asking him if he could kill some boys (captured after a battle). He wrote back, “If you are a Khadir, capable of differentiating between a believer and an unbeliever, then you might.” According to another version in Ibn abi Shaybah, the reply also said, “.. but you are not. Indeed, the Prophet has forbidden their killing, therefore, free them.” And, according to a report in Muslim, Abu Da’ud and Tirmidhi, the Prophet said, “The boy that Khadir killed was created, the

day he was created, an unbeliever. Had he reached his age of puberty, he would have only confronted his parents with rebellion and unbelief” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani and others, under verse 74).

100. While Sa’id b. Jubayr and a few of the Followers thought Allah replaced the boy with a girl by next delivery, Qatadah and Ibn Jurayj believed it was a boy again (Ibn Jarir).

101. Although some have reported that the treasure that Khadir spoke of was nothing more than a piece of writing containing a two-line advice, there are reports from ‘Ikrimah that it was some gold and silver” (Ibn Jarir). There is in fact, a report from the Prophet (*saws*) himself to this ef-

fect. It is in Bukhari's *Tarikh* as well as in Tirmidhi, (who evaluated it as Hasan), Bazzar, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn abi Hatim, Tabarani and Hakim who said it is *Sahih* (Shawkani).

In addition, there are several *ahadith*, (although none in the *Sihah* works, with a few not agreeing with the others: Au.), to the effect that the treasure was in the form of a golden plate over which some words of admonition were inscribed (Ibn Kathir).

Nevertheless, Ibn Kathir expresses his doubts about the authenticity of these reports. Shawkani ignores them altogether (Au.).

102. Ibn 'Abbas has pointed out that Allah (swt) spoke of the righteousness of the father, but said nothing about the sons (Ibn Jarir); implying that piety-effects travel downward and not upward (Au.).

103. *Sufi* Thanwi comments: The meaning the verse lends us is that knowledge of the 'hidden causes' and Divine wisdom behind the apparent events, revealed to some by means of *kashf* (mystic insight) are not of the kind that can be termed as the "core knowledge," the "essence" or the "ultimate truth." Had it been so, Musa (*asws*), although superior to Khadir, would not have been denied it in the first place.

Pseudo *Sufis* exploit Khadir's episode to lay claim to knowledge of the hidden, and, to escape from the obligations of the *Shari`ah* in the light of such knowledge. *Sufi* commentator Alusi takes up the issue for discussion. First he points out that the knowledge that Khadir drew on, obtained either through *Wahiyy* or *Ilham* (whatever the case), which allowed him, for example, to kill an innocent soul, was valid for him alone, not for others. In fact, not even for Musa, who was required to follow the *Shari`ah* laws (which would not allow for the killing of the boy: hence his protest). Therefore, whoever claimed knowledge by *Ilham* (Divine inspiration sans words) but which goes against the *Shari`ah*, spoke a lie. So that, if somebody claimed to receive knowledge by *Ilham* – rightly or wrongly – of a similar nature as Khadir, then killing of a boy, for example, will not be allowable to him. One of those who rejected the claim that knowledge by *Ilham* can nullify or supersede a *Shari`ah* law, was the *Sufi* Sha`rani. He said many people have gone astray and misled others over the issue, since no such thing is possible. Sheikh al-Akbar Mohiuddin ibn al-Arabiyy wrote in one of his works: "When we talk about *Ilham* as an angelic inspiration, we do

not mean to say that it is brought to us by an angel. Not at all. In fact, inspiration and revelation, with the angels as the medium, is specifically the right of Prophets and Messengers. With the termination of Messengership, the possibility of inspiration through revelation has also terminated. Neither can anyone claim, nor has ever claimed, that knowledge comes to him directly from Allah. If anyone ever felt that, then the explanation is that it is a kind of Satanic fraud upon him. If at all there is some 'opening of the heart, for a 'special kind of knowledge', it can never be of the kind of do's or don't do's, the lawful and the unlawful. But rather, either of a hidden wisdom, or maybe a hint about what kind of event can be expected next."

Imām Rabbani, Mujaddid Alf-Thani, continues Alusi, has also clearly stated in his "Letters" that *Ilham* cannot cancel out a *Shari`ah* law. It is possible, he stated, that when someone is high in a "state" or "trance," he may hear, or utter things of that sort. But, back to sobriety, he can never utter any such thing. The state of sobriety melts off all those wild thoughts. He also wrote that *Shari`ah* is the name of three elements: knowledge, deeds, and sincerity. Whoever fell short in any of these, fell short on *Shari`ah*.

But if he observed them wholly, he earns Allah's approval, which is better than anything in the heavens or earth, including what is claimed as the *haqiqah* behind the *Shari`ah*. Indeed, the *Tariqah* and *haqiqah* that the *Sufis* speak of are in the service of *Shari`ah* by strengthening the third of its elements as stated above, viz., *Ikhlas* (sincerity). In short, the best and the easiest way of gaining closeness to Allah is to follow the *Shari`ah* as revealed to the Prophet. The Qur`ān said (12: 108), "Say, 'This is my way, I invite you on a knowledge - I and my followers.'" And (3: 31), "Say, 'If you love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you.'" And (10: 32), "What is left after untruth but error?" The Imām also wrote elsewhere, "You should know that in the final analysis, the knowledge of the *Sufis* is the knowledge of the scholars, not something else in sum and substance. Yes, as they travel on the path, they experience some kind of esoteric knowledge, (not comprehended by others). But in no way does it contradict the *Shari`ah*. The difference in the kinds of knowledge that the ascetics gain, and that which the traditional scholars possess, is that the latter's is of the deductive type, supported by evidences, worked out with the help of reason and logic. In

contrast, that in which the *Sufis* specialize is obtained through *kashf* (vision of the realities). He also wrote, "You must know that *Shari`ah* and *Haqiqah* are in their reality one and the same things. If there is any difference between the two, it is in that of details, manner of deduction, and that one has the backing of vision while the other relies entirely on derivation, or at worse, one could be theoretical, while the other a practical experience. Further, if the knowledge through vision contradicts the knowledge through deduction, even by a grain, then, it is the sign of its rejection from on High.

On the subject, we might note that Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani has said that the *Awliya`* depend not on anything but the Qur`ān and *Sunnah*. Junayd in fact has said that all the paths are closed, save that of the Sunan of the Prophet. Indeed, he said that he who did not memorize the Qur`ān and does not write the *hadith*, may not be followed at all. Sirri al-Saqtī has said that whoever claimed hidden, secret knowledge, that clashes with the *Shari`ah* is in error. Abu al-`Abbas al-Daynuri said, "If you see someone in a state which the *Shari`ah* does not approve, you may criticize him." Imām Ghazali wrote: "Whoever claimed that he

is on a very special footing with his Lord, so that He has abrogated, say Prayers, or has allowed him to drink wine, or things of that sort, deserves to be killed. In fact, slaying him is better than slaying a hundred unbelievers, for the evil in him is greater."

Nor, Alusi continues, *kashf*, or miracles, and things of this nature that some of the *Sufiya* are able to perform, are signs of true greatness. It is said that once Hasan al-Busri was waiting for a boat when Habib al-`Ajami happened to pass by. When he learnt that Hasan was waiting for a boat to take him to the other shore, he asked, "Don't you have faith?" Hasan replied, "Don't you have knowledge?" Habib in any case walked over the water to the other shore. Yet, Hasan was far superior to Habib by virtue of knowledge and wisdom. He had mastered both the knowledge of the truth (*'ilm al-yaqin*), as well as the truth of truths (*'ayn al-yaqin*). In contrast, Habib was merely spiritually drunk. So, when he placed his foot on water in trust and good faith, physical laws were held in abeyance for him. (But that did not raise his esteem in the sight of Allah). This in fact is the secret behind why few thaumaturgies are reported of the Companions. They were people of great knowledge and

[83] And they ask you concerning Dhu al-Qarnayn.¹⁰⁴ Say, 'I shall presently recite to you about him a report.'

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْقَرْنَيْنِ قُلْ سَأَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾

high degree of faith. Imām Rabbani has aptly said that “the high point of Uways al-Qarni’s faith was the low point of Wahshi’s faith.” (Wahshi was Hamza’s killer, but counted a Companion). How will you then compare those whose quality of faith is not of the level of Uways with those (of the Companions) whose quality of faith was not that of Wahshi?

Away from the above discussion, the scholars have also pointed out that the following can be learnt from Musa-Khadir episode:

- The desirability to travel for knowledge.
- It is a virtue to seek it.
- The desirability to show respect to a teacher.
- Not to object or criticize the masters.
- Attempt to reconcile the inexplicable of their acts.
- Carrying one’s provision with him in a journey is not against trust in Allah.
- Scholar needs to show patience to the student.

- Forgetfulness is from *Shaytan*.
- Lawfulness of wages for one’s works.
- A *miskin* can own property.
- It is allowable to conceal treasure.

Quote from Alusi ends here, and Thanwi adds to the list his own that knowledge requires deeds and actions. Knowledge is not “the word” alone.

104. Ibn Jarir writes that there is no definite report about why Dhu al-Qarnayn (“the Two-Horned One”) was so named. Some people have said that he had two bumps on his head and so won the nickname. (Others have said that he wore a crown, out of which protruded two horns: Zamakhshari). Yet others have said that he let his long hair hang down in two plaits. Asad expresses the possibility that he could have belonged to two epochs since Qarn is also used for epoch. Majid comments and quotes: “Horn in the *Bible* is ‘a symbol of strength’, and ‘is frequently mentioned to signify power and glory’ (CD p. 457). In Hebrew usage ‘rais-

ing the horn of a people or an individual signifies victory or pride, 'breaking it' signifies 'defeat.' (ERE, VI, p.792). Even Moses, (peace be on him) was represented with horns. 'It has become a widespread belief that Moses, when he came down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of Law, had two horns on his forehead.' (JE, VI, p. 463)."

His identity is also covered in obscurity. Reports of Jewish or Christian origin say he was a conqueror who subdued Rome and Persia. (Hence perhaps "the controller of two horns": Au.). Ibn Jarir reports a few other conjectures. Another report from Wahab b. Munabbih, also of Jewish and Christian origin, says he was a Roman. 'Ali's opinion was that he was not a Prophet, merely a righteous man.

Shawkani says that a few have thought he was an Egyptian; others that he was one of the sons of Kahlan b. Saba' (of the Yemen). Qurtubi records Suhayli that perhaps there were two of them involved, one at the time of 'Isa b. Maryam and the other at the times of Ibrahim (*asws*). Razi is inclined to believe that the allusion is to the Macedonian Alexander. However, he thinks there is a hitch. Alexander was a student

of Aristotle but a student who was far from being a righteous man. Ibn Kathir also believes there were two: one of the times of Ibrahim, and the other, the Macedonian Alexander. He thinks that the one Qur'an spoke of here, was of the times of Ibrahim. Ibn Kathir strongly refutes the idea that Alexander the Macedonian could have been Dhu al-Qarnayn. Alusi says that some scholars have identified him with Faridun b. Ithfiyan, one of the Persian emperors (Cyrus), while Abu Rayhan al-Bayruni thought that the allusion was to a Himyari (Yemeni) ruler of the past who had conquered vast areas of land. He quoted a few classical poetical pieces to prove his point. In short, he could not be identified.

Muhammad Asad has a useful remark, "...it is precisely the Qur'anic stress on his faith in God that makes it impossible to identify Dhu al-Qarnayn, .. with Alexander the Great (who is represented on some of his coins with two horns on his head) or one another of pre-Islamic, Himyarite kings of Yemen. All those historical personages were pagans and worshipped a plurality of deities as a matter of course, whereas our Dhu al-Qarnayn is depicted as a firm believer in the One God.."

[84] Verily, We established him in the land and bestowed on him means to all things.¹⁰⁵

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾

[85] So he followed a course.

فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy spring.¹⁰⁶ And he found a people there. We said, 'O Dhu al-Qarnayn, either you punish them or adopt towards them a graceful (attitude).'¹⁰⁷

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا أَنْ تَعْدِبَ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾

Commentary books then have as many suggestions about Dhu al-Qarnayn's identity as there are commentators. Ibn Kathir has ruled them all as unworthy of serious consideration. Only a few of them say that according to Jewish and Christian sources the allusion is to Alexander the Macedonian. No one has ever reported it as a statement of the Prophet.

105. The textual "sabab" of the first occurrence here has been interpreted by Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah, Dahhak, Ibn Zayd and others as "knowledge" (of means) while the latter three occurrences have been interpreted as "target" or "way through the lands" (or "course") - Ibn Jarir.

The meaning adopted by us at this point (as "means") is the understanding of later day commentators (Au.). Ibn Kathir thinks the allusion is to

the usual means of power provided to kings viz., a large army, weapons, siege equipment, et al.

106. "Muddy (pool)" is the commonly accepted meaning. But a second opinion about "hami'ah" of the original, coming down from Ibn 'Abbas and Hasan, is that it means "warm (waters)." Both could be right, one and at the same time (Ibn Jarir). As for what place it was, Ibn Jarir has no report. But Ibn Kathir points out that anyone who travelled to the edge of a land will find the sun setting in a pool of water. Ibn Kathir also points out that the *hadith* as in Ahmed and other books that when the sun sets it dips into waters, is an untrustworthy one (Au.).

Asad adds: "..Razi and Ibn Kathir, both .. point out that we have here a metaphor based on the common optical illusion of the sun's "disappear-

[87] He said, 'As for him who transgresses,¹⁰⁸ we shall indeed punish him,¹⁰⁹ and then he will be returned to his Lord who will punish him with a terrible punishment.

قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نَعَذِّبُهُ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ
إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُكْرًا ﴿٨٧﴾

ing into the sea;” and Razi explains this, correctly, by the fact that the earth is spherical. (It is interesting to note that, according to him, this explanation was already advanced in the – now lost – Qur’ān commentary of Abu `Ali Jiba’i, the famous Mu`tazili scholar who died in 303 A.H., which corresponds to 916 or 916 of the Christian era).”

In other words, ancient Muslim scholars believed in the sphericity of the earth, although controversy remained to Razi’s days (d. 604 AH) who himself seemed to have been a believer in its sphericity (Au.).

107. That is, after you have overpowered them (Au.).

Asad once again explains, “This divine permission to choose between two possible courses of action is not only a metonymic statement of freedom of will accorded by God to man, but establishes also the important legal principle of *istihsan* (social or moral preference) open to a ruler or government in deciding as to what might be conducive to the greatest

good (*maslaha*) of the community as a whole: and this is the first “lesson” of the parable of Dhu al-Qarnayn.”

It is educating to know how preconceived ideas lead to error after error.

A contemporary commentator first spends a good amount of energy to prove that Cyrus was definitely the Dhu al-Qarnayn of the Qur’ān. But, since Cyrus neither received revelation, nor *Ilham*, he had to assume that Dhu al-Qarnayn also did not receive either. Hence in reference to Allah’s words, “We said, ‘O Dhu al-Qarnayn..’, he adds the commentary, “It is quite possible that no actual communication took place..”!

Perhaps the above does not need any criticism.

108. That is, if they insist on remaining pagans, associating with Allah (Ibn Jarir).

109. Qatadah thought the meaning is “we shall exterminate him” (Ibn Jarir).

110. The translation reflects a literal understanding. But Mujahid’s opin-

[88] But whosoever believed and worked righteous deeds, for him will be a goodly reward. And we shall order him, of our task, (something) easy.¹¹⁰

وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] Then he followed a course.

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٩﴾

[90] Until, when he reached the rising of the sun, he found it rising upon a people for whom We had provided no shield against it.¹¹¹

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطَّلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿٩٠﴾

[91] That is how,¹¹² and We encompassed in knowledge what was with him.

كَذَلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

[92] Then again he followed a course.

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] Until, when he reached between the two barriers,¹¹³ he found beside them a people who hardly understood a word.¹¹⁴

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَّا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

ion was, as in Ibn Jarir, “we shall teach him, within our humble capacity, what will take him nearer to his Lord.”

111. Once again there is no definite opinion about the people or their place, except for personal opinions. Probably they were desert-dwellers. Some have conjectured that they lived in a barren land in which they had dug burrows to shield themselves from the sun. If so, it must have been quite a primitive tribe.

112. Asad notes that “..*kadhalika* [refers] the (implied) fact that Dhu al-

Qarnayn left them as he had found them, being mindful not to upset their mode of life and thus to cause them misery.”

113. Although according to Ibn ‘Abbas the allusion by the two barriers is to the mountain ranges of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Ibn Jarir), there is no *hadith* to this effect.

114. That is, they did not understand Dhu al-Qarnayn’s language (Ibn Jarir).

115. The Qur’an did not speak of these people but at two places. The second instance being (21: 96),

[94] They said, 'O Dhu al-Qarnayn. Ya'juj and Ma'juj cause chaos in the land.¹¹⁵ So, shall we offer you tribute on the understanding that you erect a barrier between us and them?'

قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ
مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ
خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا

﴿٩٤﴾

وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ [الأنبياء : ٩٦]

"And they will descend from every elevation." *hadīth* literature gives us quite some details. They are as follows.

Ya'juj and Ma'juj

Ibn Kathir writes: They have not been identified, but are definitely sons of Adam. A *hadīth* of *Sunan al-Kubra* of Nasa'i says,

إن يأجوج ومأجوج لهم نساء يجامعون ما شاؤوا
وشجر يلقحون ما شاؤوا فلا يموت منهم رجل إلا
ترك من ذريته ألفا فصاعدا

"Ya'juj and Ma'juj have women with whom they have intercourse as they wish, have trees that they cross-pollinate as they wish, and, one of their men does not die but leaves a thousand or more behind him."

Where are they now? This is also not certain. However, many scholars have thought that they are somewhere behind the Caucasus region of Central Asia. A *hadīth* runs like this:

"Allah will address Adam. He will say, 'Here I am O Lord.' He will say, 'Separate out those of the Fire.' He will ask, 'Who are those of the Fire?'" He will reply, 'Nine hundred and ninety-nine from every thousand to the Fire, and one to Paradise.' It is then that that when a child will turn grey (will become old) and every pregnant will suffer miscarriage.' [The Companions were frightened]. They asked in anguish, 'Who that one will be from amongst us meant for Paradise?' He replied, "Do not worry, you will be like one against a thousand of the Ya'juj and Ma'juj. Then he added, 'Among you will be two communities that will not come to a thing but will overwhelm it: Ya'juj and Ma'juj."

The first part of the *hadīth* (up to 'who that one will be ..') is in Bukhari, but the latter part is from Abu Ya'la's *Musnad* which, according to Husayn Saleem, is weak.

In any case, wherever they are now, they are behind a barrier unable to

breach it. Ibn ‘Abbas is reported by Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn abi Hatim and Hakim (who declared the report *Sahih*), as saying that although sons of Adam, they will measure in height no more than the span of a hand or two. The tallest of them will measure maybe three hand spans (Shawkani).

The above is not a *hadith* (Au.).

A *hadith* (in Ahmed, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, declared *Sahih* by Albani: S. Ibrahim) says,

لَيَخْفِرُونَ السِّدَّ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ حَتَّى إِذَا كَادُوا يَرَوْنَ شُعَاعَ الشَّمْسِ قَالَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِمْ اِرْجِعُوا فَسَتَخْفِرُونَهُ عَدَا فَيَعُودُونَ إِلَيْهِ كَأَشَدِّ مَا كَانَ حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَتْ مَدَّتْهُمْ وَأَرَادَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ يَبْعَثَهُمْ إِلَى النَّاسِ حَفَرُوا حَتَّى إِذَا كَادُوا يَرَوْنَ شُعَاعَ الشَّمْسِ قَالَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِمْ اِرْجِعُوا فَسَتَخْفِرُونَهُ عَدَا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَيَسْتَتِنِي فَيَعُودُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَهُوَ كَهَيْئَتِهِ حِينَ تَرَكُوهُ فَيَخْفِرُونَهُ وَيَتْرَجُونَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

“They make a hole in the barrier everyday, until they are almost able to see sunlight through it. Their overseer tells them, ‘Enough for today. Tomorrow we shall open it.’ But when they come back the next day, they find it plugged more strongly; until, when the time comes for their release, and Allah wishes to release them against the people, they will dig and are almost able to see the sunlight. Their overseer

says, ‘Let us return, tomorrow we shall open it, Allah willing.’ Thus he leaves it to Allah’s will. Then they return to it, and it is like they left it the previous day. They will complete the digging and come out against the people.”

Ibn Hajr has shown that the *hadith* has good narrators.

Ibn al-‘Arabiyy has pointed out that their saying, “If Allah wills” demonstrates that Prophets would have been raised among them but could have been rejected except for a few of them (leaving behind practices such as saying “If Allah wills”).

After quoting Ibn al-‘Arabiyy, Mufti Shafi` adds that some scholars think that the opening in the barrier referred to above could be symbolical. In fact, it is possible that the barrier has already been rendered severely weak, to come down completely anytime. It has also been conjectured that a party of them might have already been let loose, who could be, at the moment, a civilized people. At some time in future the rest of the great mass will be released. As for how is it that explorers have not been able to find the barrier? The answer is, Some Muslim historians have mentioned that a delegation sent by the Abbasids three hundred years af-

ter the Prophet actually *saw* it. But they have nothing in evidence, and therefore Qur'ānic verse cannot be said to be definitely referring to it. Sheikh Anwar Shah Kashmiri, the Indian *Sheikh al-hadith*, has suggested that perhaps the barrier got hidden within newly appearing mountain ranges.

According to some reports, they will breach the barrier only after 'Isa b. Maryam will have finished off Dajjal. He will be told, "I am releasing a creation that no one can withstand." So 'Isa (*asws*) will take his followers and withdraw to Mount Tur. *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* will raid the people and subdue them all. They will drink off waters of the earth until some of them will pass by a lake and drink off its water leaving it dry. Someone passing by after them will say, 'Once there used to be a lake here.' People will withdraw into their cities and forts taking away their flock with them. When they run out of provision, a bull's head will be worth a hundred Dinar. *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* will shoot an arrow or one of their weapons towards the sky. It will come back laced with blood. They will say, 'We have subdued those on the earth and those in the heaven.' The people will finally complain to 'Isa of their hardship. He will pray to

Allah who will release an insect (bacteria?) into their necks, which will kill them all. They will lie motionless in the fields." According to another report in Ibn Jarir, "Muslims will say, 'Will not someone risk his life for us and find out what happened to them?' So one of them will volunteer to go, but quite sure that he will lose his life. He will find them all dead, piled up, one upon another. He will cry out, 'O Muslims! Rejoice. Allah has delivered you from their evil.' So the Muslims will come out with their cattle. And their cattle will have nothing but their flesh to feed on. And, by Allah, they will fatten on their flesh, like they never fattened on grass ever before." According to other reports, people will go to 'Isa to complain of the stink of their corpses. He will pray to Allah. He will send huge birds whose necks will be similar to camel's neck. They will pick up their corpses and dump them away.

Some narratives say that heavy rains will follow and the lands will be rendered clean. Allah will then command the earth to throw out its produce. It will, and in those times a pomegranate will be so large as to suffice a group of people. A goat's milk will be enough for a whole family. That situation of plenty will

prevail for forty years. Then Allah will send a wind that will cause some kind of sickness to the believers and they will all die. Thereafter, the worst of creatures will remain in the land who will intercourse in the streets. It is upon then that the Hour will be called.

The above combines more than one report. The following from Muslim covers most of the above text but not all:

فَبَيْنَمَا هُوَ كَذَلِكَ إِذْ أَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَى عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ أَنِ امْشِرْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا ذَاتَ رِجْلَيْهِ كَمَا مَشَى يَوْمَ تَبَايَعْتَهُمْ لِيَلْبِسَهُ الْجَمَادُ الْمَلَكُوتَ فَبَدَأَ بِذَاتِ رِجْلَيْهِ فَجَعَلَ لَكُلِّ بَلَدٍ بَنَانًا وَإِلَى الطُّورِ. وَيَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ فَيَمُرُّ أَوَائِلَهُمْ عَلَى بَيْتِ طَبْرَةَ فَيَسْتَرْبُونَ مَا فِيهَا وَيَمُرُّ آخِرَهُمْ فَيَقُولُونَ لَقَدْ كَانَ بِحَدِيثِهِ مَرَّةً مَاءٌ. وَيُخَصِّرُ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ عِيسَى وَأَصْحَابَهُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ رَأْسُ الثَّوْرِ لِأَحَدِهِمْ خَيْرًا مِنْ مِائَةِ دِينَارٍ لِأَحَدِكُمْ الْيَوْمَ فَيَرْتَعِبُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ عِيسَى وَأَصْحَابُهُ فَيُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ النَّعْفَ فِي رِقَابِهِمْ فَيُضْبِحُونَ فَرَسَى كَمَوْتِ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ يَهْبِطُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ عِيسَى وَأَصْحَابُهُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ فَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَوْضِعَ شِبْرٍ إِلَّا مَلَأَهُ زَهْمُهُمْ وَتَسْتُهُمْ فَيَرْتَعِبُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ عِيسَى وَأَصْحَابُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ فَيُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ طَيْرًا كَأَعْنَاقِ الْبُحْتِ فَتَحْمِلُهُمْ فَتَطْرَحُهُمْ حَيْثُ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ مَطَرًا لَا يَكُونُ مِنْهُ بَيْتٌ مَدْرٍ وَلَا وَرٍ فَيَغْسِلُ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَبْرُكَهَا كَالرَّلْفَةِ ثُمَّ يَقَالُ لِلْأَرْضِ أَنْبِيَّ تَمَرَتِكَ وَرِدَى بَرَكَتِكَ.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ تَأْكُلُ الْعَصَابَةُ مِنَ الرُّمَامَةِ وَيَسْتَنْظِلُونَ بِقُحُوفِهَا وَيُبَارِكُ فِي الرَّسْلِ حَتَّى أَنَّ اللَّفْحَةَ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ لَتَكْفِي

الْفَقَامَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّفْحَةَ مِنَ الْبَقَرِ لَتَكْفِي الْقَبِيلَةَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّفْحَةَ مِنَ الْعَنَمِ لَتَكْفِي الْفَحْدَ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَيْنَمَا هُمْ كَذَلِكَ إِذْ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ رِيحًا طَيِّبَةً فَتَأْخُذُهُمْ تَحْتَ أَبْطَانِهِمْ فَتَقْبِضُ رُوحَ كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ وَكُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَيَبْتَدِئُ شِرَارَ النَّاسِ يَنْهَارُجُونَ فِيهَا تَهَارُجُ الْحُمْرُ فَعَلَيْهِمْ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ

A *hadith* in the *Sahibayn* says,

اسْتَيْقَظَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- مِنْ نَوْمٍ وَهُوَ مُحْمَرٌّ وَجْهُهُ فَقَالَ: «لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَإِنِّي لِلْعَرَبِ مِنْ شَرِّ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ فُتِيحَ الْيَوْمِ مِنْ رَدْمِ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ». وَعَقَدَ تِسْعِينَ فُكُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَتَهْلِكُ وَفِينَا الصَّالِحُونَ فَقَالَ تَعَمَّ إِذَا كَثُرَ الْحَبْتُ.

“The Prophet woke up from a sleep with his face flushed red. He said, ‘There is no deity but Allah. Woe unto the Arabs from the evil that has drawn nigh. Today, a hole has been made in the barrier against *Ya’juj* and *Ma’juj* the size of this.’ He made a sign with his thumb and index finger. (Zaynab bint Jahsh the reporter says she asked him), ‘Messenger of Allah, shall we be destroyed while there are good men among us?’ He replied, ‘Yes, when the wicked are overwhelming’” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani, Shafi’).

[95] He replied, 'That over which my Lord has empowered me is better. Help me merely with some (man-)power and I shall erect a rampart¹¹⁶ between you and them.

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ
أَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾

[96] Bring me sheets of iron.¹¹⁷ At length, when he had filled the (space between the) two cliffs, he said, 'Blow.' Until, when he had made it red hot he said, 'Bring me, that I may pour over it molten copper.'¹¹⁸

آتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا
قَالَ آتُونِي أُفْرِغَ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] There! Neither they had the power to scale it, nor able to drill through.

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا أَن يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا
لَهُ نَقَبًا ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] He said, 'This is by the mercy of my Lord. But when my Lord's promise comes to pass,¹¹⁹ He will make it level. Surely, my Lord's promise is ever true.'¹²⁰

قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّي فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ
رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا
﴿٩٨﴾

116. The textual "*radm*" is used for a barrier, but something stronger than a mere "*sadd*" (Ibn Jarir).

ly that he would have first got rocks placed and then covered the wall with iron (Au.).

Qurtubi points out that this verse helps derive the rule that those men whose evil is feared can be imprisoned. It can be also be deduced that providing safety to the people is the responsibility of a government. Further, the government should not levy taxes when not required. Although offered, Dhu al-Qarnayn refused tribute, but only sought what he was short of, i.e., manpower.

118. Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak and others have understood "*qitr*" as meaning molten copper (Ibn Jarir). Some others have said it is lead (Qurtubi and others).

If it involves copper or brass, the process of welding the iron sheets together is technically known as brazing and it is the strongest way of joining two pieces of steel, having an advantage of strength over the simpler iron to iron welding (Au.).

117. "*Zubar*" is used both for pieces of iron as well as for sheets, and Dhu al-Qarnayn might have used both sheets as well as ingots. It is also like-

119. "When my Lord's promise comes to pass" – when will that be? The prevailing opinion is that, "when

the Lord's command to release *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* is pronounced.”

120. Ibn Mas'ud reported the Prophet:

عَنْ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَقِيتُ لَيْلَةً أُسْرِي بِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى قَالَ فَتَذَكَّرُوا أَمْرَ السَّاعَةِ فَرَدُّوا أَمْرَهُمْ إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ فَقَالَ لَا عِلْمَ لِي بِهَا فَرَدُّوا الْأَمْرَ إِلَى مُوسَى فَقَالَ لَا عِلْمَ لِي بِهَا فَرَدُّوا الْأَمْرَ إِلَى عِيسَى فَقَالَ أَمَا وَجِبْتُهَا فَلَا يَعْلمُهَا أَحَدٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ وَفِيمَا عَهَدَ إِلَيَّ رَبِّي عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنَّ الدَّجَالَ خَارِجٌ قَالَ وَمَعِيَ قَضِيْبَانِ فَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ذَابَ كَمَا يَذُوبُ الرِّصَاصُ قَالَ فَيُهْلِكُهُ اللَّهُ حَتَّى إِنَّ الْحَجَرَ وَالشَّجَرَ لَيَسْئَلُونَ يَا مُسْلِمُ إِنَّ نَحْيِي كَأَفْرَأَ فَتَعَالَ فَاقْتُلْهُ قَالَ فَيُهْلِكُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُ النَّاسُ إِلَى بِلَادِهِمْ وَأَوْطَانِهِمْ قَالَ فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ يُنْجِجُ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ فَيَطْفُونَ بِلَادَهُمْ لَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَهْلَكُوهُ وَلَا يَمْشُونَ عَلَى مَاءٍ إِلَّا شَرِبُوهُ ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُ النَّاسُ إِلَيَّ فَيَسْأَلُونَهُمْ فَأَدْعُو اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَيُهْلِكُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيُجِيبُهُمْ حَتَّى تَجُوى الْأَرْضُ مِنْ تَغْيِ رِيحِهِمْ قَالَ فَيُنزِلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الْمَطَرَ فَتَحْرِفُ أَجْسَادُهُمْ حَتَّى يَمْدُقَهُمْ فِي الْبَحْرِ قَالَ أَبِي ذَهَبَ عَلَيَّ هَاهُنَا شَيْءٌ لَمْ أَقْهَمُهُ كَأَدِيمٍ وَقَالَ يَرِيدُ بِنْتِ هَارُونَ ثُمَّ تَسْفُ الْحِيَالُ وَتُمَدُّ الْأَرْضُ مَدَّ الْأَدِيمِ ثُمَّ رَجَعَ إِلَى حَدِيثِ هُشَيْمٍ قَالَ فَفِيمَا عَهَدَ إِلَيَّ رَبِّي عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ إِذَا كَانَ كَذَلِكَ فَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ كَالْحَامِلِ الْمَتَمِّعِ الَّتِي لَا يَدْرِي أَهْلُهَا مَتَى تَفْجُوهُمْ بِوِلَادِهَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا

“I met Ibrahim, Musa and ‘Isa the night I was raised up. They were discussing the Hour. Ibrahim was asked about it. He said, ‘I know nothing about it.’ Then Musa was asked. He too said he knew nothing about it. Then ‘Isa was asked. He said, ‘No one knows when

the Hour will be struck. But my Lord has told me about things that will happen, without telling me when. He told me that Dajjal will appear. He will send me down to him. When he sees me, he will start dissolving like lead. Until, even rocks and trees will call out, “O Muslim, here is an unbeliever. Come and kill him.” Thus they will be destroyed and the people will return to their native lands. But then *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* will confront them, descending from every elevation. They will not pass by anything but eat it off and will not pass by any water but drink it off. So the people will come to me complaining of them. I will supplicate to Allah. He will destroy them until the earth will stink because of them. Then rains will come down and floods will carry their bodies to the seas. Then the mountains will be brought down, until the earth will be like a piece of leather spread out. This is my Lord's promise to me. At that moment the world will be like a pregnant female that has completed the period of pregnancy so that people do not know when it will give birth, by evening or morning” (Ibn Jarir).

[99] On that day We shall let some of them surge into others.¹²¹ And the Trumpet will be blown¹²² and We shall collect them all together.¹²³

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ
وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا ﴿٩٩﴾

[100] We shall present Jahannum that Day to the unbelievers, on display.¹²⁴

وَعَرَّضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

121. Suddi’s opinion is that the allusion is to the time when the barrier will be breached and *Ya’juj* and *Ma’juj* will be let loose surging into mankind, destroying life and property – a little before the Last Hour is struck. Another Qur’ānic verse says (21: 96),

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ
يَنْسِلُونَ (٩٦) وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ [الأنبياء : ٩٦ :
٩٧ ،

“Until, when *Ya’juj* and *Ma’juj* are let loose, they will sweep down from every high place, and the True Promise will draw nigh” (Ibn Kathir).

However, some others, including Ibn ‘Abbas have said that the allusion is to the Jinn and Mankind being let loose surging into each other before the Last Hour is struck (Qurtubi, Shawkani and others).

122. The Prophet has said in a *hadith* of Tirmidhi (Tuhfah),

كيف أنعم وصاحب القرن قد التقم القرن وحي
جهته يسمع متى يؤمر ، [فينفيخ] ، فقال أصحاب

النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم : كيف نقول ؟ قال :
قولوا : حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل على الله توكلنا

“How can I relax when the one with the Trumpet has placed it on his lips, has bent down his head and is all attentive to the word of command (to blow).” They asked, “What shall we say O Messenger of Allah?” He answered, “Say: ‘Allah is sufficient for us, the best to rely on; in Him we place our trust.’” (Ibn Kathir).

123. That is, collect them together for Reckoning.

124. That is, Jahannum will be brought close to the unbelievers. A *hadith* of Muslim says,

يُؤْتَى بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَهَا سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ زِمَامٍ مَعَ كُلِّ زِمَامٍ
سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يُجْرُوتُهَا

“On Judgment-day Jahannum will be brought nigh pulled by seventy thousand reins, each rein pulled by seventy thousand angels (Ibn Kathir).

[101] Those whose eyes had been under a veil from My admonishment, and (so) were not able to hear.¹²⁵

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي
وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ سَمْعًا ﴿١٠١﴾

[102] Do the unbelievers imagine then, that they can take My slaves as protectors besides me? Verily, We have prepared for the unbelievers Jahannum for hospitality.

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا
عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ تَزْلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] Say, 'Shall we tell you about those who lost most in respect to their efforts?

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا
﴿١٠٣﴾

[104] Those whose efforts were misguided in the life of the world, while they thought they were doing well in performance.¹²⁶

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ
يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

125. To say that they were not able to hear, rather than saying that they were deaf, bears greater eloquence, since the unbelievers were not deaf. In fact, they had heard, and known the truth. But, in their pride and insolence, they could not bear to hear a thing about the truth (Razi, Qurtubi, Shawkani).

126. `Ali was asked about exactly to whom was this verse applicable. He replied, "Those of the people of the Book whose earlier generations were on truth. But, their subsequent generations associated with Allah, imported innovations into their religion, worked in the service of falsehood under the impression that they were serving Truth, who worked on error but thought they were rightly

guided. Their efforts were lost in this world while they thought they were doing good." According to other reports, he had their priestly and ascetic class in his mind, who strive hard but in vain (Tabari, Qurtubi, Shawkani).

When Sa'd b. Waqqas was asked if it was applicable to the Haruriyyah (*Khawarij*), he said in his opinion the Haruriyyah were *Fasiqun* while the verse was applicable to the unbelievers from among the Jews and Christians (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

But of course, as several of the *Salaf* have said, the application is common to all kinds of deluded people who work with good intentions, employing right means, but for

[105] They disbelieved in the revelations of their Lord and the encounter with Him.' So their efforts have failed¹²⁷ and We shall not assign any weight to them on the Day of Judgement.¹²⁸

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ
فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا تُقِيمُ هُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًّا ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] That is their reward - Jahannum - for what they denied and held My revelations and My Messengers in mockery.

ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا
آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

wrong causes, without first checking whether the causes they serve are legitimate. The textual words, “while they thought they were doing well in works” may not be missed for their accuracy. For, these people paid attention only to their “works” and thought they were serving humanity well. But they destroyed their relationship with their Creator, and cannot, therefore, receive any reward from Him (Au.).

127. Mawdudi comments: “No matter how great the unbelievers’ worldly attainments might be they are bound to come to an end with the end of the world itself. All that man is immensely proud of – his grand palaces and splendid mansions, his universities and libraries, his grand highways and wondrous vehicles of transportation, his great inventions and staggering industries, his magnificent arts and sciences, his impressive museums and art galleries

– will all be left behind at the time of man’s death and will have absolutely no weight in God’s scale.”

128. A *hadith* of the Prophet says,

إِنَّهُ لَيَأْتِي الرَّجُلَ الْعَظِيمُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يَرِي
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ وَقَالَ اقْرَأُوا {فَلَا تُقِيمُ هُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًّا}

“A huge fat man will appear on the Day of Judgment. He will weigh no more than a fly’s wing. Read if you want: “We shall not assign any weight to them on the Day of Judgment” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). The report is in the *Sahihayn* (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

Qurtubi adds: When Ibn Mas`ud once climbed a tree and some people laughed at his extraordinary thin legs, the Prophet remarked,

مَا تَضْحَكُونَ لِرَجُلٍ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَثْقَلُ فِي الْمِيزَانِ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ أُحَدٍ

“You laugh at legs that will weigh out the deeds that will be heavier

[107] Surely, those who believed and did righteous deeds: for them will be Gardens of Firdaws,¹²⁹ in hospitality.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

than Mount Uhud on the Day of Standing?” This shows that some people will be weighed.

Obesity in any case, is something disapproved of in Islam. That is, of the type caused by overeating. The Prophet has said, “A fat scholar is the most hated of mankind in the sight of Allah.” (The *hadith* is in Abu Nu`aym, of unknown strength: Au.). Nonetheless, ‘Imran b. Hussain’s reports the Prophet as having said (in a *hadith* of Bukhari),

خَيْرَ أُمَّتِي قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ ...
ثُمَّ إِنَّ بَعْدَكُمْ قَوْمًا يَشْهَدُونَ وَلَا يُسْتَشْهَدُونَ وَيَحْلُونُونَ
وَلَا يُؤْتَمَنُونَ وَيَتَدْرُونَ وَلَا يَفُونَ وَيَطْهَرُ فِيهِمُ السَّمَرُ

“The best of my followers are of my generation, then those that follow, then those that follow. Later, a people will come who will bear witness without being asked, who will be dishonest and never trusted, who will vow but never fulfill and in whom will appear obesity.”

Indeed Allah has condemned overeating in the Qur`an itself. He said (47: 12),

يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ [محمد : ١٢]

“As for those who have disbelieved, they indulge and eat as the animals eat. Fire is their destination.” Whoever ate and drank a lot will end up a greedy man, and at night he will be most lazy (to get up for Prayers). Such a man’s days will be spent in worries and nights in sleep.

129. ‘Ubadah b. Samit and others have reported the Prophet,

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ أَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ لِلْمُجَاهِدِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَتَيْنِ كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ فَاسْأَلُوهُ الْفِرْدَوْسَ فَإِنَّهُ أَوْسَطُ الْجَنَّةِ وَأَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ أَرَاهُ فَوْقَهُ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ وَمِنْهُ تَفَجَّرُ أَنْهَارُ الْجَنَّةِ

“Paradise has a hundred levels that are prepared for the Mujahideen in His cause. Between each level the distance is like the distance between the heaven and earth. Therefore, when you supplicate Allah, supplicate for Firdaws. It is the highest and the best part of Paradise. As I see it, above it is the `Arsh of the Rahman. It is from here that the springs of Paradise sprout forth.” (The *hadith* is in the *Sahih* works: Ibn Kathir).

[108] Abiding therein forever, not wishing to move out from there.¹³⁰

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

[109] Say, 'If the sea was ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the sea will be exhausted before the Words of my Lord are exhausted,' even if We brought the like of it, in supplement.'

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مَدَادًا لَكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

[110] Say, 'I am only a mortal, the like of you (except that) it has been revealed unto me that your God is One God. So, let him, who desires to meet with his Lord, work righteous deeds and associate not anyone in the worship of his Lord.'¹³¹

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Another report says that Umm Haritha came to inquire about her son Haritha ibn Suraqah who was struck by an arrow at Badr. He was a mere boy then. She asked the Prophet where her son would be on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet replied,

يَا أُمَّ حَارِثَةَ إِنَّهَا جَنَّانٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ ابْنَكَ أَصَابَ
الْفِرْدَوْسَ الْأَعْلَى

“O Umm Haritha. Paradise is several gardens. And your son has reached the highest level of Firdaws” (Tabari, Bukhari).

130. The companions of Anas were heard saying, “The first to enter Paradise will say, ‘Perhaps I have been let in first because there is no one better than me.’ And the one to enter

last will say, ‘My Lord allowed me in last because He did not bestow on anyone what He bestowed on me’” (Tabari). That is Paradise is an abode of such great beauty and blessings that everyone will think he received what no one received (Au.).

131. Mu`awiyah b. Sufyan is reported (in Tabarani: Ibn Kathir) that this is the last of the verses to be revealed to the Prophet (Ibn Jarir). Probably he meant meaning-wise, and not chronologically, since this is a Makkan chapter (Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Jarir explains the verse with the following report. Somebody asked ‘Ubadah b. Samit, “I pray and fast a lot – for Allah. But I wish to be praised for it. What have you to say

about it?” He answered, “They are all worthless. Allah has said, ‘I am the best of those associated with. If there be a deed in which another has a share, I give away my share also to the one associated.’”

According to a narration in Hakim and Bayhaqi (judged *Sahih* by Albani: S. Ibrahim), someone asked the Prophet,

أَرَأَيْتَ رَجُلًا عَزَا يَلْتَمِسُ الْأَجْرَ وَالذِّكْرَ، مَا لَهُ؟ فَقَالَ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا شَيْءَ لَهُ

“What do you have to say about a man who takes part in a battle seeking the reward as well earning a name; what will he get!?” The Prophet answered, “He will get no rewards.” That sounded tough for the Companions. So the man asked the same question but got the same answer thrice, “He will get no rewards” (Alusi, Shwkani).

Ahmed, Nasa’I, Ibn Hibban, Tabarani and Hakim (who declared it trustworthy) have reported the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

مَنْ عَزَا وَهُوَ لَا يَنْوِي فِي عَزَاتِهِ إِلَّا عَفَا فَ لَهُ مَا نَوَى

“He who fought but did not intend except to get a piece of rope, then he will get what he intended” (Alusi).

Several *ahadith* of more or less this meaning are to be found in Ahmed, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi and other works with varying degrees of reliability. In a *hadith* preserved by Hafiz Abu Ya’la, the Prophet said,

مَنْ صَلَّى يُرَائِي فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ

“Whoever did the Prayers for a show off, committed Association (*shirk*).”

The above is a weak report (Au.).

In fact, there is a *hadith* (of unknown strength: Au.) reported by Ibn Qays Khuza’i which says, “Whoever stood up making a show of himself, will have Allah angry with him until he sat down” (Ibn Kathir).

Nevertheless, other *ahadith* make it clear that if one feels pleased at somebody praising him for a good act, then, that is of no harm. Muslim has a *hadith* which says that someone asked the Prophet,

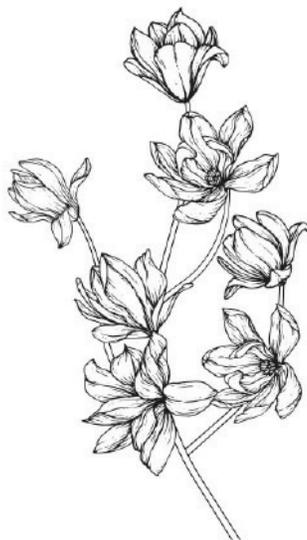
أَرَأَيْتَ الرَّجُلَ يَعْمَلُ الْعَمَلَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَيَحْمَدُهُ النَّاسُ
عَلَيْهِ قَالَ: تَبْلُغُ عَاجِلَ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ (صحيح
مسلم)

“What have you to say about a person who does good for the sake of Allah. But people come to know and praise him for that?” He replied, “That is the immediate glad tiding for a believer.”

There is another report of this nature in Tirmidhi. So, there is a difference between doing something to please other than Allah, and feeling pleased when praised for a good deed (Ma`arif).

Qurtubi adds that Zirr b. Hubaysh said, "Whoever wishing to rise up for *Qiyam al-Layl* recited the last verse of this chapter will be helped in breaking his sleep." 'Abdah said,

"We experimented and found that it works." Qurtubi ends by quoting Ibn al-Arabiyy, who quoted his Master Turtushi who said, "Let not one of you spend all his time in the company of friends and relatives, while you know that Allah said, "So, let him, who desires to meet with his Lord, work righteous deeds and associate not anyone in the worship of his Lord." ﴿۱۸﴾



Surah 19
Maryam

Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Kaf. Ha. Ya. `Ayn. Sad.

كهيعص ﴿١﴾

[2] (This is) an account of your Lord's mercy
on His slave Zakariyyah.²

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا ﴿٢﴾

1. `A'isha, Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Zubayr have said that this chapter is Makkan, to which Muqatil has added that the Prostration verse 58 was revealed in Madinah. Suyuti has said in his Itqan that another verse 71 is also Madinan. As for the connection between this and the previous chapter, it may be pointed out that the previous one mentioned some wondrous phenomena, such as that of the Companions of the Cave. This one also mentions the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. It is also said that the Companions of the Cave will once again wake up and perform Hajj with `Isa ibn Maryam. So, if this report is true, then this is another connecting thematic link (Alusi). Thanwi adds: The chapter primarily deals with Tawhid, Risalah

and Ma`ad (Oneness of Allah, Messengership and the Hereafter).

Ibn Is-haq has stated that Ja`far ibn abi Talib had read out the opening verses of this chapter in Najashi's court when he asked the Muslims to explain their position vis a vis `Isa ibn Maryam (Ibn Kathir).

That was in the fifth year of the Holy Prophet's advent (Majid); when Najashi heard what the Qur'an had to say about `Isa ibn Maryam, he cried until his beard was wet (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

2. Zakariyyah (*asws*): An Israeli Prophet about whom Bukhari's report tells us that he was a carpenter by profession (Ibn Kathir); but not much is known of him through trustworthy sources. Mawdudi uses

[3] When He called upon his Lord – a secret call.³

إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾

Israeli sources to write the following about his office: “Zechariah .. was from the family of Aaron.. After their occupation in Palestine, the Israelites entrusted the government of the land to the twelve tribes, all descended from the Prophet Jacob (peace be on him) by dividing the functions of the government between them; whereas, the religious duties were assigned to the thirteenth tribe, the Levites. Even among the Levites though, the house that was set apart to ‘sanctify the most holy things..’ and to ‘burn incense before the Lord’, was the house of Aaron. Other Levites were permitted to enter the Temple, but their duties were ‘to assist the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God ..’ (I Chronicle 23: 28). The were also required to ‘.. stand every morning, thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening, and whenever burnt offerings are offered to the Lord on Sabbath, new moons, and feast days ..’ (I Chronicle 23: 30-1).

“The descendents of Aaron comprised 24 houses, and these per-

formed their duties in turn. One of these was the house of Abijah whose chief was Zechariah. Whenever it was his house’s turn to serve the Temple, it was Zechariah’s duty to go there and burn the incense.”

(The above is, for what it is, a *Biblical* account. We have only quoted for interest. Otherwise, it should go without saying that any conclusions based on the above would have a question mark before it: Au.).

3. There could be several reasons why he supplicated secretly, e.g., because he was supplicating in the depth of night and did not wish to disturb others, or because keeping the voice low in supplication is a sign of sincerity. Another is, maybe he feared that the people around him might taunt him for seeking a child in such an advanced age (Razi, Qurtubi).

In any case, adds the *Sufi* commentator Thanwi, the verse demonstrates that “*Dhikr al-Khafiy*” (sub-vocal *Dhikr*) is the preferred way of remembrance (as against the Jahri – vocal - of the *Sufis*: Au.). This can be supported by another Qur’anic statement (7: 55),

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً [الأعراف : ٥٥]

[4] He said, 'My Lord! Verily, the bones within me have become fragile, the head glistens gray with old age,⁴ yet, never have I been in my supplication to You, My Lord, unblessed.⁵

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ
الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَمَا أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا
﴿٤﴾

[5] And I am apprehensive of my kinsfolk after me;⁶ and my wife is barren; so grant me from Yourself a kinsman.⁷

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ
امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا
﴿٥﴾

*"Call upon your Lord in humility
and in secret."*

4. It is said that Zakariyyah was then seventy years old (Ibn Jarir).

5. That is, I have been granted whenever I supplicated (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The manner of prayer suggests that it is desirable to first mention one's own weakness during supplication and acknowledge Allah's various blessings before stating one's own needs (Qurtubi, Shafi' and others).

6. That is, he was very unsure of his kinsmen carrying out the religious duties after him, and be mindful of what the House of Ya`qub stood for (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). In Yusuf Ali's words, "This preface shows the fervent faith of Zakariya. Zakariya was a prophet of the Most High Allah. His office was in the Temple, and his relatives were his colleagues. But he found in them no true spirit of

the service to Allah and man. He was filled with anxiety as to who would uphold the godly ideas he had in mind, which were strange to his worldly colleagues."

7. The textual word "*waliyy*" is used in several senses. One of them is "cousins" or those related through the father, such as paternal uncle. However, here it must be interpreted as "a heir" or "a progeny" in view of another of Zakariyyah's supplication noted in the Qur'an which said (3: 38),

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً [آل عمران : ٣٨]
"My Lord! Grant me by Your
grace a progeny pure" (Alusi).

And the implication of the words, "the bones within me are fragile, the head glistens gray with old age.." and "my wife is barren .." is that there is no limit to what one can ask of Allah (Thanwi).

[6] Who shall inherit me and inherit from the House of Ya`qub;⁸ and make him, My Lord, well-pleasing.⁹

يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ﴿٦﴾

8. That is, Mujahid, Hasan, Abu Saleh and others explain, he may inherit Messengership from me and knowledge (of the past revelations) from the House of Ya`qub. Our Prophet (*saws*) said while passing over this verse, “May Allah show mercy to Zakariyyah, he possessed no wealth for anyone to inherit” (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Kathir adds: Although the above is a truncated report (*mursal*), it does not contradict any trustworthy tradition in meaning.

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir also wrote: It could not have been wealth which Zakariyyah wanted his progeny to inherit because, firstly he was a mere carpenter, secondly, Prophets are other-worldly, and thirdly, our own Prophet has said,

إِنَّا مَعْشَرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ لَا نُورَثُ

“We the brotherhood of Prophets are not inherited.”

Fourthly, Thanwi and Shafi` add, the House of Ya`qub did not leave, and could not have left, any wealth for Yahya (*asws*) to inherit several generations down the line. In fact, Thanwi argues, Zakariyyah did not need a son to inherit his wealth, if there was

any. The whole extended family was already there to inherit it.

On the subject of inheritance, Alusi deals with the important question over which the *Shi`ah* split from the Sunnis. He writes: This *hadith* quoted above is also found in the most important of *Shi`ah* works, “*Al-Kafiyy*” of Kulayni. Their scholars accept it as trustworthy, and, therefore, they have no basis for their claim that the first caliph denied Fatimah her share in the Prophet’s inheritance. Kulayni has another report which says, “Sulayman inherited Da`ud and our Prophet inherited Sulayman,” which makes it obvious that the allusion is not to wealth (Alusi). But perhaps their scholars do not mention the *hadith* before their laity in Muharram when they shed lakes of tears over this and other such fabricated political issues (Au.).

Zamakhshari wrote: Allah (*swt*) said, “Inherit me, and inherit from the House of Ya`qub”, that is, He added “from the House ..” That is because, not everyone in the House of Ya`qub was a Prophet from whom (knowledge) could be inherited.

[7] (He was answered), 'O Zakariyyah. We give you the glad tiding of a boy. His name is Yahya; a name We did not assign to anyone earlier.'¹⁰

يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ لَمْ
نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٧﴾

[8] He said, 'My Lord! How shall I have a boy seeing my woman has been barren and I have attained to extreme old age?''¹¹

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ
أُمْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا
﴿٨﴾

Alusi also adds: Some reports say that Zakariyyah (*asws*) died before Yahya (*asws*) grew up. That does not in any way affect Yahya inheriting the knowledge, or good qualities of his father. Further (although the Qur'an did not state specifically whether Zakariyyah belonged to the House of Ya'qub by blood or not: Au.), there are differences in opinion over his exact lineage. Some say he was a son of Maathan, and 'Imran – Maryam's father - was his brother.

9. That is someone pleasant and acceptable to all: his Lord, as well His creations (Ibn Jarir).

10. The apparent meaning expressed in the translation is supported by Mujahid and Qatadah, (meaning, Allah did not name anyone as Yahya [John of the *Bible*: Au.] before him, even if humans did it: Au.). However, Ibn 'Abbas thought the meaning is: no barren woman of the sort his mother was ever gave birth to a son

like him. A third possible meaning expressed by Mujahid is that the textual term "*samiyya*" is for "*shabiha*" meaning, "similar" or "equal" (Ibn Jarir). He derived this meaning from another verse of this chapter itself which said (no. 65)

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ
لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا [مریم : ٦٥]

"(He is) the Lord of the heavens and earth. Therefore, worship Him, and persevere in devotion to Him. Do you know anyone of a (similar) name as He?" (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

11. Ibn Jarir explains that when Zakariyyah asked, "How will I have a son?" he did not mean to express his doubt, but rather to ask for details concerning the process; e.g., would he have to take another wife, or the present one would conceive, and, whether regenerative power would be restored, or, the conception would be entirely miraculous?

[9] Said He, 'Even so,'¹² your Lord has said, 'Easy it is unto Me. Indeed, I created you earlier while you were nothing.'

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٩﴾

[10] He said, 'My Lord, appoint to me a sign.'¹³ Said He, 'Your sign is that you shall not speak to the people for three nights, (although) sound and healthy.'¹⁴

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا ﴿١٠﴾

[11] So he went out to his people from the Prayer-niche¹⁵ and signaled to them¹⁶ that (they should), 'Sing glory morning and evening.'¹⁷

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿١١﴾

12. The meaning is, "Presently, this might be the situation: your wife is barren and you are an old worn out man (but things will happen despite all this)" - Ibn Jarir. Ibn Kathir adds: There was an element of surprise hidden in the manner the news was received. In contrast, Ibrahim was less surprised since, after all, he had a son earlier, also granted in old age.

13. That is, a sign of pregnancy (Thanwi).

14. Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Mujahid and others said that he felt tongue-tied but without becoming dumb. Ibn Zayd said that he was able to do his adhkar, but unable to speak out aloud. (Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn al-Mundhir have this report: Shawkani). Another interpretation however, of the word "sawiyya" as offered by Ibn `Abbas is: continually. That is, for three continuous days he

would not be able to speak (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

(The present day New Testament supports the Qur'anic statement): "And when he came out, he could not speak unto them.. He beckoned unto them and remained speechless." (Lk. 1: 20) – Majid.

15. The textual word "mihrab" has its origin in "harb" (to fight) and refers to that corner of a house which is reserved for devotional acts – a place where one fights *Shaytan* (Alusi).

16. The translation reflects the understanding of the majority. Mujahid and Suddi have said however that by the word "awha" the allusion is to writing. That is, he wrote to them (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

17. Such is the level of keenness of Prophets to bring people closer to their Creator. When Zakariyyah

[12] (We said), 'O Yahya,¹⁸ hold the Book firmly.¹⁹ And We granted him judgment (although still) a boy.²⁰

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴿١٢﴾

could not speak, he used signals to convey to the people that in the final analysis what mattered most was how close they were to their Lord (Au.).

Yusuf Ali makes a short study in contrast to teach us how far we need to go to understand the Qur'an, and in this case, variations in Qur'anic statements. He compares the verses as here with those of *Surah Al-'Imran*, number 41. Here it said: "Your sign is that you shall not speak to the people for three nights, (although) sound and healthy.' So he went out to his people from the Prayer-niche and signaled to them, 'Sing glory unto Him morning and evening.'" Verse 41 of *Al-'Imran* said, "He prayed, 'My Lord! Appoint to me a sign. He said, 'Your sign is that you shall not speak to the people for three days, save by signs. Therefore, remember your Lord much in the evening and in the morning.'" Yusuf Ali then writes, "Compare this verse with verse 3: 41. The variations are interesting. Here it is 'for three nights'; there it is 'for three days.' The meaning is the same, for a day is a period of 24 hours. But the point of view is

different in each case. There it was from the point of view of the Ummat or Congregation, among whom he worked by day; here the point of view is that of his individual soul, which spent the night in prayers and praise. Notice again that at the end of the next verse, we have here, 'In the morning and in the evening', and at the end of 3: 41, "In the evening and in the morning' – showing again that the point of view is reversed."

18. So the supplication was granted and a new Prophet was raised. However, the Israelites did not treat him as a gift from Allah. The Gospels tell us that he was put to death by the Israeli ruler Herod. The story as told in Matthew is as follows: "... Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because John said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her

[13] And a tenderness from Us²¹ and purity, and he was godfearing.

وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٣﴾

[14] Dutiful to his parents, and not at all a sinful tyrant.²²

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَمَن يَكُن جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ﴿١٤﴾

[15] Peace unto him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive.²³

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; but because of his oath and his guests he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. (Matthew 14: 3-11)” – Mawdudi.

19. That is, learn it well (Ibn Kathir).

20. The textual “*hukm*” could also be understood to mean knowledge. (Or wisdom: Alusi). It is said that once some children invited Yahya to join them in their play. He spurned the idea, saying, “I have not been created for games” (Ibn Jarir), or, “We have not been created for games” (Zamakhshari, Razi). Abu Nu`aym, Ibn Marduwayh and Daylami have a report which says that he was given knowledge and understanding, and became a devout child at the age of seven (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali lays emphasis on accuracy of meaning. He writes, “*Hukm*, translated Wisdom, implies something more than Wisdom; it is the Wisdom or Judgment that is entitled to judge and command, as in the matter of denouncing sin.”

21. Another meaning that the textual “*hanan*” affords is, love. That is, he was made lovable (‘Ikrimah: Alusi).

22. A future Prophet is not expected to be a sinful tyrant. Why then did Allah say these words? Shah `Abdul Qadir has a pointed remark: Most sons granted after great entreaties are spoilt ones (Shabbir).

Thanwi writes: The words, “We granted him judgment (although still) a boy, a tenderness from Us, purity, and he was godfearing,” speak of the inner behavior, while the words, “Dutiful to his parents, and he was not at all a sinful tyrant,” speak of external behavior.

23. Ibn `Atiyyah has said that there are three moments in a man’s life

[16] And narrate in the Book (the story of) Maryam.²⁴ When she withdrew from her folks to a place toward the east.²⁵

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾

[17] She took against them a curtain. Then We sent to her Our Spirit.²⁶ He appeared before her as a man in all respects.

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾

[18] She said, 'I seek refuge in the Merciful from you - if you be godfearing.'

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾

[19] He said, 'I am but a Messenger from your Lord to give you a boy most pure.'

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾

[20] She exclaimed, 'How can I have a son seeing no man has ever touched me, nor am I an harlot?'²⁷

قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَمَمَا يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَمَا أَكُ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] He said, 'Even so, your Lord has said, "Easy it is unto Me; that We may appoint him a sign unto mankind and a mercy from Us: it was an affair (long) decreed."'

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيَّئٌ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَقْضِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾

when he cannot escape suffering: birth, death, resurrection. Allah saved Yahya from the suffering of all three occasions (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

24. Allah follows up the story of Yahya's miraculous birth with that of Jesus Christ to impress on the Christians that a miraculous birth was nothing new in the family of `Imran (Au.).

25. Bayhaqi, Ibn `Asakir and Hakim, who declared it *Sahih*, report that according to Ibn Mas`ud and Ibn `Abbas, it was the need to cleanse herself after menstruation that had driven

Maryam to a spot toward the east (Shawkani).

26. That is, Jibril (Ibn Jarir from the Companions and Followers). A possible explanation as to why he was called "Our Spirit" is that he happens to be very close to Allah (Zamakhshari).

27. Why did she have to say that she was not an adulteress? Imam Razi (and Qurtubi) answer that one possibility is that when she said, "No man has touched me," she meant "I am not married." Accordingly, she had to add that neither is she an adulteress.

[22] So she conceived him,²⁸ and retired with him to a remote place.²⁹

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَّتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَاصِيًا ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] And the birth pangs drove her³⁰ to the trunk of a (date) palm-tree. She cried (in anguish), 'O that I had died before this and become forgotten, lost in oblivion.'³¹

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مِّنْ سَيِّئًا ﴿٢٣﴾

28. Both the believing, as well as non-believing classes have wondered how a woman could conceive without a male. The non-believing class has an excuse. But what excuse the religious class – Jews – could have? Do they not believe that Adam was created without a male and female? Hawwa from a male? And wasn't Yahya, an Israeli Prophet whose mother was barren and father decrepit, the result of a miraculous conception? As for the non-believing class, at least by our times they have no excuse for their skepticism. There are several species of reptiles that conceive without a male. Recently scientists were amazed to discover that a female shark became pregnant in a pool that had only females. The said shark had been brought in at a time she was a baby and had all her life lived among females alone. Allah has power over all things is a refrain little believed in (Au.).

29. Wahab b. Munabbih has said that when Maryam had conceived 'Isa and the signs of pregnancy began to show, she retired to *Bayt al-Lahm* (Bethlehem) in order to be away from the eyes of the people. And Majid points out that it could as well have been another obscure little village of the same name, now some 7 km from Nazareth.

Pregnancy itself might not have been visible until late months. Some women are reported to have carried without they themselves knowing for as many as eight months (Au.).

30. Another possible connotation that the textual "*aj'aha*" suggest is that the birth pangs took her by surprise at the palm-tree (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

31. Zamakhshari writes that linguistically "*nasyu*" is something too insignificant to be remembered.

[24] He called her from below her,³² 'Grieve not. Your Lord has set below you a rivulet.

فَتَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ
رَبُّكَ تَحْتِكَ سَرِيًّا ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] And shake toward yourself the trunk of the palm-tree.³³ It will drop down on you dates fresh and ripe.

وَهَزِي إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ
رُطَبًا حَنِيًّا ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] So, eat and drink and cool (your) eyes, and if you should see any mortal, say, "I have vowed a fast unto the Merciful.³⁴ So, today I shall not speak to any man."

فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرِينِ مِنْ
الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ
صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] At length she brought him to her folk carrying him. They said, 'O Maryam! You have truly brought a thing unprecedented.

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ
جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾

32. Probably she was at a somewhat raised spot (Au.). Ibn `Abbas, `Amr b. Maymun, `Alqamah, Dahhak and others have said that it was Jibril who called out to her from below her. Nevertheless, Mujahid, Hasan, Wahab b. Munabbih, Sa`id b. Jubayr and others have thought that it was the new born child `Isa who called her (Ibn Jarir). The textual term "*sariyy*" in any case refers also to a great, noble man. Hasan has said, "Isa ibn Maryam was a *sariyy*" among men (Qurtubi).

33. The stem of a palm-tree is not something that can be shaken easily, especially by a woman, weakened by childbirth. Scholars have pointed out the importance of adopting means towards material ends. Although, dates could drop down by

themselves, Maryam was required to shake the heavy trunk, to the best of her strength and not sit fingers crossed, waiting for Allah's help to descend (based on Qurtubi).

34. While some of the *Salaf* have interpreted the word "*sawm*" as meaning "*samt*" (silence, i.e., "a vow of silence") others have said that some kinds of Jewish fasts required abstinence from talk also – except for words of remembrance, (or a short sentence if need be). But others have said that Maryam was to inform of her fast through signs and tokens (Ibn Jarir and others). As for Islamic fasts, Qurtubi adds, it is only indecent talk that is prohibited.

It is said that once Abu Bakr passed by a woman. They said she had

[28] O sister of Harun!³⁵ Your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother an harlot.'

يَا أُخْتِ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأً سَوِيًّا
وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٨﴾

vowed that she would not speak to anyone. He said, "Islam has annulled all that" (Alusi).

35. Several of the *Salaf* have made it clear that the said Harun was not Musa's brother. A few have said that all those devoted to Allah referred to themselves as Harun. In fact, Mughira ibn Sho'ba reports the following: "The Prophet sent me to Najran (a Christian area). They asked me, 'Don't you read (in the Qur'an), 'O sister of Harun?'" I said yes. They said, 'But you know that many generations have been there between 'Isa and Musa.' I said nothing and asked the Prophet when I returned. He said, 'Why did you not tell them that they used to adopt the names of their prophets and righteous men?'" (Ibn Jarir). The *hadith* is in Muslim and Tirmidhi (Qurtubi). Qatadah has said that at any time there used to be thousands among them called Harun (Alusi).

Asad comments: "In ancient Semitic usage, a person's name was often linked with that of a renowned an-

cestor or founder of the tribal line. Thus, for instance, a man of the tribe of Banu Tamim was sometimes addressed as 'son of Tamim' or 'brother of Tamim.' Since Mary belonged to the priestly caste, and hence descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, she was called a 'sister of Aaron' (in the same way as her cousin Elisabeth, the wife of Zachariah, is spoken of in Luke i, 5, as one 'of the daughters of Aaron.'")

A fuller account of Asad's quote from Luke is as follows: "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

In fact, Shabbir reminds us, the Qur'an itself has a similar usage. It referred to Hud (*asws*) as (46: 21) "Ad's brother" although 'Ad was the great grand progenitor of Hud.

[29] She pointed to him.³⁶ They said, 'How shall we talk to someone in the cradle, a babe?'

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] He spoke out, 'I am indeed a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet.'³⁷

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] He has made me blessed wherever I be,³⁸ and enjoined on me prayer and charity, so long as I live.

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ﴿٣١﴾

[32] And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant.³⁹

وَبِرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَمَا جَعَلَنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die and the day I am raised up alive.'

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] Such was `Isa son of Maryam, a word of truth wherein they are doubting.⁴⁰

ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

36. The words, "She pointed to him," also give us to believe that all the while Maryam was speaking them in signs and tokens (Qurtubi).

37. That is, it has been predestined that I should be a prophet and receive a Book. This is how `Ikrimah has explained this verse (Ibn Jarir).

38. Mujahid and Sufyan have explained "mubarak" as "mu'allim". That is, someone who will preach the good word wherever he happened to be. Another connotation is: beneficent (Ibn Jarir and others).

39. This verse, as well as several others of this kind, tells us that Prayers,

charity and kindness toward the parents have been elements of all revealed religions (Qurtubi).

Readers of the New Testament can be very surprised by Jesus' behavior towards his mother. Majid throws light on this important aspect of the meaning held in the verse: "This refutes and contradicts the position implied in various passages of the NT that the attitude of Jesus towards his mother was cold and indifferent. See Mt. 12: 46-50; Mk. 3: 31-35; Lk. 8: 19-21.

40. People have always been in grave doubts regarding `Isa ibn Maryam and have, therefore, disputed be-

[35] *It was not for Allah that He should take a son. Exalted is He. When He determines a thing, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is.*⁴¹

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ سُبْحَانَهُ
إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

﴿٣٥﴾

[36] *(Jesus too had said) 'Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path.'*⁴²

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ
مُسْتَقِيمٌ

﴿٣٦﴾

tween themselves. Some said, like the Jews, that he was a magician, a soothsayer and an illegitimate child. The Talmud consigns him to Hell, along with dogs. Others said, he was a Son of God; yet others that he was God himself; a few that he was one of a Trinity of gods. It was only a handful who believed in Christ's own claim which can be found in today's Gospels also that he was no more than a Messenger of Allah (Ibn Jarir with some additions).

Some scholars have noted however, says Qurtubi, that it was only once that `Isa ibn Maryam spoke in infancy. Once Maryam's chastity was established, he grew up as a normal child. Ibn `Abbas has said that his mother and Yusuf the carpenter took him away to Egypt fearing attempt on his life. They brought him back after 12 years, (and, to be sure, he immediately started preaching and making evoking enmity: Au.).

Mawdudi's comment touches on another aspect, "The thrust of the

argument so far clearly reveals that the Christian belief in Jesus is false. Although John was born in a miraculous manner, this birth did not make him God's son. Similarly, although Jesus too was born by means of another miracle, this in no way provided any reason for considering him to be God's son. Jesus' birth was no more miraculous than John's and there are no grounds for referring to John as God's son. Remember that according to reports which are accepted by Christians, both John and Jesus were born miraculously. In Luke, both miracles are described in terms which bear close resemblance to the Qur'anic version of the miracles."

41. Where is the need of a son for someone who creates what He wishes with a single command? (Alusi and others).

42. Yusuf Ali explains the positioning of the verse, "As opposed to the crooked superstitions which take refuge in all sorts of metaphysical soph-

[37] But the factions differed between themselves. Woe then to the unbelievers for the scene of a dreadful Day.⁴³

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ
لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَّشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] How plainly they will hear and see the Day they come to Us!? Yet the transgressors are in clear error today.

أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ يَأْتُونَنَا لَكِنِ
الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] And warn them of the Day of regrets, when the affair will be judged,⁴⁴ but they are heedless and (so) they are not believing.⁴⁵

وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ
فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

istries to prove three in one and one in three; in the Qur'an there is no crookedness. Christ's teaching was simple, like his life, but the Christians have made it crooked."

are real, Allah will admit him into Paradise regardless of his deeds" (Ibn Kathir).

43. That is, the Day of Judgment, when nothing will profit without the right sort of beliefs. A *hadith* of Bukhari and Muslim reports the Prophet,

44. Yusuf Ali explains the textual word "*mash-had*": ".. (it) implies many things: (1) the time or place where evidence is taken, as in a Court of Judgment; (2) the time or place where people are produced (to be judged); and (3) the occasion for such production for the taking of evidence. A very expressive way for describing the Day of Judgment."

مَنْ شَهِدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنَّ
مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَأَنَّ عِيسَى عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ
وَكَالِمَتُهُ أَلْفَاهَا إِلَى مَرْبِّهِ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ وَالْجَنَّةُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّارُ
حَقٌّ أَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ الْجَنَّةَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ

45. Abu Sa'id reported the Prophet as having said:

"Whoever testified that there is no deity save Allah the One, that He has no partners, that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger, that 'Isa is a slave, His Messenger, a Word that He cast upon Maryam, and a Spirit from Him, and that Heaven and Hell

يُؤْتَى بِالْمَوْتِ كَهَيْئَةِ كَنْبَشٍ أَمْلَحَ فَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ يَا أَهْلَ
الْجَنَّةِ فَيَسْرِعُونَ وَيَنْظُرُونَ فَيَقُولُ هَلْ تَعْرِفُونَ هَذَا
فَيَقُولُونَ نَعَمْ هَذَا الْمَوْتُ وَكُلُّهُمْ قَدْ رَأَهُ ثُمَّ يُنَادِي
يَا أَهْلَ النَّارِ فَيَسْرِعُونَ وَيَنْظُرُونَ فَيَقُولُ هَلْ تَعْرِفُونَ
هَذَا فَيَقُولُونَ نَعَمْ هَذَا الْمَوْتُ وَكُلُّهُمْ قَدْ رَأَهُ فَيُذْبَحُ
ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ خُلُودٌ فَلَا مَوْتَ وَيَا أَهْلَ النَّارِ
خُلُودٌ فَلَا مَوْتَ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ: وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ ..

[40] Indeed, it is We who inherit the earth and all that are upon it, and it is to Us that they shall be returned.⁴⁶

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا وَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

“Death will be brought forth on the Day of Judgment in the form of a fat ram and placed between Heaven and Hell. Then a crier will call, ‘O inhabitants of Paradise.’ They will gaze around and look. He will ask, ‘Do you recognize it?’ They will reply, ‘Yes. This is death.’ And everyone would have seen it. Then the crier will call, ‘O inhabitants of the Fire.’ They will gaze around and look. He will ask, ‘Do you recognize it?’ They will reply, ‘Yes. This is death.’ And everyone would have seen it. Following that it will be slaughtered and announced, ‘O inhabitants of Paradise, eternity and no more death. And O inhabitants of the Fire, eternity and no more death.’ Then the Prophet recited this verse, ‘And warn them of the Day of regrets, when the affair will be judged, but they are heedless and they do not believe.’ Then the Prophet signaled towards the earth (that is to say, ‘They are heedless in this world’) - Ibn Jarir.

Qurtubi writes that the *hadith* is also found in Muslim. However, Alusi

writes, Ibn Zayd has said that there would be many situations of regret for the unbelievers on the Day of Judgment. In fact, even a righteous believer will regret that he was not more righteous.

The above *hadith*, says Ibn Kathir, is in the *Sahihayn* as well as in Ibn Majah.

46. Mawdudi writes, “..the discourse seeks to establish the fact that Islam teaches Muslims not to make any compromise in matters relating to truth. The religious fervor of (the) righteous Muslim migrants to Abyssinia is all the more remarkable since they expressed the true doctrinal position about Jesus before the court of a Christian Emperor at a time when the court was strongly inclined to accept a bribe to hand them over to their enemies. It was obvious to the Muslims that their forthright criticism of the Christian doctrine might enrage Negus and that as a result he might return them to the ruthless Makkan unbelievers. Notwithstanding the precariousness of the situation, they showed remarkable strength of faith and showed

[41] And recall in the Book (the account of) Ibrahim. Surely he was a truthful man,⁴⁷ a Prophet.

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤١﴾

[42] When he said to his father, 'O my father! Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees; nor avails you anything?'⁴⁸

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] O my father! To me has come a knowledge that has not come to you. Therefore, follow me, I will lead you to an even trail.

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] O my father! Serve not Shaytan. Surely, Shaytan has ever been disobedient to the Most Merciful.

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] O my father! I fear that a chastisement from the Most Merciful strikes you,⁴⁹ so that you become a friend of Shaytan.'

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] He replied, 'Are you averse to my gods O Ibrahim? If you do not give up I will stone you.⁵⁰ Now leave me alone for a good while.'⁵¹

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنِ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾

not even the slightest hesitation in speaking the truth.”

47. Majid gives us the definition of *Siddiq*: “*Siddiq* is the intensive form of *saduq* ‘the truthful,’ and implies an invariable habit of veracity and imperishable love of truth.

He was not simply a truthful man, but a man of truth, in the sense that he stayed true to his mission. In contrast, the Torah alleges that he was a liar (Au.).

48. Majid comments: “The religion of Ur was a polytheism of the gross-

est type. ‘Written texts preserve for us the names of about five thousand Sumerian gods, great and small’ (Woolley, Abraham, p. 192).”

49. Yusuf Ali has a nice point about why the epithet “the Most Merciful” has been placed here: “The rebellion is all the more heinous and inexcusable, considering that Allah is Most Just, Most Merciful, Most Gracious.”

50. The translation is literal. Otherwise, Suddi, Dahhak, Ibn Jurayj and others have said that what Ibrahim’s father meant to say is that he will

[47] He said, 'Peace be upon you.⁵² I shall seek forgiveness for you from my Lord.⁵³ Surely, He has ever been Gracious unto me.

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ
كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾

stop talking to him (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

51. The translation reflects both the literal meaning as well as the understanding of Mujahid, Hasan, Suddi and others. Ibn `Abbas however, as well as Dahhak and Qatadah understood the term "*maliyy*" as meaning, "in good shape" or, "unharmed." That is to say, "Leave me alone O Ibrahim, with yourself in good shape, unharmed – before I take some action against you" (Ibn Jarir). This latter interpretation of Ibn `Abbas is preserved in Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani).

Many commentators have pointed out the difference in the tones of Ibrahim and his father. In Yusuf Ali's words, "Note the gentle persuasive tone of Abraham in his speeches.. contrasted with the brusque and repellent tone of the father's reply in this verse. The one was the outcome of the true Light which had come to Abraham from Allah, as the other was the outcome of Pagan ignorance and the worship of brute force."

52. That was Ibrahim's reply in response to his father's threat, mean-

ing, "Although you threaten to attack me, I leave you in peace, out of respect due to a father." The statement also reflects the general behavior of the believers, who, when confronted by course men respond in words (28: 55),

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلكُمْ
أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْتَغِي الجَاهِلِينَ [القصص
: ٥٥]

"When they hear useless talk, they withdraw from it and say, 'To us our deeds and to you your deeds. Peace unto you. We seek not (the way of the) ignorant'" (Ibn Kathir).

But it is obvious, Qurtubi writes, that these were Ibrahim's parting words. For, greeting an unbeliever with an Islamic greeting is not desirable. We have a *hadith* of the Prophet in the *Sahihayn*. He said,

لَا تَبْدَءُوا الْيَهُودَ وَلَا النَّصَارَى بِالسَّلَامِ فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمْ
أَحَدَهُمْ فِي طَرِيقٍ فَاضْطَرُّوهُ إِلَى أَضْبِقِهِ

"Do not initiate Salam with the people of the Book. And when you meet one of them in a lane, push them to the constricted sides." (But perhaps this applies

[48] And I renounce you all, and those that you call upon apart from Allah.⁵⁴ And I shall supplicate my Lord. Perhaps I shall not be, in my supplications to my Lord, unblessed.⁵⁵

وَأَعْتَرْتُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَأَدْعُو رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلاَّ أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي
شَقِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾

to those fighting against Islam for), some of the *Salaf* used to initiate the greeting when they passed by the people of the Book.

Ibn Mas`ud himself greeted someone who was traveling in a caravan in his company. `Alqamah reminded him, "O Abu `Abdul Rahman, is it not undesirable to initiate Islamic greeting?" He replied, "Yes. But a co-traveler has his own rights." Abu Umamah would not pass by a Muslim or a Christian but say Salam to him. Awza`i was asked about a Muslim who passes by an unbeliever. Should he greet him? He answered, "If you greet them, then the righteous people greeted them before you. But if you did not, then the righteous people before did not do before you."

53. (Following his promise, Ibrahim kept seeking his father's forgiveness until it became clear that the man would not change). And so did the followers of the Prophet until the following Qur'anic statement prevented them. That is, until

prevented, they supplicated for their pagan relations. The following verse in question is (9: 114):

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا
إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ [التوبة : ١١٤]

"Ibrahim's invocation for his father was only because of a promise that he had made to him. But when it became clear that he was Allah's enemy, he disassociated himself from him. Surely, Ibrahim was very invocative, clement" (Ibn Kathir).

54. Perhaps he was also announcing his departure from Chaldea (Iraq) to Syria and then to Palestine (Au.).

55. The addition of "perhaps" at the beginning was by way of humbleness and to impress that answering a supplication is not an obligation on Allah, rather, a measure of mercy (Alusi).

56. Alusi explains that since Isma`il has been separately mentioned in the Qur'an, ref. (37: 101),

فَبَشِّرْهُ بِبُعْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ [الصافات : ١٠١]

[49] Then, when he had abandoned them and what they worshipped apart from Allah, We bestowed on him Is-haq and Ya`qub,⁵⁶ and each We made a Prophet.⁵⁷

فَلَمَّا اعْتَرَاهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا
نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] And We bestowed of our mercy on them and granted them praise,⁵⁸ lofty.⁵⁹

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ
صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] And recall in the Book (the account of) Musa. He was a chosen one,⁶⁰ a Messenger and a Prophet.

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا
وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥١﴾

“So We gave him the glad tiding of a clement son,” his mention has been left out although first born. Yusuf Ali further elaborates: “Isaac and Issac’s son Jacob are mentioned here as carrying on one line of Abraham’s traditions. The other line was carried by Isma`il, who is mentioned independently five verses lower down, as his line got special honour in the Holy Prophet of Islam. That is why his mention comes after that of Moses. Cf. xxi. 72.”

In fact, whenever Isma`il and Is-haq have been mentioned together in the Qur`an in one verse, it is Isma`il who has been mentioned first, e.g., ref. 2: 136 and 4: 163.

57. The implication hidden is: righteous progeny is the reward of

righteous living. And, greater the commitment, more significant the reward. When Ibrahim had completely abandoned false gods and devoted himself wholeheartedly to one God, without any reservation whatsoever, the reward followed was also of the highest kind possible (Au.).

58. Ibn Jarir and Zamakhshari quote poetical lines to demonstrate that *lisana sidqin* is used in Arabic to mean “good praise.”

59. That is, lofty praise on all tongues of the followers of great religions (Ibn Kathir).

60. The textual “*mukhlas*” is also read as “*mukhlis*” meaning, sincere in his religion, sincere to his Lord (Ibn Jarir and others).

[52] We called him from the right side of (Mount) Tur,⁶¹ and drew him near for close communion.⁶²

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ
نَجِيًّا ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] And in Our mercy bestowed on him his brother Harun, a Prophet.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا
﴿٥٣﴾

[54] And recall in the Book (the account of) Isma`il. He was indeed true to his promise,⁶³ a Messenger and a Prophet.⁶⁴

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٤﴾

61. Another understanding is that Musa heard the call made from his right hand side. The meaning however can be wider. In Asad's words, "I.e., to the right side from the standpoint of Moses, as he was facing Mount Sinai (Tabari). However, it is much more probable that the term 'right side' has here, as elsewhere in the Qur'an the abstract connotation of 'blessedness.'"

62. The opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Abu al-`Aliyyah and others was that Allah took him so close that he heard the movement of the Pens (Tabari). That is, that of the Pens held by the angels writing down the Tawrah (Razi, Ibn Kathir).

The report is in several collections and has been termed as *Sahih* by Hakim. But the reference in the *hadith* seems obviously to the time when Musa experienced *Mi`raj* which implies that it was not specific to our

Prophet (*saws*) although most complete in his case (Alusi).

63. Being true to the promise is specifically mentioned as Isma`l's quality because he stayed true to the promise he gave to his father that he will not flinch when the knife is applied to his throat. Otherwise, of course, all Prophets were endowed with this quality. Our own Prophet was particular about it even before he was chosen for the mission. `Abdullah ibn abi al-Hamsa' says in a report of Abu Da'ud,

بَايَعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِبَيْعِ قَبْلِ أَنْ
يُبْعَثَ وَيَقْبِطَ لَهُ بِقِيَّةٍ فَوَعَدْتُهُ أَنْ آتِيَهُ بِهَا فِي مَكَانِهِ
فَنَسِيتُ ثُمَّ دَكَّرْتُ بَعْدَ ثَلَاثٍ فَجِئْتُ فَإِذَا هُوَ فِي
مَكَانِهِ فَقَالَ يَا فَتَى لَقَدْ شَقَمْتَ عَلَيَّ أَنَا هَا هُنَا مُنْذُ
ثَلَاثٍ أَتَشْطُرُكَ.

"I made a deal with the Prophet in pre-Islamic days. I paid him partly and told him to wait at the spot for the rest. However, as I went off to fetch, I entirely for-

got about it. I happened to pass by the place after three days and found him right there. He remarked, “Young man, you put me into hardship. I am waiting for you here since three days” (Qurtubi).

But the *hadith* has been declared not quite trustworthy by some authorities, while Ibn Kathir evinces some confidence (Au.).

64. Ibn Kathir points out here that while mentioning Is-haq, Allah qualified him as a Prophet, while mentioning Isma`il, he qualified him both as Prophet and a Messenger. This demonstrates the superiority of Isma`il over Is-haq. This is strengthened by a Prophetic statement which says, “Indeed, of the sons of Ibrahim, Allah chose Isma`il..”

There is a lack of clarity about the exact functions of a Prophet (*nabiyy*). This rises from the simple fact that we do not know enough about the *anbiya`* of the past. Previous nations have not preserved their history to any degree of credibility. In fact, the term *nabiyy* itself has been variously understood. In the words of Mawdudi, “Lexicographers disagree as to the exact meaning of the word *nabi*. Some consider it to be the derivative of the term *naba`*

and denotes ‘to give news and hence the word *nabi* means someone who brings news. Others consider it to be derived from *nabu*, meaning height and elevation.. Accordingly, *nabi* is a person who holds a high, elevated position.”

What in any case, is the difference between a Prophet and a Messenger? Mujahid answered in very simple terms. He said, as in Ibn Abi Hatim, “Prophets are those who are revealed to, but not sent to a people. In contrast, Messengers are those who are given revelations, and, in addition, are sent to a people” (Shawkani).

Alusi adds: However, a Messenger need not carry a new *Shari`ah* altogether. According to one opinion, sometimes he is sent with the *Shari`ah* of a previous Messenger, to a people who had not received a revealed *Shari`ah* earlier. This is the case with Isma`il. A new *Shari`ah* was not revealed to him. But rather, he carried the *Shari`ah* of Ibrahim to a people – in this case the Jurham tribe – who had not received any *Shari`ah* through any earlier Messenger.

Yusuf Ali simplifies it while writing about Musa: “.. he was a prophet (*nabi*), in that he received inspiration; and he was a messenger (*rasul*)

[55] He enjoined his people Prayers⁶⁵ and charity; and He was pleasing to His Lord.

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] And recall in the Book (the account of) Idris.⁶⁶ He was a man of truth⁶⁷ and a Prophet.

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٦﴾

in that he had a Book of Revelation, and an Ummat or organized community, for which he instituted laws.”

65. Ibn Kathir writes: Allah (*swt*) has also said about Prayers (66: 6):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا
النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا
يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ [التحریم
٦ :

“Believers! Save yourselves and your homefolk from a Fire whose fuel is men and stones. It is in charge of such angels as are harsh, tough, who do not disobey Allah, but rather do as they are ordered.”

And the Prophet has said,

رَجِمَ اللَّهُ رَجُلًا قَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَصَلَّى وَأَيَّقَطَ امْرَأَتَهُ ،
فَإِنْ أَبَتْ نَضَحَ فِي وَجْهِهَا الْمَاءَ ، رَجِمَ اللَّهُ امْرَأَةً
قَامَتْ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَصَلَّتْ وَأَيَّقَطَتْ زَوْجَهَا ، فَإِنْ أَبِي
نَضَحَتْ فِي وَجْهِهِ الْمَاءَ

“May Allah show mercy to a man who got up in the depth of the night and Prayed, and woke up his wife. If she did not respond, he sprinkled water on her face. May Allah show mercy to the woman who got up in the depth

of night, Prayed, and woke her husband up. If he did not respond, she sprinkled water on his face.” The *hadith* is in Abu Da’ud and Ibn Majah.

It was declared as of strong chain by Al-Arna’ut (Au.).

66. In the absence of a *hadith*, opinions vary about Idris. But many see him as the first Messenger (rasul) after Adam, being a grand grandfather of Nuh. He was given 30 scriptures (Alusi). Ibn Mas’ud however thought that Idris and Ilyas were one and the same person (Alusi, Shawkani).

Majid adds: “(He is) Probably the Enoch of the *Bible* .. who lived for 365 years (Ge. 5: 18-21). But Yusuf Ali rightly expresses his doubts. He writes, “Idris is mentioned twice in the Qur’ān, viz., here and in xxi. 85, where he is mentioned among those who patiently persevered. His identification with the *Biblical* Enoch, who ‘walked with God’ (Gen. v. 21-24), may or not be correct. Nor are we justified in interpreting verse 57 here as meaning the same thing

[57] We raised him to a high station.⁶⁸

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] Those were some of the Prophets whom Allah favored, from the seed of Adam and of those We carried (in the boat) with Nuh; and of the seed of Ibrahim and Isra'il⁶⁹ - of those We guided and chose. When verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them they fell down prostrate, crying.⁷⁰

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ حَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا * ﴿٥٨﴾

as in Gen. v. 24 ('God took him'), that he was taken up without passing through the portals of death."

67. "This is perhaps to refute the opinion held by a section of the Jews that Enoch was 'inconsistent in his piety (JE. V. p. 178),' or that 'he was light-minded and inclined to sin again' (Rashi, On Genesis, p. 93)" – Majid.

68. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak and others have said that Idris was raised up to the fourth or sixth heaven, where he died. Our Prophet had met him in the fourth heaven when he himself had gone there during his *Mi'raj* journey (Tabari, Ibn Kathir). Many of those who believe that he was taken up to the heavens think that he went up alive (Alusi). However, there is no *hadith* to this effect and the earliest commentators seem to have been, as pointed out by Majid, influenced by Jewish traditions (Au.).

69. The commentators have used this verse to conclude that Idris appeared before Nuh. For, in the words of Mawdudi, (with the modification of names), "Of the Messengers mentioned here, Yahya, 'Isa and Musa are descendants of Ya'qub and Isma'il; Is-haq and Ya'qub are descendants of Ibrahim, and Ibrahim is a descendant of Nuh. This leaves only Idris and it is to him alone that the expression 'descendant of Adam' might be applied."

70. It is reported that once 'Umar ibn al-Khattab recited this chapter, prostrated himself at this point and remarked, "Here is the prostration, but where is the crying?!" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Majah, Is-haq b. Rahwayh and Bazzar have a report coming down through Sa'id b. Waqqas. The Prophet said,

اتلوا القرآن وابتكوا فان لم تبتكوا فبتكوا

[59] Then came after them a posterity⁷¹ who wasted away the Prayer⁷² and followed lusts;⁷³ so they will soon meet with destruction.⁷⁴

[60] Except for him who repented, believed and worked righteousness. Such of them will indeed enter Paradise and will not be wronged in the least.

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ
عَذَابًا ﴿٥٩﴾
إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ
يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظَلَّمُونَ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٠﴾

“Recite the Qur’ān and cry. If you can not, then attempt to cry”
(Alusi).

According to some scholars, the above report does not meet with the strict conditions of acceptance. But Haythami expressed some confidence in it (Au.).

71. The allusion is to the evil posterity of every nation: Jews, Christians, Muslims etc. (Ibn Jarir and others). Mujahid has said that this class of people will emerge near the end of the world (Qurtubi).

72. Although stray opinions say that the allusion by “wasting away of the Prayers” is to delaying or neglecting them, the preferred opinion is that the allusion is to not Praying at all (Ibn Jarir). The opinion of Ibn Mas`ud, Nakha`i, Qasim, Mujahid and `Umar b. `Abdul `Aziz was that delaying the Prayers beyond the sanctioned time is to be “wasting it.” Some have said that to pray at home is also to waste it (Shafi`).

In other words, the opinion of the *Salaf* is split between interpreting it as “not praying at all,” and “doing the prayers badly.”

Ibn Mas`ud said that not doing the prayers on time is to “waste it.” He was told, “But we thought not doing it at all was to be wasting it.” He replied, “That’s *kufr*.”

Abu Sa`id al-Khudri reports a *hadith* preserved by Ahmad wherein the Prophet (*saws*) said,

يكون خلف بعد ستين سنة، أضاعوا الصلاة واتبعوا الشهوات، فسوف يلقون غيا. ثم يكون خلف يقرءون القرآن لا يحدو تراقيهم. ويقرأ القرآن ثلاثة: مؤمن، ومنافق، وفاجر.“ قال بشير (٣) : قلت للوليد: ما هؤلاء الثلاثة؟ قال: المؤمن مؤمن به، والمنافق كافر به، والفاجر يأكل به

“An evil set of followers will appear after sixty years. They will waste away the Prayers and follow lust. They will meet with their destruction. They will be followed by successors worse than them. They will recite the

Qur'ān but it will not go beyond their throats. And the Qur'ān is read by three kinds of people: believers, hypocrites and the corrupt (*fasiq*)." The narrator was asked about the three. What exactly did the Prophet mean? He replied, "A believer who believes in it. An hypocrite who disbelieves in it. And a corrupt person who makes money out of it" (Ibn Kathir).

The earlier part of the *hadith* is in Hakim who declared it *Sahih* (Shawkani). Hakim's opinion is seconded by Dhahabi. As such the report is also in Ibn Hibban and Ahmad (S. Ibrahim).

Qurtubi discusses the question of Salah in detail. He quotes 'Umar ibn al-Khattab as saying, "Whoever neglected the Prayers will neglect everything else all the more." Hudhayfa saw a man doing his Prayers badly. He asked him, "Since how long have you been Praying?" The man answered, "Forty years." Hudhayfa said, "If you died Praying the way you did just now, you will die on a religion other than that of Muhammad." The Prophet (*saws*) has said in reports coming down from several sources that the first thing to be accounted for is Prayers. If one gets

through it, he will get through the rest of the deeds also. According to a report in Abu Da'ud, the Prophet said, "If a man's Prayers are wanting in quality or quantity, Allah will command the angels to look into his *Nawafil* (supererogatory). If the shortage is met, good. It is after that, that other deeds will be looked into."

73. 'Ali is reported to have said that to construct palatial houses or use such vehicles or put on such clothes as which attract attention of the people, constitutes "following the lust" (Qurtubi, Shafi').

Mujahid remarked that the allusion is to those of the *Ummah* (near the end of the world) who will leap on each other in the streets like the cattle and donkey, neither fearing the One in the heavens, nor shying from the people on the earth (Ibn Kathir).

The above is now taking place in the non-Muslim world, which is not likely to be curbed, but could spread to Muslims (Au.).

74. The translation of "*ghayy*" as destruction is more or less literal. Some of the earliest commentators however, have thought that "*ghayy*" is the name of a valley in Hell where pus, blood, vomit and refuse of the inhabitants is collected. A *hadith* is also quoted in support (Tabari), but it

[61] Gardens of Eden that the Most Merciful has promised His slave in the Unseen.⁷⁵ Indeed, His promise has to come to pass.

[62] They will not hear any loose talk therein, except for peace.⁷⁶ And for them is therein their provision morning and evening.⁷⁷

[63] That is the Paradise We shall grant as inheritance to those of Our slaves who had been godfearing.

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ
بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًا ﴿٦١﴾

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا وَلَهُمْ
رِزْقُهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿٦٢﴾

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ
كَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿٦٣﴾

has been judged *Da'if* by the experts (S. Ibrahim). The prevalent meaning has been that of destruction (Alusi).

75. That is, the promised Gardens of Eden are at present beyond the ken of sense perception (Au.).

76. Yusuf Ali comments: "Salam, translated 'Peace', has a much wider significance. It includes (1) a sense of security and permanence, which is unknown in this life; (2) soundness, freedom from defects, perfection as in the word *saleem*; (3) preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word *sallama*; (4) salutation, accord with those around us; (5) resignation, in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented; (6) the ordinary meaning of Peace, i.e., freedom from any jarring element. All these shades of meaning are implied in the word *Islam*."

77. Of the textual word "*rizq*", the sense of providence is only one shade of the meaning. In Yusuf Ali's words, "*Rizq*: literally sustenance or means of subsistence; the term covers all the means of perfect satisfaction of body and soul."

It is said that in pre-Islamic times very few people could afford both lunch and dinner. The few who could were thought to be a fortunate class. Hence the Qur'anic words "morning and evening" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others).

Mujahid, Qatadah and Zuhayr b. Muhammad have said that there will be no morning or evening in Paradise. It is only the opening and closing of the Paradise doors or pulling aside of the curtains that will be indicative of passage of time in between. The allusion therefore, by morning and evening, is not to fixed hours for lunch and dinner, but rath-

[64] And (the angels say) 'We descend not but by the command of your Lord.⁷⁸ To Him belongs all that is before us and behind us, and all that is between them.'⁷⁹ And your Lord was not such as to forget.⁸⁰

وَمَا نَنْزِلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا
وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ
نَسِيًّا ﴿٦٤﴾

er, to the fact that the victuals will be in constant supply.

Hasan al-Busri has said in this context that the doors of Paradise will be made of see-through material and will operate on command: when told 'open', they will open up, and when told 'close', they will close up (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Hasan Busri's report about Paradise doors seems a step ahead of the present day sophisticated automatic glass doors, which are sensor-operated, and not sonar-operated. Indeed, sonar operated devices are still a distant dream, voice classification and recognition being a major hurdle (Au.).

Ibn Kathir expands on the pleasures available in Paradise. The Prophet said in a report of the *Sahihayn*,

أَوَّلُ زُفْرَةٍ تَلِجُ الْجَنَّةَ صُورَتُهُمْ عَلَى صُورَةِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ
الْبَدْرِ لَا يَبْصُقُونَ فِيهَا وَلَا يَمْتَخِطُونَ وَلَا يَتَعَوَّطُونَ
أَنْبِئُهُمْ فِيهَا الذَّهَبُ أَمْشَاطُهُمْ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةُ
وَمَجَامِرُهُمْ الْأَلْوَةُ وَرَشْحُهُمْ الْمِسْكُ وَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ
زَوْجَتَانِ يَرَى مِثْلَ سَوْفِهِمَا مِنْ وَرَاءِ اللَّحْمِ مِنَ الْحُسْنِ
لَا اخْتِلَافَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَا تَبَاعُضَ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَلْبٌ وَاحِدٌ
يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّهَ بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا

“The first group to enter Paradise will have faces like the full moon. They will not spit therein, or cleanse their noses, nor would they need to use water closets. Their crockery and combs will be of gold and silver. Their censers made of aloes wood. Their sweat like musk. Each of them will have two wives whose bone marrow of the shins will be visible through the flesh. Such will be their beauty. There will be no differences between them, nor any rancor: hearts united like the hearts of a single man. They will sing Allah's glory morning and evening.”

78. It is widely reported that once Jibril did not appear for a long while. When the Prophet expressed his anxiety this verse was revealed (Ibn Jarir). But Bukhari reports the following as the context of revelation of this verse. Ibn 'Abbas said, “The Prophet asked Jibra'il, ‘What prevents you from coming oftener?’” In response Allah (*swt*) revealed this verse (Qurtubi).

The absence happened after the Prophet inquired Jibril about the people of the Cave and Dhu al-Qarnayn. His long absence evoked the pagans to allege that Muhammad's God had abandoned him (Alusi and others).

According to reports in Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani and Ahmad, Jibra'il once delayed in coming by several days (some say 12, some others say forty days). The Prophet asked him the reason. He replied,

وكيف نأتىكم وأنتم لا تقصون أطفاركم ولا تنقون
براجمكم ولا تستاكون

“(How can we come) when you do not clean your teeth (with Miswak: Ibn Abi Hatim), do not clip your nails, do not clip your moustaches, and do not clean your finger joints”.

The above report is from Ibn abi Shaybah's collection, but its strength could not be established (Au.).

(The Qur'an used the term "we" rather than "I" because there were a variety of angels who came to the Prophet). A *hadith* in Ahmad reports Umm Salamah (the Prophet's wife) as saying,

أصليجي لنا المجلس فإنه ينزل ملك إلى الأرض ثم
ينزل إليها قط

“Once the Prophet (*sams*) told me, ‘Clean up the house for today an angel is coming down to the earth who has never been here earlier’” (Ibn Kathir).

Shu'ab al-Arna'ut thought that the *hadith* is weak (Au.).

79. According to some of the *Salaf*, the allusion is to this world, the Hereafter, and whatever is in between them. There have been other explanations too such as, the past, the future and the present (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). In short, all that is covered by space and time from eternity onwards (Thanwi).

80. That is, if the angel did not come for a while it was not because Allah (*swt*) had forgotten to send him (Qurtubi). Everything that happens in the cosmos, is well attended after its creation. It should not be imagined that Allah forgot about a thing, or does not care about it (Au.)

Ibn Kathir and Shawkani, quote a *hadith* from Ibn abi Hatim which brings out this point. The Prophet said,

مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ فَهُوَ حَلَالٌ وَمَا حَرَّمَ فَهُوَ حَرَامٌ
وَمَا سَكَتَ عَنْهُ فَهُوَ عَافِيَةٌ فَاقْبَلُوا مِنَ اللَّهِ عَافِيَتَهُ فَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُنْ نَسِيًّا

“What Allah declared in His Book as lawful is lawful, and what

[65] Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. Therefore, worship Him and forbear in His service.⁸¹ Do you know anyone of a (similar) Name as He?⁸²

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ
سَمِيًّا ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] Man says, 'What, when I am dead, shall I be brought forth alive?'

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَإِذَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ
أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] Does not man consider that We created him earlier when he was nothing?

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَمَا يَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] By your Lord, We shall surely gather them and the Shayatin, then, We shall collect them together around Hell-fire on their knees.

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ
لَنَحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] Then We shall pull out from every faction whoever that was the most obstinate against the Most Merciful in rebellion.

ثُمَّ لَنَنْزِعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ أَشَدُّ عَلَى
الرَّحْمَنِ عِتِيًّا ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] And We know best those who are most deserving to be roasted therein.

ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِهَا
صِلِيًّا ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] And there is none of you but he shall pass over it;⁸³ that is on your Lord a decree determined.

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ
حَتْمًا مَّقْضِيًّا ﴿٧١﴾

He declared unlawful is unlawful. And whatever He did not speak about is out of deliberate overlooking. Therefore, accept from Allah what he deliberately overlooked. For, Allah was not such as to forget.” Then the Prophet recited this verse.

The report is strong enough: Haythamiyy (Au.).

81. That is, the requirement is not for the occasional type of devotion, but rather, through and through

one's life, on regular basis, without a break (Thanwi).

82. The translation reflects a more or less literal meaning. Some commentators of old have said (as in Tabari, Ibn Kathir and others) that one of the meanings that “*samiyyun*” affords is someone who has no one “equal,” or “similar” to him.

83. Some of the ancient commentators such as Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas and others have understood the word “*warid*” as meaning “entry.”

That is, there is none of the human-kind but will initially enter the Fire. Later, the believers will be rescued by Allah. Nafi` (b. al-Azraq, who was a *Kharijite*: Qurtubi) in fact had an argument with Ibn `Abbas over the issue. To prove his point, Ibn `Abbas quoted two other Qur`anic verses that have used the word in this sense. One is (21: 98),

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشْمٌ
لَهَا وَارْدُونَ [الأنبياء : ٩٨]

“You indeed (O unbelievers), and those you worship apart from Allah are firewood of Hell. You are indeed going to enter into it.”

And (11:98),

يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوَارِدُ
الْمُؤْرَدُ [هود : ٩٨]

“He (Fir`awn) will lead his people on the Judgment Day and lead them to the Fire: an evil coming to an evil destination.”

After quoting the above verses, Ibn `Abbas concluded, “For sure I and you will enter it. So let us see if we can get out or not. However, I don’t see how you can get out, seeing that you are denying the Qur`an.” Nafi` only laughed.

Ibn Rawaha had a similar opinion. In fact, he was in tears at his death-bed. When his wife asked him why,

he replied, “I know that we are to enter the Fire, but I do not know whether I’ll get out or not.” Hasan reported that a man said to a brother, “Have you received the information that you will enter the Fire?” He replied, “Yes.” He asked, “Have you received any information about getting out of it?” He replied, “No.” He asked him, “So, why do you laugh?” It is said that thereafter he was not seen laughing.

The above said, continues Ibn Jarir, others have taken the meaning of “*warid*” as “to pass over.” This is not only the literal meaning, but also supported by a *hadith*. The Prophet (*saws*) said,

إِنِّي لِأَرْجُو أَنْ لَا يَدْخُلَ النَّارَ أَحَدٌ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِمَّنْ
شَهِدَ بَدْرًا، وَالْحَدِيثِيَّةُ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَلَيْسَ قَدْ
قَالَ اللَّهُ ”وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا
مَقْضِيًّا“ [مریم آیه ٧١] ؟، قَالَ: أَوْمَ نَسْمَعِيهِ، يَقُولُ:
”لَمْ تُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثًّا“

“I hope that those who participated in the Badr and Hudaibiyah encounters will not enter the Fire.” Hafsa (bint `Umar) asked, “Hasn’t Allah said, ‘And there is none of you but he shall pass over it?’” He replied, “Read after that, ‘Then We shall deliver those that were godfearing.’”

A similar report is in Muslim (Au.).

There is another, long *hadith* that supports this meaning. It is narrated by Abu Sa`id al-Khudri. The Prophet speaks in it about how the people will cross the Bridge laid over the Fire. Many will fall down into Hellfire. Subsequently, (after a long period) intercessors will intercede until no one will be left in whose heart there is the littlest of faith. The tradition, coming from Abu Sa`id al-Khudri is as follows: "Then the people will start crossing over. Some Muslims would get through unhurt but some will be injured by it. Some escaping, while some held back. Yet others will pile up therein. Until, when Allah will be finished with the accounting of His slaves, the believers will discover that they are missing believers who were with them in the world, doing their kind of Prayers, paying their kind of zakah, fasting their kind of fasts, making pilgrimage in their manner and making *Jihad* like theirs. So they would say, 'Our Lord. Some slaves of Yours! They were with us in the world. They used to Pray like us, pay zakah like us, fast like us, perform pilgrimage with us and make *Jihad* with us: we do not see them now?!' He will say, 'Go to the Fire and whoever of them you find therein, remove them.' They'll find that the Fire would have eaten off them

in proportion to their deeds. There would be some among them whom the Fire would have taken off up to their feet; others up to his shank; some up to their knees; some up to their breasts; some up to their necks but would not have touched their faces. So they'll remove them from the Fire and dip them in the water of Life." It was asked, "And what is the water of Life, Messenger of Allah?" He answered, "Waste water of the people of Paradise."

"So, they will start growing like the plants start growing in the flood passage. Then the Prophets will intercede in favor of everyone who sincerely bore witness that there is no god save Allah. They will remove them from it. Then Allah will show His mercy to whom He will so that none will be left therein who had a grain of faith in his heart but would have been removed" (Ibn Jarir).

Those who have held the above opinion have argued with another verse of the Qur`ān which says (21: 101),

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ [الأنبياء : ١٠١]

"As regards those about whom blessing has preceded from Us, they, such of them will be far removed from it (i.e., the Fire)."

[72] Then We shall deliver those who were godfearing⁸⁴ and leave the transgressors therein on their knees.

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًا ﴿٧٢﴾

This being the case, Khalid b. Ma'dan said, "When the people of Paradise would have entered Paradise, they will say, 'Did our Lord not promise that we shall surely enter it?' It will be said, 'You have already been into it. But you found it ashes'" (Qurtubi).

This report is in `Abd b. Humayd, Ibn Abi Shaybah and others (Alusi).

Ibn Kathir has more or less the same line of argument except to add another *hadith* of Bukhari. It says,

لَا يَمُوتُ لِأَحَدٍ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْوَالِدِ فَمَسَّهُ النَّارُ إِلَّا تَحِلَّةَ الْقَسَمِ

"Three of a man's infants do not die but the Fire becomes forbidden unto him, except for the fulfillment of the oath."

A third opinion comes directly from the *hadith*, viz., entry into Hellfire will be made comfortable and pleasant. The Prophet is reported by Ibn Sumayyah as saying,

الْوُرُودُ الدُّخُولُ لَا يَبْقَى بَرٌّ وَلَا فَاجِرٌ إِلَّا دَخَلَهَا فَتَكُونُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا كَمَا كَانَتْ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَتَّى إِنَّ لِلنَّارِ أَوْ قَالَ لِحَبَّتِمْ صَحِيحًا مِنْ بَرْدِهِمْ ثُمَّ يُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَيَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًا

"Coming there is entry. No one, neither a corrupt person nor a pious believer will be left but will enter the Fire. But it will be as cool for the believers as it was for Ibrahim" (Shawkani). The report is in Hakim who declared it *Sahih* with Dhahabi agreeing with him. It is also in Ahmad, and Haythami thought that the narrators were trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

Majid traces out a similar statement in Christian liturgy. He writes: "Compare a teaching of Jesus, unrecorded in the canonized gospels, 'Every one, be he who he may, must go into Hell. It is true, however, that the holy ones and prophets of God shall go there to behold, not suffering any punishment' (GB. p. 317)."

84. That is, people will pass over the Bridge laid over the Fire of Hell. Those who pass through, will do at a pace proportional to their deeds. Many will fall. Later, intercessors will intercede for them: from among the believers, angels, Prophets. They will intercede in favor of those who committed Major sins. They will bring out a whole lot of people who

[73] When Our revelations are recited to them as clear evidences, the wrongdoers say to the believers, 'Which of the two groups is better placed and which one better in assembly?'⁸⁵

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا ﴿٧٣﴾

will be burned to the core except for the prostration spot on the forehead. They will first remove those who had faith the size of a Dinar (coin). Then lesser, and then lesser, until they would have removed anyone with the minutest amount of faith possible. Thereafter, Allah will remove a people who would have merely pronounced the testimony, without doing anything good ever. After that only those will be left who deserve to abide in Hell (Ibn Kathir).

85. Sayyid Qutb comments: "So these are the prestigious clubs and important organizations from where the unbelievers issue their statements. Such statements as loaded with values and standards of judgment that are dear to the unbelievers of every corrupt epoch. On the other hand are the humble societies and modest associations that have nothing to show as their possessions except their faith: neither pomp nor glory, nor glittering ostentations, nothing. The two exist on the same planet, confronting each other.

"The former stands with all its gorgeous temptations, grandeur, wealth, power and glory, while the latter is clothed in poverty, armed with humbleness. The latter is belittled for lack of wealth and possessions, mocked at for want of power and prestige. It invites the people to join its ranks, not in the name of luxuries it has acquired, advantages it has gained, or closeness to men of power and authority that it has earned. But rather, in the name of a faith that it offers without dressing it with shiny apparels, bereft of every glitter, seeking strength by Allah's Power and of none else. Indeed it presents a faith that is accompanied by hardships, difficulties and humiliation. It possesses nothing with which it can compensate the losses of those who respond to its call, except for nearness to Allah and a wholesome reward in the Hereafter.

"Here are the Quraysh chieftains – of the time of the Prophet – to whom Allah's revelations were recited. They would turn to the weak Muslims and

quip: 'Which of the two groups is better placed and better in association?' Which of the two: the powerful ones who wouldn't believe in Muhammad, or the weak ones who surrounded him? Which of the two is better placed and better in association? Nadr b. al-Harith, `Amr b. Hisham, Walid b. al-Mughira and the other chieftains or Bilal, `Ammar, Khabbab and others of their brotherhood: those who held no rank in the society of the Quraysh and were of no importance at all? They met, when they had to, in the house of a poor, unemployed person like Khabbab to confront those of the prestigious clubs and important organizations, whose members held top positions in the society.."

Asad delves deeper to look at the underlying meaning of an apparently simple Qur'anic statement. He writes: "This parabolic 'saying' of the unbelievers implies, in the garb of a rhetorical question, a superficially plausible but intrinsically fallacious argument in favor of the society which refused to submit to any absolute moral imperatives and is determined to obey the dictates of expediency alone. In such a social order, material success and power are usually seen as consequences of a more or less conscious rejection of all

metaphysical considerations – and, in particular, of all that is comprised in the concept of God-willed standards of morality – on the assumption that they are but an obstacle in the path of man's free, unlimited 'development.' It goes without saying that this attitude (which has reached its epitome in the modern statement that 'religion is the opium for the people') is diametrically opposed to the demand, voiced by every religion, that man's social life, if it is to be a truly 'good' life, must be subordinated to definite higher ethical principles and restraints. By their very nature, these restraints inhibit them to achieve – without regard to the damage done to others, and, spiritually, to themselves – outward comforts and positions of strength in the shortest possible time: but precisely because they do act as a brake on man's selfishness and power-hunger, it is these moral considerations and restraints – and they alone – that can free a community from the interminable, self-destructive inner tension and frustration to which materialistic societies are subject, and thus bring about a more enduring, because more organic, state of social well-being. This, in short, is the elliptically implied answer of the Qur'an to a rhetorical question placed in the

[74] How many nations have We (not) destroyed before them who were better furnished and better in appearance?⁸⁶

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِمَّن قَرِنَهُمْ أَحْسَنُ
أَنَّا وَرَبِّيَا ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] Say, 'Whoever is in error, let the Most Merciful extend (the rope) to him extensively,⁸⁷ until when they see that which they were being promised – either the chastisement, or the Hour - it is then that they will realize as to who is worse placed and weaker in forces.⁸⁸

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ
الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ إِمَّا
الْعَذَابَ وَإِمَّا السَّاعَةَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ
شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضْعَفُ جُنْدًا ﴿٧٥﴾

mouths of 'those who are bent on denying the truth.'"

86. If the root of the word "ri'ya" is sought in "ray", then it would mean blessings and good things (Zamakhshari).

87. That is, Allah (*swt*) allows him to carry on with his evil ways until the crime is proven beyond any doubt. And, one opinion is that the words, 'let the Most Merciful extend (the rope) to him extensively' are the Prophet's words of supplication. Another opinion is that it is a threat (Qurtubi).

88. Mawdudi comments: "This was a fallacious argument which the unbelievers often put forward, claiming that it was they rather than the believers upon whom God's bounties were lavished. They audaciously asked: 'Who has more stately houses to live in – the believers or we? Who enjoys

higher standards of living – the believers or we? Whose assemblies are more splendid and grandiose – those of the believers or ours?' How is it possible, they asked, that those who follow the truth suffer such a miserable lot whilst those who follow falsehood – as you fancy – prosper?"

Yusuf Ali adds on: "Allah's warning is that every evil deed must have its punishment, and that there will be a Hereafter, the Day of Judgment, or the Hour, as it is frequently called. The punishment of evil often begins in this very life. For instance, over-indulgence and excesses of all kinds bring on their Nemesis quite often soon in this very life. But some subtler forms of selfishness and sin will be punished – as every evil deed will be punished – in its own good time, as the Hour approaches. In either case, the arrogant boasting sinner will realize that their taunt – who

[76] And Allah increases those who accept guidance with (further) guidance.⁸⁹ And the abiding good things⁹⁰ are better with your Lord in reward and better in respect of returns.

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ
الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ
مَرَدًّا ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] Have you considered him who rejected Our signs and said, 'Assuredly, I shall be given wealth and children?'⁹¹

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالَ لَأُوتِيَنَّ
مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ﴿٧٧﴾

is best in position and in force? – is turned against themselves.”

89. The verse can be explained in Asad's words: “God endows those who avail themselves of [His] guidance with an ever deeper consciousness of the righteous way.”

90. See *Surah al-Kahf*, note 69 for explanation of the terms “*al-baqiyyat al-salihat*.” In short, belief and righteous deeds are the *baqiyyat al-salihat* (Au.).

91. A report (in Bukhari, Muslim: Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir) coming from Khabbab b. al-Art says,

كُنْتُ قَبِيًّا فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَكَانَ لِي عَلَى الْعَاصِ بْنِ
وَائِلٍ دِرَاهِمٌ فَأَتَيْتُهُ أَتَقَاضَاهُ فَقَالَ : لَا أَقْضِيكَ حَتَّى
تَكْفُرَ بِمُحَمَّدٍ فَقُلْتُ : وَاللَّهِ لَا أَكْفُرُ حَتَّى يُمَيِّنَكَ اللَّهُ
ثُمَّ يَبْعَثَكَ قَالَ فَذَرْنِي حَتَّى أَمُوتَ ثُمَّ أُبْعَثَ فَأُوتَى
مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا فَأَقْضَيْتُكَ فَتَرَلَّ (أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا
وَقَالَ لَأُوتِيَنَّ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا)

“I was a blacksmith in Makkah. `As b. Wa'il owed me some money (for some work I had done for him: Qurtubi). [According to some reports, `A owed several Muslims money: Ibn Kathir]. I went up to him and asked for it. He said, 'By God, I'll never give you until you denounce Muhammad.' I replied, 'By Allah, I shall never denounce Muhammad until you are dead and then are resurrected.' He said, 'If I die, am resurrected and you come to me and if I happen to have wealth and children, I may pay back to you.' In response Allah revealed this verse” (Ibn Jarir, Razi).

According to reports coming from Ibn `Abbas and others, `As said, “Surely, If ever I am resurrected, I shall be given wealth and children” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[78] *Has he looked into the Unseen, or has he concluded a covenant with the Most Merciful?*⁹²

أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبِ أَمْ اِتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] *No indeed! We shall record what he says, and shall extend for him the chastisement extensively.*

كَلَّا سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ﴿٧٩﴾

[80] *We shall inherit from him what he says,⁹³ and he will come to Us, alone.*

وَنَرِيئُهُ مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] *And they have taken deities other than Allah so that they might be (a source) of power for them.*

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾

[82] *By no means! Soon they will disavow their worship and become adversaries against them.*⁹⁴

كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ﴿٨٢﴾

92. According to Ibn `Abbas and Muhammad b. Ka`b al-Qurazi, the allusion by the term “`*ahd*” is to the testimony “there is no god except Allah” (Ibn Kathir).

That is, everyone who said the testimony entered into a covenant with Allah with the promise from Him that He will bestow him with blessings in the Hereafter (Au.).

93. Ibn Mas`ud, Mujahid and Qatadah have said that the meaning is, “We shall inherit his wealth and children, and he shall come to Us alone, without them in his company” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

94. That is, those who were worshipped will deny that they were ever worshipped. In fact, they shall act as their adversaries (Au.). Allah said elsewhere (46: 5),

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ يَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنِ دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ [الأحقاف : ٥]

“And who can be more misguided than he who called upon someone besides Allah, who can never answer him until the Day of Judgment. In fact, they are unaware of their call. And when the people are gathered together (on the Judgment Day), they will be their enemies and will deny their worship” (Ibn Kathir).

[83] Have you not noticed that we have let loose *Shayatin*⁹⁵ upon the unbelievers to prick them incitingly?

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ
تَوَزُّؤُهُمْ أَزًّا ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] So hasten not against them. We are only counting out against them a (limited) number.

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا
﴿٨٤﴾

[85] The Day when We will gather the God-conscious unto the Most Merciful as honored delegates.⁹⁶

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا
﴿٨٥﴾

[86] And drive the criminals to Hell-fire in thirst.⁹⁷

وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ وَرِدًّا
﴿٨٦﴾

95. The meaning of the words, “We have let loose (lit. ‘sent’) *Shayatin*” is, “We gave them the freedom (to incite the humans)” – Qurtubi.

96. `Ali, Abu Hurayrah, Ibn `Abbas and Sufyan Thawri said that on Judgment Day the righteous will not be on their feet singly, but rather, in groups, on mounts (of Light) of such beauty as never seen before (Ibn Jarir). In fact, the term “*wafd*” is employed in Arabic for a delegation on mounts (Ibn Kathir). This does not contradict those reports in the *Sahihayn* that say that people will leave their graves barefoot, bare-headed, and naked. For, they might be clothed after leaving the graves (Qurtubi).

We also have `Amr b. Qays al-Mula’i on record as having said, “As a believer leaves his grave he will encoun-

ter someone with the most beautiful countenance and the best of fragrance. He will ask, ‘Do you know me?’ The believer will reply, ‘No. But your fragrance is so pleasant and the countenance so beautiful.’ He will say, ‘That is how you were in the world. I am your good deeds of the life of the world. There I rode upon you, today you ride upon me.’” Then he recited this verse (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Abu Bakr Ibn al-`Arabiyy has said however – in his *Siraj al-Muridin* – that the report does not have a trustworthy chain of narrators (Qurtubi).

The above *hadith* is in Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir).

97. The translation of “*wird*” as “thirsty” follows the understanding of Ibn `Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, Hasan and others (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[87] None will have (the benefit) of intercession, save those who had concluded with the Most Merciful a covenant.⁹⁸

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٨٧﴾

[88] And they said, "The Most Merciful has taken (unto himself) a son."⁹⁹

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] Surely, you have advanced something most hideous.

لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا ﴿٨٩﴾

[90] The heavens could well-nigh explode thereby, the earth split asunder, and the mountains collapse into ruins.¹⁰⁰

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٩٠﴾

[91] That they should attributed to the Most Merciful a son.

أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾

[92] It behooves not the Most Merciful that He should take a son.

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] None there is in the heavens and the earth but must come to the Most Merciful as a servant.

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتَى الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا ﴿٩٣﴾

98. What covenant is it? Ibn `Abbas thought that it is faith itself. But Qatadah and Ibn Jurayj added that it is faith followed by righteous deeds. Qatadah said that they had learnt from their elders that the Prophet said,

لَيَدْخُلَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ بِشَفَاعَةِ رَجُلٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَكْثَرُ مِنْ بَنِي تَمِيمٍ

"There will be a man in my *Ummah* by whose intercession as many people will enter Islam as the tribe of Banu Tameem." And, "we use to hear," Qatadah continues, "that a martyr will in-

tercede for seventy of his kinsfolk" (Tabari, Ibn Kathir).

The report is, according to Dhahabi, trustworthy; and Hasan al-Busri is reported to have said that he believed the allusion was to Uways al-Qarni (Au.).

99. Majid notes the Christian doctrine, "God the Son is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the only Begotten and eternal son of the Father. He is co-substantial with the Father." (CD. p. 912)."

100. So monstrous it is to attribute a son to the Lord Most High that

the world could all but be destroyed. Hence the importance of belief in the Oneness of God. The Prophet said,

لَقَبْتُوا مَوْتَنَا كُمْ شَهَادَةً أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ , فَمَنْ قَالَهَا عِنْدَ
مَوْتِهِ وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الْجَنَّةُ , قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ , فَمَنْ قَالَهَا
فِي صِحَّةٍ؟ قَالَ: تَبْلُكَ أَوْجِبُ وَأَوْجِبُ , ثُمَّ قَالَ: وَالَّذِي
تُفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَوْ جِيءَ بِالسَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِينَ وَمَنْ
فِيهِنَّ وَمَا بَيْنَهُنَّ وَمَا تَحْتَهُنَّ , فَوُضِعَتْ فِي كِفَّةٍ
الْمِيزَانَ وَوُضِعَتْ شَهَادَةُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فِي الْكِفَّةِ
الْأُخْرَى لَرَجَحَتْ بِهِنَّ

“Let your dying say the testimony ‘There is no god save Allah’ for whoever said that at the time of his death will enter Paradise.” He was asked, “If so, then what about someone who said it in ordinary times?” He replied, “That would make it more certain, more certain.” Then he added, “By Him in whose hands is my life, if all that is there in the heavens and the earth were to be placed into one pan and the testimony ‘There is no god save Allah’ in another, the one with the testimony will weigh down” (Ibn Jarir).

The above *hadith* draws strength from another which says that a slip of paper containing the testimony will weigh heavier in the Scale on the Day of Judgment than 99 books of evil deeds (Ibn Kathir).

And, Ibn al-*Mubarak*, Sa`id b. Mansur, Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ahmad (in his “*Al-Zuhd*”), Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu al-Sheikh, Tabrani and Bayhaqi (in his *Shu`ab*) have reported Ibn Mas`ud as saying, “A mountain calls out to another mountain by its name, ‘O so and so. Did anyone pass by you who remembered Allah?’ It replies, ‘Yes. Be of good cheer’” (Shawkani).

Qurtubi adds: Muhammad b. Ka`b has said that the statement about Allah taking a son is so heinous, that those who uttered it almost broke the Last Hour on us human beings. And, Ibn al-Arabiyy has said, “If not for the fact that Allah is neither affected by the disbelief of the disbeliever, nor is He elevated by the belief of the believer; neither the former decreases in His kingdom by aught, nor the latter increases it by aught, (if not for these facts) such a blasphemy would not have been allowed to roll on the tongues. But the thing is, Allah Most High takes no notice of what the misguided ones have to utter about Him.”

Majid adds: “Compare a saying of Jesus himself, unrecorded in the ‘canonical’ gospels. ‘The crowd drew nigh, and when they knew him they began to cry out: Welcome to thee, O our God! And they began to do

[94] Assuredly, He has full account of them and has numbered them exactly.

﴿٩٤﴾ لَقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا

[95] And every one of them is to come to Him on the Day of Judgment singly.

﴿٩٥﴾ وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا

[96] Surely, those who attained to faith and did righteous deeds, the Most Merciful will surely assign them love.¹⁰¹

﴿٩٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

[97] Indeed We have made it easy (to understand) in your own tongue so that you might thereby give glad tiding to the believers and warn thereby a people contentious.

﴿٩٧﴾ فَأَمَّا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لُدًّا

him reverence, as unto God. Whereupon Jesus gave a great groan, and said: Get ye from before me, O madmen, for I fear lest the earth should open and devour me with you for your abominable words.' (GB. p. 213)."

101. Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and others have said in explanation that the allusion is to the place of love for the believers among the believers (Ibn Jarir).

The above is confirmed by reports in the *Sahihayn* and other collections. The Prophet said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا دَعَا جِبْرِيْلَ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أُحِبُّ فُلَانًا فَأَحِبَّهُ - قَالَ - فَيَحِبُّهُ جِبْرِيْلُ ثُمَّ يَنْادِي فِي السَّمَاءِ فَيَقُولُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ فُلَانًا فَأَحِبُّوهُ. فَيَحِبُّهُ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ - قَالَ - ثُمَّ يُوضَعُ لَهُ الْقَبُولُ فِي الْأَرْضِ. وَإِذَا أَبْغَضَ عَبْدًا دَعَا جِبْرِيْلَ فَيَقُولُ إِنِّي أَبْغَضُ فُلَانًا فَأَبْغِضُوهُ - قَالَ - فَيَبْغِضُوهُ جِبْرِيْلُ ثُمَّ يَنْادِي فِي أَهْلِ

السَّمَاءِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْغِضُ فُلَانًا فَأَبْغِضُوهُ - قَالَ - فَيَبْغِضُونَهُ ثُمَّ تُوضَعُ لَهُ الْبَغْضَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ.

“When Allah loves a man He calls Jibril and tells him, ‘Jibril! I love so and so. So, you love him too.’ So, Jibril begins to love him. Thereafter it is announced among the inhabitants of the heavens: ‘Allah loves so and so. So, you too love him.’ So, the inhabitants of the heavens begin to love him. Then love is placed for him in the earth. In contrast, when Allah hates a man He calls Jibril and tells him, ‘Jibril! I hate so and so. So, you hate him too.’ So, Jibril begins to hate him. Thereafter it is announced among the inhabitants of the heavens, ‘Allah hates so and so. So, you too hate him.’ So, the inhabitants of the heavens begin to hate him. Then

[98] How many nations ¹⁰² have We destroyed before them? Do you perceive anyone of them, or hear from them a whisper?¹⁰³

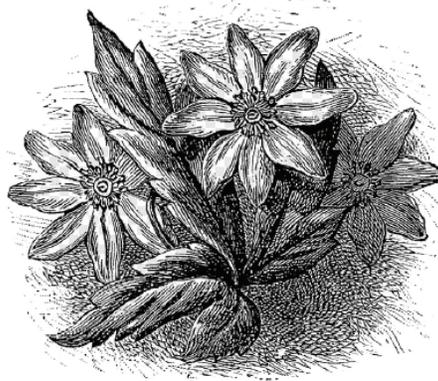
وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّن قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ
مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا
﴿٩٨﴾

hatred is placed for him in the earth” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Razi in brief).

As for the popularity that we see some of the unbelievers gaining among themselves, or among misguided Muslims, most of the time, it is temporary (Au.).

102. A literal translation of the word “*qarn*” is epoch. It can also be rendered as “civilization.”

103. Ibn Jarir presents examples from poetry to demonstrate that although the textual “*rikz*” lends different meanings, primarily it stands for a low voice, or whisper. ﴿٩٨﴾





Surah 20

*Ta-Ha*¹

Makkan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. According to a report in Daraqut-ni and Sirah Ibn Is-haq, it is the opening verses of this chapter that ‘Umar read in his sister’s house in the incident which ultimately led to his conversion to Islam (Qurtubi).

It was the 6th year after the Prophet’s commissioning when ‘Umar started out with the intention to kill him and do away with the source of the problem. On the way he met someone and confided his intention in him. He (a Muslim) told him that the right point of start would be his own house: ‘Umar’s sister and brother-in-law who had turned Muslims. So ‘Umar changed his direction. Just then his sister Fatimah and her husband Sa’id b. Zayd (one of the ten who received glad tiding of Paradise) were receiving instructions in the Qur’ān from Khabbab b. al-‘Arabi (a slave and an earlier Muslim). As ‘Umar knocked, they hid the parchment that carried the Revelation. Khabbab went under the bed.

‘Umar had heard the recitation. He inquired about what they were reading and, had they, by any chance, abandoned their old time-honored pagan religion? Upon receiving a denial about any written material, he assaulted his brother-in-law. When his sister intervened, he transferred a bit of his rage on her face with a powerful blow. She began to bleed but said defiantly, “Yes! You may do what you will, ‘Umar; but we shall never give up our new religion.” The blood and the sister’s confidence helped bring down ‘Umar’s rage. “Alright. But let me see what you were reading,” he said, half sheepish, half arrogant. However, in that heat also they would not forget the sanctimony of the Scroll and asked him to wash himself first. Was he not unclean? As ‘Umar washed the rest of his arrogance, Khabbab appeared from down under the bed. Images seemed to be flashing around, as he seemed to be more excited rather

[1] Ta-Ha.²

طه ﴿١﴾

than apprehensive. “Umar,” he said, “I have heard the Prophet ask Allah to lead one of the two `Umars (he, or Abu Jahl) to Islam.” How could `Umar have avoided feeling honored? As they stretched out the scroll, lo, it contained *Surah Ta-Ha*. A few minutes of intent reading, and `Umar was ready to see the Prophet (Au.).

Alusi quotes a few *ahadith* on the virtues of this *Surah*. One is in Darami, Ibn Khuzaymah (in his *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Tabarani (in his *Awsat*) and Bayhaqi (in his *Shu`ab*), which Ibn Kathir also quotes, but distrusting it. It says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى قَرَأَ : (طه) و (يس) قَبْلَ أَنْ يُخْلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِأَلْفِ عَامٍ ، فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْقُرْآنَ ، قَالَتْ : طُوبَى لَأُمَّةٍ يَنْزِلُ هَذَا عَلَيْهَا ، وَطُوبَى لَأَجْوَابِ تَحْمِيلِ هَذَا ، وَطُوبَى لَأَلْسِنَةٍ تَتَكَلَّمُ بِحَدَا.

“Allah recited *Ta-Ha* and *Ya-sin* a thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth. When the angels heard the recitation, ‘Goodness for a people upon whom they will be revealed, goodness for a people who carry them in their hearts, and goodness for a people whose tongues recite them.’”

Haythamiyy said: While Bukhari distrusted one of the narrators, Ibn Ma`in (one of his masters) trusted him (Au.).

And Ibn Marduwayh has a narration coming down from Abu Umamah. The Prophet (*saws*) said,

ترفع قراءة القرآن عن أهل الجنة غير طه ويس

“Recitation of the Qur`ān will be taken away from the people of Paradise except for the chapters *Ta-Ha* and *Ya-sin*.”

We have traced this *hadith* to Hilyatu al-Awliyah. Its authenticity could not be established (Au.).

Apart from these there are several other reports on the topic.

As noted by some commentators, the reports quoted, or alluded to by Alusi and others on the virtues of this chapter are weak. But their combined strength must be made note of (Au.).

2. According to the earliest commentators, *Ta-Ha* is a word of Nabatean origin meaning, “O man.” Tabari quotes poetical lines to demonstrate that in the classic Arabic also the word was used in this sense. An ancient dialect of a Yemeni tribe

[2] We have not sent down the Qur'ān upon you that you should be distressed.³

﴿٢﴾ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى

known as 'Akk, also used it in the same sense. Another possible meaning is, "Rest assured." Imām Razi offers several other possibilities without stating his own preference.

3. Mujahid said that (in early Islam) the Prophet used to stand long hours in vigil as well as some of his Companions. Sometimes they stood so long that they needed to tie ropes to themselves (to prevent falling off during the Prayers). It was proving very stressful so Allah revealed, "We have not sent down the Qur'ān that you be distressed." In other words of the Qur'ān itself (73: 20),

فَاقْرَأُوا مَا تيسَّرَ مِنْهُ [المزمل : ٢٠]

"So recite of it (in the Prayers) what is easily possible" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report however is not wholly reliable. It was declared weak by Suyuti (Shawkani).

Another possibility is that the allusion is to the distress the Prophet felt for the Makkans for not accepting his message and this verse was revealed to console him (Qurtubi).

Taking cue from this verse, Ibn Kathir quotes a *hadith* which should

be a great source of consolation for scholars. It is preserved by Tabarani which Ibn Kathir thinks is fairly reliable. The Prophet said,

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِلْعُلَمَاءِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، إِذَا قَعَدَ عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ لِقَضَاءِ عِبَادِهِ : إِنِّي لَمْ أَجْعَلْ عِلْمِي ، وَحُكْمِي فِيكُمْ ، إِلَّا وَأَنَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَعْفِرَ لَكُمْ ، عَلَى مَا كَانَ فِيكُمْ ، وَلَا أَنَالِي .

"On the Day of Judgment when Allah would have taken His place for judgment He will address the scholars and say, 'I did not place the knowledge from Me, nor My wisdom in you except that I wished to forgive you, whatever the state in which you were, and I do not care.'"

Yet another possible reason for the revelation of this verse is that the Makkans were taunting the early Muslims that since the Revelation had begun coming down, they appeared to be in great distress, what with lengthy Prayers at nights and several restrictions in everyday life (*Ma`arif*). Asad answers their objection. He writes, "I.e., the ethical discipline imposed upon man by the teachings of the Qur'ān is not meant to narrow down his feel of life, but on the contrary, to enhance it by

[3] But only an exhortation to him who fears.

إِلَّا تَذِكْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾

[4] A revelation from Him who created the earth and the high heavens.

تَنْزِيلًا مِّنْ خَلْقِ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ
الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾

[5] (By) the Most Merciful who assumed *Istawa'* on the '*Arsh*'.⁴

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٥﴾

deepening his consciousness of right and wrong.”

4. Imām Razi once again stresses on the point that “*istawa' ala 'l-'Arsh*” should not be taken in the sense of “being seated on the '*Arsh*”: for three reasons. One, there was a time when there was no '*Arsh*' until Allah created it. Second, the earth is spherical. What is up for some is down for others. '*Arsh*' has to be in some direction. But Allah is not in any one direction. Third, we read in *Surah Al-Haqqah* verse 17,

وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةَ [الحاقة :
[١٧

“Eight will be bearing the '*Arsh*' on that Day.” Obviously, the created cannot bear the Creator.” Therefore the meaning of being seated has to be shelved. For further discussion see Chapter 7, note 82 of this work.

We might also ask ourselves, if not for the introduction of such enigmatic words how will challenge-

hungry minds spend their research energies? (Au.)

Alusi also takes up the subject to show how difficult it is to deal with it. He quotes the *hadith* from Abu Da'ud which says,

أُذِنَ لِي أَنْ أُحَدِّثَ عَنْ مَلَكٍ مِنْ مَلَائِكَةِ اللَّهِ مِنْ حَمَلَةِ الْعَرْشِ إِنَّ مَا بَيْنَ شَحْمَةِ أُذُنِهِ إِلَى عَاتِقِهِ مَسِيرَةُ سَبْعِمِائَةِ عَامٍ

“I have been allowed to say that one of those angels that carry the '*Arsh*' (is so large) that between his earlobe and the shoulder is a distance of seven hundred years.”

According to Albani, the *hadith* is *Sahih* (Au.).

The Prophet has also said that the '*Arsh*' is above the seven heavens in the form of a dome. Another report of Abu Da'ud tells us that once a Bedouin went up to the Prophet and said,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ جِهَدْتَ الْأَنْفُسَ ، وَضَاعَ الْعِيَالُ ، وَهَلَكْتَ الْأَمْوَالُ ، وَتَهَكَّتِ الْأَعْصَامُ ، فَاسْتَسْقَى اللَّهُ عَرْزًا وَجَلَّ لَنَا ، فَإِنَّا نَسْتَشْفِعُ بِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ ،

وَنَسْتَشْفِعُ بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : وَيْحَكَ تَدْرِي مَا تَقُولُ ؟ ، فَسَبَّحَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، فَمَا زَالَ يُسَبِّحُ ، حَتَّى عَرَفَ ذَلِكَ فِي وُجُوهِ أَصْحَابِهِ ، ثُمَّ قَالَ : وَيْحَكَ لَا يُسْتَشْفَعُ بِاللَّهِ عَلَى أَحَدٍ ، مِنْ خَلْقِهِ ، شَأْنُ اللَّهِ أَعْظَمُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ، وَيْحَكَ تَدْرِي مَا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ؟ إِنَّ عَرْشَهُ عَلَى سَمَاوَاتِهِ ، وَأَرْضِهِ هَكَذَا ، وَقَالَ بِأَصْبَعِيهِ : مِثْلُ الْقُبَّةِ ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيَطُوبُ بِهِ أَطْبِطُ الرَّحْلَ بِالرَّاكِبِ .

“People are suffering, folks are lost, properties are destroyed, cattle is dying, so ask Allah for rains. We seek that you intercede with Allah, and seek that Allah intercede with you..” The Prophet remonstrated, “Woe unto you man. Do you realize what you are saying?” Then he began to say “Glory to Allah, glory to Allah,” again and again. Then he said, “Woe unto you man. Allah cannot be asked to intercede with anyone of His creation. Allah is Greater than that. Do you realize Allah’s Greatness? He is above His `Arsh, the `Arsh is above the heavens.” Then using his fingers he made a dome-like figure to indicate its shape. Then he added, “It makes a noise similar to the noise of a rider on a new leather saddle.”

The *hadith* was declared *Sahih* by Abu Da’ud himself.

The difficulty of the topic has led many scholars of great repute to leave the verse where it is without any interpretation, explanation, or further clarification. Imām Abu Hanifah held the opinion that, “It is not right of anyone to speak out anything about Allah’s Essence. Rather, one should ascribe to Him what He ascribed unto Himself, without adding anything over and above what He said.” This was also the opinion of Imām Malik, Imām Ahmad, Imām Shaf’e`i, Muhammad b. al-Hasan, Mirwazi, Ibn Mubarak, Is-haq b. Rahwayh, Bukhari, Tirmidhi and Abu Da’ud. This is more or less what the Sufiya have said, viz., people do not need any interpretation unless they forget the fact, already there in a corner of their mind, that Allah is different from anything that their minds can imagine.

Nevertheless, some scholars have understood the term “*istawa*”, continues Alusi, in the sense of “*istila*” meaning, “He overcame, or overpowered.” This of course may not be a satisfactory explanation to some. But we should not be oblivious of the fact that the Qur’an is in the Arabic language, addressing Arabs, and their minds look for meaning. In view of this fact, and since “*istawa*” cannot

[6] To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, what is between them, and what is beneath the wet soil.⁵

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا
بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ﴿٦﴾

be understood in the sense of “He sat,” or “squatted,” or “positioned Himself,” there should be room to understand it in the sense of “*istila*” since an Arab reader will have to choose between the two. He cannot be told to draw no meaning whatsoever. What Ibn `Abidin al-Shami has written in Radd al-Muhtar is very reasonable that taking the meaning as “*istila*” should be allowable for the common people, since they have to understand the verse one way or the other, although, such a meaning cannot be declared correct in the absolute sense.

Alusi concludes that it is best not to speak of the topic at all, but rather, leave it to everyone to form an opinion that his knowledge allows him, and not insist that one version is correct and another incorrect.

5. Linguistically, the word “*thara*” is used for wet soil (that one encounters as he digs). But many have accepted the meaning at this point as simply the soil. That is, Allah knows what is below the soil. Our translation is literal and exact. Muhammad b. Ka`b however said that it meant “the seven earths.” That is, Allah

knows what is below the seven earths (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Majid’s study of other religions yields fruit. He writes: “The under-world has been supposed by many polytheistic nations to be ruled by a God of its own. ‘The divinity who reigns over the under-world is frequently a personification of the region itself, and this is more particularly the case where, e.g., the Earth and Under-earth are conceived as personified in one being. The earth-goddess is also the ruler of souls, with the under-earth people as her subjects’ (ERE XII, p. 518).”

The verse could also be considered as a prediction by the Qur`an that nobody will ever know what is below the wet soil. Centuries of research has yielded some results about what is below the surface of the earth. It is a world teeming with life forms. Yet details of which is impossible to determine. Bacteria has been found several kilometers deep. But, and significantly, the Qur`an is not speaking of the wet layer of soil. It is speaking of what is below the wet layer: as if to send across the hint that at best you will only know (at best something)

[7] And, whether you speak aloud in speech (or not), He knows the secret and what is more hidden.⁶

وَإِنْ تَجَهَّرَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾

[8] Allah, there is no god save He. His are the Names Most Beautiful.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴿٨﴾

about the wet layer, and not any further. On a diameter of 12,000 kilometer man has been able to drill through no more than a few kilometers and the rest remains a complete mystery. The division and description of several layers by the geologists, which ends with a hot liquid core, is, at best, sketchy, conjectural, and, of little information value. Only Allah knows what is beneath the wet soil (Au.).

6. What can be “hidden and less than that”, or more secretive than the secretive? Imām Baqir and Ja`far Sadiq (as also others: Au.), said that “*sirr*” is what one conceals in his heart, whereas “lesser than that” is the passing thought which a man is unable to control and recollect afterward (Alusi).

At this point Alusi also takes up the question of “*Dhikr Jahri*” (vocal remembrance) and states that there are above twenty *ahadith* that speak of the Prophet remembering Allah in a loud voice. We know of the famous incident when the Companions

were making *dhikr* in a loud voice, in chorus, invoking the Prophet to say, “Be kind upon your souls, you are not calling upon someone who is deaf, nor someone away, but rather someone Who is the Hearing, the Near.” (That is, his objection was to the shouting. He did not say, do not raise your voice at all: Au.). As for the report that when Ibn Mas`ud encountered some people in a mosque doing *dhikr* aloud he remarked, “I do not see except that you are innovators” - and then he got them sent out. Well, this report is not trustworthy. In fact, Imām Nawawi thought that *dhikr* in a raised voice is better than the sub-vocal one (because it helps drive away other thoughts). So was the opinion of Imām Shafe`i and which seems to be the opinion of Imām Ahmad also.

See *Surah Al-An`am*, note no. 286 for some more details.

Although the main point of discussion above may have its merits, we might point out that according to Hussain Saleem Asad the narration

[9] *And, have you received the story of Musa?*⁷

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾

[10] *When he saw a fire,⁸ and said to his family, 'Stay here.⁹ I can perceive a fire. Perhaps I can bring you back a burning brand from it, or find guidance at the fire.'*¹⁰

إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدًا عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾

[11] *When he came to it, he was called, 'O Musa!*

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿١١﴾

concerning Ibn Mas`ud has a sound chain (Au).

At all events, it is scientifically proven that sound waves leave their effects on the mind, either positively or negatively: "The science seems to suggest that there is a relationship between sound waves and brainwaves and that sound waves can alter brainwaves in positive ways. In the conclusion of a study, 'A Comprehensive Review of the Psychological Effects of Brainwave Entrainment,' 2008, by Tina L. Huang, PhD., she says that findings suggest that Brainwave Entrainment is an effective therapeutic tool, but that more studies needed to be conducted. Her studies showed that people suffering from cognitive functioning deficits, stress, pain, headaches/migraines, PMS and behavioral problems benefited from Brainwave Entrainment." (What Type of Sound Waves Are

Best For Brain Entrainment? – by A. Mullen) – Au.

7. Imām Razi expresses the possibility that among the Makkan revelations this was the first time the Qur`ān was narrating Musa's story and hence it started with words, "Have you received the story of Musa?"

8. We are at a point in Musa's story when, having completed his term with his father-in-law, Musa (*asws*) was heading back to Egypt, with his wife. It was a cold wintry night and Musa had lost his way (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others).

9. The form is plural, leading us to believe that it was a small caravan comprising of a wife, a child, or more (Au.).

10. That is, guidance to the path Musa had lost that would lead him to Egypt (Ibn Kathir from Ibn `Abbas).

[12] Surely I, I am your Lord! So put off your shoes;¹¹ you are in the sacred valley Tuwa.¹² إِنَّنِي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاحْلَعْ تَعْلِيكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾

11. Majid quotes: “Among the Hebrews, ‘it was a mark of reverence to cast off the shoes on approaching a sacred person or place’ (ERE. XII. p. 149).”

The earliest scholars differed between themselves over why Musa was asked to remove his shoes. Quite a few said that they were made of a dead donkey’s leather and so unclean. But Ibn Jarir distrusts the Prophetic report in this regard and prefers the reason that Musa was asked to do so for his feet to draw spiritual blessing (*barakah*) by touching the soil of the Holy Valley.

Qurtubi adds: Musa (*asws*) was possibly asked to remove his shoes for reasons of humility due at the time of devotional acts. The *Salaf* used to remove their shoes while circumambulating the house. Indeed, Imām Malik would not ride upon a camel within Madinah out of respect for the Prophet’s body buried there. Nevertheless, it is allowed in our *Shari`ah* to Pray with the shoes on. In fact, someone has said that it is preferable to do so in view of Allah’s instruction (7: 31), “Put on your

adornment at every Prayer.” But the condition is that they should be free of filth. It is reported that:

بَيْنَمَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- يُصَلِّي بِأَصْحَابِهِ إِذْ حَلَعَ تَعْلِيَهُ فَوَضَعَهُمَا عَنْ يَسَارِهِ فَلَمَّا رَأَى ذَلِكَ الْقَوْمُ أَلْفَوْا نِعَاهُمْ فَلَمَّا قَضَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- صَلَاتَهُ قَالَ « مَا حَمَلَكُم عَلَى الْفَائِكُم نِعَالِكُمْ ». قَالُوا رَأَيْنَاكَ أَلْقَيْتَ تَعْلِيكَ فَأَلْقَيْنَا نِعَالَنَا. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- « إِنَّ جِبْرِيْلَ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- أَتَانِي فَأَخْبَرَنِي أَنَّ فِيهِمَا قَدْرًا ». وَقَالَ « إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ فَإِنْ رَأَى فِي تَعْلِيهِ قَدْرًا أَوْ أَدَى فَلْيَمْسَحْهُ وَيُصَلِّ فِيهِمَا ».

Once the Prophet removed his footwear, placed them on the left hand side and then entered into Prayers. The Companions behind him followed him. After the Prayers he asked them why they had done that. They said they did in his imitation. He said, “Jibril came to me to say that my footwear was unclean.” Then he added, “When one of you comes to the Prayers, let him look at his shoes. If unclean, let him rub off the dirt and then Pray in them.”

Abu Da’ud narrated this *hadith* and Muhammad Abdul Haq rated it as *Sahih*.

[13] *I have chosen you; therefore give ear to what is to be revealed.*¹³

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾

[14] *Verily I, I am Allah. There is no god but I; therefore worship Me, and perform the Prayers for My remembrance.*¹⁴

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

In fact, Ibrahim al-Nakha`i used to say, “I would like to see the shoes of those who Pray without them taken away by a needy person!” However, according to a report in Nasa’i, the Prophet himself was seen on the day he entered Makkah triumphant removing his shoes and placing them on the left side before Prayers. He placed them on the left side because he was the Imām. As for others, they should put them in a place where they do not inconvenience others. Further, if the dirt is say urine, excrement, etc., then, according to most scholars, rubbing them off is not sufficient. They must be washed. According to Abu Hanifah, if the impurity is dry it may be rubbed off, but if wet, the shoes must be washed.

Qurtubi’s commentary ends here.

Finally, the fact must not be lost sight of that Arabia is a dry place, sandy, craggy, and rocky, with no rains and no mud. There is little or nothing to dirty one’s shoes in complete contrast with wet places, where streams, open sewages, and pools of water dotting

the landscape help spread the dirt by feet. Thus, what is applicable to Arabia is not applicable to every other place (Au.).

12. Commentators are divided between the majority accepting Tuwa as the name of the valley and a minority, as meaning “twice,” i.e., a valley twice blessed.

13. That is, listen carefully. Sufyan b. ‘Uyayna has said that the first step towards gaining knowledge is to hear carefully, intently. Then memorize it, then put it to practice and finally, spread it (Qurtubi).

14. “Thus, the conscious remembrance of God and of His oneness and uniqueness is declared to be the innermost purpose, as well as the intellectual justification, of all true prayer” (Asad).

The translation represents the general understanding. However, another possible meaning is, “offer the Prayers whenever you remember” (Ibn Jarir). This draws its strength from a *hadith* in Ahmad. It says,

[15] Surely, the Hour is to come that I would well-nigh conceal it,¹⁵ so that every soul be requited for its labors.

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَى
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾

[16] So let him not avert you from it who does not believe in it but follows his lust, lest you perish.

فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ
هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾

إِذَا رَفَدَ أَحَدُكُمْ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ أَوْ غَفَلَ عَنْهَا فَلْيُصَلِّهَا
إِذَا ذَكَرَهَا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ بِمَا يَشَاءُ لِيُذَكِّرَ

“When one of you sleeps off his Prayer, or forgets to do it, then let him do it when he remembers, for Allah said, ‘Perform the Prayers for My remembrance’” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Similar reports are in the *Sahihayn* (Shawkani).

The text however, writes Qurtubi, allows for both the interpretations. In its extended meaning, *hadith* literature tells us that if someone did not do his Prayers intentionally, he might do it when he repents. This is the opinion of almost all scholars except that of Da’ud (Zahiri) and one or two minor scholars. The situation is the same as with fasts. Whoever did not do Ramadan fasts is, by consensus, required to do them later. So also Prayers. Those who said against, perhaps said it to impress the importance of the Prayers, and not to discourage people from not Praying at

all later, if in the first instance, they did not do it intentionally.

15. The literal translation of “*akadu*” as “almost” is the understanding of Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Abu Saleh and others who said that the meaning is, “I would almost conceal it from Myself, it being an affair of such suddenness” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

However, some have understood “*akadu*” in the sense of “I wish (to conceal)”, i.e., from the creations. Ibn Jarir and others quote poetical lines to show that classical Arabic has examples of such usage, although he himself accepts the former interpretation as most likely intended. Further, the word “*ukhfi-ha*” changes its meaning if read as “*akhfi-ha*” which some have done. In that case it would mean, “I will show” or, “manifest”, and the whole verse would mean, “The Hour is coming and I am about to show it.” But this is not a popular understanding (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others).

[17] And what is it in your right hand, O Musa?¹⁶

[18] He answered, 'It is my staff. I lean on it, beat down therewith leaves for my sheep, and I have other uses thereof.'¹⁷

[19] He said, 'Cast it down O Musa.'

﴿١٧﴾ وَمَا تِلْكَ يَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبٌ أُخْرَى

﴿١٨﴾

﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَى

16. Some scholars have said that the question was asked about an obvious thing in order to draw Musa's attention to the fact that it was after all a wooden rod that he held in his hand (and which he will see undergo a transformation) - Ibn Kathir.

17. The lengthy answer by Musa (*asws*) to a short and simple question leads us to believe, writes Qurtubi, that one may answer more than asked. We have similar examples in the *hadith*. When the Prophet (*saws*) was asked about sea water he replied, "Its water is clean, and its dead lawful." And, when a little girl was raised up and asked, "Can she perform Hajj?" he answered, "Yes. And you will get the reward." Many such examples can be quoted from the *hadith*.

The *ahl al-qalb* of course have not missed to note Musa's anxiety to prolong his conversation with His Lord. Qurtubi also devotes more than a page to the use of a staff and is in-

clined to believe that every believer should carry one, whether old or young. He quotes Maymun b. Mahran as saying: "Carrying a staff is a *Sunnah* of the Prophets of all times, and a sign of a believer." Hasan al-Busri said, "There are six points involved in a staff: a *Sunnah* of Prophets, adornment for the righteous, a weapon against enemies, a supporter for the weak, hateful to the hypocrites and an increase in obedience." Our Prophet too carried one. (Of course not because he was too old: Au.). He used it for several purposes. One was to use it as a barrier (*Sutra*) during Prayers in the open. During Tawaf he used it for pointing to the Hajr al-Aswad in lieu of a kiss. He also leaned on it during his sermons. In fact, there is consensus that the Khateeb should lean on it during the sermons. During tarawih Prayers ordered by 'Umar, some Companions used to support themselves with staffs because of the lengthy recitation.

[20] He cast it and behold, it was a snake,¹⁸
moving swiftly.

فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] He said, 'Grasp it and fear not.'¹⁹ We shall
restore it to its former state.

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا
الْأُولَى ﴿٢١﴾

The above said, we may point out that although several *ahadith* quoted on the virtues of carrying a staff (although Qurtubi does not quote any), are, according to Albani untrustworthy (see *Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa al-Mawdu'ah*, *hadith* no. 536); none the less, we know that the staff was commonly used by the Companions. We also know that apart from our own Prophet, Musa (*asws*) carried a staff, and that Sulayman (*asws*) died while leaning on one. We also have a *hadith* in Tabarani, declared trustworthy by Ibn abi Hatim, to the effect that on the Day of Judgment all the Prophets will be carrying a staff (Haythami, *Kitab al-Ba'th*). In fact, other reports imply that a few others will be carrying staffs on that Day. A report (Hasan according to Ibn Hajr) says that when 'Abdullah b. Unays had completed his mission successfully, the Prophet gave him a staff in reward and told him to preserve it for he will be carrying it on a Day when few will be carrying anything to support themselves with. Following his instructions, it was buried with him when he died (Au.).

18. The textual word "*hayyah*" is a generic word meaning "snake." In other places the Qur'an referred to the staff-turned-snake as "jann" which is for a thin swift moving snake as against "*thu'ban*" – also used in the Qur'an – which is for a python. Perhaps the staff took different shapes at different times. Some have conjectured that although it became like a large python, it moved as fast as a thin snake which made it all the more fearful, and hence the two names (Au.).

Majid adds: "This miracle of the rod had a special significance in Egypt, where snake was deified and worshipped as a sacred deity. 'Of all the animals' that were the real gods of Egypt, 'none were so numerous or were so universally feared and venerated as the snake' (Syce, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 208)."

Some of the crowns of ancient Egyptian rulers were decorated with snake figures (Au.).

19. Majid once again, "Moses was subject to the primary human emotion of fear as much as any other

[22] And press your hand to your side, it will come forth white without blemish²⁰ – an additional sign.

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضًا
مِّنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] In order that We may show you (some) of Our great signs.

لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] Go to Fir`awn. He has indeed transgressed (all bounds).²¹

أَذْهَبَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] He said, 'O my Lord, open my heart for me.'²²

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Ease up my task unto me.

وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] And untie a knot on my tongue.²³

وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾

mortal, and there is absolutely nothing derogatory to him in that he got frightened at the wonderful 'freak of nature'. Cf, the OT: 'And the Lord said unto him, what is that in thine hand? And he said, a rod. And He said, cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled before it' (Ex. 4: 2-3)."

20. That is, without any similarity with the hand of a leprous person (Ibn Jarir).

Majid explains why this phrase was added: "The import of the phrase.. is to correct the derogatory misstatement of the *Bible* that Moses' 'hand was leprous as snow' (Ex. 4: 6) and also a story quoted by Josephus (an ancient Jewish historian: Au.) that 'Moses was a leper, and was expelled

from Heliopolis on this account' (DB. II. p. 96)."

21. The Fir`awn in question, (which was a title), is generally identified as Rameses II. Majid writes: "Rameses II the generally acknowledged oppressor of Israel, 'was inordinately vain' (Breasted, History of Egypt, p. 461).

22. Musa knew that destined to receive Revelation, he will need a large heart to accommodate its secrets and subtleties (Alusi).

Imām Razi has a commentary on this verse which runs into several pages but we drop it out because of its philosophical nature.

23. In the absence of a *hadith*, it is not clear what the verse means, especially in view of the explanation

offered by Sa'id b. Jubayr, Mujahid and Suddi, that prevents us from accepting the literal meaning. They explained, as in Tabari, and obviously relying on Jewish accounts, that once Fir'awn picked up the infant Musa. He tore off a few hairs from his beard. In rage, he wanted to kill him off then and there. But his wife pleaded saying "after all he is a child and does not know the difference between diamond and live coal." Fir'awn caught on that, and ordered that diamond and burning coals be brought and placed before Musa. Musa picked up live coal and put it in his mouth, which left a knot on his tongue, unable to speak out properly when he grew up. Suddi's version says it was Jibril who put the burning coal into Musa's hand.

But of course, the story does not sound true, apart from the fact that it is perhaps of Jewish origin (Au.).

At all events, Muhammad b. Ka'b al-Qurazi, who was of Jewish origin, seemed to have understood the verse in its apparent sense. Somebody once remarked to him that he sounded poor in Arabic. Ka'b asked him in return, "Are you not able to follow my speech?" (That is, can you un-

derstand what I say or can you not?) The he added, "I hope you will understand what I am about to say. Listen. Musa asked his Lord to remove a knot on his tongue in order that the Israelites are able to understand his speech.." Ka'b stopped short at that. The meaning then is, Allah removed just enough of the knot on Musa's tongue for him to be able to communicate his ideas to others (Ibn Kathir).

In other words, the terms "a knot on my tongue" implies a part removal of some kind of impediment in reference to eloquent speech that Musa suffered (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani and others).

Later, in verse 52 of *Surah 43*, we will come across Fir'awn's objection to Musa that he was not clear in presenting his argument. But that was a political gimmick. Fir'awn understood everything that Musa said, but he wished to pretend ignorance for the sake of his courtiers. Otherwise, one may look at Musa's presentations and arguments in Fir'awn's court. They are at the highest level of eloquence with no ambiguity surrounding them (Au.).

[28] That they understand my speech.²⁴

يَقْمَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] And appoint for me a helper²⁵ from my family.

وَأَجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] Harun, my brother.²⁶

هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Strengthen me by him.²⁷

اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٣١﴾

[32] Let him associate with me in my task.

وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] So that we glorify you much.

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] And remember You greatly.

وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Surely, You are ever seeing of us.²⁸

إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] He said, 'You have been granted your requests O Musa.²⁹

قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿٣٦﴾

24. This piece further strengthens the opinion that it was simply the ability to successfully communicate his ideas to others that Musa had requested when he had asked for the removal of a knot on the tongue. He did not suffer any physical impediment (Au.). Present day *Bible* supports this meaning. It says, "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent .. but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." (Ex. 4: 10) – Majid.

25. The primary meaning of the term "*wazir*" is "burden-carrier" (from *wizr* meaning a "burden").. "hence its later – post-classical - application to government ministers (Asad).

26. Musa's supplication in favor of his brother leads us to believe that

he had remained in touch with him, was aware of his good qualities, and had good faith in him (Au.).

27. Literally, the translation should be, "strengthen my back with him."

28. Of several possible explanations, one is that Musa meant to say, "I have asked for an assistant to help me out in the affairs entrusted to me. However, whether I need one or not is, O Lord, best known to You. After all, you are seeing of us" (Razi).

29. In all, Musa made eight requests and was granted all of them with no modifications, and no strings to them. This is how His slaves have to behave when dealing with one another: ever ready to give when asked. Our Prophet never said 'no' to any-

[37] Indeed, We conferred a favor on you another time.³⁰

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] When We inspired your mother with what was inspired.³¹

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] (To the effect) that, "Place him in a chest and then cast it into the river - that the river may cast him ashore, to be picked up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him." And I cast upon you love from Me, that you be brought up under My sight.³²

أَنۢ أَلْقَيْتَهُ فِي التَّنَابُوتِ فَأَقْدِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ
فَلْيَلْقَاهُ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ
لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي
وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾

one who asked. When he did not have anything to give, he promised he would give when he had (Au.).

30. Razi raises a question and then answers. Why did Allah say at this point, "We conferred a favor on you another time?" Why did He have to remind Him of a favor done? The answer is, (firstly, it was in order that Allah's blessings may not be taken for granted. One has to be conscious of them. And that needs a reminder: Au.). Secondly, Musa needed the reminder that he did not earn those blessings: they were entirely bestowals from His Lord.

Sayyid adds that perhaps it was to remind Musa that he wasn't being sent unprepared. It was a long plan, executed by Allah and not an accidental event that Musa was there receiving

the command to proceed and warn Fir`awn.

Imām Razi further points out that earlier also Allah (*swt*) had bestowed eight favors on Musa (*asws*) – from birth until he came looking for fire in the valley of Tuwa.

31. The translation of "*awhayna*" (lit., We revealed) as "We inspired" reflects the unanimous understanding of the commentators that Musa's mother was not a Prophetess.

Thanwi points out that this verse is the basis, apart from others, of the statement that non-Prophets can receive inspiration.

32. That is, under special care. Majid writes: "'*Ala` Ayn* is said in this instance to refer to 'honouring and protecting.'"

[40] When your sister walked along and said, "Shall I lead you to someone who will take charge of him?" Thus We returned you to your mother so that she may cool her eyes and not grieve³³. Then you killed a man,³⁴ and We rescued you from distress³⁵ and tried you with many trials.³⁶ Then you remained several years with the people of Madyan. Finally you have arrived (here) according to a decree, O Musa.³⁷

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى
مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَى أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ
عَيْنَهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَوَقَّلتَ نَفْسًا فَجَعَيْنَاكَ
مِنَ الْعَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي
أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَى قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَى
﴿٤٠﴾

[41] And I have prepared you for Myself.

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾

33. Understanding these verses requires the background story that the Qur'an unfolds in other chapters. A few points can be offered here drawing some details from sources other than the Qur'an. Fearing the advent of a Prophet among the Israelites, Fir'awn and his advisors decided that they should better kill every newborn Israeli male child. But, subsequently, fearing serious shortage of labor, they decided to kill the male offspring every alternate year. Harun (*asws*) was born the year they decided to spare them, but Musa in the year they were killing. Inspired to the action, his mother put him in a casket, and cast it into the river Nile. The casket however was held by a rope tied to a peg. She pulled it ashore to feed the child whenever she felt free of the dangers of Copt informers and inspectors. But one day the rope

slipped off her hand and the casket floated away in good cheer. She sent her daughter behind it to find out what happened to it. Meanwhile the casket was picked up by the Royal household. But the child, despite its heart-rending cries refused to be fed by anyone. His sister somehow came to know of him. (According to some reports, the news spread around that Fir'awn's folks had picked up a child who was not accepting anyone's breast: Alusi). She managed to speak to someone of importance and said (that although she knew nothing about who the child belonged to) she could lead them to someone, very decent, who could nurse him. (Perhaps any doubt about she being the true mother could have been removed from the color of the parents: Musa was dark, while his parents were perhaps as fair as the Semites:

[42] Go then, you and your brother, with My signs. And slacken not in My remembrance.³⁸

اَذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي
ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] Go to Fir`awn (the two of you), indeed he has rebelled.

اَذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾

Au.). Thus the child was ultimately returned to the mother, who insisted she would rather take the child into her house instead of she herself moving into the palace: what with her another son Harun to be looked after?! Finally, they agreed to it, and paid her handsomely for the services to her son (Au.).

An account more in detail is available in Nasa'i and has been quoted by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others.

34. The story behind the incident will appear in detail - *in sha Allah* - in *Surah al-Qasas*. In short, an Israeli sought Musa's help against a Copt. Musa punched the Copt and he fell dead. Next day he found the same Israeli quarrelling with another Copt. As he advanced to help, the Israeli thought it was he who was about to receive the punch and revealed the other day's happening. The previous accidental killing uncovered, Musa had to leave Egypt and seek refuge in Madyan.

Ibn Jarir presents a *hadith* which says that the Copt that Musa had killed was never intended to be killed yet

Allah said, "Then you killed a man, and We rescued you .."

35. The allusion is to the removal of the distress caused by the accidental killing of a man in Egypt (Mujahid, Qatadah: Ibn Jarir).

36. To the question, were the trials to which Musa was subjected, a favor that His Lord mentioned here? Imām Razi and Qurtubi answer that yes, they helped cleanse him and led to his selection for Messengership.

When Sa'id b. Jubayr asked Ibn `Abbas the explanation of the trials, he narrated to him the entire story of Musa, from the beginning of the affair until he came to the Tuwa valley pointing out several trials that he was subjected to (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others).

37. That is, it is not an accident that you came here, O Musa, to collect fire, but are receiving Messengership. The whole affair had been designed long past in time (Shabbir).

38. It is said that here onward the verses were revealed to Musa in Egypt (Alusi and others).

[44] But say to him soft words,³⁹ that he might be reminded, or perchance fear.⁴⁰

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى
﴿٤٤﴾

[45] They said, 'Our Lord. We are afraid lest he will over-react with us or he should transgress.'⁴¹

قَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا نَخَافُ أَنْ يُفْرِطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطَّعَى ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] 'Fear not,' He said, 'I am with you indeed. I hear and I see.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمِعُ وَأَرَى ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] So go to him and say, "Verily, we two are the Messengers of your Lord. Send forth, therefore, the Children of Israel with us and persecute them not.⁴² We have indeed brought you a sign from your Lord. And peace upon him who followed the guidance.⁴³

فَأْتِيَاهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا تَعَذِّبْهُمْ قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بَيِّنَاتٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَى ﴿٤٧﴾

Thanwi adds: This verse is the basis of the opinion that for full profit of the efforts to spread knowledge, a teacher must engage himself in plenty of *dhikr*.

39. It is said that one of the latter day Khulafa' was doing his Tawaf when a scholar reproached him harshly. The Khalifah protested, "Look! Neither I am worse than Fir'awn nor you better than Musa. Allah said, 'But say to him, the two of you, soft words.'" That said, there is nothing wrong in acting tough with the proud (Au.).

40. Asad comments, ".. obviously (this) does not imply any 'doubt' on God's part as to Pharaoh's future reaction: it implies no more than His command to the bearer of His mes-

sage to address the sinner with a view to the latter's bethinking himself; in other words, it relates to the intention or hope with which the message-bearer should approach his task (Razi)."

41. That is, they feared that Fir'awn might hasten his punishment on them even before they had finished relaying the message to him or before they show him their miracles (Alusi and others).

42. The allusion is to the tough tasks and meanly works that were imposed on the Israelites. In addition, their new-born male children were slaughtered and women let live for labor.

[48] *Indeed, it has been revealed to us that chastisement shall be upon him who laid the lie and turned away.*"⁴⁴

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَن
كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾

43. Ibn Kathir points out that these were also the words that our Prophet used when he addressed kings and rulers. For example, the letter he wrote to Heraclius the Roman Emperor ran as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the Most Kind, the Most Compassionate.

From Muhammad the Messenger of Allah,

To Heraclius, the Emperor of Rome.

Peace be upon him who followed the guidance.

After that, I invite you by the word of Islam. Embrace Islam, you will be in peace and Allah will give you twice the reward."

44. Several accounts in the *Bible* are similar to those in the Qur'an; but, only in sketchy terms. Otherwise, the two accounts are seas apart. However, that has been enough for honest professors and the erudite in the Western Universities and Research Centers, deeply sunk in their books since last five hundred years, to conclude, not hastily, but very deliberately, with mountains of evi-

dential material, that the Prophet committed plagiarism. Mawdudi answers to the absurd allegations. He writes, "The Qur'anic account of the incident should be read in conjunction with those accounts in the *Bible* and the Talmud. (Talmud is a sort of a commentary on the Old Testament which, in modern times of effulgence of information, no Jew, but the very specialist, has in possession; others having never seen it: Au.). This comparative study will clearly reveal the differences in the images of the Prophets as portrayed in the Qur'an and in the Jewish religious tradition. According to the *Bible*, God told Moses, 'Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God: 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?' (Exodus 3: 10-11). Subsequently, even though God tried at length to persuade Moses of the same, encouraged him, and endowed him with miracles, Moses still said: 'Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person' (Exodus 4: 13).

[49] He (Fir`awn) asked,⁴⁵ 'Who then is the Lord of you two, O Musa?'⁴⁶

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يَا مُوسَى ﴿٤٩﴾

“The Talmudic account goes a step further. It states that the argument between God and Moses continued for seven days. God insisted on Moses accepting the prophetic mission whereas Moses declined to do so on the grounds of his speech impediment. Finally, God said that it was his will that Moses become a Prophet. To this Moses replied that God had sent angels to save Lot, had assigned five angels when Hagar left the house of Sarah, so why was He, then, asking him to leave Egypt along with His favorite children (the Israelites)? This so enraged God that He made Aaron (Harun: Au.) a party to Moses’ prophetic office, and denied priesthood to the house of Moses by transferring it to the descendants of Aaron. (See The Talmudic Selections, p. 142 ff. – Dr. Z. Is-haq).”

Thanwi points out that the manner of phrasing the words, “it has been revealed to us that chastisement shall be upon him who cried lies and turned away,” are the first application of the command in the earlier verse which instructed, “but speak to him in soft words.” It did not say, “chastisement shall be upon you.”

45. “Here the Qur`an omits certain details of the story: in particular, how Moses arrived at Pharaoh’s court and how he explained his teachings to him. These details are mentioned earlier in *al-A`raf* 7: 108; and can also be found in *al-Shu`ara* 26: 10-33; *al-Qasas* 28: 28-40 and *al-Nazi`at* 79: 15-36” (Mawdudi).

46. Mawdudi comments on Fir`awn’s true concerns: “The purpose of the question posed by Pharaoh was to emphasize the fact that since he was sovereign of Egypt and its people, Moses had no business setting up anyone other than him as their Lord.. We have already noted that Pharaoh’s claim to be the sovereign was grounded in his belief that he was the incarnation of the sun-god Ra.

“It has also been established historically that the national cult of the Egyptians consisted of the worship of many gods and goddesses. Hence, in point of fact, Pharaoh did not claim to be the ‘only object of worship’. He rather claimed, on a practical level, divine political lordship over the people of Egypt, and on a theoretical level, divine political lordship over

[50] He answered, 'Our Lord is the One who gave everything its form and then guided (it).'⁴⁷

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى ﴿٥٠﴾

all mankind.. What he could not accept, however, was that God should have any authority to interfere with his political overlordship, or that any of God's Messengers should claim the right to command him."

47. That is, after giving His organic creations their varying forms and shapes, Allah guided them to their means of sustenance, methods of obtaining them, and ways by which they could live in communities and multiply their numbers: all instinctively (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*).

In the words of Mawdudi, "Now God did not simply create each thing on a certain pattern and leave it at that; rather, He taught each created being how it should function and fulfill the purpose for which it has been created. It is God who taught the fish how to swim and the birds to fly, the plants to blossom and the soil to produce vegetation..

"In the above sentence, which is crisp, pithy and rich, Moses not only mentions God Who is the object of his worship, but also explains why he

accepted Him as his Lord and why none else could be acknowledged to be so. The statement embodies both the thesis and its supporting argument."

Asad adds: "In the original, this sentence appears in the past sense ("has given" and "has guided"); but as it obviously relates to the continuous process of God's creation, it is independent of the concept of time and denotes, as in so many other places in the Qur'an, an unceasing present. The term *khalq* signifies in this context not merely the inner nature of a created thing or being but also the outward form in which this nature manifests itself.."

Fir'awn's manner of asking suggested that he wanted Musa to give him the address of the Lord God. Musa told him in effect, "Our Lord God is not a physical being (who can be met across the street: Au.). He can only be known through His Qualities and Attributes: 'Our Lord is the One who gave everyone its form and then guided (it) – Qurtubi.

[51] He asked, 'Then what about the previous generations?'⁴⁸

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى ﴿٥١﴾

[52] He replied, 'Knowledge about them rests with my Lord, (preserved) in a Book. My Lord neither errs, nor does He forget.'⁴⁹

قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] He who made the earth a cradle for you, threaded therein paths for you, and sent down water out of heaven - and then We brought forth⁵⁰ thereby many species of diverse plants.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّن تَبَاتٍ شَتَّى ﴿٥٣﴾

48. What Fir`awn meant to say is, if there is a God Lord who created and gave every creation its guidance, why then the previous nations did not worship Him? Why did they miss the guidance? ("Are they, in thy view, irretrievably doomed?": Asad). But Musa avoided this deviation from the main topic, gave a short answer about Allah's all-comprehensive knowledge, and brought the conversation back to the main track about who their Lord - Musa's, Fir`awn's and everyone's - was (Razi).

"At the same time, it is quite possible that Pharaoh's intent in making the above statement was to incite people against Moses by appealing to their natural feelings of love and veneration for their ancestors. This weapon has frequently been used by the opponents of truth. At the time when these Qur`anic verses were re-

vealed, this very weapon was being constantly employed against Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)" - Mawdudi.

49. That is, Allah does not err, nor does He forget as you do, O claimant to godhead (Zamakhshari).

Asad adds the explanation, "I.e., He alone decrees their destiny in the life to come, for He alone knows their motives and understands the cause of their errors, and He alone can appreciate their spiritual merits and demerits."

50. Mawdudi offers an explanation to the change in the form of address: "The Qur`an is full of instances where statements are made about past incidents or about future events. Such statements are followed either by a few sentence of exhortation to piety and righteousness, or by

[54] Eat and pasture your cattle. Surely in that are signs for men of understanding.⁵¹

كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] From it We have created you, to it We shall return you, and from it We shall bring you out a second time.⁵²

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا
نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] Indeed, We showed him all Our signs but he gave the lie and refused.

وَأَلْقَدُ أَرْبَابَهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى
﴿٥٦﴾

[57] He said, 'Have you come to us to drive us out of our land by your magic, O Musa?⁵³

قَالَ أَجِئْتُكُمْ لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكِ
يَا مُوسَى ﴿٥٧﴾

explanation or elaboration of those sentences. The style of the text, on such occasions, indicates whether the statement in question was made by a human being or by God.”

51. Allah's signs are spread all around. But why is it that the people are not guided by them? There are several reasons. One of them is people's uncaring attitudes to anything serious in life. A sign is a kind of a signpost. You read it and move forward in the direction it shows. But, if you have nowhere to go, no paths to tread, no goals to reach, then the signposts are useless (Au.).

52. It is reported that once when a coffin had been placed in the grave, the Prophet threw in a handful of dust and said, "From it We have created you." Then he threw in a second handful and said, "To it We shall re-

turn you." Then he threw in a handful and said, "And from it We shall bring you out a second time" (Ibn Kathir).

Albani however thought that the *hadith* is weak (S. Ibrhim).

Refer *Surah An'am*, ayah, note 2 and the notes that follow for details concerning man's origin from the dust and his return to the place from where the dust was taken.

53. This question indicates that Fir'awn was completely convinced that Musa and the Message he had brought were truly of an extraordinary nature, and that, if he did not employ his best means of defense, he was very likely to lose out everything to Musa. If for a moment he had believed that Musa was a mere magician, he would have ceased to pay him any attention (Zamakhshari).

[58] We shall indeed produce a magic similar to it. Therefore, appoint between us a time that we shall not fail to keep – neither we nor you – (at) a place mutually agreeable.⁵⁴

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا تُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ
مَكَانًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] He said, ‘Your appointed time is the day of adornment⁵⁵ and let the people be gathered when the sun is well up.’

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَن يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ
ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

But perhaps like the unbelievers of all times he too was a victim of skepticism and fought against the rising conviction in his heart until he met with his destruction (Au.).

Mawdudi touches upon other aspects, “It would also appear that at this stage Pharaoh had begun to seriously believe that both his courtiers and common people of his realm were being favorably impressed by Moses. He, therefore, had to resort to lies and fraudulent practices in an attempt to arouse his people’s latent prejudices. He, therefore, argued that what Moses had demonstrated were simply magical feats rather than miracles; tricks which any magician of his realm could perform – transmuting a rod into a serpent. He also attempted to incite his people’s anger against Moses by saying in effect, ‘Look, Moses brands your ancestors to be ill-guided; as those who deserve to be cast into Hell-Fire. Beware of him! He is no Prophet, but merely

hungers for power. He merely wants the Israelites to be able to seize power from the Copts and rule over this country as in the time of Joseph..’

“At this point it is also worth mentioning that the ruling classes, throughout all times, have maligned the votaries of truth, accusing them of hungering for power, misconstruing all their activities as being directed to that sole objective.”

54. Other possible meanings of “*makanan suwa*” are, as Yusuf Ali put it, “(1) a place equally distant from both sides, a central place, or (2) equally convenient to both sides, or (3) an open level plain, where people can collect with ease” as also, in Razi’s words “a prominent place, visible to all.”

55. That is, a day of festivities. Majid writes: “There were two great festivals of the Egyptians when thousands of people gathered, one of 20 days in March, and another of 27 days in

[60] So Fir`awn withdrew, got together his tricks and then came back.⁵⁶

فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَىٰ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] Musa told them, 'Woe unto you! Forge not a lie on Allah, lest He exterminate you with a chastisement. And surely, he who forged a lie will suffer failure.'

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَيَّ اللَّهُ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ افْتَرَىٰ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] So they debated their affair between themselves,⁵⁷ but kept their counsel secret.

فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرَأُوا النَّجْوَىٰ ﴿٦٢﴾

August.. And there was a yet greater festival named after Sed held on the occasion of the king being deified as Osiris.. After his 30th year Rameses repeated it every third year."

56. That is, he prepared a stratagem and then reappeared on the day of appointment (Au.).

Mawdudi adds: "Pharaoh and his courtiers considered this encounter to be of crucial importance. Messengers were sent to all parts of the country to summon all skilled magicians to the capital. Likewise, efforts were made to attract the maximum number of people in order that they might witness the magicians' feats. It was hoped that the people's minds would thus be disabused of the favorable impression that had been

formed by Moses on account of his magic."

57. It is said that they said to each other that if Musa were to be a mere magician, they will have no problem defeating him. But, against all expectations if he defeated them then surely, that would be a sign of his Messengership. The verse is alluding to the debate that ensued (Tabari). Another possibility is that having heard Musa's words ringing with truth, some of them might have remarked that those were not the words of a magician (Razi, Ibn Kathir). After all, they knew the vocabulary of the magicians better than anyone else. Did Musa's words match with their own vocabulary? (Au.).

[63] Saying (among themselves), 'These two are⁵⁸ no more than magicians who wish to drive you out of your land by their magic, and do away with your time-honored way of life.⁵⁹

قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذَانِ لَسَٰحِرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثَلَّى ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] So, resolve⁶⁰ upon your plan and then come forward as one (united) body.⁶¹ Surely, today he will prosper who prevailed.'

فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ آتُوا صَفًّا وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَى ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] They said,⁶² 'O Musa, either you cast, or let us be the first to cast.'

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَى ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] He said, 'Rather you cast.' Then behold, their ropes and their staffs appeared to him on account of their magic⁶³ as if they were moving swiftly.

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى ﴿٦٦﴾

58. Several commentators have devoted several pages discussing whether "*in hadhayni*" should be read as "*inna hadhayni*" which happens to be a second variant reading. But most have defended the present reading, viz., "*in hadhayni*" as linguistically quite correct.

59. What they meant is that Musa's victory would mean (in Mawdudi's words), "the downfall of and extinction of their splendid way of life.. that Moses' rise to power would sound the death-knell of their own culture; their arts, their attractive civilization, their varied entertainments.. in sum all the essentials of a life in pursuit of pleasure, would be destroyed. What would be left would be a life of cold and stark piety; a life so insufferable

that it would be preferable for men of good taste to die rather than continue living."

60. In Arabic when you say, "*ajmi`u ala al-amr*" it means, "prepare yourself for an affair," or "resolve upon it" (Tabari).

61. Lit. "come forward in rows" (Au.).

62. Although some have stated the number of the magicians as running in thousands, a conservative estimate is that they were nine hundred (Ibn Jarir). Ibn `Abbas however said that they were only seventy (Ibn Kathir).

63. This writer can recall witnessing a street charmer in India slit the throat of a companion lad, and then, after the final rounds of money col-

[67] Musa felt a fear within him.⁶⁴

[68] We said, 'Fear not. You will have the upper hand.

[69] Cast down what is in your right hand, it will swallow what they have faked. Indeed, what they have faked is a magician's tricks. And a magician will not prosper, howsoever he comes.⁶⁵

[70] Then the magicians were thrown into (an involuntary) prostration. They said, 'We have believed in the Lord of Harun and Musa.'

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى ﴿٦٧﴾

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفُ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٦٨﴾

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سَاحِرٌ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى ﴿٦٩﴾

فَأَلْقَى السَّحْرَةَ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى ﴿٧٠﴾

lection, remove the cloak from his body to recover him alive.

64. That is, Musa feared that the magicians might sway the people's opinion in their favor by their mighty magical feat (Qurtubi). That is because, until he actually threw, Musa perhaps did not know what his own staff, which normally turned into snake, would do. If it just slithered around, along with other make-belief snakes, would the masses know the difference? (Au.).

Yusuf Ali applies the verse to life's situations: "The concerted attack of evil is sometimes so well contrived from all points that falsehood appears and is acclaimed as the truth. The believer of truth is isolated, and a sort of moral dizziness creeps over his mind. But by Allah's grace Faith

asserts itself, gives him confidence, and points out the specific truth which will dissipate and destroy the teeming brood of falsehood."

65. Asad writes, "The above statement implies a categorical condemnation of all endeavours which fall under the heading of 'magic', whatever the intention of the person who devotes himself to it."

According to a *hadith* in Ibn Abi Hatim as well as in Tirmidhi, the Prophet said,

إذا أخذتم الساحر فاقتلوه ، ثم قرأ : ولا يفلق الساحر حيث أتى

"If you overpower a magician, kill him." Then he recited this verse, "And a magician will prosper not, howsoever he comes" (Ibn Kathir).

[71] He (Fir`awn) said, 'Have you believed in him before I gave you leave? Surely, he is your chief who taught you magic. I shall surely sever your hands and feet from opposite sides⁶⁶ and then shall crucify you by the trunks of the palm-tree⁶⁷ and you will surely learn which of us is more severe in punishment and more abiding.'

[72] They asserted, 'We shall never prefer you over that which has come to us of the signs, nor over Him who originated us. So, go ahead and do your doing. Indeed you can only decree concerning the life of this world.'

[73] We have believed in our Lord that He might forgive us our sins, and what you compelled us to perform of magic.⁶⁸ And, Allah is better and more abiding.'

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرٌ كُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا صَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّحْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ آيُنَا أَشَدَّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧١﴾

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِيكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾

إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧٣﴾

Although Ibn Kathir attributes it to Tirmidhi, the report could not be located in it (Au.).

66. That is, right hand and left foot, or the other way round.

67. He carried out his threat so that they were magicians by morning and martyrs by evening (Ibn `Abbas: Ibn Jarir).

In ancient times crucifixion consisted in nailing a victim's spread out hands to a cross bar while he was hoisted on a vertical wooden pole with a foot rest. The feet were also nailed. The victim was then left to die a slow death. In case of the former magi-

cians a palm-trunk tree was used, to which a cross bar would have been added (Au.).

68. Ibn `Abbas has said that the allusion is to the fact that they were employed as instructors (in an institute set up) at a place called Firman. Fir`awn himself used to send talented young men to learn magic under them (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Asad has another explanation to add, "Pharaoh (a title borne by every indigenous ruler of Egypt) was considered to be a "god-king" and, thus, the embodiment of the Egyptian re-

[74] Surely, whoever came to his Lord as a criminal, for him shall be Jahannum, dying not therein nor living.⁶⁹

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] While he who came to Him a believer, having done righteous deeds, such, for them are ranks high.⁷⁰

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى ﴿٧٥﴾

ligion, in which occult practices and magic played a very important role; hence, every one of his subjects was duty-bound to accept magic as an integral part of the scheme of life.”

69. The verse seems to be applicable to unbelievers. That is how Ibn `Abbas understood it. It can be substantiated with a *hadith* reported in Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn abi Hatim and Ibn Marduwayh. It says that once the Prophet was delivering a sermon. When he reached this verse he said,

أَمَّا أَهْلُ النَّارِ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَهْلُهَا فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَمُوتُونَ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَوْنَ وَلَكِنَّ نَاسًا أَصَابَتْهُمْ النَّارُ بِدُنُوبِهِمْ - أَوْ قَالَ بِخَطَايَاهُمْ - فَأَمَاتَهُمْ إِمَاتَةً حَتَّى إِذَا كَانُوا فَحَمًا أُذِنَ بِالشَّفَاعَةِ فَجِئَ بِهِمْ صَبَائِرٌ صَبَائِرٌ فَبُتُّوا عَلَى أَتْهَارِ الْجَنَّةِ ثُمَّ قِيلَ يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنِهِمْ. فَيَسْبِقُونَ تَبَاتِ الْحَبَّةِ تَكُونُ فِي حَمِيلِ السَّبِيلِ. «. فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ كَأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- قَدْ كَانَ بِالْبَادِيَةِ.

“As for its dwellers of the Fire, they are its inhabitants: they will neither live therein nor die. But as regards those people who entered the Fire because of their

sins, it will deal them death of a kind; until, when they have become coals, intercession will be allowed. They will be brought like burnt out coals at the springs of Paradise. Then the inhabitants of Paradise will be asked to throw water at them. They will start growing there like plants that sprout forth in channels through which flood water has run.” One of those men around remarked, “As if the Prophet was brought up in the deserts” (Alusi).

70. A *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* and ibn Abi Hatim gives us some details about the ‘high ranks.’ It says,

إن أهل عليين ليراهم من هو أسفل منهم، كما ترون النجوم أو الكوكب الدرّي في السماء

“Those of the *Illiyun* will be seen by those below them like you see the stars in the horizons of the sky.” The Companions asked, “Messenger of Allah! Are those the dwelling places of the Prophets?” He replied, “Rather,

[76] Gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever. That is the reward of one who purifies (himself).⁷¹

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاء مَنْ تَزَكَّى
﴿٧٦﴾

by Him in whose Hands is my soul, they are for people who believed in Allah and testified to the Messengers.” According to a version in other collections, the Prophet added, “Abu Bakr and ‘Umar are of them.” (Ibn Kathir).

Shu`ayb al-Arna`ut thought that the report is *Sahih li-Ghayrihi* (Au.).

71. That is, purified himself by obeying Allah’s commandments and abstaining from what He forbade (Ibn Jarir).

Sayyid Qutb is inclined to believe that the speech of the magicians ends here. And, therefore, he comments on the differences between true faith and ornamental faith, “The believers’ heart scoffed at the threats of the tyrant’s outburst and confronted him with a pure, deep and strong faith. Thus history lowered another curtain on a scene depicting the freedom of the heart from the bindings of the earth and earthly powers, and supremacy of faith in rewards of the hereafter over that of earthly, material rewards. This is something that

no heart can pronounce except in the shades of faith.

“With this the curtain is brought down, to be raised over another scene, and over a new episode in the unfolding story.

“It is a scene that depicts the victory of truth and faith in a living, thriving world. It came after the truth and faith had been victorious in the arena of thoughts and beliefs. After the victory of the miracle of the staff over magic, the victory of faith in the hearts of the magicians over trickery, the victory of faith in their hearts over rewards and punishments, threats and promises - after all those victories - truth now overcomes falsehood, guidance over error, and firm faith over tyranny of the living world. And the last of the victories is related to the first of the series of victories. For, the victory of the physical world does not manifest itself before victory at the level of conscience. The holders of truth will never rise up in the open, visible world, without the truth first overcoming falsehood in the hearts. Truth and faith possess a

[77] And We revealed unto Musa that, 'Depart with My slaves by night, and strike for them a dry path in the sea,⁷² fearing not to be overtaken, nor be afraid.'⁷³

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي
فَأَضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا
تَخَافُ دَرْكًا وَلَا تَحْشَىٰ ﴿٧٧﴾

[78] Then Fir`awn pursued them with his forces. Then that overwhelmed them of the sea which overwhelmed them.⁷⁴

فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ
مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾

reality of such order that when they take hold of the sensory organs of the body, they rise up further to manifest themselves at the material, physical level. This, in order that the people can be witness to it. On the other hand, if faith happens to be simply an external ornament, it never takes hold of the inner self; and tyranny and falsehood easily overcome it. For they possess a power that is real and material: something that ornamental faith cannot confront. Therefore, it is necessary to establish true faith in the heart. It is this which proves stronger than the material powers and overcomes falsehood and tyranny."

72. This refers to the situation when Musa and his followers had reached the sea shore. Fir`awn was behind them. Musa's weak-hearted followers cried out in apprehension (26: 61-62),

إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ (٦١) قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ
[الشعراء : ٦١ ، ٦٢]

"We will be overtaken.' He said, 'Never. My Lord is with me, He will guide me.'"

Musa was then told to strike the sea with his staff. It split into two with dry land in between for Musa and his followers to pass through (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

73. That is, do not be afraid of getting drowned (Ibn Jarir).

74. That is, when the Israelites had crossed, Fir`awn and his forces followed them into the dry bed. But, while in the middle, the two waters met and they all drowned.

Mawdudi comments: "The manner in which the Qur`an mentions this event leaves no doubt that it is a miracle. The Qur`anic description provides no justification for those who claim that the event was caused by wind storm or by the ebb and flow of the tide. This was clearly not the case. For neither a wind storm nor the recession of the tide would cause

[79] Fir`awn led his people to error and did not guide them aright.⁷⁵

[80] O children of Israel! Indeed, We delivered you from your enemy, and took a covenant from you by the right side of (Mount) Tur,⁷⁶ and sent down unto you Manna and quails.⁷⁷

[81] Eat of the good things We have provided you, and commit not excesses therewith lest My anger should alight on you. And on whomsoever My anger alighted, he is lost.

وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَى ﴿٧٩﴾

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ
وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَنَزَّلْنَا
عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى ﴿٨٠﴾

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا
فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ
غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى ﴿٨١﴾

the water to stand in the form of high walls; nor does wind storm or recession of the tide cause a dry road to emerge in the midst of the sea by the splitting of water into two parts.”

75. Fir`awn had assured his courtiers earlier (40: 29),

مَا أُرِيكُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَرَى وَمَا أَهْدِيكُمْ إِلَّا سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ
[غافر : ٢٩]

“I am not leading you but to the right course;” and, in the Hereafter too he will lead their entry into the Fire (Thanwi).

76. The allusion is to the covenant taken from the representatives of the Israelites, by the right side of (Mount) Tur to the effect that when revealed, the Law of *Torah* will be followed by one and all in good spirit (Au.).

Another possible rendering of the second half of the verse however is, “When We gave you an appointment by the right side of (Mount) *Tur*” –

the allusion being to the permission given to Musa to bring seventy of the Israelites along with him to witness the coming down of Revelation. Further, the textual “right side of the *Tur*” alludes to the situation of the Mount Tur when Musa reached it, that is, as he arrived, the Mount was on his right side (Qurtubi).

77. Asad has a useful note here. He writes: “According to Arab philologists, the term manna denotes not only the sweet, resinous substance .. but also to everything that is ‘bestowed as a favor’, i.e., without any effort on the part of the recipient. Similarly, the term salwa signifies not merely ‘quail’ or ‘quails’, but also “all that makes man content and happy after privation (*Qamus*). Hence the combination of these two term denotes, metonymically, the gift of sustenance freely bestowed by God upon the followers of Moses.”

[82] Indeed, I am very Forgiving unto him who repented, believed and did righteous deeds and then remained guided.⁷⁸

وَإِنِّي لَعَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ
صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] 'And what has hastened you from your people O Musa?'

وَمَا أَعَجَلَكَ عَنِ قَوْمِكَ يَا مُوسَى
﴿٨٣﴾

[84] He said, 'They are on my footsteps,⁷⁹ and I hastened to You, O my Lord, that You be pleased.'⁸⁰

قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءُ عَلَىٰ أَثَرِي وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ
رَبِّ لِتَرْضَىٰ ﴿٨٤﴾

78. The translation of “*ibtada*” as here reflects the understanding of Ibn `Abbas, as in Razi. However, Imām Razi adds other possible meanings, such as, attending to the purification of the heart and soul.

79. There have been at least two opinions regarding the words “they are on my footsteps.” One, which is adopted by most commentators, “they (the promised seventy) are just a little way off behind me.” And second, the term “they” refers not to the seventy at the foot of the mountain, but to the general Israeli public back in the tents; in which case the meaning is, as was the opinion of Hasan, “I have hastened to You O my Lord because the general public of the Israelites follows me closely in guidance.” Hence Allah said, “(That is not the case, but rather), they have been put to test after you).”

Asad sees the second meaning more plausible and comments: “This passage relates to the time of Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai, mentioned in 2: 51 and 7: 142. (The statement here implies) that he should not have left them alone, without his personal guidance, at so early a stage in their freedom. In this inimitable elliptic manner the Qur’ān alludes to the psychological fact that a community which attains to political and social freedom after centuries of bondage remains for a long time subject to the demoralizing influences of its past, and cannot all at once develop a spiritual and social discipline of its own.”

80. It is said that Musa (*asws*) was to bring seventy of his followers to Mount Tur to witness the coming down of the revelation. However, it appears that although Musa started with the seventy, he left them a little

[85] He said, 'We have tested your people in your absence - and the Samiri⁸¹ has led them into error.'⁸²

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ
وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] So Musa returned to his people angry and grieved. He said, 'My people. Has not your Lord made you good promises? Or, did the promise seem to you long (in coming)? Or, did you want your Lord's anger should strike you, that you broke your promise to me?'

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا
قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا
حَسَنًا أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ
يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ
مَّوْعِدِي ﴿٨٦﴾

behind him and hastened his own presence (Razi and others).

Qurtubi opts for the first meaning expressed in the last note and adds his own Sufistic comment: It seems the people with him were a bit slow. But Musa lost control of himself and, out of love, hastened to present himself to his Lord. So that, when asked why he had hastened, he had no answer except to say that "they are right behind me." Why should Musa have not hastened, when we are told of our Prophet that when it rained, he would bare his upper body and stand in the open receiving the downpour saying, "This is fresh from my Lord?" And, it is reported of `A'isha that when going to bed she would sometimes say, "Pass the Book (the Qur`ān) to me." She would place it upon her breast, drawing comfort from it.

81. As regards Samiri's identification, although the opinion of Ibn `Abbas was that he was not an Israeli, but rather an outsider whose tribe used to worship the cow, and who somehow attached himself to them. The opinion of others was that he was in fact an Israelite of a tribe called Samirah (Razi). Alusi adds that there is a tribe in Syria even until his time which is called as the Samiri tribe. But Asad rules out that the Samiri belonged to the Samiri tribe. He prefers the opinion of Ibn `Abbas who held that he was one of the Egyptians who believed in Musa and joined the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt. "In which case," writes Asad, "the designation samiri might be connected with the ancient Egyptian shemer, 'a foreigner' or 'stranger.' This surmise is strengthened by his introduction of the worship of the golden calf, undoubtedly an echo of the Egyptian cult of Apis."

Mawdudi attends to the problem of Orientalists' scholarship: "Al-Samiri was not the proper name of that person. The last letter ya of the word clearly indicates an affiliation, either to a race, a tribe, or to a place. Moreover, the prefix al here indicates that the person referred to was one particular Samiri, implying that there were many other people bearing that appellation because of their particular tribal, racial or habital affiliation – and that it was only he from among the Israelites who was responsible for the spread of calf-worship.

"In order to explain what the Qur'an says here no further information seems to be required. However, this particular matter has been deemed to be of great significance by Christian missionaries and especially by some Orientalists who have gone to great lengths to cast aspersions on the Qur'an. According to them, what is said here betrays – God forbid – the grievous ignorance of the Qur'an's author.

"They contend that Samaria, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel, was built in 925 B.C., several centuries after this event, [implying, thereby, that the world al-Samiri is an anachronism]. Moreover, several centuries after this a hybrid people –

a cross breed of Israelites and non-Israelites – appeared on the scene and were named Samaritans. The critics point out that along with other polytheistic innovations, worship of the golden calf was in vogue among the Samaritans. They claim that the Prophet (peace be on him) got wind of it from the Jews, and linked it with the time of the Prophet Moses (peace be on him), but invented the story that the worship of the golden calf was introduced by a Samaritan.

"They level similar charges against Haman whom the Qur'an mentions as one of Pharaoh's ministers. Both Christian missionaries and Orientalists identify Haman as a courtier of the Persian King, Cyrus, who did indeed share the same name. Using this assumption, they argue that the current Qur'anic statement is further proof of the ignorance of the Qur'an's author. Such a contention can only be sustained if one were to believe that in olden times there existed only one person, tribe or place, with a particular name; if that were indeed the case, the possibility of there being two or more people, tribes or places bearing the same name, is altogether excluded.

"The fact, however, is that the Samaritans were a well-known ancient

[87] They said, 'We did not break our promise to you by our will. But we were burdened with the weight of the people's ornaments which we cast;⁸³ and thus did the Samiri cast.'⁸⁴

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا
حَمَلْنَا آثَارًا مِّن زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَاهَا
فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾

nation who held sway over Iraq and the areas surrounding it during the time of Abraham (peace on him). It seems quite likely then for people belonging to this nation, or to any branch of it, to have been known as Samiris in Egypt during the time of Moses (peace be on him)."

82. In Islamic literature the Jews are sometimes referred to as the "enemies of the Prophets." This is one instance of their enmity. The *Bible* attributes the calf-making to Harun (*asws*). Exodus, ch. 32, verses 1-5 say, "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Up, make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And Aaron said to them, 'Take off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' So all the people took off the rings of gold which were in their ears, and brought them

to Aaron. And he received the gold at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made a molten calf; and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamations and said, 'Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.' (Au.).

83. Although not a *hadith* but some of the *Salaf* have said that when the Israelites were ready to leave Egypt, Musa (*asws*) suggested to them to borrow ornaments and jewelries from the Egyptians which would come handy as booty. It were these ornaments to which they were referring, which they cast into the fire, on Samiri's bidding (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Others have felt that Musa never ordered the Israelites to borrow the jewelry. They did it on their own. Mufti Shafi` is also inclined to this belief and points out that when the Prophet (*saws*) was leaving Makkah, the "*Dar al-Harb*" he did not take away with him the trust money he had in his possession. He left behind

`Ali and instructed him to return them to the rightful owners.

84. When Musa had left for Mount *Tur*, the Samiri took charge of the plebian class. He must have been a charismatic figure with previous influences on the Children of Israel still in his stock. He got the gold ornaments they had brought from the Copts collected together, threw in a handful of dust that he had picked up from the hoof-marks of Jibril's horse, and molded a body in the shape of a calf. It produced a lowing sound and he induced the Israelites to worship it. According to other reports Harun had got the ornaments collected together and got them buried in ground saying that booty was unlawful for the Israelites and which the Samiri dug out (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi).

The last sentence of the above would imply that it could not have been Musa who suggested to the Israelites to borrow ornaments from the Copts (Au.).

The report about the dust from the horse's hoof-mark comes from `Ali, and, according to Hakim, is trustworthy (Shawkani).

Asad writes (a little earlier), "It is mentioned in Exodus xii, 35 that, immediately before their departure from Egypt, the Israelites 'borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and gold'. This 'borrowing' was obviously done under false pretences, without the intention on the part of the Israelites to return the jewelry to its rightful owner.."

Razi quotes that once a Jew told `Ali, "Your Prophet had not yet been buried that differences surfaced between you." He answered, "We differed after him (i.e., as to who will succeed him) and not about him (i.e., whether he was a Prophet or not); whereas your feet were still not dry from the sea water that you began to clamor, "Musa! Make for us a deity as these tribal people have their deities (of mud and stone)."

In any case, the doubt remains as to how could the Israelites fall prey to Samiri's gimmicks. The answer given is that the Samiri must have been working on the spread of his personal beliefs even the while Musa (*asws*) was between them in Egypt (Alusi).

[88] He brought out for them a calf: a body with a low. They said (to one another), 'This is your Lord and Musa's Lord, but he forgot.'⁸⁵

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ فَقَالُوا
هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ ﴿٨٨﴾

[89] Did they not see that it could not reply to them a word,⁸⁶ and it did not have power for harm or good to them?

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُ لَا يُرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ
لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

[90] Indeed, Harun had told them earlier, 'My people you have been put into a trial therewith, and surely your Lord is the Most Merciful; therefore, follow me and obey my command.'⁸⁷

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَا قَوْمِ
إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي
وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي ﴿٩٠﴾

[91] They said, 'We shall remain squatted around it until Musa returns to us.'⁸⁸

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ
إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩١﴾

85. Of the several opinions that have been offered, one, as reported of Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid and others, is that this word (*fa-nasiya*) is from the Samiri who meant to say, effectively, "Musa forgot the place he should have looked into to meet and discover his deity, the molten image – the deity you should devote yourselves to" (Ibn Jarir, Razi). Yet another possible meaning offered by Asad is, "Musa has forgotten his past."

86. That is, was the lowing of the calf enough for the Israelites to conclude that it had divine powers? Could they not see that beyond lowing it could do nothing else? Did it answer any of their questions? Did it utter a word? Did it send Revelation? (Au.).

87. Although short, this sentence is rich in meaning. Harun first criticized the Israelites for their calf-worship by saying, "My people! You have been put into a trial therewith"; then he invited them to know and understand their Lord God by saying, "and surely your Lord is the Most Merciful"; then, thirdly, invited them to ponder over his own Prophethood by saying, "therefore, follow me"; and, finally, invited them to follow the Law by saying, "and obey my command."

We may remind at this point that the epithet "*Al-Rahman*" has another meaning of "*Al-Aziz*", (the Most Powerful) which seems better suited to this verse (Au.).

88. That is, "We shall wait and see what Musa has to say about it when

[92] He asked, 'O Harun! What prevented you when you saw them going astray?

قَالَ يَا هَارُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا

﴿٩٢﴾

[93] That you should not follow me?⁸⁹ Have you then disobeyed my order?⁹⁰

أَلَا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾

[94] He replied, 'O my mother's son. Do not seize me by my beard or by my head. I feared that you would say, "You caused division among the Children of Israel and you did not observe my word."⁹¹

قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا

بِرَأْسِي إِنَِّّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ

بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

he returns. Maybe he too will adopt its worship" (Qurtubi,Alusi).

89. The words, "That you should not follow me" have been understood in two ways: one, "Why did you not, O Harun, collect together all those who did not accept calf-worship and come away to me?" This is how Ibn `Abbas and Sa`id b. Zayd understood the verse. This corroborates well with Harun's reply who said, "I feared that you would say, 'You caused division among the children of Israel.'" That is, by breaking away with a party of them you caused division. However, Ibn Jurayj understood the words as meaning, "Why did you not, O Harun, follow my ways and prevent them from calf-worship?" (Ibn Jarir).

90. Harun was referring to Musa's advice that he had said while leaving for Mount Tur. In Mawdudi's words, ".. refers to Moses' directives to Aar-

on when he delegated the leadership of the Israelites to Aaron in his absence as he headed to the Mount. According to the Qur`an, 'And Moses said to Aaron, his brother: "Take my place among my people, act righteously and do not follow the path of those who create mischief"' (*Al-A`raf*, 142)."

91. Although it amounts to the same thing, yet Mawdudi points out that it was not national unity that Harun was trying to preserve, but rather avoiding a civil strife among the Israelites who would all but murder him if he had forcefully tried to prevent the calf-worship. The Qur`an recorded Harun's words elsewhere (7: 150), "My mother's son, the people overpowered me and almost killed me."

Had Harun acted forcefully, the initial division of the Israelites would have ultimately resulted in the ap-

[95] He asked, 'What then is your case, O Samiri?'

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾

[96] He replied, 'I saw what they did not see. So I took a handful of the prints of the Messenger and cast it.⁹² That is what my inner self suggested to me.'⁹³

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي ﴿٩٦﴾

pearance of a sect with die-hard members at its core. Therefore, Harun let things run their course until Musa's return and hence his words to him, "I feared you would say, 'You caused division among the Children of Israel'" (Au., with a point from Shafi').

92. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others have said that the Samiri saw Jibril and picked up a handful of dust from the hoof-prints of his horse. He threw it into the gold that was being melted saying, 'Be a calf with a low,' and then molded the calf (Ibn Jarir). There are reports from `Ali which say that the Samiri saw Jibril and his horse when he had come down to inform Musa of his appointment with his Lord (Alusi).

It might be worth noting that a similar "vision" was "experienced" by Shaybah b. `Uthman at Hunayn. He himself reports that when the Muslims fled with the initial onslaught, exposing the Prophet to the enemy, it occurred to him (although in the

Prophet's army as a new-Muslim) that he could avenge the deaths of his father and uncle killed at Badr. But as he neared the Prophet he saw flames between himself and him, resembling lightning. He feared for his life and covering his eyes with his hands, traced his steps backward. The Prophet turned towards him and asked him to get near. When he got closer he said, "O Allah, drive Satan away from him" and asked him to go forward and fight the unbelievers. Shaybah said, "Messenger of Allah. I see a beautiful horse." The Prophet replied, "O Shaybah. No one but an unbeliever sees it." Then he placed his hand on his breast and said, three times, "O Allah, guide Shaybah." With that his hatred for the Prophet changed to love. Earlier at Badr too a Bedouin onlooker had died of heart attack when he saw angels descending from the heaven. These "visions" should help us look at the so-called "Kashf" of the Sufis from a proper perspective (Au.).

[97] He said, 'Begone then. It shall be your lot in this life that you should say, "No touching."⁹⁴ And you have a promise that you will not fail you.⁹⁵ Now look at your deity to which you remained devoted. We shall burn it down⁹⁶ and then scatter it in the sea as dust.⁹⁷

قَالَ فَادْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ
لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ نُخْلِفَهُ
وَأَنْظُرْ إِلَى إِلْهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَنْ نَحْرِقَ تَهُ ثُمَّ لَنْ نَسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾

In fact, the Sufi commentator Thanwi states that *Kashf* is not a prerogative of the Ahl al-Haq at all.

Another interpretation advanced by Abu Muslim as in Razi and in Asad's words is as follows: ".. *athar* (literally "vestige" or "trace" [is]) in its topical sense of the "practices and sayings" or – collectively – the teachings of any person, and particularly of a Prophet; thus, he makes it clear that the phrase qabattu qabdatan min *athari 'r-rasul fa-nabadhtuha* signifies "I took hold of a handful [i.e., "something"] of the teachings of the Apostle and discarded it": it being understood that "the Apostle" referred to by the Samaritan in the third person is Moses himself."

In simpler words, the Samiri said that he had discarded a handful of the ways and practices of Musa. But there are two obvious problems in this interpretation. One, "*athar*" (in singular) is not used in the sense of "practices and sayings." It is its plural "*aathaar*" that is used in the above sense. Second, since the Samiri was

speaking to Musa he should have said "I took a handful of your practices and sayings and discarded them" and not "I took a handful of the Apostle's practices and sayings and discarded them" (Au.). It is another thing, adds Alusi, that the construction of the sentence does not allow for such far-fetched meaning and interpretation.

As regards several doubts that might arise about the Samiri and his feat, Alusi sets himself to answer them but which we ignore since anyone who has not placed a limit to his mind and thought, can easily work out the answers by himself (Au.).

93. What the Samiri meant to say by these words is, "It was my inner self's suggestion that if I threw the handful of dust taken from the hoof-marks of the horse, the molded calf would produce the lowing sound." This is in the same report of Ibn `Abbas in *Durr al-Manthur* from which the story of Jibril's horse has been taken.

94. Qatadah said that the Samiri was one of the great figures of the

Israelites until they crossed the sea. But, thereafter he preferred to be a hypocrite. The punishment that Musa prescribed for him was that he should be boycotted at every level of interaction, to the extent that he was not even to touch anybody, nor anyone touch him (Ibn Jarir).

Yet the above does not make clear why the Samiri should have been saying to everyone who came close to him, "No touching." Perhaps Musa's words brought on him some kind of disease that caused him pain on human touch (Au.).

In fact Mufti Shafi` reports that the commentary work "*Al-Ma`alim*" has a narration that Musa had supplicated against the Samiri which brought a disease on him with the result that when he touched someone or someone touched him, both he and the other person suffered high fever.

95. The allusion is to the Day of Judgment (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

96. A variant reading would render the meaning of "*la-nuharri-qannahu*" as "we shall reduce it to dust" (Kashshaf, Razi).

In fact, that is how Ibn `Abbas used to read and explained that since gold and silver cannot be burnt directly,

the calf was first powdered and then burnt to ashes (Shawkani).

97. Yusuf Ali places his last word on the Samiri here. He writes: "Thus ends the Samiri's story.. It may be interesting to pursue the transformation of the word Samiri in later times.. Whether the root of Samir was originally Egyptian or Hebrew does not affect the later history. Four facts may be noted. (1) There was a man bearing a name of that kind at the time of Moses, and he led a revolt against Moses and was cursed by Moses. (2) In the time of King Omri (903-896 B.C.) of the northern kingdom of Israel, there was a man called Shemer, from whom, according to the *Bible*, was bought a hill on which was built the new capital of the kingdom, the town of Samaria. (3) The name of the hill was Shomer (= watchman, vigilant guardian), and that form of the name also appears as the name of a man (see II Kings xii. 21); some authorities think the town was called after the hill and not after the man (Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*), but this is for our present purposes immaterial. (4) There was and is a dissenting community of Israelites called Samaritans, who have their own separate Pentateuch and Targum, who claim

[98] Surely, your God is Allah, besides whom there is no god but He. He circumscribes everything with His knowledge.'

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

[99] Thus We narrate to you some of the stories of what has been in the past, and thus We have given you a reminder from Us.

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ
سَبَقَ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾

[100] Whoever turned away from it, indeed, he will carry a burden on the Day of Judgment.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

[101] Abiding therein forever - an evil burden for them on the Day of Judgment.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾

[102] The Day when the Trumpet is blown; and We shall gather together that Day the criminals (all) blue.⁹⁸

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ
يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] Whispering to one another, 'You lived not but ten (days).'

يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا
﴿١٠٣﴾

[104] We know best what they will say when the best among them in ways will say, 'You lived not but a day.'⁹⁹

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَفْلُحُكُمْ
طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

to be the true Children of Israel, and who hold the Orthodox Jews in contempt as the latter hold them in contempt; they claim to be the true guardians (Shomerim) of the Law, and that is probably the true origin of the name Samaritan, which may go further back in time than the foundation of the town Samaria. I think it probable that the schism originated from the time of Moses, and that the curse of Moses on the Samiri explains the position."

98. The translation reflects the understanding of Alusi. Linguistically though, "zurqan" has been understood as "blue-eyed", meaning perhaps, that eyes would have turned blue due to fear. Other suggested meanings are "blind" and "thirsty" (Au.).

99. At another place it is said in the Qur'an (79: 46),

كَاتَبْتَهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبُثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا
[النارعات : ٤٦]

[105] *And they ask you about the mountains. Say, 'Allah will scatter them as dust far and wide.*¹⁰⁰

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي
نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] *And leave it plain, smooth.*

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

“The Day they see it they will think they did not tarry but an evening or a morning.”

In yet another place it said, (30: 55),

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُنْفِثُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ
سَاعَةٍ [الروم : ٥٥]

“The Day when the Hour is called, the sinners will swear (that) they did not tarry (in the world) but for an hour.”

Scientists say that our universe is around 15 billion years old while humans have been on the earth for no more than 10 million years, no matter how generous the counting parameters. The ratio then of human stay versus the life of the universe works out to 1: 1,500,000 years. It works out that the so-called “modern age” is no more than a second in comparison to the age of the universe (Au.).

100. Probably, wrote Razi, when the Makkan pagans heard of the Day of Judgment, they asked the Prophet how it could be brought about seeing that there were no signs of destruction in the world. What they

meant is that some kind of process has to start to bring about decay and ultimately end with total destruction. For example, mountains. How can such solid and massive objects be moved out of place? This in fact, Razi adds, was a doubt that Galenos (the Greek physician) had also expressed who said that the heavens and the earth will never meet with their destruction, for no signs of that are presently visible. Therefore Allah (*swt*) informed them that He will, by His Power, render the mountains to dust and scatter them about.

The above is a good example of how people’s mind has been working throughout the ages: from the time of the Greek civilization, to the Arabs of the Prophet’s time, to the modern man. The question of the origin and hence destruction of the world is one over which not only the best minds have spoken, but schools of thoughts have been developed. Fred Hoyle and a few others have held that the universe has always been as it is and will remain in existence as it is. This school refers

[107] You will not see therein a depression or elevation.¹⁰¹

لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

to this cosmos as the “Steady-State Universe.” Others have held that since the expansion of the universe is well proved, it means once it was smaller, and before that smaller and so on, until you arrive at a point no more than 10-23 cm across, at terribly high temperature and higher pressure. At that point it burst and the phenomenon is known in common parlance as the Big Bang. Obviously, since the burst and scattering of the material, the universe has been cooling, losing the original pressure and, therefore, slowing down in its rate of expansion. But, what happens when the initial force of expansion is lost and the cosmos stops expanding at some point of time in future? It is envisaged that the universe will then begin to contract and collapse upon itself – what is known as the Big Crunch - to ultimately end up being what it was at the time of the Big Bang. At that point the cycle of Big Bang, expansion, cooling, contraction and Big Crunch will again begin. The cycle will go on for ever!

But the scientist were left completely out of their wits when they discovered through data collected by the

Hubble telescope operating in the space that the Universe is accelerating in expansion. That is, the speed of expansion is increasing. This has come as a bomb shell suggesting a mysterious force operating upon matter pushing it afar. The Big Bang-Big Crunch-cycle therefore, will not work. So, what’s the scenario now? Well, it looks like the universe will keep on expanding, and, obviously, matter will disperse far and wide and lose complete contact with each other for ever.

The Qur’ān of course does not reject or confirm any of the above except to agree on two points: that once all matter was together (21: 30) and that the universe is expanding (51: 47) and to disagree on two points, viz., at the start the universe was not a tiny dot, but was in the form similar to rolled scriptural material (21: 104), and that the cycle will not go on forever - Au.

101. The translation – as “depression” and “elevation” - reflects the understanding of Ibn ‘Abbas, Mujahid, Ibn Zayd and others as in Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Baghawi and others.

[108] *On that Day everyone will follow the Summoner, with no deviation in him.*¹⁰² *Voices will be hushed to the Most Merciful, so that you will hear not but the shuffle of footsteps.*¹⁰³

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ
وَخَشَعَتِ الأصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ
إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

[109] *The Day, when intercession will not profit, except for whom the Most Merciful allows, and whose word He approves.*

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ
الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

[110] *He knows what is before them and what is behind them while they comprehend it not by knowledge.*¹⁰⁴

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا
يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

102. A possible meaning is, the follower of the Summoner will follow him without any deviation (Qur-tubi).

103. This is how Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Hasan and others have understood the word “*hams*.” But Mujahid thought it referred to a whispering voice (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

104. That is, He knows what they have before them of the Day of Judgment when they will be punished, and what they will leave behind them of this worldly life where they disobey His commands (Ibn Jarir).

Alternatively, they cannot comprehend Him (Allah) by knowledge (Baghawi).

Thanwi, `Uthmani and Mawdudi connect this verse with the previous one, but which seems to be possible only in a limited sense. In Mawdu-

di's words: “This (verse) explains the reasons for placing restrictions on intercession. Regardless of whether someone is an angel, or a Messenger, or a saint, nobody knows – indeed nobody – the full record of another person's deeds, of those activities which kept them preoccupied during their lives. No one fully knows what is truly creditable about a person or what makes him blameworthy. God, however, has full knowledge of the past records as well as the present state of all beings. He knows precisely the extent of goodness of those who are good. Likewise, He knows the wickedness of those who are wicked. Only He knows whether someone deserves to be pardoned, and if so, whether fully or in part. Neither angels nor Prophets nor any saints can be given a free hand to intercede on behalf of those they might like to.”

[111] Faces will be humbled¹⁰⁵ before the Living, the One by Whom all sustain. And surely, undone will be he who carried the burden of a transgression.

وَعَنْتَ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ وَقَدْ خَابَ
مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾

[112] (In contrast) He who did righteous deeds and is a believer, he shall not fear an injustice nor deprivation.¹⁰⁶

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ
فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾

[113] Thus We have sent it down - an Arabic recital¹⁰⁷ - and have diversified therein all manner of warnings that haply they may fear, or that it give rise to a new awareness in them.¹⁰⁸

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ
مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ
ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾

[114] So, exalted is Allah, the (true) Sovereign, the (Ultimate) Truth. And do not hasten with the Qur'ān before its revelation is completed to you.¹⁰⁹ And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.'¹¹⁰

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ
بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ
وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

105. The textual word “*anat*” also reflects the meaning of “surrender” (Razi, Qurtubi).

106. Literally, “*hadm*” is reduction or diminution in the wages that someone deserves to receive (Ibn Jarir from Mujahid). It is also used for wrongdoing and oppression (Qurtubi).

107. “Arabic recital” is a literal translation, otherwise, as Majid notes, the meaning is, a clearly worded recital, “The main idea underlying the word ‘arabiyyan is clearness of the precepts of the Qur’ān and their intelligibility. A`raba, like afsaha, means,

‘he spoke clearly, plainly, distinctly or intelligibly (LL)” - Majid.

108. Literally, “*dhikr*” is remembrance, but Asad’s rendering as “awareness” seems to be more appropriate here (Au.).

109. Ibn ‘Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Jurayj understood the verse as meaning, “Do not recite the revelation to your followers, O Muhammad, until We have made clear its meaning to you” (Ibn Jarir).

Razi, Ibn Kathir and others have pointed out that initially the Prophet (*saws*) used to repeat the words of revelation, even as the revelation

was in process, in fear of forgetting it. Verse 16-17 of *Surah al-Qiyamah* promised him that he will not forget what was revealed to him. This present verse instructed him not to be in a hurry to recite them to others either.

Another interpretation is that the Prophet was told not to pass on the revelations to others until they had been explained to him. Hasan has said that once a woman came to him seeking retaliation for a slap from her husband. The Prophet told her that she had the right of retaliation. But Allah (*swt*) revealed (4: 34), “Men are the protectors and managers (of the affairs) of women..” and the Prophet took back his decision (Kashshaf, Qurtubi). The above report is in Al-Faryabi, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani).

Asad relates the verse to other than the Prophet. He writes: “Although .. this exhortation was in the first instance addressed to the Prophet Muhammad, there is no doubt that it applies to every person, at all times, who reads the Qur’ān. The idea underlying the above verse may be summed up thus: Since the Qur’ān is the Word of God, all its component parts – phrases, sentences, vers-

es and *Surahs* – form one integral, co-ordinated whole.. Hence, if one is really intent on understanding the Qur’anic message, one must beware of a ‘hasty approach’ – that is to say, of drawing hasty conclusions from isolated verses or sentences taken out of their context – but should, rather, allow the whole of the Qur’ān to be revealed to one’s mind before attempting to interpret a single aspect of its message.”

Thus, in the light of interpretation of the *Salaf*, the verses here are not a repeat reminder of what had already been revealed in *Surah al-Qiyamah* which said (75: 16), “Do not move your tongue to hasten therewith.”

In contrast, a contemporary commentator wrote: “The previous subject ended with the statement: ‘Exalted is Allah, the True King’. Thereafter, the angel, before departing, apprises the Prophet (peace be on him) of something he had noted in the course of communicating the revealed message to the Prophet (peace on him). Presumably the angel did not wish to disturb him while he was in the process of receiving this revelation. Once the task had been completed, the angel drew the Prophet’s attention to what he had noticed.”

[115] Indeed, We had already taken a promise from Adam earlier, but he forgot.¹¹¹ We did not find in him a firm resolve.¹¹²

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِن قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾

[116] When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam.' They fell prostrate except for Iblis: he refused.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ ﴿١١٦﴾

The above implies that this verse is from the angel: a notion as bizarre as wrong. Indeed, we do not have any report in the *hadīth* literature which says that the angel ever apprised the Prophet of what he had noticed of him, except during Isra' wa Me'raj journey. At the time they bring a revelation, the angels speak not to Messengers except what they are commanded by Allah, and then when they speak, they speak out only words chosen from on High. Surely, if they were allowed to speak out their own words, confusion would arise over their words, and those of Allah (Au.).

110. It is noteworthy, writes Zamakhshari, that the Prophet was never asked to seek increase in anything except in knowledge.

111. Mawdudi comments on the repetition of Adam's story here. He writes: "Although the story of Adam (peace be upon him) was narrated earlier in *al-Baqarah*, *al-A'raf*, *al-Hijr*, *Bani Isra'il* and *al-Kahf*, it is

resumed once again in this *Surah*. This, in fact, is the seventh occasion that Adam's story is narrated in the Qur'an. On each occasion the story has a different context; accordingly, the details of each story have been set out in a different fashion. We find in certain instances that details incidental to the story but which are directly related to the theme of the *Surah* are described in one place but omitted at another. Likewise, the style varies from place to place. For a full understanding of the story and its meaning, one should recall the entire narrative as documented in different places throughout the Qur'an."

112. The verse draws the following comment from Muhammad Asad: "... the faculty of conceptual thinking is man's outstanding endowment, his 'forgetting' God's commandments – resulting from a lack of 'firmness of purpose' in the domain of ethics – is an evidence of the moral weakness characteristic of the human race (cf. 4: 28 – 'man has been created weak'):

[117] So We said, 'O Adam. Surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not drive the two of you out of Paradise, lest you suffer.'¹¹³

قَتَلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ
فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى ﴿١١٧﴾

[118] It is for you that you should not be hungry therein nor go unclothed.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى ﴿١١٨﴾

[119] And that you should not be thirsty therein nor face the sun's heat.'

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَى ﴿١١٩﴾

and this, in turn, explains man's dependence on unceasing divine guidance, as pointed out in verse 113 above."

The verse implies that some weaknesses are no sign of imperfection. They are but natural. A further implication is that the perfect man too can sometimes commit errors (Thanwi).

113. Allah said, "So let him not remove you both from Paradise," In contrast, He did not say, "Lest you both suffer," but rather, "Lest you suffer," i.e., in singular dropping out the reference to Hawwa.' This implies that the male will have to work harder than the female (Ibn Jarir, Thanwi). According to Sa'id, immediately upon reaching the earth, Adam (*asws*) was given an oxen to till

the land. But it is possible, adds Ibn Jarir, that Hawwa's mention was left out because her inclusion is understood.

Nevertheless, adds Qurtubi, the implication is there, that a woman's livelihood is the husband's responsibility. And that the responsibility covers four items mentioned here: food, drinks, clothes and shelter (*Ma'arif*).

Although the root word is same, the "*shaqawah*" of this verse, is not that "*shaqawah*" which implies being wretched, or away from the mercy of our Lord, either in this world or the next. But rather, according to Farra', "*shaqawah*" of this occurrence is to be made to earn one's living at the expense of one's best energies (Qurtubi, *Ma'arif*).

[120] But Shaytan whispered to him saying, 'O Adam. Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity,¹¹⁴ and a kingdom that will never decay?'

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى ﴿١٢٠﴾

[121] So the two ate of it and consequently, their shameful parts became visible to them; and the two began to fasten upon themselves leaves of Paradise. Thus Adam disobeyed his Lord and fell into error.¹¹⁵

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَى آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَى ﴿١٢١﴾

[122] Yet his Lord chose him, turned to him (in mercy) and guided him.

ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى ﴿١٢٢﴾

114. Obviously, Satan deceived them. The tree was not the Tree of Eternity. But the question remains, what tree “*Shajaratul Khuld* is?” *hadith* literature is silent about it. There is just one *hadith* in Ahmad as well as in Abu Da’ud Tayalisi’s collection which says, “Paradise has a tree under whose shade a rider can ride for a hundred years but will not be able to overtake it. It is the *Khuld* Tree.” But this report is of unknown status (Ibn Kathir). Bukhari has a similar report but without the addition of the words, “It is the *Khuld* Tree.”

In any case, it is interesting to note that throughout history, mankind’s single obsession and the ultimate goal of developmental efforts has been to attain eternal life, and a kingdom which will not decay. And, by implication, the Biblical explanation of the tree as “the tree of life” or,

“the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2: 9) is entirely inadequate. It does not convey the eternal human quest (Au.).

115. According to Qushayri, “ghawa” has two meanings. One, to commit an error. Two, to run into problems that render life unpleasant. It is the second of the two meanings that is applicable here. A question arises: What kind of sin was it that Adam committed: major or minor? The answer is, it was minor from our point of view, but, because of his high status in the sight of Allah, a major one for him. Junayd has said,

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“Good deeds of the righteous are evil deeds for those who are closer” (Qurtubi, *Ma’arif*).

Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others write: A *hadith* in Bukhari says,

[123] He said, 'Go down, the two of you from here, all together, some of you enemies to one another.¹¹⁶ Then, when there comes to you guidance from Me, then, whosoever followed My guidance, shall not go astray, nor shall he be wretched.¹¹⁷

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ
عَدُوٌّ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ
هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى ﴿١٢٣﴾

حَاجَّ مُوسَى آدَمَ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَنْتَ الَّذِي أُخْرِجْتَ النَّاسَ
مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ بِذَنْبِكَ وَأَشَقَّيْتُهُمْ قَالَ قَالَ آدَمُ يَا مُوسَى
أَنْتَ الَّذِي اصْطَفَاكَ اللَّهُ بِرِسَالَتِهِ وَبِكَلَامِهِ أَتَلُومُنِي
عَلَى أَمْرٍ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَنِي أَوْ قَدَّرَهُ عَلَيَّ
قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَنِي قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
فَحَجَّ آدَمُ مُوسَى

“Musa argued with Adam. He told him, ‘Are you the one who got mankind expelled from Paradise because of your sin, bringing wretchedness upon them?’ Adam replied, ‘Musa! Are you the one Allah chose for His Messages and (direct) talk? Do you blame me for something that Allah had decreed for me even before He had created me?’ Thus Adam overcame Musa in argument.”

According to other reports, added Ibn Hajr in *Fat-h*, Adam asked Musa, ‘What was the period before my creation that you found written in the *Torah* as when I would do what I did?’ Musa replied, ‘Forty

years.’ Adam asked, ‘Do you blame me for what was written I’ll be doing forty years before my creation?’

Hence Qadi Abu Bakr Hanafiyy has written in his *Ahkam al-Qur’ān* that it is not allowed for any of us to say, e.g., “Adam sinned,” or “Adam committed an error,” unless by way of quoting the Qur’ān or a *hadith* in which case he might quote the original words without attributing the words to himself. In fact, it is not allowed to speak ill of ordinary dead Muslims. How then, when the person involved is a Prophet and our progenitor? (Qurtubi, Shafi’).

116. That is, some of the progeny of Adam will be enemy unto one another.

117. That is, if you followed the guidance, you will neither be misguided in this world, nor be wretched in the next (Ibn Jarir).

[124] In contrast, whosoever turned away from My admonition, he shall indeed have a constricted existence,¹¹⁸ and on the Day of Judgment We shall raise him blind.¹¹⁹

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ
مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾

[125] He will say, 'My Lord. Why have You raised me blind when I was seeing (in past life)?'

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ
بَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

[126] He will say, 'That is how Our revelations came to you, but you forgot (all about) them.¹²⁰ And that is how you will be forgotten today.'¹²¹

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيَتْهَا
وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسى ﴿١٢٦﴾

[127] Thus do We requite him who crosses the limits and believes not in the revelations of his Lord. And the chastisement of the Hereafter is more terrible and more enduring.

وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِن
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَى
﴿١٢٧﴾

118. According to the earliest scholars "*ma`ishatan danka*" is every earning that is earned in the disobedience of Allah, is accompanied by hardships and which does not bring to the earner, its true benefits viz., peace and comfort, but rather leaves him miserable. Some authorities however, such as Ibn Mas`ud, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, Suddi and others have thought that the allusion is to the torture in the grave which will narrow down on the man to squeeze him until his ribs pass through one another (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The opinion of Ibn Mas`ud is supported by a *hadith* in Bazzar – of fairly good chain of narrators (Hasan

according to S. Ibrahim) - reported by Abu Hurayrah, which says that "*danka*" alludes to punishment in the grave (Ibn Kathir).

119. There will be several situations on the Judgment Day. In certain situations the unbeliever will be raised blind, though seeing on other occasions (Thanwi and others).

120. Although here the direct reference is to those unbelievers who forgot "all about the message sent to them," Ibn Kathir reminds us that memorizing the Qur`an and then forgetting any part of it is no small a sin either. The Prophet said in more than one *hadith* recorded by Ahmad,

[128] Are they not guided (by the fact that) how many generations We have destroyed before them in whose (past) inhabitations they walk about? Indeed in this are signs for those who are endued with understanding.

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ
الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسَاكِينِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿١٢٨﴾

[129] And were it not for a word from your Lord preceding,¹²² and a term determined, it would have been a thing necessary.¹²³

وَأَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا
وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾

[130] Therefore, bear with patience what they say and glorify praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting. Also proclaim (His glory) during some hours¹²⁴ of the night, and at the ends of the day,¹²⁵ haply you will be satisfied.

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ
قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ
آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ
تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ ، ثُمَّ يَنْسَاهُ ، إِلَّا لَقِيَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ
وَجَلَّ وَهُوَ أَجْدَمٌ

“No one read the Qur’ān and then forgot it, but will meet Allah the Day he meets Him as a leper.”

But Albani and others have declared the *hadith* weak (Au.).

121. That is, he will be forgotten in the Fire (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

122. What is the ‘word’ that has preceded? Ibn Kathir answers: It is the rule set by Our Lord that He shall not punish any nation before it has been warned.

123. What would have become necessary? The answer is, ‘punishment.’

124. “Aana” is the plural of “ini” meaning, some or few. But which part of the night? According to Ibn ‘Abbas, the allusion is to whole of the night. (To remind, the term “aana” is in plural). Another of his opinion is that the allusion is to the middle of the night. Hasan said the allusion by “aana”, is to the beginning, the middle and the end (Ibn Jarir).

125. The textual word “atraf” is the plural of “taraf”. It is not in the dual form “tarafayn” which would mean the two ends. So, what are the “atraf?” Ibn Jarir writes that according to some scholars the allusion could be both to morning and evening as well as mid-day, which is a “taraf” of the first half of the day. Yusuf Ali has a

[131] And do not stretch your eyes toward what We have bestowed on classes of them as splendor of this life so as to try them therein.¹²⁶ The provision of your Lord is better and longer lasting.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا
مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ
وَرِزْقَ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾

[132] Enjoin Prayer to your kinsfolk and be steadfast therein (yourself).¹²⁷ We do not ask you of provision. It is We who provide you.¹²⁸ And the good end is for the pious.¹²⁹

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا
نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ
﴿١٣٢﴾

brilliant remark: “*Taraf*, plural *atraf*, may mean sides, ends, extremities. If the day be compared to a tubular figure standing erect, the top and bottom are clearly marked, but the sides are not so clearly marked: they would be *atraf* (plural), not *tarafain* (dual). Now the prayer before sunrise is clearly *Fajr*; that before sunset is *Asr*: ‘part of the hours of the night’ would indicate *Maghrib* (early night, just after sunset), and *Isha*, before going to bed. There is left *Zuhr*, which is in the indefinite side or middle of the day: it may be soon after the sun’s decline from noon, but there is considerable latitude about the precise hour. The majority of Commentators interpret in favor of the five Canonical prayers, and some include optional prayers. But I think the words are even more comprehensive. A good man’s life is all one sweet Song of Praise to Allah.”

126. According to some reports the Prophet sought some food stuff on loan from a Jew. He refused except on mortgage. That mortified the Prophet and Allah (*swt*) revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir).

The verse is the basis of a Sufi principle viz., stay away from those who are engaged in other than Allah (Thanwi).

127. It is reported that whenever ‘Urwah (ibn Zubayr) saw wealth in the hands of some people he would go home and tell his home-folk, “Prayers, O my people, Prayers. May Allah show you mercy” (Ibn Jarir). Thabit has said, add Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, and others, that whenever Prophets of the past faced hard times, they turned to Prayers.

128. Asad comments: “.. (Razi wrote) ‘God makes it clear that He has enjoined this [i.e., prayer] upon

men for their own benefit alone, inasmuch as He Himself is sublimely exalted above any [need of] benefit.’ In other words, prayer must not be conceived as a kind of tribute to a ‘jealous God’ – as the Old Testament, in its present corrupted form, frequently describes Him – but solely as a spiritual benefit for the person who prays.”

Our own Prophet has said in a *hadith* of Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah:

يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمَلًا صَدْرَكَ غِنَى وَأَسَدًا فَفَرَّكَ
وَأِلَّا تَفْعَلْ مَلَأْتُ صَدْرَكَ شُغْلًا وَمَ أَسَدًا فَفَرَّكَ

“Son of Adam. Free yourself for My worship, I shall fill your heart with contentment and shall block your poverty. But if you do not, I shall fill your heart with multiple affairs and shall not block your poverty.” (That is, “fear of poverty will keep goading you on and on to more and more hard work: *Ma`arif*).

Shu`ayb Arna`ut said the report is Hasan, Albani that it is *Sahih*, and Tirmidhi himself declared it Hasan Gharib (Au.).

Ibn Majah has another tradition. The Prophet said,

مَنْ جَعَلَ الْهُمُومَ هَمًّا وَاحِدًا هَمَّ الْمَعَادِ كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ هَمَّ
دُنْيَاهُ وَمَنْ تَشَعَّبَتْ بِهِ الْهُمُومُ فِي أَحْوَالِ الدُّنْيَا لَمْ يُبَالِ
اللَّهُ فِي أَيِّ أَوْدِيَّتِهِ هَلَكَ

“Whoever chose a single concern for himself out of several – that of the Hereafter – Allah will suffice for him this world’s concerns. In contrast, he whose several concerns are of this-worldly nature, Allah does not care in which valley of His he dies.”

Albani declared the above report Hasan (Au.).

And a third tradition, also in Ibn Majah says,

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: حَظَبْنَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي مَسْجِدِ الْخَيْفِ فَحَمَدَ اللَّهُ وَذَكَرَهُ بِمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَنْ كَانَتْ الْآخِرَةُ هَمَّهُ، جَمَعَ اللَّهُ لَهُ شَمْلَهُ، وَجَعَلَ غِنَاهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، وَأَتَتْهُ الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ رَاغِمَةٌ، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ الدُّنْيَا هَمَّهُ، فَفَرَّقَ اللَّهُ شَمْلَهُ، وَجَعَلَ فِقْرَهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، وَمَ يُؤْتِيهِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَا كُتِبَ.

Ibn `Abbas reports that the Prophet addressed us in the Khayf Mosque, saying, after praises to Allah: “Whoever has the Hereafter as his concern, Allah organizes his affairs for him and contentment is placed in his heart, while the world comes to him subdued. In contrast, whoever

treats this world as his main concern, Allah scatters his affairs and places his poverty before his eyes, although, of the world nothing comes to him but that which is in his fate” (Ibn Kathir).

[133] And they said, 'Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?' Has there not come to them the clear sign of what was in the previous Scriptures?¹³⁰

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ أَوْلَمِ تَأْتِيهِمْ
بَيِّنَةٌ مَّا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى ﴿١٣٣﴾

[134] Surely, had We destroyed them before him with a chastisement,¹³¹ they would have certainly said, 'Our Lord, why did You not send a Messenger so that we followed Your revelations before We were humbled and disgraced?'¹³²

وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا
رَبِّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ
مِن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَذَلَّ وَمَخْزَى ﴿١٣٤﴾

Haythamiyy treated this report as *Sahih* (Au.).

129. What constitutes the "good end?" Ibn Kathir answers it as Paradise. A *Sahih* tradition (of Muslim: Au.) says,

رَأَيْتُ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ فِيمَا يَرَى النَّائِمُ كَأَنَّ فِي دَارِ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ
زَافِعٍ فَأُتِينَا بِرُطَبٍ مِّن رُّطَبِ ابْنِ طَابٍ فَأَوْلَتْ الرِّقْعَةَ
لَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَنَّ دِينَنَا قَدْ طَابَ

"Last night I saw in a vision that we are in the house of 'Uqbah b. Rafe` and that we are being presented with fresh Ibn Taab dates. I interpreted it to mean that the final outcome will be a lofty position in this world, the success in the Hereafter, and that our religion is Good."

130. Asad remarks, "I.e., 'Does not the Qur'an express the same fundamental truths as were expressed in

the revelations granted to the earlier prophets?' Beyond this, the above rhetorical question contains an allusion to the predictions of the advent of Muhammad to be found in earlier scriptures, e.g., in Deuteronomy xviii, 15 and 18 .. or in John xiv, 16, xv, 26 and xvi, 7, where Jesus speaks of the 'Comforter' who is to come after him."

131. The personal pronoun in "*qablihi*" can either be for the Prophet, for the Message he brought, or for the warning of destruction the rejecters were given.

132. Abu Sa`id al-Khudri reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

يَحْتَجُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: الْهَالِكُ فِي الْفِتْرَةِ،
وَالْمَعْلُوبُ عَلَى عَقْلِهِ، وَالصَّبِيُّ الصَّغِيرُ، فَيَقُولُ الْمَعْلُوبُ
عَلَى عَقْلِهِ: لَمْ يَتَّعَلَّ لِي عَقْلاً أَتَنْفَعُ بِهِ، وَيَقُولُ الْهَالِكُ
فِي الْفِتْرَةِ: لَمْ يَأْتِنِي رَسُولٌ وَلَا نَبِيٌّ، وَلَوْ أَتَانِي لَكَ
رَسُولٌ أَوْ نَبِيٌّ لَكُنْتُ أَطُوعُ خَلْقِكَ لَكَ وَقَرَأَ: (لَوْلَا

[135] Say, 'Everyone is waiting, so wait. Soon you will know who are the people of the straight path, and who are rightly guided.'¹³³

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَى

﴿١٣٥﴾

أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا (وَيَقُولُ الصَّبِيُّ الصَّغِيرُ: كُنْتُ صَغِيرًا لَا أَعْقِلُ قَالَ: فَتَرَفَعُ هُمْ نَارٌ وَيُقَالُ هُمْ: رُدُّوهَا قَالَ: فَيَرُدُّهَا مَنْ كَانَ فِي عِلْمِ اللَّهِ أَنَّهُ سَعِيدٌ، وَيَتَلَكَّأُ عَنْهَا مَنْ كَانَ فِي عِلْمِ اللَّهِ أَنَّهُ شَقِيٌّ، فَيَقُولُ: إِيَّايَ عَصَيْتُمْ، فَكَيْفَ يُرْسِلِي لَوْ أَتَيْتُكُمْ؟

“Three classes of men will contend with Allah (over their fate): those who died in a Prophet-less period (*fatrah*), the insane and children. The insane will say, ‘You never gave me enough intelligence to be able to comprehend.’ The man of Prophet-less period will say, ‘No Messenger came to me, nor a Prophet. Had a Messenger or a Prophet come to me, I would have been the most obedient of Your slaves.’ (The Prophet recited, ‘Only if You had sent us a Messenger?’) The child will say, ‘I was little, unable to use my mind.’ So the Fire will

be brought forward and they will be ordered to walk into it. Now, he who would be the lucky one in Allah’s knowledge will walk in. But he who would be of the wretched ones in Allah’s knowledge will withhold himself. Allah will say, ‘You have disobeyed Me. So, how do you think you would have behaved if a Messenger had been sent to you?’” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The authenticity of the above version could not be established (Au.).

133. Muhammad Asad points to a human fault: “I.e., human nature is such that no man, whatever his persuasion or condition, can never cease to hope that the way of life chosen by him will prove to have been the right way.” ﴿١٣٥﴾