

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
سُبْحَانَكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
١ أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٢  
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ٣ مَا لِكَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ  
٤ أَيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَأَيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ  
٥ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  
٦ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ  
الْمَغضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ٧

سُبْحَانَكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

سورة البقرة مدية

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ  
الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾  
وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمِمَّا  
أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾  
أُولَئِكَ  
عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

مائة وستون آية

## I seek refuge in God from Satan eternally rejected (from God's Mercy).<sup>1</sup>

1. The Qur'an (16: 98) commands: *When you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge in God from Satan eternally rejected (from God's Mercy)*. Accordingly, before beginning to recite the Qur'an, one should say: "I seek refuge in God from Satan eternally rejected (from God's Mercy)." This is a prayer for God's protection and help during the recitation against evil suggestions from Satan.

### SŪRAH 1

## AL-FĀTIḤAH (THE OPENING)

### Makkah Period

It is commonly accepted that this *sūrah* was revealed during the Makkah period of Muḥammad's Prophethood. Some Traditions say that it was also revealed on a second occasion in Madīnah. The majority of scholars hold that the first *sūrah* to be revealed in its entirety is *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*. In one respect, the *Basmalah* is the "seed" of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, which, in turn, is the "seed" of the whole Qur'an. With its marvelously terse and comprehensive words, it balances praise and petition perfectly, and it establishes four main themes or purposes of the Qur'anic guidance – (1) establishing the Existence and Unity of God, (2) Prophethood, (3) the Resurrection and afterlife, and (4) worship and justice. It is called *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* because it is the opening chapter of the Qur'an. It also has other names such as "the Seven Doubly-Repeated (Verses)" because of its glory and distinction and because it must be recited in the first two *rak'ahs* of each of the Prescribed Prayers (the *Ṣalāh*); "the Mother of the Book," because it is the seed of the whole Qur'an; and "the Treasure," because it contains many precious truths.



1. <sup>1</sup>In the Name<sup>2</sup> of God,<sup>3</sup> the All-Merciful,<sup>4</sup> the All-Compassionate.<sup>5</sup>
2. All praise and gratitude<sup>6</sup> (whoever gives them to whomever for whatever reason and in whatever way from the first day of creation until eternity) are for God, the Lord<sup>7</sup> of the worlds,<sup>8</sup>
3. The All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate,
4. The Master<sup>9</sup> of the Day of Judgment.<sup>10</sup>
5. <sup>11</sup>You alone do We worship,<sup>12</sup> and from You alone do we seek help.<sup>13</sup>
6. Guide<sup>14</sup> us to the Straight Path,<sup>15</sup>
7. The Path of those whom You have favored,<sup>16</sup> not of those who have incurred (Your) wrath (punishment and condemnation),<sup>17</sup> nor of those who are astray.<sup>18</sup>



1. This blessed phrase (*Bi'smi-llāhi r-Raḥmāni r-Raḥīm* translated as "in the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate," called the *Basmalah*), is one of the symbols of Islam. Muslims begin every good deed, and individual daily actions, that are not religiously forbidden, such as entering one's workplace, or eating, by uttering it. All things and beings come to life and survive through it. The par-

ticle *bi-* here means both *in* and *with*, so that everything, dependent on the laws of the All-Merciful, does whatever it does in and with His Name. A minute seed under earth germinates and pushes through soil and stone to grow into the sunlight, depending on the laws of the All-Merciful, and begging the (special) compassion of the All-Compassionate. Human beings, favored with free will, should always do good and

do so in God's Name and to please Him, beginning the effort in and with the Name of God.

According to some scholars, the *Basmalah* is counted as the first verse of every Qur'anic *sūrah* (chapter) except the ninth. According to the Ḥanafī school of Law, it is a verse, but not counted as the first verse of every *sūrah*. It is the first verse of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, the opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān, and it is written before every *sūrah* because of its importance and its being blessed, and so as to separate the *sūrahs* from each other. It is, in any case, a rope of light extending from the Supreme Throne of God to the hearts of people. Whoever holds fast to it in awareness of its meaning and is enlightened by it can rise to the highest point of human perfection.

2. The word "name" translates the Arabic *ism*. It is derived from the root *SaMā* (s-m-v) meaning to be high, exalted, or *VaSaMa*, meaning to be a sign. (We may call to mind *samāwāt*, meaning skies or heavens because of their being high.) The nominal phrase, "the name of God," reminds us that God is exalted as the Divine Being having names, One Whom we may address, and we mean and remember only that Divine Being when we mention the name God.

Knowledge of God (in the sense of the Arabic *ilm*) is impossible in respect of His Being or Essence (*Dhāt*). Because there is none like or comparable to Him, it is therefore impossible to grasp or comprehend His Essence. However, we can recognize God or have some knowledge of Him (in the sense of the Arabic *ma'rifah*) through His works, acts, Names, Attributes and Essential Qualities (*shu'ūn*). Awareness of His works (what we see in the world, His creation) leads us to become aware of His acts, and that awareness leads us to His Names and Attributes which, in turn, lead us to His Essential Qualities, and thence to awareness of the One Who has these Qualities.

Journeying to the Divine Being can be through either reflection on God's works – the universe, including human beings in particular, with the physical and psychological composition particular to each – or through the disciplines of the "heart," following a Ṣūfī way.

Combining the two is always safer and preferable. (Regarding the Ṣūfī way or Islamic Sufism, see Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* [translated]).

3. *Allāh*, translated as God, is the proper Name of the Divine Being Who creates and administers His creatures, individually and as a whole; Who provides, brings up, sustains, protects, and guides each and all; Who causes to perish and revives each and all; Who rewards or punishes, etc. All His Attributes are Attributes of absolute perfection, and He is absolutely free from any and all defects. He is Unique and Single, having no like or resemblance and nothing is comparable to Him. He is absolutely beyond any human conception: *Eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends all eyes* (6: 103).

God is the Unique, Single Being with the exclusive right to be worshipped and to be made the sole aim of life. He is loved in and of Himself. Everything is dependent on Him and subsists by Him. Every truth has its source in Him. His Existence is so manifest that one may doubt one's own existence but one cannot and should not doubt His. Eyes cannot see Him because of the density and plenitude of His manifestations. His Light is a veil before the eyes. He is worshipped because He is worthy of it as God – not the other way round; that is, He is God because He is the object of worship.

Without (belief in) God, life is torment within torment, intellect is pure retribution, ambitions are pure pain, attainments are losses, union is separation, love is suffering, pleasure is distress, and knowledge is whim. He is the cure for the afflicted, and the remedy for the wounded hearts. Hearts attain peace and come to rest by remembering and mentioning Him. Whoever has found Him has found everything; whoever has lost Him has lost everything.

4. The expression "the All-Merciful" translates the Arabic *ar-Raḥmān*. *Ar-Raḥmān* is an essential Attribute of God, the precise rendering of which into another language is impossible. Though an Attribute in essence, *ar-Raḥmān* can be used almost interchangeably with the name God, for it is applied to none other than God. It means the One with infinite mercy

Who embraces the whole of creation with mercy, grace and favor including all of humanity, without discrimination between believers and unbelievers, giving life, maintaining, providing, and endowing with the capacities necessary for each. God has created the universe out of, and as the manifestation of, the mercy embodied by His Name, the All-Merciful.

The universe is the work of the All-Merciful, and God's Mercy embodied by the All-Merciful embraces the creation in its entirety. There are two aspects of Divine manifestation, pertaining to the universe. One is His universal manifestation with all of His Names related to the universe. It may be understood by analogy with the sun's manifestation throughout the world with its light, including the seven colors in it and heat. This is called the manifestation of Divine Unity (*at-tajallī al-Wāḥidiyah*). The (attributive) Name the All-Merciful is the source of this manifestation. It is the source of the magnificent order of the universe such that everything is in absolute obedience to God, bound by the laws of the All-Merciful. A particular instance and visible symbol of it is the enlivening of the earth, with the plants and animals therein, together with the provision and sustaining and administration thereof in perfect harmony and mercy. All of that is owed to and dependent on the manifestation of God as the All-Merciful.

5. The other aspect of Divine manifestation may be understood by analogy with the sun's particular manifestation on each thing according to the capacity of that thing. This is God's particular manifestation on each thing with one or a few of His Names, with the other Names subordinated to them. This manifestation is the result of God's being *ar-Raḥīm*, translated as "the All-Compassionate," and is called the manifestation of Divine Absolute Oneness or Uniqueness (*at-tajallī al-Aḥadiyah*). God embraces the whole of creation as *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), without discrimination between belief and unbelief, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, or good and evil; while as *ar-Raḥīm* (the All-Compassionate), He has special mercy for faith, justice, truth, right, beauty and good, both in this world and, partic-

ularly, in the Hereafter. No one has any part in their coming into existence, the determination of their place or date of birth and death, race, color, physical features and the functioning of their body. These are all dependent on the absolute choice of God as the All-Merciful and, therefore, cannot be the grounds of superiority or inferiority – of discrimination among people. By contrast, the conscious inhabitants of the earth (jinn [ see *sūrah* 46, note 10] and human-kind) have a choice between belief and unbelief, justice and injustice, right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood – as exercised by their free wills –and are, therefore, accountable for their preferences. Being *ar-Raḥīm*, God helps those who prefer faith, right, justice, and good in this world and rewards them with eternal happiness in the Hereafter. But for *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), we would not have come into the world. But for *ar-Raḥīm* (the All-Compassionate), we would not be able to use our free will to make the right preference, comprehend the marvelous works of God's art, know what faith, religion and Prophethood are, or attain true, eternal happiness in Paradise.

6. As one must understand the Qur'ānic concepts in order to understand the Qur'ān, we give a brief explanation.

The Arabic word translated as "praise and gratitude" is *ḥamd*. It encompasses both meanings, and carries other connotations as well. We give praise on account of some particular praiseworthy achievements or qualities; we feel gratitude for some particular good done. But in relation to God, *ḥamd* affirms that God is eternally worthy of praise and gratitude because He is God eternally, eternally Merciful and the Lord of all creation. Whether His favors are recognized as such by His creatures or not, He must still be praised and thanked. Thanking is required by loyalty to God because of His favors, while praise is required by being a sincere servant aware of Who God is and what servanthood means.

It should be noted that all praise and thanks are due to God alone, and are His alone. Wherever beauty, excellence and perfection occur, the ultimate source is God. No created beings,

whether angels or humans, heavenly or earthly objects, have anything other than a dependent excellence, beauty or perfection. Where these qualities occur, they are, in reality, simply favors from God. Thus, if there is one to Whom we should feel indebted and grateful, it is the Creator of everything, Who is in reality the Creator of that to which we respond with praise and gratitude, and not its apparent possessor.

When we say *All praise and gratitude are for God*, we also mean that it is God in Whom we seek refuge when we are in danger, to Whom we pray for help when we are in difficulty or in need, and Whom alone we adore and worship.

7. The word “Lord” is used to translate *Rabb*. It has three sets of related meanings: (i) Upbringer, Trainer, Sustainer, Nourisher; (ii) Lord and Master; (iii) He Who directs and controls.

God’s being *Rabb* means that every being (and every part of every being) – from elements or inanimate objects to plants, animals and humanity, and all other beings in other worlds – is raised, sustained, directed and controlled by Him until it achieves its particular perfection, the purpose of its creation. This means that what we commonly call the “natural laws” are, in reality, designations or descriptions for God’s exercise of His Lordship, of His being *Rabb*. A complementary kind of God’s bringing up or training of humanity is His sending Prophets and religions. It follows that, in affirming God as the sole Upbringer, Trainer, Sustainer, Nourisher, Lord and Master of all beings (*at-tawhīd ar-Rubūbiyah*), we affirm another dimension of faith in God’s Oneness and Unity.

8. “Worlds” translates the Arabic *‘ālamīn* (singular, *‘ālam*). The word comes from *‘alam*, *‘ālanah*, meaning something by which another thing is known. Thus, in this perspective, every individual thing or set of things, from the tiniest sub-atomic particles to the largest nebulae and galaxies, is a “world” and indicates God. The plural form (*‘ālamīn*) is particularly used for conscious beings, giving the sense that everything that is created is as if conscious, and signifying that its pointing to

God’s Existence, Unity and Lordship is extremely clear for conscious beings.

From another perspective, the “worlds” are classified as *Lāhūt* (the High Empyrean: the pure, immaterial world of pure Divine Realities), *Jabarūt* (another of the immaterial worlds where Divine realities are manifested in their pure, immaterial forms), *Malakūt* (the world of the pure inner dimension of existence), *Mithāl* (the world of the symbols or ideal, immaterial forms of things) and *Shahādah* (the corporeal world, including all the realms visible to humankind). These worlds should be thought of as dimensions rather than distinct locations: the Divine truths or realities manifested in material forms in this world are manifested in other worlds in the forms peculiar to each.

The “worlds” are also classified as the world of spirits, this world, the immaterial world between this and the next (*al-‘Ālam al-Barzakh*), and the eternal world of the Hereafter.

The “worlds” may also be taken to refer to different domains or “kingdoms” within this earthly world, or other worlds beyond this earth.

9. The word *Mālik*, here translated as “Master,” means both owner and sovereign. Although God allows the existence of sovereigns in this world because He has endowed humankind with free will, He will be the sole, absolute Sovereign on the Day of Judgment: *Whose is the absolute Sovereignty on that Day? It is God’s, the One, the All-Overwhelming (with absolute sway over all that exist (40: 16)*. In addition, ownership of the other world with all its regions or sub-worlds, such as the Place of Supreme Gathering, the Bridge, Paradise and Hell, belongs to God exclusively.

10. The “Day of Judgment” translates the Arabic phrase *Yawm ad-Dīn*. The word *dīn* is usually rendered in English as “religion,” being derived from the verb *Dā-Na* (from *d-y-n*) meaning to profess a religion. From the same radicals (*d-y-n*), the verb *Dā-Na* has another, connected set of meanings – to borrow or be indebted, to be subjected or bound, to owe allegiance, to be called to account, judged, or

convicted. (The related noun is *dayn*, a debt or liability, an obligation.) The Islamic concept of religion (*dīn*) encompasses all these meanings. God has brought us from the darkness of non-existence into the light of existence, created us in the best pattern, and raised us to the highest point in the hierarchy of creation. He has included in the dough of our existence certain elements that, however seemingly negative or destructive, will, when disciplined, cause us to rise to higher ranks of perfection. So that we might discipline them with His help, and not be defeated by them, and so that we might use all our capacities and the positive elements in our existence in the right way, He has sent Prophets and revealed through them and through Books the rules of how we should conduct ourselves. These are God's trust or gifts to us for which we owe Him the debt of gratitude. Paying this debt requires, first of all, designing our life in accordance with the rules God has established. In this sense, religion or *dīn* is the assemblage of Divine rules that human beings must observe in order to attain to good and salvation. A day will come when we will be called to account for our efforts in this regard, and we will be judged as to how we acted in this world, and rewarded or punished accordingly. Of that day, the sole Master is God.

As the lifetime of this universe is referred to as a "day," so too the time when we are raised to life after death and judged, and eternally recompensed for what we did in this world, is also referred to as a "day." That time is also the time when the realities of religion will become clearly and fully manifest. That is another of the reasons why the Qur'ān calls that "day" *Yawm ad-Dīn*, the Day of Judgment.

11. It is reported from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, that God said: "The half of *al-Fātiḥah* belongs to Me, while the other half to My servant" (Muslim, "Ṣalāh," 38). The part up to this verse (i.e. verses 1-4) belongs to God. In it, the servant addresses God, as it were, in the third person, praising Him. These four verses of praise serve as a ladder to rise to His Presence and there attain the dignity of addressing Him in the second person (verses 5-7).

At this point, the servant addresses a petition to the One praised with His most comprehensive Attributes in the preceding verses. According to the Tradition mentioned above, verse 5 belongs to both God and the servant, whereas the following verses (6 and 7), when the servant prays to God for his/her most pressing need (i.e. right guidance), belong to the servant.

12. The words "we worship" translate the Arabic *na budu*, first person plural in the imperfect tense of the verb *'ABaDa*. It means doing something with energy and determination. *Tbādah* is derived from it and, as a term, means adoration and submission. The verb *'ABaDa* has two other important infinitives, both of which are deeply related with worshipping. *'Ubūdah* means humility and submission, and *'ubūdiyyah*, doing the duty of worship in a systematic way. "You alone do we worship" translates the meaning of the Arabic construction *īyyā-ka na budu*, which puts the pronoun "You" in an emphatic position; the same emphasis is found in the next phrase also: *īyyā-ka nasta 'īnu* (instead of the usual *nasta 'īnu-ka*). Thus, the meaning here is that we worship God in awe and with utmost submission, sincerity and humility, and in a systematic way. In so doing, we express our total devotion, submission and subjection to God and declare our faith that none other than God deserves worship, which expresses *at-tawḥīd al-'ubūdiyyah*. The fact that *na budu* is in the first person plural, and in the imperfect tense, means that the duty of worship is not restricted to one occasion only or discharged once only, but rather that it is due always, and due collectively as well as merely individually. Indeed, worship in congregation is preferable. The collective aspect refers to (i) the individual person with all the systems and cells of his/her body, (ii) the group(s) of believers who have come together at any place or time to worship God, and (iii) the whole body of believers throughout the world who have turned to the Ka'bah to worship.

13. Since the relationship between the worshipping servant and God as the One Worshipped is not maintained in other religions with the

strict clarity proper to it – especially given the influence of the modern trends of humanism and individualism – it may give rise to certain misconceptions, which we will try to clarify.

Servanthood in Islam means freedom from all other kinds of servitude and slavery. The response of Rabi' ibn 'Amir, the envoy of the Muslim army's commander, before the battle of Qadisiyah, when asked by the commander of the Persian armies about the meaning and message the Muslims sought to proclaim, expresses well what servanthood means in Islam: "We invite people from servanthood to false deities to servanthood to One God, from the suffocating dungeon of the world to the exhilarating expanse of the heavens, and from the darkness of false religions to the light of Islam" (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, 1: 391).

Servanthood in Islam is the only means to true human freedom and dignity. No one is greater than any other in being a servant and, therefore, none is worthy of worship or adoration. Every created being, whether a Prophet or a common human, is equally removed from being an object of worship. The Prescribed Prayer (the *Ṣalāh*) and the Pilgrimage (the *Hajj*) are public occasions that demonstrate this most clearly.

One who claims human freedom in rebellion to God may be a Pharaoh-like tyrant, but he is one who will abase himself, in order to serve his interest, so far as to bow in worship before the meanest thing. He may be haughty and arrogant, and yet so wretched as to accept degradation for the sake of a momentary pleasure; unyielding in self-esteem and yet so ignoble as to kiss the feet of devilish people for the sake of some trivial advantage. He may be conceited and domineering, but since he can find no point of support in his heart against death, misfortunes and innumerable enemies, he knows himself within as an impotent, vainglorious tyrant. He may be a self-centered egoist who, in striving to gratify his own carnal desires or personal interests or the advantage of his racial or cultural group, quickly becomes a slave to those desires and interests.

As for the sincere servant of God, he is a worshipping servant who does not degrade himself to bow in worship even before the greatest of the creatures. He is dignified and does not regard as the goal of worship a thing of even the greatest benefit like Paradise. Also, though modest, mild and gentle, he does not lower himself before anybody other than his Creator. He is indeed weak and in want, and aware of his weakness and neediness. Yet he is independent of others, owing to the spiritual wealth that his Munificent Owner has provided for him, and he is powerful in that he relies on the infinite power of his Master. He acts and strives purely for God's sake and for God's pleasure, and to be endowed with virtues. (*The Words*, "The 12<sup>th</sup> Word," 147)

14. *Ihdī-nā* translated as "guide us" is from the verb *HaDā*, which means taking by the hand and leading and guiding rightly, and gently. The noun *hidāyah* derived from it usually means true or right guidance, and is the opposite of deviation or being astray.

The verb *HaDā* is used both transitively and intransitively. God guides one either directly or through a means. In most cases, He kindles faith in the hearts of people as a result of their using their will and striving to find guidance. However, although God wants His servants to desire guidance and strive for it, their desiring and striving are not the cause of being guided. This seeming paradox is well expressed in the anonymous saying: "Although He is not to be found by searching, only those who search for Him find Him." The primary means of guidance is Prophets and Divine Books. In the absence of a Prophet, those who, without deviation, follow in the footsteps of the Prophets, serve the same function. Their character is made clear in the next verse.

15. The Arabic word translated as Path is *ṣirāt*. It is a way having ups and downs, one wide in some of its parts and narrow in others, and difficult to walk on. It is described in a Prophetic Tradition as a path or bridge with ups and downs, one having walls on its sides, and doors and windows opening on the outside.

The walls are the rules of the Islamic Sharī'ah, which protect it from external attacks and save those following it from veering off. The doors and windows are the openings to things forbidden. Those following the Path should not follow these openings lest they go astray (Ibn Hanbal, 4: 182-183).

*Ṣirāṭ* is used in the Qur'ān in the singular; the word has no plural. This tells us that it is the only road leading to God although there are many roads (*sabīl*) leading to the Path. It is qualified with the adjective straight, meaning that the Straight Path is the way of the Qur'ān with no crookedness at all (18: 1). It is the middle way having nothing to do with any extremes. It is equally far from communism and capitalism in economy, from absolutism and anarchism in politics, from realism and idealism in philosophy, from materialism and spiritualism in belief, and from being exclusively this-worldly or exclusively other-worldly in world-view. It is the middle way considering human psychology and the realities of life and creation. In educating people, it disciplines and ennoble the intellect, saving it from the extremes of demagoguery, cunning and stupidity, and so leads to sound knowledge and wisdom. The disciplining and ennobling of the faculty of anger and impulse of defense saves that faculty from wrongdoing, oppression and cowardice, and leads to justice and valor. The power or impulse of lust is saved through discipline from dissipation and hedonism, and grows into chastity.

16. Even if one can, by studying creation and reflecting on it, work out that there must be One Who has created it, none can discover what the Straight Path is through reasoning alone.

Human beings have a distinguished place amongst created beings. They are usually drawn to and desire what is the most beautiful. Meeting even their everyday needs requires multifarious skills and crafts. As social beings, they are obliged to share and exchange the products of their labor with others. However, their innate impulses and powers, such as intellect, anger, passion and lust, are unrestricted and, therefore, need some discipline. It follows that human beings must be guided to a

universal straight way far from all extremes, a way that contains the correct rules to guarantee their happiness in both worlds. Even if all people came together to establish these rules, they could not do so, for it requires knowing all human beings with the character, ambitions and fears of each, as well as the conditions of both worlds. This is possible only for a universal intellect, which has been manifested as Divine religion throughout history.

The greatest favor or blessing of God for humanity is the Religion. People attain happiness in both worlds through it, and realize the aim of their creation. In order to be able to find and follow the true Religion, God points us towards some persons He has chosen among people. He describes them as those whom He has favored. He presents the Straight Path as their way, and He publicizes their identity in another verse (4: 69): *Whoever obeys God and the Messenger (as they must be obeyed), then those are (and in the Hereafter will be, in Paradise) in the company of those whom God has favored (with the perfect guidance) – the Prophets, and the truthful ones (loyal and truthful in whatever they do and say), and the witnesses (those who see the hidden Divine truths and testify thereto with their lives), and the righteous ones (in all their deeds and sayings and dedicated to setting everything right). How excellent they are for companions!* One who sincerely searches for such people finds them, because they shine in the spiritual and intellectual "heaven" of humankind.

17. The Qur'ān forbids us to follow the ways of two groups: those who have incurred God's wrath (punishment and condemnation), and those who are astray.

God's wrath does not mean that God becomes angry in some way analogous to us. Rather, His wrath means punishment and condemnation. We read in the Qur'ān that those who kill a believer intentionally (4: 93), those who cherish evil thoughts about God (48: 6), those who flee the battlefield (8: 16), those who have disbelieved after their belief (16: 106), and those who argue concerning God after He has been acknowledged (42: 16) have incurred God's

punishment and condemnation. Again, those who disbelieved in God and kill His Prophets (2: 61); those who refused to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad because of envy and racist tendencies, even though they knew and recognized that he was a Prophet (2: 90); those who took a calf for worship after they believed in God (7: 152, 20: 86); and those who showed disrespect to the Sabbath, also incurred God's wrath (punishment and condemnation).

18. The verbal noun meaning "astray" (*dalāl*) can refer to a broad range of straying from the path – from the slightest lapse of a believer to complete deviation from the Straight Path. As a term, it denotes returning to unbelief after belief and exchanging unbelief for belief (2: 108); associating partners with God either in His Essence or His Attributes or acts (4: 116); and rejecting faith in all or any of the pillars of faith, namely believing in the Existence and Unity of God (including Destiny), in angels, in all the Divine Scriptures and Prophets without making any distinction among them with respect to believing in them, and in the Resurrection and afterlife.

Since before Islam, some of the Jews committed the crimes incurring God's punishment and condemnation (*Numbers*, 16: 12–24, 31–35, 41–50; 21: 4–6; *Deuteronomy*, 4: 25–29; 9: 9–29; *Matthew*, 12: 34–35; 23: 2–7, 23–33), God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, interpreted *those who have incurred (Your) punishment and condemnation*, as referring to those Jews (at-Tirmidhī, "Tafsīr al-Qur'ān," 2; Ibn Hanbal, 4: 378). And since some among the Christians went astray in different ways,

he interpreted *those who are astray* as referring to those Christians (at-Tirmidhī, "Tafsīr al-Qur'ān," 2). However, this is to exemplify a general truth – it does not exclude others who commit the same crimes and share the same characteristics from the meaning of the expression. Those who are of the same character as the Jews and Christians condemned without being Jews and Christians, are certainly included in the meaning of the expressions.

The Messenger made clear to the Muslims how, through their particular beliefs and ways of acting, people incur God's punishment and condemnation and go astray. This is his warning to the Muslims not to follow the same ways, so that they may be saved from being included in those who have incurred God's wrath (punishment and condemnation), and those who are astray.

It should be noted that all the Jews and Christians are never all alike in the Qur'ān's sight. Elsewhere it declares:

*(Yet) they are not all alike: among the People of the Book there is an upright community, reciting God's Revelations in the watches of the night and prostrating (themselves in worship). They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin and promote what is right and good and forbid and try to prevent evil, and hasten to do good deeds as if competing with one another. Those are of the righteous ones. Whatever good they do, they will never be denied the reward of it; and God has full knowledge of the God-revering, pious. (Sūrah 3: 113-115)*

## SŪRAH 2

## AL-BAQARAH (THE COW)

## MADĪNAH PERIOD

This *sūrah* of 286 verses is the longest in the Qurʾān and may be regarded as a detailed summary of it. The *sūrah* began to be revealed just after the Emigration (*Hijrah*) to Madīnah and continued to be revealed over almost ten years until all the elements of it were completed. As pointed out in the Preface, whenever a verse or group of verses was revealed, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had it written and inserted in the place in the *sūrah* to which it belonged, and where it had to be, by God's order.



In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

1. *Alif. Lām. Mīm.*<sup>1</sup>

2. This is the (most honored, matchless) Book: there is no doubt about it (its Divine authorship and that it is a collection of pure truths throughout); a perfect guidance for the God-revering, pious, who keep their duty to God:<sup>2</sup>

3. Those who believe in the Unseen,<sup>3</sup> establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and out of what We have provided for them (of wealth, knowledge, power, etc.), they spend (to provide sustenance for the needy and in God's cause, purely for the good pleasure of God and without placing others under obligation).

4. And those who believe in what is sent down to you, and what was sent down before you (such as the Torah, Gospel and Psalms, and the Scrolls of Abraham); and in the Hereafter they have certainty of faith.<sup>4/5</sup>

5. Those (illustrious ones) stand on true guidance (originating in the Qurʾān) from their Lord; and they are those who are the prosperous.<sup>6</sup>



1. If the *lām-alif* (a compound letter) is counted, the Qurʾānic alphabet has 29 letters, otherwise 28. The Qurʾān uses half of these at the beginning of 29 *sūrahs*, either singly like *qāf* (as in *Sūrah Qāf*) and *ṣād* (as in *Sūrah Ṣād*) or in two-, three-, four- or five-letter combinations. These letters are called *hurūf al-muqattaʿāt*: disjunct, isolated or abbreviated letters.

Much has been said and written about their meaning:

- Spelling these letters means that people had just begun to learn how to read and write. So, their presence at the beginning of some *sūrahs* shows that the Qurʾān was sent down to an illiterate people.

- They imply that the Qurʾān is a book composed of words and letters, which it is impossible for a person like the Prophet Muḥammad who neither reads nor writes, upon him be peace and blessings, to have produced. As the Qurʾān is a book, the universe is also a book. This is why Muslim sages call the former “the Revealed and Written Universe,” and the latter “the Created Book.” A letter has no meaning of itself; rather, it functions in a word and points to its writer in many ways. Each creature in the universe functions in a similar way by likewise pointing to its Creator.

- The characters of the Arabic alphabet are variant forms, extended and curved, of the first letter *alif*, which is itself described as the extended form of the *nukṭah*, or “point.” This is a symbol of the reality that, like the letters, words and sentences of the Qur’ān, all the creatures of the universe originate in a single source and are interrelated. From this we may understand that, in order to be able to produce even a single atom in the universe or a word in the Qur’ān in its proper place, one must have the knowledge and power to produce the whole universe and the whole Qur’ān.
- These letters suggest that there is an inherent mystery in the Qur’ān, and are like ciphers between the Revealer (God) and the Messenger, the exact and complete meaning of which is known to the Messenger only. However, this does not mean no one else can grasp some of their meanings. Scholars well-versed in the science of the mysteries of the letters have drawn many mysterious conclusions from them and discovered in them such truths that, in their view, these letters form a most brilliant miracle. For example, Imam Rabbānī Ahmad Fārūq al-Sirhindī (1564?–1624) discovered the signs of many future events in them.

2. The word translated as “the God-revering, pious, who keep their duty to God” is *muttaqī*. It is derived from *taqwā* from *wiqāyah*, meaning protection, self-defense and averting (danger). *Taqwā* is one of the most important concepts used to characterize a Muslim believer. It denotes refraining from sins in utmost reverence for God and receiving His protection against deviations and His punishment. God has two sets of laws: one the “religious” laws (including the pillars of faith, and principles of worship and morality) governing human individual and social life, and the other, the Divine laws of the creation and operation of the universe studied by the natural sciences (which we wrongly call “laws of nature”). God’s protection depends on acting in accordance with both of these sets of

laws. *Taqwā*, which we will render as “piety, righteousness, and reverence for God” in this commentary, is the only criterion of human distinction or nobility in God’s sight: *Surely the noblest, most honorable of you in God’s sight is the one best in taqwā (piety, righteousness, and reverence for God)* (49: 13).

3. The word translated as “the Unseen” is *ghayb*. Its opposite, *shahādah*, means what is observable or sensed. So, the *ghayb* denotes that which is not directly sensed or is beyond the physical senses. It has two categories: one absolute, the other limited or relative. The absolute *ghayb*, from the perspective of this world, denotes God, the Divine Being, with His Attributes and Names, and the worlds of the Hereafter. The worlds of angels, jinn, spirits and other immaterial beings can also be included in the absolute *ghayb* for the common people – “common” from the perspective of spiritual development. The exact knowledge of the absolute *ghayb* belongs to God exclusively. However, He may impart some of it to whomever He wishes amongst His servants, including primarily His Messengers, in whatever way He wills. As for the limited or relative *ghayb*, it denotes all that we cannot “sense” within the present conditions we are in, of which the most obvious case is occurrences in the past and future. For example, the Qur’ān uses the term “the tidings of the *ghayb*” when narrating the histories of bygone peoples. This class of the *ghayb* can be known through study and investigation and, in respect of the future, with the passage of time.

It is of great significance that the Qur’ān praises the believers, first of all, for their belief in the *ghayb*. This means that existence is not restricted to what is sensed and observed. This corporeal realm is the manifestation of the Unseen and unobservable according to the measures particular to it. So the truth, or full reality, of every phenomenon in this world lies in the world of the *ghayb*. By mentioning the believers’ faith in the *ghayb* at the outset, the Qur’ān teaches us how we must view things and events, providing us with the true criterion and viewpoint. This world is like a book whose meaning lies in the *ghayb* and which makes its Author known

to us. Believers are those who study this Book and discover its Author. They view every thing and event in this world from this perspective and base all their studies upon this foundation. This is the point at which Islamic epistemology departs from modern epistemology.

4. The word translated as “certainty of faith” is *yaqīn*. It means having no doubt about the truth of a matter and arriving at accurate, doubt-free knowledge. This knowledge can come from either Revelation, or study and verification. *Yaqīn* has three degrees: first, that which comes from knowledge (*ilm al-yaqīn*); second, that which depends on seeing and observation (*ayn al-yaqīn*); and third, that which comes from direct experience (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). For example, rising smoke is the sign of fire and gives us some certainty about the existence of a fire where it is rising. This certainty is that which is based on knowledge. When we go to where the smoke is rising and see the fire with our own eyes, our certainty of the fire’s existence is the kind coming from direct observation. If we put our hand into the fire and feel its burning quality, then we obtain experienced certainty about the existence and quality of fire.

One may acquire certainty about or certain faith in the Hereafter through Revelation or discovery; or through the seeing of the “heart” (the spiritual intellect); through intellectual deduction or reasoning; or through some sort of contact with the spirits of the dead (provided that this last is done through authentic ways); through true dreams; or through scientific studies. In all these cases, it will be certainty based on knowledge, that is, certainty of the first degree.

5. By describing the qualities of believers in a few concise phrases, the Qur’ān summarizes the main essentials of Islam. Islam is based on believing in the meta-physical – including first and foremost the reality of God with all His Attributes and Names, which is the source of all truths. Believing in one of the pillars of the

Islamic faith requires believing in the others, because one cannot be conceived of without the others. For example, believing in God requires believing in the Messengership, because, first of all, it is only through Messengership that we can have accurate knowledge about God and receive answers to the basic questions we all ask as human beings: Who am I? What is this world all about? What is the essence, nature, and meaning of life? Who sent me to this world and why? What do life and death ask of me? What is my final destination? Who is my guide in this journeying of life? Believing in Messengership requires believing in Revelation, Divine Books, and angels. Finally, the afterlife is both the inevitable, eternal consequence of this life and a requirement of God’s being eternal, with all His Attributes and Names.

Second, as stated in a Prophetic Tradition, the Prescribed Prayer constitutes the central pillar of Islamic life (ad-Daylamī, 2: 204). Without it, one cannot establish the building of Islam. Giving to those in need is the bridge between people, a bridge that fills the space between social classes. Believing in all the Prophets and Divine Books make all believers from the time of Adam brothers and sisters. Islam is the consummation of all Divine religions and the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was heir to all his predecessors. Faith in the Hereafter extends life and time to eternity and embraces all believers among humankind, jinn, and angels, in a single, eternal embrace.

6. Prosperity (*falāḥ*) has many degrees and types according to the needs and aspirations of people and the degrees of their spiritual enlightenment. For example, some want to be saved from eternal punishment, while others desire Paradise. There are still some who aim at the higher ranks in Paradise, and others who aspire to obtain God’s good pleasure. By ending the account of the believers’ virtues with prosperity but without specifying it, the Qur’ān allows that there are various degrees in faith, sincerity, purity of intention, and good deeds, and corresponding degrees in the final prosperity achieved.



7. The three most important reasons for unbelief are self-pride, wrongdoing or injustice, and prejudice causing deviancy in thought and action. Under the influence of these, the heart, which has been created to serve as a mirror to God, is darkened and polluted. Just as institutions or buildings that have operated in a way contrary to the law or the lawful purpose of their construction are sealed up, so does God seal up a heart which has lost its ability to believe internally.

If the heart is protected against sins, wrongdoing, prejudice, self-pride, and the mercilessness that does injustice, the senses of hearing and seeing through which the heart establishes its relationship with the outer world, function properly. Besides, such a heart has a “point of affirmation.” That is, the verses of Revelation coming into it through the ears and the evidences the eyes obtain from the universe cause the light of faith to be kindled in it. But if a heart loses its essential identity for the reasons mentioned above, it is useless to look for a point of affirmation in it. As a result, the ears become deaf to Revelation, and since the heart has no longer a point of affirmation, the eyes’ observation or study of the universe increase only unbelief in it. Perhaps that is why in many science circles, where the science is pursued on the modern Western pattern, some still insist on atheism.

8. Unbelief is an immeasurable, unpardonable crime because it is:

- an unforgivable ingratitude in the face of infinite Divine favors;
- a limitless disrespect to God and His Attributes;
- a rejection of, and contempt for, the innumerable signs of God in the universe;
- an accusation of lying and deceit against numberless beings who have believed in God, among whom are angels, righteous and believing jinn and human beings, more than a hundred thousand Prophets, and millions of saints and most honorable scholars, all of whom have never lied;

- an everlasting destruction of human conscience, which has been created for eternity and, therefore, aspires to it.

Just as faith results in eternal happiness and bliss, so does unbelief in the sense of rejecting any of the pillars of faith have the potential to result in an eternal, painful punishment.

9. After describing the believers and unbelievers in a few comprehensive statements, the Qur’ān starts to depict the hypocrites in thirteen verses. This is because:

- A hypocrite is a deceiving, secret enemy. An undeclared enemy is the most dangerous – if cheating and dishonest, more malicious and seditious; and if internal to the community, more harmful. The crimes of hypocrisy in the Muslim world have usually been greater and more destructive than the harm coming from outside the faith. A little attention to the characteristics described in these verses will suffice to call to mind the committees of evil, the underground gangs, and the secret circles who have been “setting fire” to this world for centuries.
- Evil attributes and acts such as derision, trickery, lying, and ostentation are found more among hypocrites than unbelievers. This is another reason why the Qur’ān has described the hypocrites in detail and warned the Muslims against acquiring such attributes through unguarded association with them.
- On the other hand, since hypocrites live among the believers, it is possible that long and repeated descriptions of their characteristics may cause the hypocrites themselves to perceive the evil of their hypocrisy, and the *Kalimat at-Tawhīd* (the declaration of faith in God’s Unity, namely “There is no deity but God, and Muḥammad is His Messenger”), which they pronounce with their tongues, may find a way to their hearts.

10. Qur'ānic statements such as those about how God has "increased them in disease", "set a seal on their hearts and hearing", and "left them to wander blindly" do not by any means signify that human beings have no will-power and, therefore, no responsibility for their acts of deviancy. Rather, such statements clarify the true nature of Divine pre-determination or Destiny and human free will.

A person gets his or her just deserts in recompense for his or her inclinations, thoughts and actions. A person *wills* and *acts*, and God *creates*. *Creating* human deeds means giving "external" existence or reality to human will and human actions. The Qur'ānic statements cited above mean that, in response to people using their will-power in a certain direction and acting in that direction, God has given "external" or "visible, material" existence to their intentions, choices, and actions.

Having confused human acting with Divine creation and thus wrongly supposed that there are two kinds of destiny – one for the cause, and the other for the effect – the school of the *Jabriyyah* (fatalists) denied human free will, while the school of the *Muʿtazilah* (rationalists) accorded creative effect to human will and agency, concluding that it is human beings who create their actions.

11. Elsewhere (*sūrah* 63: 4), the Qur'ān describes the hypocrites in these words: *When you see them, their outward form pleases you, and (their posture and speech are attractive and effective so that) you give ear to their*

*words when they speak. (In reality,) they are like blocks of wood propped up and (draped over) in striped cloaks.* Throughout history, puffed up by their wealth, social status, and physique, the leaders of unbelievers and hypocrites have usually belittled specially weak or impoverished believers as *fools*, as *the lowliest among them* and *as those without reflection*. But the truth is clearly the opposite.

This verse also clarifies that, besides being the shelter for the weak and poor, Islam defends and supports right and truth, and destroys haughtiness and self-pride. Islam has also established the true criteria for perfection, nobility and honor, so that the Religion cannot be made a means of oppression at the hands of worldly people and rulers. It is hypocrisy and unbelief that give rise to haughtiness, conceit, egotism, hatred, and enmity.

12. The verse points out that only through knowledge and a sound viewpoint can one distinguish between truth and falsehood, between the way of faith and that of hypocrisy. Such other admonitions of the Qur'ān as, "Do they not use their intellect?", "Do they not reason and understand?", "Do they not reflect?", and "Do they not reflect and be mindful?", signify that the appeal of Islam is based on knowledge, sound reasoning and wisdom, so that anyone with a sound intellect and capable of reflection is expected to accept Islam. By contrast, ignorance, falsehood, blind imitation and subjection to prejudice are characteristic of a disposition to superstition or unbelief and hypocrisy.

## الْبَقَرَةُ

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17. They are like him who (while traveling with company in the desert, halted for the night and) kindled a fire (for light and warmth and protection). However, when the fire had just lit all around him (and the company had become comfortable but were not properly appreciative of the fire and failed to guard it against wind, the fire was extinguished. Thus) God took away their light and left them in darkness, unseeing.

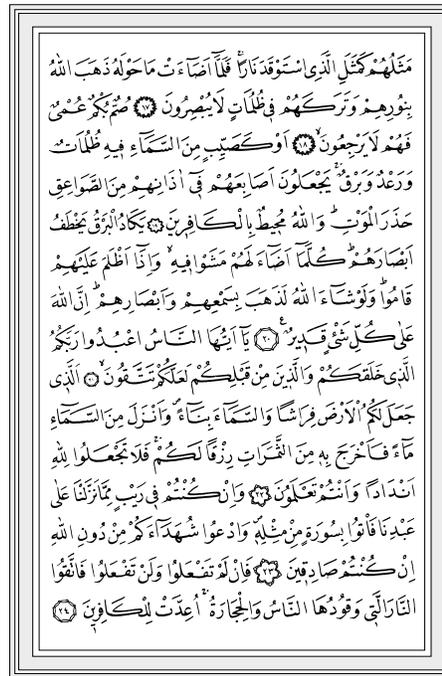
18. They are utterly deaf, dumb, and blind; they can no longer recover.<sup>13</sup>

19. Or like (those caught in) a rainstorm from the sky, accompanied by veils of darkness, thunderclaps and flashes of lightning. (Terrified by the thunder, and as if they might thereby evade a possible stroke of lightning), they press their fingers into their ears in fear of death. This is how God has encompassed the unbelievers from all sides.

20. The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Whenever it gives them light, they take a few steps in it, and when the darkness covers them, they stand still. Had God so willed,<sup>14</sup> indeed He would have taken away their hearing and sight. Surely God has full power over everything.

21. Now O humankind! Worship your Lord Who has created you as well as those before you (and brought you up in your human nature and identity), so that you may attain reverent piety towards Him and His protection (against any kind of straying and its consequent punishment in this world and the Hereafter);

22. And Who has made the earth a bed (comfortable, couch-like floor) for you, and the sky a canopy. He sends down from the sky water, with which He brings forth fruits for your provision.<sup>15</sup> So do not set



up rivals to God (as deities, lords and objects of worship)<sup>16</sup> when you know (that there can be no deities, lords, creators, and providers at all to worship, save God).<sup>17</sup>

23. If you are in doubt about the Divine authorship of what We have been sending down on Our servant (Muhammad, and claim that it is the work of a human being like Muhammad who can neither read nor write), then produce just a *sūrah* like it and call for help to all your supporters, all those (to whom you apply for help apart from God), if you are truthful in your doubt and claim.<sup>18</sup>

24. If you fail to do that – and you will most certainly fail – then guard yourselves against the Fire whose fuel is human beings and stones (that you have shaped into idols to adore), prepared for the unbelievers.

13. A fuller interpretation is as follows:

*(Since no voice is heard in the darkness of night and their hearing has long been closed to any “good, beneficial” voice,) they are utterly deaf; (since they cannot hear, they are) dumb (who have no possibility to speak and shout for help;) and (since their eyes are veiled to light by darkness, they are) blind; they can no longer recover (from the state they are in).*

Verses 17–20 illustrate the condition and consequence of hypocrisy in the heart by means of two comparisons or similes. Both contain wonderfully effective and abrupt transitions from general truth to concrete representation, and vice versa. Without due consideration of this, the statement here describing the hypocrites as *deaf, dumb, and blind* may seem at variance with the later one (verse 20) in which it is said that, had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight. The two similes describe the hypocrites from different viewpoints.

14. It points to an important truth that God did not will to take away their sight and hearing. The eternal Divine Will is, in one respect, identical to Divine Knowledge. That is, with His Eternal Knowledge Which encompasses all time or in Which all time ends, God knew eternally what people would do and “wrote” it. People do not do something because God (pre-)determined or (pre-)wrote it but God (pre-)wrote it because He eternally knew that people would do it. So, since it is part of what the hypocrites have deserved that they suffer from the dreadful condition they are in, God did not will to take away their sight and hearing out of justice. He does not take away their sight and hearing also to give them respite so that they may yet see their pitiful condition and give up their way. However, it should particularly be pointed out that it is solely God Who determines what consequence people face in return for what deed. This “determinism,” which is prevalent in the world of conscious beings where knowledge and will have a significant place, points decisively to an all-encompassing Knowledge and Will, and therefore to God’s Existence and Uni-

ty. That is why the Qur’ān presents the Divine Will as a link between cause and effect, and between human free will and its consequences.

15. The atmosphere surrounds the earth as the rind of an orange surrounds and protects the fruit within it. The layer of the atmosphere nearest to the earth is the layer of air. It preserves the earth from the harmful rays coming from different parts of the sky. By allowing only the rays beneficial to life to pass through, it functions like a sort of filter or screen providing shade. Clouds and rain are formed in this layer of the atmosphere.

16. This verse shows that unbelief is not based on true knowledge. However, it also points to the fact that knowing does not always prevent unbelief. As pointed out above, the main reasons for unbelief are haughtiness, self-pride, wrongdoing, prejudice, and deviancy in thought and action. Even if unbelief is not always based on ignorance, it causes ignorance. One whose heart is lacking in “a point of affirmation” may have specialist knowledge of all the natural and social sciences but, for want of that opening to faith, this knowledge increases him or her only in ignorance of Divine truths. According to the Qur’ān, only the knowledge which leads to “knowing” God and belief in Him is true knowledge: *Of all His servants, only those possessed of true knowledge have awe of God* (35: 28). Any knowledge polluted by haughtiness, self-pride, wrongdoing, prejudice, and deviancy in thought and action, is worthy only of being a piece of information.

17. These two verses, as well as expressing many other truths, establish God’s Oneness in Divinity, Lordship, and His being the Sole Object of Worship, and describe what this means. Believing in God’s Oneness requires that He must be affirmed as the only Creator, Nourisher, Provider, as the One Who brings up every creature and equips it with the necessary systems, organs, and faculties in accordance with its functions and duties in life, and the One Who deserves worship exclusively. All phenomena in the universe – from humanity’s creation to the earth’s being made like a comfort-

able, couch-like floor, and from the sky's being built like a dome-like ceiling for us to the rain, and all kinds of vegetation brought forth to feed us – are enough to establish these three requirements of belief in God's Oneness.

18. After mentioning some of the phenomena demonstrating God's Oneness, the Qur'ān presents another proof as clear as daylight to establish both God's Unity and the Messengership of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and its Divine authorship. This proof is presented in the form of a challenge that humankind is absolutely unable to produce even the like of one of its *sūrah*s.

When the Qur'ān was revealed, eloquence, oratory, and poetry were held in the highest regard among the Arabs. In order to prove its Divine authorship and the main purposes it pursues, the Qur'ān challenged first the literary geniuses of the time, and then the whole of humankind until the Last Day:

O men and jinn! If you have doubts concerning the Divine authorship of the Qur'ān and fancy it to be the product of a human mind, come forward and let an illiterate one among you like the one whom you call Muḥammad, the Trustworthy, produce a like of the Qur'ān. If he (or she) cannot do that, let the most famous of your writers or scholars try it. If they too cannot do it, let them all work together and deploy the whole legacy of the past, and call on their deities to help. Let all of your scientists, philosophers, sociologists, theologians, and men of letters try their utmost to produce the like of the Qur'ān. If they too cannot do it, then let them try – leaving aside the miraculous aspects of the Qur'ān's meaning, which are inimitable – to produce a work which can match the Qur'ān in the eloquence of its word order and composition.

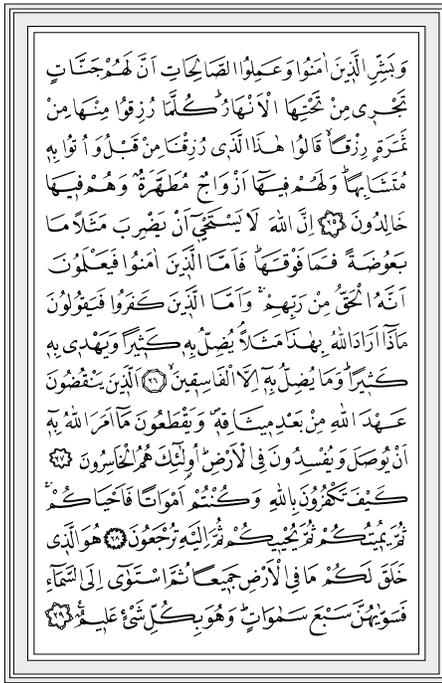
By *Then produce ten invented sūrah*s like it (11: 13), the Qur'ān means: "It is not stipulated that the meaning of what you invent should be true, you may fabricate legends, myths, or stories. If you cannot do that, not the like of the whole Qur'ān, produce a work which can

match only ten *sūrah*s of it. If you cannot do that either, then produce a work like only one *sūrah* of it. If that also is too difficult, then produce a work like one of its short *sūrah*s.

If you cannot do that either – and you will never be able to – although you are in dire need of doing so because your honor, religion, nationality, and even lives will otherwise be at risk, you will perish in the world in utter humiliation, and as stated in the verse, *Then guard yourselves against the Fire, whose fuel is human beings and stones (that you have shaped into idols to adore)*, (2: 24), you will go to Hell. Since you have now understood that you are absolutely unable, you must admit that the Qur'ān is the miraculous Word of God. (*The Words*, "The 25<sup>th</sup> Word," 404-405)

Those self-conceited people were unable to argue with the Qur'ān in words. Although it was the easier and safer course for them to obstruct and falsify its message, they chose to fight against it with the sword, which was the perilous and most difficult course. If those intelligent people had been able to argue with the Qur'ān in words, they would not have chosen to put their property and lives at risk. However, as al-Jāhiz remarked, since they could not argue with it in words, they were compelled to argue with their swords, taking the risk of losing their lives and properties.

Like the parts of an organism, all the verses, even individual words, of the Qur'ān are interrelated. Among its verses, there is both the relation of whole and parts, and the relation of universal and particular. That is, most of the verses are each an independent part of the Qur'ān – wherever you put it, you will see it fitted. Yet most verses have an essential link to all other verses and represent the whole of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān has many other aspects of miraculousness which make it impossible for humankind to produce even the like of even one of its verses.



25. <sup>19</sup> Give glad tidings to those who believe and do good, righteous deeds: <sup>20</sup> for them are Gardens through which rivers flow. Every time they are provided with fruits (of different color, shape, taste, and fragrance, and that are constantly renewed) therefrom, they say, “This is what we were provided with before.” For they are given to them in resemblance (to what was given to them both in the world, and just before in the Gardens, familiar in shape and color so that they may not be

unattractive due to being unknown). Furthermore, for them are spouses eternally purified (of all kinds of worldly uncleanness); and therein they will abide. <sup>21</sup>

26. God does not disdain to strike any parable – (that of) something like a gnat or something greater or lower than it. <sup>22</sup> Those who have already believed know that it is the truth from their Lord. As to those whose unbelief has long been established in their hearts, they say, “What does God mean by such a parable?” Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many. He thereby leads none astray save the transgressors: <sup>23</sup>

27. (Those) who break God’s covenant after its solemn binding, and sever the bonds God commanded to be joined, and cause disorder and corruption on earth. <sup>24</sup> Such are those who are the losers (in both this world and the next).

28. How can you disbelieve in God, seeing that you were dead, and He gave you life; <sup>5</sup> then He causes you to die; <sup>26</sup> then He will bring you to life again; and then you will be returned to Him? <sup>27</sup>

29. It is He Who (prepared the earth for your life before He gave you life, and) created all that is in the world for you (in order to create you – the human species – and make the earth suitable for your life); then He directed (His Knowledge, Will, Power, and Favor) to the heaven, <sup>28</sup> and formed it into seven heavens. <sup>29</sup> He has full knowledge of everything.

19. In addition to being a miracle of eloquence, the Qur’an is also miraculous in maintaining the balance among both the truths of divinity and the absolute and relative truths in the universe. It also maintains the balance between encouraging people to do good deeds in the hope and expectation of pleasing God and earning

His reward, and discouraging them from doing evil ones for fear of His punishment. Following the presentation of the characteristics of believers, unbelievers and hypocrites, it warns those who are willfully determined in their unbelief against the Fire. Now it directs attention to the result of faith and doing good deeds

with most pleasant and exhilarating expressions, and in so doing, it both relieves the fearful souls and encourages faith and good deeds.

20. There are many deeds and attitudes, such as believing, establishing the Prayer, giving alms, and helping others, that are praised as good and enjoined by the Qur'an and God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. There are other deeds and attitudes which can either be virtuous or evil according to the time and occasions when they are done. Besides, the qualities or "virtues" that are often associated with good deeds and good character are best judged according to the rightness of intention and the particular circumstances in which it is expressed.

For example, the self-respect that a weak person should wear before a powerful one becomes, if the powerful one assumes it before a weak one, self-conceit. The humility which a powerful person should wear before a weak one becomes, if assumed by a weak one, self-abasement. The solemn or strict bearing of an administrator in the exercise of his or her duties of office is dignity, while humility in that situation would be self-abasement. The same solemnity in his or her house would be self-conceit, whereas humility there would indeed be humility. Forbearance and forgiving the evils done to one is good and a virtue; but when done on behalf of others, it is bad and a treason: a person may and perhaps should bear patiently whatever is done to him or her personally; but it is impermissible for that person; for example, to bear patiently the wrongs being done to the society or nation. Conversely, whereas pride and indignation on behalf of the nation are commendable, on one's own behalf, they are not.

Believing and doing good deeds are mentioned together but distinguished in the verse. This implies that doing good deeds is not a part of faith, yet faith alone without good deeds is not enough for the final salvation in the Hereafter. In fact, the same is stressed in the New Testament: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James, 2: 26).

21. The verse signifies that there will be Gardens for every believer within Paradise, and depicts them. The greatest blessing in Paradise is obtaining God's approval and good pleasure and (as indicated by some verses and explicitly stated in some *hadiths*) "seeing God," though this is a "seeing" beyond all our measures of quality and modality. However, since such wholly spiritual blessings are related to the elite among the believers, the Qur'an usually presents the blessings of Paradise in a language that can appeal to pleasures of the body. A human being is a tripartite being composed of the spirit, the carnal soul, and the flesh or physical body. Since the body and carnal soul serve the believer in this world, and in order to be disciplined and trained, have to endure some hardships and deprivation of some worldly pleasures, the believer will be rewarded with the pleasures appropriate to the body and the carnal soul. It should, however, not be thought that such pleasures are purely corporeal. The spiritual contentment they will give is greater than the corporeal. For example, every person needs a friend, a companion. What most satisfies this human need is having an intimate life-companion with whom to share love, joys, and sorrows. Since the kindest, most compassionate and generous of hearts is the heart of a woman, the Qur'an mentions women among the greatest blessings of Paradise for men, rather than vice versa. This does not mean that the women will be left there without companions. The pleasure coming from mutual helping, sharing joys and sorrows, companionship, love, affection, and intimacy is much greater than the bodily pleasures men and women may satisfy in each other. However, those who have been defeated by the bodily pleasures of this world, and who are therefore unaware of the spiritual pleasures accompanying them, may see Paradise as a realm of sensual enjoyment.

22. Like the Divine Scriptures prior to it, the Qur'an uses parables and comparisons to convey abstract truths. This is because people in general do not understand abstractions unless they have had some preparation in the specialized terms and specialized discourse appropri-

ate to the presentation of abstract concepts. The Qur'an addresses itself to all of humanity from the first day of its revelation until the Last Day, and accordingly deploys the full resources of language in a style that is forceful, clear, accessible, and effective in communicating its message. The accessibility of the Revelation is, like the intelligibility of the "book" of creation, an aspect of God's mercy to His creatures, of His grace in making His will knowable and known to humankind.

A second point to note here is that what human beings may see as "small" or insignificant is not always so; conversely, what they see as "great" is not always so. It may sometimes be completely the other way round. Indeed, in many respects, the smaller a thing is, the greater the artistry it manifests. In terms of artistry, there is no difference between the solar system on the one hand, and on the other, the eye of a gnat or the belly of a flea. It could be argued that the artistry of the latter is greater in that they are constituent organs of living creatures.

23. The verse confirms once more the truth explained in the note 10 above. One of the principal reasons why God creates straying for someone or why He leads them to straying, is transgression. This word translates *fisq*. Used as a term, it means deviating from what is true, going beyond the limit, and abandoning the path leading to the eternal life of happiness. *Fisq* originates in using the three principal human drives or faculties – namely reason, lust, and anger – in the wrong way, a way that leads to demagoguery, craftiness, hedonism, wrongdoing, and oppression. The next verse mentions the main reasons for unbelief, which is the greatest transgression.

24. The shortest meaning of this verse provided by the character of the words is as follows:

*(Those) who break God's covenant (which is a rope of light woven of the threads of Divine Will, Wisdom, and Favor, and responsible for the order in the universe, and able to establish peace, order, and harmony in human life) after its solemn binding, and sever the bonds God*

*commanded to be joined (among the relatives as a requirement of blood relationship, and among people as required by human social needs), and (in an attempt to spread their vices in the whole community, even in the whole world, like one who, having caught a contagious disease, desires to pass it to others) cause disorder and corruption on earth. Such are those who are the losers (in both this world and the next).*

The words given in brackets are not additional commentary; they indicate the meanings carried in the words used in the verse, in their order, and in their structure and style. For example, the word translated as "break up" is from the verb *NaQaḌa*, which means unraveling a thick, strong rope. This implies that God's covenant is a strong rope binding people together and humanity to God. The word *mīḥāq*, translated as binding corroborates this meaning.

God's covenant is a "rope of light" woven of His Will, Wisdom, Knowledge, and Favoring, and which extends from eternity in the past to eternity in the future. This rope holds together the magnificent order in the universe and establishes the relationship among all creatures. One end of it was given into the hand of humankind. This led to the implanting of the seeds of many capabilities in the human spirit. The seeds should germinate and be developed by human beings themselves into "good trees yielding ever-fresh fruits" according to the principles of Shari'ah. Loyalty to God's covenant is possible by developing these capabilities and using them in the way established by Islam. Breaking the covenant means breaking this "rope of light" into pieces. Denying any of the Prophets or Divine Books, rejecting some of the commandments of Islam while accepting others, approving some of the verses of the Qur'an while disapproving others, and similar attitudes or approaches mean breaking this rope into pieces. Such destruction results in environmental imbalance as well as imbalance and disorder in human relations. The present environmental crisis and the state of relations between people(s) and nations in the world are the result of breaking God's covenant.

25. In order to better understand the truth presented in the verse, we should provide a fuller translation derived from the character of the words used and other relevant verses (i.e., *sūrah* 22: 5; *sūrah* 23: 12-14; *sūrah* 76: 1):

*How can you disbelieve in God, seeing you were dead (the particles or atoms that had long been appointed to constitute the body of each of you were dispersed in air, water, and earth, then transferred to the worlds of plants and animals according to certain laws and principles, and, taken as food, formed into sperm in the loins of your fathers, thereafter placed as a drop of seed in the wombs of your mothers. Having undergone several stages, they came to the point of formation where God breathed into them out of His Spirit) and He gave you life. (You live until the hour He appointed for each of you, and) then He causes you to die. Then (you stay as long as He wills in the world of the grave, between this world and the next, until, following many mighty revolutions) He will bring you back to life; and then (passing through a series of tremendous revolutions and several worlds) you will be returned to Him.*

In order to establish belief in the Existence and Unity of God in the minds and hearts of people, the Qur'an draws attention to His being the Creator and how humanity was brought to life. Life is the most pleasant and fascinating miracle of God, as well as being one of His greatest blessings. It also provides a bright evidence for the eternal Existence and Unity of God and other pillars of faith. The simplest of the degrees of life visible to ordinary observation is the life of plants, the beginning of which is germination under the soil. Despite its being apparently common and observable, the origin and nature of life is still unknown to humanity. The sphere of relationship of a lifeless body, even if it is as big as a mountain, is restricted to the spot where it is located. By contrast, a living creature so small as a honeybee establishes a relationship with the whole world and can say, "The world is my property, my garden." When life attains the degree of the

human being, it can travel through all times and places and perhaps beyond on the wings of mind, heart and imagination. Containing the material, biological, and spiritual dimensions of life, as well as its mineral, vegetable, and animal divisions, human life encompasses all kinds and degrees of life. Since it is pure and transparent in both its outer and inner dimensions, there is not the veil of "natural" causes between life and God's Power. That is, the "natural" causes have no part in God's creating life.

26. Like life, death is also created by God and therefore as great a blessing as life itself. It may even be said that death is a greater blessing than life. Every degree of earthly life results in death, but death in every degree results in a greater degree of life. For example, consumed in animal and human bodies, plants attain by dying the degree of animal and human life, while the animals consumed in human bodies acquire by dying the degree of human life in the human body. A seed annihilating itself under the soil develops into a plant or tree which will yield thousands of its exact like. By dying and going into the earth, a person starts his or her eternal life. From that perspective, death is as good and as great a blessing as, or one greater than, life.

27. Some claim that, together with the verse, *Our Lord! You have made us die twice, and given us life twice* (*sūrah* 40: 11), this verse provides evidence for reincarnation. However, both that verse and this one utterly refute reincarnation. First of all, reincarnation, as defined, is not restricted to two cycles of rebirth. Secondly, reincarnation as a belief is actually restricted to unbelievers or evil persons, but the verse in question addresses everyone (for the full interpretation of verse 40: 11, consult it in its ordinal location). Thirdly, there are several verses stating that there is no return to the world after death. In response to the desire of the unbelievers to be returned to the world so that they may believe and do good, righteous deeds in order to be saved from the Fire, God will say: *No, never!* (*sūrah* 23: 99-100).

The expression *You were dead*, implies that each member of humankind has some sort of existence in the world of atoms or particles. It

has already been determined in God's Knowledge which atoms in the worlds of elements, plants, and animals will constitute the body of which person. So there is no room for chance or coincidences in the motion of the particles that constitute human bodies. The expression also suggests that since death follows life, those particles are themselves devoid of what we recognize as life, which is a direct gift from God, pointing to Him clearly. Again, the verse draws attention to the fact that it is God Who deals both death and life with no one and nothing else having any part in it. It signifies: "You were lifeless in the world of elements because God willed you to be so and made you so."

28. While this verse and the verses 41: 9-12 apparently imply that the earth was created prior to the heavens, verses 79: 27-30 suggest the opposite, and verse 21: 30 seems to be saying that they were created together at the same time. However, when considered together, they mean:

In the primeval stages of creation, the heavens or the solar system and the earth were like a piece of dough that the Hand of Power kneaded of ether, which resembles water in spreading and permeation and in its being the medium for God's creation in the beginning as water is the medium for life on the earth. This fact is what the verse, *His Supreme Throne was upon the water* (11: 7), refers to. Out of this matter – ether – God made atoms and molecules, and intensified and solidified some part of it, making this part into the earth. In its being solidified and crusted with a cover, the creation of the earth was prior to the heavens. However, before the earth was solidified and crusted with a cover, there was a single heaven in the form of clouds of gaseous elements. The fashioning of these clouds of gaseous elements, the primal form of the heavens, into "seven heavens" and adorning them with the sun, moon, and stars followed the formation of the earth, while the preparation of the earth for human life was after the fashioning of the heavens.

What the Qur'ān means by *seven heavens* has been interpreted in different ways, the most significant of which are as follows:

- This extremely broad space is filled with ether, the existence of which physics once admitted, without, however, establishing it. This ether serves as the medium to transmit heat, light and the like, and establish the relationship among the laws God established for the movement of the heavenly bodies. Like water changing into vapor and ice without losing its essential nature, this ether has also similar kinds of formation. What the Qur'ān means by "seven heavens" may be these different kinds of formations of ether.
- It is a known fact that there are many galaxies, of which the Milky Way is but one, their exact number being (as yet) unknown.
- Just as ash, coal, and diamond are substances produced from the same mineral during the process of its working, fire generates flames and smoke, so too, different levels or layers could have been formed of the same matter during its being fashioned. Since in Arabic usage (as in other languages) such numbers as seven, seventy, and seven hundred signify different degrees of multiplicity, there may be more than seven heavens.
- The Qur'ān calls the heaven where the sun, moon, and stars are *the lowest heaven* or *the heaven of the world* (*sūrah* 67: 5). The other six heavens may be the heavens of the worlds of the Hereafter. (God knows best.)

29. In respect of how the Qur'ān deals with issues that are the subject matter of sciences, the following points should be noted:

- The Qur'ān is not a book of sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, and astronomy.
- The Qur'ān aims to establish in minds and hearts the pillars of faith and the truths of worshipping and justice.
- The Qur'ān mentions scientific facts only parenthetically and uses them as evidences of the truths it conveys. For

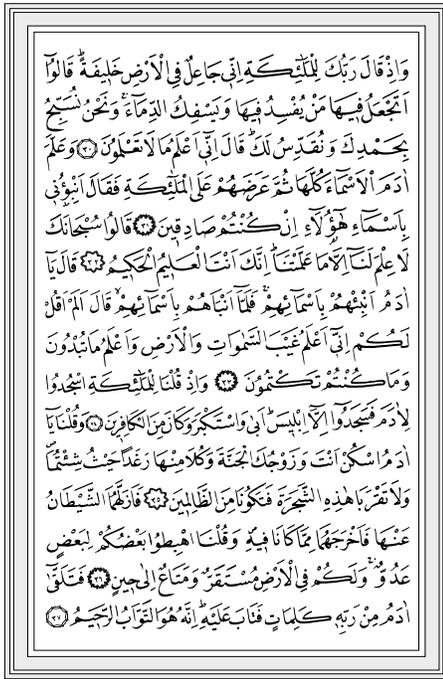
this reason, it prefers a style accessible and adapted to every level of understanding from its revelation until the Last Day.

- Since the Qur’ān uses such matters as evidence, and evidence cannot be more abstruse than the thesis propounded, it gives consideration to the people’s understanding and sense-perceptions.
- The Qur’ān was revealed fourteen centuries ago, when little was known about the issues sciences study. Seeing that humanity has made continuous progress in scientific studies and discoveries since then, the Qur’ān would obviously have to use a language impossible to contradict in any age.
- In point of fact, all the Qur’ānic expressions that allude to realities as studied in the sciences are absolutely true. However, what the Qur’ān means by them is, in most cases, open to interpretation. In this way, the Qur’ān, opens the door to scientific study and encourages it.
- Science is an assemblage of hypotheses, tested and disproved, partially or wholly, then replaced by other hypotheses, calling for further testing, and so on. It can be said that the sciences are still far away from knowing “the human” thoroughly and may always remain so. They will never be able to solve the mystery of creation and the origin of life, two mighty issues beyond the scope of scientific experiment and verification. For this reason, on the basis of present knowledge, no one

can or should object to the Qur’ānic expressions that allude to realities as studied in the sciences. If there is any appearance of contradiction, one should wait for what future studies will reveal and confirm about the meaning of the Qur’ānic expressions. There are three principles concerning the Qur’ānic expressions which are allegorical:

- The expression is God’s word.
- What God means by it is absolutely true.
- What God means by it may be “such and such.”

Confirming the first two principles is a requirement of faith, the denial of which amounts to unbelief. The third indicates that what God Almighty means by a particular expression is open to study and interpretation and, within certain conditions, different opinions may be put forward. The conditions are: (i) having excellent knowledge of Qur’ānic Arabic and its rules and modes of eloquence, and always considering them; (ii) having excellent knowledge of the essential principles of Islam and the main, clear pronouncements of the Qur’ān; (iii) having sufficient expertise in the subject-matter in question; and (iv) having no intention whatever other than to find out the truth and do so purely to obtain God’s approval. If these conditions are met, any opinion may be respected and appreciated as true, at least in part, or as contributing to the effort to arrive at the truth.



30. <sup>30</sup>(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels: <sup>31</sup>“I am setting on the earth a vicegerent.” The angels asked: “Will you set therein one who will cause disorder and corruption on it and shed blood, while we glorify You with Your praise (proclaiming that You are absolutely above having any defect and that all praise belongs to You exclusively), and declare that You alone are All-Holy and to be worshipped as God and Lord?” He said: “Surely I know what you do not know.”

31. (Having brought him into existence,) God taught Adam the names, all of them. <sup>32</sup>Then (in order to clarify the supremacy of humankind and the wisdom in their being created and made vicegerent on the earth), He presented them (the things and beings that had been taught to Adam with their names) to the angels, and said: “Now tell

Me the names of these, if you are truthful (in your praising, worshipping, and sanctifying Me as My being God and Lord deserves).”

32. (In acknowledgement of their imperfection, and their perception of the truth of the matter,) the angels said: “All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect and doing anything meaningless, and Yours are all the attributes of perfection). We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. Surely You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

33. (In order to demonstrate the superiority of humankind more clearly,) God said: “O Adam, inform them of these things and beings with their names.” When he (Adam) informed them with their names, He said (to the angels), “Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and I know all that you reveal and all that you have been concealing?”<sup>33</sup>

34. <sup>34</sup>And (remember) when We said to the angels: “Prostrate before Adam!”<sup>35</sup> They all prostrated, but *Iblis* did not; he refused, and grew arrogant, and displayed himself as an unbeliever.<sup>36</sup>

35. “O Adam! Dwell you, and your spouse, in the Garden,<sup>37</sup> and eat (of the fruits) thereof to your hearts’ content where you desire, but do not approach this tree,<sup>38</sup> or you will both be among the wrongdoers.”<sup>39</sup>

36. But Satan<sup>40</sup> (tempting them to the forbidden tree despite Our forewarning,) caused them both to deflect therefrom and brought them out of the (happy) state in which they were. And We said, “Go down, (all of you,) (and henceforth you will live a life,) some of you being the enemies of others. There shall be for you on the earth a habitation and provision until an appointed time.”<sup>41</sup>

37. (Aware of his lapse and in the hope of retrieving his error, rather than attempting to find excuses for it,) Adam received from his Lord words that he perceived to be inspired in him (because of his remorse, and he pleaded through them for

God's forgiveness). In return, He accepted his repentance. He is the One Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).<sup>42</sup>

30. Just previous to this, the Qur'ān presented the creation of the heaven and the earth, and the formation of the heavens, as the most manifest signs of God's Existence and Unity in the outer world. Then, as signs in their inner world, it showed how humankind was brought into life. It now proceeds to explain what kind of beings humans are, why they were created, and how they can fulfill the purpose of their creation. For we need to know why so valued a being was created and wherein the value lies.

31. The primary reason why God informed the angels of His will to set a vicegerent on the earth was to indicate a better way of counseling and to teach the angels the wisdom in His making humankind vicegerents on the earth. The angels knew that this vicegerent would cause disorder and corruption because the jinn, beings who resemble humankind in having free will and powers of intellect, anger, and lust, had caused sedition and bloodshed on the earth before.

Angels are among the beings in the universe endowed with a life different in kind from the life of the earthly kinds directly known to us. That different kinds of life-forms can exist in the universe should not surprise us. Yet, there was surprise when, in 1993, nearly 300 animal species, almost all of them previously unknown, were discovered living around hydrothermal vents formed where sea-water, leaking through the ocean floor at spreading ridges, is heated by the underlying magma and rushes into the cold ocean. Until then scientists had thought that there could be no life without solar energy, and few organisms were known to survive without a direct or indirect way to tap it. Perhaps this "most startling discovery of twentieth century biology" will strengthen our willingness to recognize that there can be life in other forms and conditions than those known

to us. If scientists had given ear to the Qur'ān, and not defined life solely by the earthly forms known to them, they might have acknowledged that there can be different kinds of life in other parts and dimensions of the universe, particular to each part or dimension, and so given a truer direction to their sciences.

Angels are spiritual beings, of subtle forms created from "light" (Muslim, "Zuhd," 10); they have different kinds or species but are not differentiated as male or female (*sūrah* 37: 149-150; *sūrah* 43: 19; *sūrah* 53: 27; *The Essentials*, 64). Being servants of God with no evil-commanding soul, they obey the commandments issuing from the Eternal Will and Creative Power that rules the universe. There is nothing to cause quarrels or disputes among them because they are innocent, their realm is vast, their nature is pure, and their stations are fixed. Each of the heavenly bodies is a place of worship for the angels (*The Words*, "The 29<sup>th</sup> Word," 532-533).

They ask no reward for their services; their reward is the spiritual contentment of nearness to their Creator. Their worship varies according to their different natures and functions. No event in the universe can be conceived of or occurs without the function of the angels. There are angels representing or responsible for every event in the universe and every species on the earth. For example, some of them, the chief of whom is Michael, are responsible for the growth of vegetation. Michael superintends the growth of all kinds of corn and provision by leave and Power of God, and, if one may put it in such terms, he is the head of all the angels who may be likened to farmers. There is another great angel who, by God's leave, Command and Power, is the chief of the "incorporeal shepherds" of all animals. They

look on God's acts with wonder and admiration and present to Him the glorification and worship of each species of creature offered in the language of its nature and disposition.

There are still other kinds or species of angels such as Gabriel, who carried Revelation to the Messengers, and 'Azrā'il and his aides, whom God employs in taking the lives of people, and Isrā'fīl, who will blow the Trumpet during the final destruction of the world and the resurrection of the dead. The Qur'ān also mentions the angels who record people's deeds (*sūrah* 82: 11); and angels who carry out a variety of tasks of awesome majesty and power (*sūrah* 77: 1-4; *sūrah* 79: 1-5; *sūrah* 82: 11).

32. The primary reason why humankind was accorded superiority over the angels is that we were "taught the names." The duty of humankind on the earth is vicegerency or *khilāfah*, meaning succession. This indicates another species or kind of beings on the earth preceding humankind. These were the jinn, who were succeeded by humankind because of their unending conflicts and revolts against God.

As a term, *khilāfah* or vicegerency denotes improving the earth, on the basis of knowledge of things and the laws of creation (which we wrongly call the "laws of nature"), and ruling on the earth according to the dictates of God, thus establishing justice. Carrying out this duty requires scientific knowledge and religion. Humankind can acquire scientific knowledge by studying nature and are given religion through God's Messengers. The Books given or revealed to the Messengers, in addition to containing the religious principles, are, in one respect, like discourses describing nature and its meaning. That is why, in Islam, the universe or nature is seen as the "Created Book," and its laws as the laws of the creation and operation of the universe issuing from the Divine Attributes of Will and Power. The Qur'ān is the "Revealed Book," the set of Divine laws and principles issuing from God's Attribute of Speech. For this reason, there can and should be no dichotomy or conflict between science and the Religion.

The names taught to Adam are the names of both things and his descendants. We know this from the use of the pronoun *hum* – mean-

ing "their" in the compound "their names" – which is used for conscious beings. It shows that Adam's descendants are included among the "names" taught to him. There must be a relation between this event, which took place in the World of the Unseen (*Ghayb*), and the event (referred to in 7: 172) when God brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify to His being their Lord, which also must have taken place in the Unseen. The angels must have fully comprehended Adam's supremacy and the wisdom in his vicegerency, not merely because of his being taught the names that they had not been taught, but also because they saw the illustrious members of humankind among the descendants of Adam – such as the Prophets, saints, and pure, exacting scholars, who would change the earth into gardens of Paradise through their faith, knowledge, and morality.

The knowledge of things was given to Adam in summarized form and then, during the course of history, was taught to the Messengers in relative detail according to the mission of each. That is why the Messengers became also the forerunners of scientific knowledge and progress, in addition to their being guides in spirituality and morality. The Qur'ān, which consummates all the previous Scriptures, sheds light on future scientific studies and discoveries, and indicates their final point of advancement in its narrations of the miracles of the Messengers.

The names taught to Adam also signify the potentiality of learning bestowed on humankind. Giving a name means knowing, for one can give a name only to something one knows. Animals come, or rather, are sent, to the world as if taught and trained in another world. They are adapted to the conditions of their life within a very short period as if they knew them already. By contrast, it takes human beings, on average, one year to learn how to walk, and many more years to learn the conditions of life, to distinguish securely between what is harmful and what is beneficial for them. This learning indeed continues until death, as evidence that learning has a fundamental place in human life and progress.

As pointed out above, vicegerency denotes humankind's ruling on the earth and improv-

ing it by using all that is subjected to them in accordance with the dictates of God. If humans attribute to themselves what God has given them of knowledge, power, the ability of learning, and various other capacities, and then attempt to act independently of God, it is then that disorder and bloodshed begin on the earth. For this reason, their happiness, dignity, and the improvement of the earth lie in acknowledging their innate weakness, poverty, and ignorance before God and, attributing whatever they have and their accomplishments to God, becoming to His infinite Power, Absolute Sufficiency, and Knowledge.

33. Historically, humans have not avoided bloodshed nor ceased to cause disorder, from the beginning of their earthly existence. Furthermore, the majority of people have been those who follow false doctrines or beliefs and associate partners with God. However, this does not mean that the creation of humankind and our being appointed as vicegerents on the earth has proved evil and ugly. The following simple analogy will explain:

For example: 100 seeds of fruit have the value of 100 seeds while they are seeds. But once they are planted, if even 80 out of the 100 rot away while the remaining 20 germinate and grow to bear fruit, the value of those 20 will far exceed that of the 100 seeds.

If the human race had remained existent only in God's Knowledge, without developing its potential on the earth, the Tree of Creation would not have yielded more than 100,000 Prophets, millions of saints, pure, exacting scholars, heroes of good morals, and other virtuous members of humankind. The good that these illustrious fruits have added to existence far exceeds the evil of the rest. The angels, at first, could not discern this outcome, but when the potential of the human race was made clear to them, they admitted its supremacy with full contentment of heart.

34. After the potential supremacy of humankind to the angels became evident, it can be said that an arena of trial was opened for both humankind and the angels and other conscious beings, among whom was Satan. This also im-

plied that the earthly life of humankind was about to begin. The motor of this life would be human free will. Having free will meant making a choice between at least two contrary alternatives. The individual and collective life of humankind, as well as human history, is the history of the conflicts of choices.

Besides the Attributes essential to His being God, namely Existence, having no beginning, Permanence, Oneness, being unlike the created, and Self-Subsistence, God has another kind of Attributes collectively called the Positive Attributes, which are Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Seeing, Speech, and Creating. These Attributes are the origin of the Names such as Giver of life and the All-Reviver, the All-Knowing, the All-Willing, the All-Powerful, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the All-Speaking, and the Creator, etc. Having such absolute, unrestricted Attributes and all-beautiful Names means that their manifestation will be "inevitable." One Who exists in and of Himself, and Whose Existence is absolutely perfect, will manifest Himself, as "required" by His very "nature." Thus, the universe is the collection of the manifestations of God's Attributes and Names, and those manifestations are focused on humankind. It is as if God Almighty drew an imaginary veil before His Attributes and Names and created humankind as the theater where almost all of His Attributes and Names are manifested. This demonstrates the high value accorded to humankind.

35. The prostration mentioned here signifies the angels' admission of the superiority of humankind and their obedience to the Divine purpose for the creation of Adam and his being made vicegerent on the earth. Prostration in the meaning of worship is done exclusively before God. By obeying God's order to prostrate before Adam, the angels were, in reality, prostrating to Him.

36. The angels (as explained in note 30 above) are beings created from "light," always busy with worshipping God and almost unable to commit sins. Since they do not have to struggle against sin they do not progress spiritually. Satan and his progeny represent the opposite

pole to the angels. The Qur'ān mentions Satan in the course of narrating his refusal to prostrate before Adam as *Iblīs* and subsequently as Satan. *Iblīs* belonged to the jinn (18: 50) and had free will. He had not been tested until he was ordered to prostrate before Adam. Defeated by his vainglory, he attempted to justify his refusal on the pretext that he had been created from smokeless fire while Adam was created from clay. In other words, he considered himself superior by virtue of his physical composition, whereas no one should claim superiority on the basis of something in which they have no part. What brings superiority is righteous acts done freely, without compulsion. Such things as physical structure, wealth, status, position, and the like, cannot be the basis of a reasonable claim to superiority. Because of this, the Qur'ān openly decrees: *Surely the noblest, most honorable of you in God's sight is the one best in "taqwā"* (piety, righteousness, and reverence for God). (sūrah 49: 13). Unlike Adam, Satan did not acknowledge his error and so appeared as the embodiment of haughtiness and malicious enmity towards humankind. It is clear that he had been inwardly defeated by the attributes that cause unbelief, such as wrong viewpoint, prejudice, and self-pride. In the very first test he was set, these attributes swallowed him up and caused him to become an obstinate, refractory unbeliever.

As pointed out above, Satan was called *Iblīs* at the stage of his rebellion against God's order to prostrate before Adam. *Iblīs* means one who is desperate. After that event, he was called Satan, meaning one expelled from God's Presence and Mercy and burning with envy and passion. As Adam is the father of humankind, Satan has also progeny. The unbelieving human beings who share the same character with Satan and are always busy misleading people from the path of God are also called "satans" in the Qur'ān. The "satans" of the hypocrites, referred to in sūrah 2: 14, are an example.

37. There are different opinions about whether the Garden mentioned here was a Paradise-like corner of the earth or the Paradise to which the believers will go in the Hereafter by God's grace. There is another point of view worthy of

consideration: the significant events narrated in 2: 30-39 – Adam being created and presented as the prototype of humankind, taught the names by God, the angels prostrating to him as God commanded; and *Iblīs* (the embodiment of wickedness and prototype of devils) refusing to prostrate – all these events took place in the Unseen. Similarly, the event (7: 172) when God brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and they testified to His being their Lord, must have taken place in the Unseen. If Adam's being placed in the Garden with Eve also happened in one of the worlds of the Unseen, then that Garden might be a Garden belonging to those worlds, some aspect or dimension of the manifestation of the Paradise in the Hereafter, which must even now be existing as a "seed." What we should dwell on here is the lessons that God wills to teach us by such events. From this perspective, the Garden may be a realm where the parents of humankind stayed for some time or a stage they had to pass through on the way to being fully "human," in order to reside on the earth.

38. There are, again, different opinions about the forbidden tree. When we reflect on how Satan tempted Adam and Eve – *O Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of eternity and a kingdom that will never decay?* (sūrah 20: 120) – and the inevitable results to come from approaching the forbidden tree (experiencing toil, hunger, nakedness, thirst, and exposure to the sun's heat (sūrah 20: 117-119), and that after they ate of it, their shameful parts were revealed to them (sūrah 20: 121), then we may conclude that the forbidden tree indicates human desire to gain eternity through offspring, which would later be allowed, or a kind of food or something else that caused them to become aware of their full physical and biological humanity with all the needs, feelings, and passions attendant upon it. We can deduce that this prohibition would have been only for a limited time, as in fasting or during the *Hajj* or during post-childbirth bleeding. But they showed haste and disobeyed.

39. The word here translated as wrongdoer is *zālim*, derived from *zulm*, meaning darkness. It is the opposite of light and the reason or sym-

bol of non-existence as opposed to existence. For this reason, it is used as a Qur'ānic term for acts causing the darkening and extinction of the faculties of the heart ("seeing" and "hearing" in the sense of verse 2: 7). The main feature of such acts is transgressing the bounds established by the Religion and behaving without considering the time, place, or conditions. Having a very wide area of usage, it ranges from putting something in the wrong place to associating partners with God. People harm, first of all, themselves by committing *zulm*. This is why the Qur'ān says that people wrong themselves by transgressing the bounds. The wrongdoing mentioned in this verse is such an act. (This will be clearer in the words Adam received from his Lord, explained below in note 41.)

40. Although Satan is the embodiment of evil and always tries to cause evil in human life, his being created is not evil. God is the only Creator Who creates all things and beings, along with their good or evil deeds, and whatever He creates is good either in itself or with respect to its result. The angels never do evil and Satan never does good, but humans have been endowed with the ability to do both good and evil. They are responsible for using and developing their ability to do good, resisting their potentiality for evil, and channeling it towards what is good. For example, envy can be channeled into competitiveness in doing good; obstinacy can be turned into steadfastness on the path of right and truth. By doing good and, especially, by struggling against the temptations of Satan and the carnal, evil-commanding soul, and against the potential for evil, a person evolves spiritually, while the ranks or stations of the angels are fixed because they are free from the seduction of Satan and have no evil tendency to struggle against. The inclusion in creation of relative evil – there is nothing absolutely evil in creation – is the wheel of both spiritual, intellectual, and scientific development in human life. That is why the creation of Satan and oth-

er apparent evils is not evil in itself. Against the argument that many people deviate and many evils appear in human life because of the temptations of Satan, readers may refer to the analogy in note 33. Unaware of this highly significant truth, the Magians in Iran attributed the creation of evil to a second deity, and within the civilization of Islam, the Mu'tazilites attributed it to humankind.

41. While it was Adam and his spouse who were tested in the Garden, we understand from the Qur'ān's usage of the plural form in the order, *Go down, all of you!* that more than two people received the order: *Go down, all of you, (henceforth you will live a life,) some of you being the enemies of others.* Those addressed by this order must be Adam, Eve, Satan, and their future progeny.

42. Unlike Satan, Adam did not offer to defend himself with excuses for his lapse. Rather, he felt great remorse and thus opened the door to being forgiven. In return for his remorse, God Almighty inspired in him some words – *talaqqā* here translated as "received", connotes "inspired" – through which he, together with his spouse, pleaded for God's forgiveness. It is agreed by the majority of the interpreters of the Qur'ān, that these words were those given in 7: 23: *Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we will surely be among those who have lost!*

Some (probably under the influence of narrations from Biblical sources) have argued that Eve led Adam to be deceived by Satan. Since this is the approach in the Old Testament (*Genesis*, 3: 1–6), woman was considered evil and held in disgrace in medieval Christianity. In contrast, the Qur'ān presents the event as being centered on Adam; that is why it was he who received the words and, even more than Eve, had to implore God's forgiveness, although they both did so.



فَلَمَّا هبطوا منها جميعاً فلما نزلناهم من حيث هدى فمن تبع هدى فلا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون ﴿٤٨﴾ والذين كفروا وكذبوا بآياتنا أولئك أصحاب النار هم فيها خالدون ﴿٤٩﴾ يا بني إسرائيل اذكروا نعمتي التي أنعمت عليكم وأوفوا بعهدي أوف بعهدكم ولا تخفوا فلما آمنتم بآياتي فأتيتكم بالبينات ولا تكفروا أولئك كفروا بما أتيتهم بالبينات فليسوا أولئك عاقبوا فأذنوا لهم ما لم تكن تعلم ﴿٥٠﴾ ولا تبغوا الدنيا ولا العرش العظيم ﴿٥١﴾ إنما أردت أن أتقنهم الدين وأتقنهم بالصلاة والزكاة وأتقنهم بالدين وتسنون أنفسكم وأنتم تتلون الكتاب أفلا تعقلون ﴿٥٢﴾ واستعبوا بالصبر والصلاة وإنها لكبيرة إلا على الخاشعين ﴿٥٣﴾ الذين يظنون أنهم مؤمنون بآياتنا ولا يخفون ﴿٥٤﴾ يا بني إسرائيل اذكروا نعمتي التي أنعمت عليكم وأني فضلتكم على العالمين ﴿٥٥﴾ واتقوا يوماً لا تجزي نفس عن نفس شيئاً ولا يقبل منها شفاعته ولا تؤخذ منها عدل ولا هم ينصرون ﴿٥٦﴾

38. <sup>43</sup>We said: “Go down, all of you, from there!” (and executed Our order). If, henceforth, a guidance (like a Book through a Messenger) comes to you from Me, and whoever follows My guidance (and turns to Me with faith and worship), they will have no fear (for they will always find My help and support with them), nor will they grieve.”

39. But those who disbelieve and deny Our signs (the verses of the revealed Book of guidance, as well as the signs in both their inner world and the outer world, establishing My Existence and Unity and other pillars of faith), they will be the companions of the Fire; therein they will abide.<sup>44</sup>

40. <sup>45</sup>O Children of Israel!<sup>46</sup> Remember My favor<sup>47</sup> that I bestowed upon you, and fulfill My covenant (which I made with you

through your Prophets),<sup>48</sup> so that I fulfill your covenant,<sup>49</sup> and of Me alone be in awe and fear (in awareness of My Power and of your being My servants).

41. Believe in that which I have sent down (the Qur’ān), confirming what (of the truth) you already possess, and do not be the first to disbelieve in it. And (you scribes, fearful of losing your status and the worldly benefit accruing from it) do not sell My Revelations for a trifling price (such as worldly gains, status, and renown); and in Me alone seek refuge through reverence for Me and piety.

42. Do not confound the truth by mixing it with falsehood,<sup>50</sup> and do not conceal the truth while you know (the meaning and outcome of what you do, and that what you strive to hide is true, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, whose coming you have been anticipating).<sup>51</sup>

43. Establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the *Zakāh*); and bow (in the Prayer, not by forming a different community or congregation, but) together with those who bow (the Muslims).<sup>52</sup>

44. Do you enjoy upon people godliness and virtue but forget your own selves, (even) while you recite the Book (and see therein the orders, prohibitions, exhortations, and warnings)? Will you not understand and come to your senses?<sup>53</sup>

45. Seek help through patience<sup>54</sup> (and fasting, which requires and enables great patience), and through the Prayer. Indeed the Prayer is burdensome, but not for those humbled by their reverence of God:

46. Those who feel as if always in the Presence of their Lord, having met with Him; and are certain of following the way to return to Him.<sup>55</sup>

47. O Children of Israel! Remember My

favor that I bestowed upon you, and that I once exalted you above all peoples;

48. And be fearful of and strive to be guarded against a Day when (everybody will be seeking a means to save himself, and when) no soul will pay on behalf of

another, nor will any intercession (of the sort common in the world but which does not meet with God's permission and approval) be accepted from any of them, nor will compensation be received from them, nor will they be helped.

43. The acceptance of the repentance of Adam and Eve, following their appeal to God for forgiveness, did not mean that God's decree that they would descend to the earth would not be implemented. Rather, it meant that they started their earthly life cleansed of their error – without any blemish or “original sin” to be passed on to their descendants – as all newborns begin their life free of sin. It is also a Qur'ānic principle – one which is one of the basic principles of law – that *every soul earns only to its own account; and no soul, as bearer of burden, bears and is made to bear the burden of another* (sūrah 6: 164).

44. With its wonderful eloquence and concision, the Qur'an thus far in this sūrah, has informed us about guidance, faith, and Islam, and the pillars and main principles thereof, then about unbelief and hypocrisy and the reasons for them, together with a description of the different qualities of the believers, unbelievers, and hypocrites. Then, it has presented decisive and comprehensive proofs, in the inner world of human beings and in the outer world around them, of God's Existence and Unity, the Divine authorship of the Qur'an, the Messenger-ship of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and about the Hereafter, Paradise, and Hell. It has then explained the nature and duty of humankind and how we started our earthly life. The Qur'an has, in this way, summarized its main purposes before beginning to narrate the earthly adventure of humankind and human communities, which will illustrate those purposes with concrete, historical examples. In verses 38 and 39, it has extended

a rope to the beginning of the sūrah, binding the whole together. It makes direct reference to the guidance mentioned at the beginning of the sūrah with the mention of guidance in verse 38. It interprets or expands on the prosperity mentioned in verse 5 with the explanation in verse 38: *They will have no fear (in this world and the next, for they will always find My help and support with them), nor will they grieve*. In addition, by stating that the unbelievers and those who deny God's Revelations and signs will be the companions of the Fire to abide therein, it recalls verses 23 and 24, which threaten those who deny the Divine authorship of the Qur'an with the Fire *whose fuel is human beings and the stones (that they have shaped into idols to adore)*.

45. The history of the Children of Israel narrated in the Qur'an is an example of the general history of humankind or of all nations. It is both for this reason, and because of the significant part that the Israelites and their descendants would play in the future history of Islam and humankind, that the Qur'an draws attention to certain aspects of their story.

In presenting and praising the true believers at the beginning of the sūrah, the Qur'an opened a door on the history of previous peoples with the verse, *Those who believe in what is sent down to you, and what was sent down before you (such as the Torah, Psalms, and Gospel, and the Scrolls of Abraham)* (2: 4). This door is opened for several reasons: because of the importance of the part the Children of Israel played in the past, and would play in the future history of humankind; because of the important position the Jews enjoyed in Madīnah

during the Madīnah period of the Messenger-ship of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings; and to warn the nascent Muslim community and all the Muslims to come in the future against lapsing into the same deviancy and error as the Children of Israel fell. For these reasons, the Qurʾān recounts notable events in the history of the Jews, at the same time urging them to believe in Muḥammad and enter the Muslim community.

46. “Israel” was a title of the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, meaning a pure servant of God. In Muslim history, the Jews are usually referred to as *Yahūdī*, meaning one who belongs to Yahūda –Judah in the Old Testament. Judah – *Yehudah* in Hebrew – is the name of one of the two kingdoms which emerged with the division of Prophet Solomon’s kingdom after his death, and takes this name from Judah, one of the sons of Jacob. According to another opinion, *Yahūdī* means one who follows the Law established by Judah, an Israelite jurist who lived in the second century after Jesus. The Jews themselves name their religion – Judaism – after Judah. The Qurʾān uses the term *Yahūdī* for the most rigid enemies of Muslims among the Children of Israel and those who regard and call themselves as *Yahūdī* among them (6: 82; 2: 62). By referring to them as the children of a Prophet, a pure servant of God, the Qurʾān means that they are expected to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad and so fulfill their covenant with God. This usage also establishes an important principle of good manners, especially in calling people to the Straight Path, that one should address people with the titles they like to be addressed with.

47. Here there is a reference to the favor mentioned in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*. When used in a general sense, it means being favored with the Religion, a Divine Book, a Prophet, guidance, and following the Straight Path without deviancy. It specifically means here God’s choosing Prophets and Messengers from amongst the Children of Israel and granting them a great kingdom, and giving them a Book, guiding them to the Straight Path, and making them inhabit the land promised to them.

48. The covenant God made with the Children of Israel was that when a Messenger came after the Prophets, they would believe in him and help him; therefore, they were required to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, whom God had mentioned with his particular attributes, and the good tidings of whose coming He had given in the Book He had sent to them, and whom they consequently knew very well.

49. The covenant of the Children of Israel – *your covenant* in the verse – is that they would continue to receive His favor if they reformed themselves and were steadfast in following His way after so many calamities striking them in return for their rebellions and transgressions.

For the covenant between God and the Children of Israel, see also 17: 4–8.

50. About the ways in which the Children of Israel confounded the truth by mixing it with falsehood, see *sūrah* 2: 71, 79, 140, 174, 179; *sūrah* 3: 167; *sūrah* 4: 13, 46; *sūrah* 5: 106. (They made additions or changes in the Book and then attributed them to God; they willfully misinterpreted its words; and they hid the truths which they thought did not serve their purposes. They also confounded the message through false testimony and wrong judgment.)

51. Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır (1877–1942), one of the greatest Muslim interpreters of the Qurʾān, made the following comment on confounding the truth by mixing it with falsehood:

Were it not for another verse concerning this subject, this verse alone would suffice to teach us how we must act in the matter of the translation and interpretation of the Qurʾān and in similar other issues of the religious sciences. It must never be forgotten how important it is that the Qurʾān should remain and be preserved in its original form, and its translation, interpretation, or commentary in any other language can never replace and be substituted for the Qurʾān. We must avoid such expressions as the “Turkish Qurʾān” or the “Persian Qurʾān.” No matter into how many languages the Qurʾān is translated or in how many languages

it is interpreted or commented on, none of them can be the Qur'ān, nor can they substitute for it. God Almighty declares explicitly: *Do not confound the truth by mixing it with falsehood.* (Yazır, 1: 336)

This point should be considered especially with reference to the controversies about whether the extant versions of the earlier Scriptures are (or could be) exactly the same as their originals. As is well known, the earlier Scriptures were not preserved in their original language and only translations of them are extant.

52. The Qur'ān orders the Children of Israel to do, not their own Prayer which lacks the rite of bowing – they must have changed it during their long history – but, rather, the Prayer God taught the Muslims through the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. The Qur'ān draws particular attention to the bowing (*rukū'*) in the Prayer. This tells us that bowing has a special importance in the Prayer, and because of this, every cycle of the Prayer is called *rak'ah*, a word derived from the same root as *rukū'*. In addition, the verse is alluding to the importance of establishing the Prescribed Prayer in congregation, which is both a means and an expression of the solidarity and unity of the Muslims. This is a warning against forming separate congregations on the basis of differences of opinion about minor legal or other secondary matters. The verse is also inviting the Children of Israel to join the Muslim community. We can infer from this verse that they had become negligent about the duties of the Prayer and the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the *Zakāh*). The latter is a tax at fixed rate in proportion to the value of property or wealth above a certain minimum, and its proper expenditure is decreed in *sūrah* 9: 60.

53. Enjoining godliness on others but forgetting one's own self means knowingly exposing oneself to perdition and consenting to punishment. Not acting on the advice one gives to others means contradicting oneself and degrading the knowledge and authority on which that advice is based. Obviously, it can have little or no effect on others to recommend and enjoin on them what one does not do oneself. So, en-

joining the good on others but not doing it is sheer stupidity and absurdity.

Like earlier Israelite Prophets who severely admonished and scolded their people, we also see in the Gospels that the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, addressed many among the Jewish scholars of his time in terms much harsher than the Qur'ān. For example:

Brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. (*Matthew*, 12: 34–35)

. . .saying, the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: Therefore whatever they tell you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not do according to their works: for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen by men: they make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the market places, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ; and you are all brethren.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: therefore you will receive the greater damnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whosoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to *perform it!*' . . . Woe to

you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. . .

Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 'Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?' (*Matthew*, 23: 2-8; 13-16, 23, 26-27, 29, 31-33)

The Qur'ān's warnings are not addressed only to the scholars and leading representatives of a certain religion; they are directed to all those who represent a heavenly religion, including, of course, Muslim scholars.

54. It can be said that patience is the half of Islam, the other half being thankfulness. The patience shown just at the moment when misfortune strikes is true patience. With respect to the situations requiring it, patience can be divided into the following categories:

- enduring difficulties of fulfilling the duty of servanthood to God or steadfastness in performing regular acts of worship;
- resisting the temptations to sin of the carnal soul and Satan;
- enduring heavenly or earthly calamities, which entails resignation to Divine decrees;
- steadfastness in following the Straight Path without deviancy in spite of worldly attractions and distractions;
- showing no haste in pursuing those of one's hopes or plans that require a stretch of time to achieve.

Because fasting requires prohibiting to the carnal soul the things of which it is most enamored – eating, drinking, and sexual relations, as well as lying, backbiting, and gossip – it strengthens and deepens the believer's willpower. Accordingly, fasting as a duty of worship has come to be regarded as identical with patience. For this reason, the meaning of *patience* in the verse includes fasting.

55. God's guidance is based on compassion, knowledge, evidence, logic, reasoning, warning, giving good tidings, and illustration. Here, again, the Qur'ān refers to the beginning of the *sūrah*: it relates the topic here to faith, establishing the Prescribed Prayer, paying the Purifying Alms-giving, and spending in God's cause, reverence for God, and the afterlife – all of which were treated at the beginning. By recounting the history of the Children of Israel and the favors God bestowed upon them, the Qur'ān continues to send its rays of guidance to their minds and hearts.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

49. And (remember) that We saved you from the clan (the court and military aristocracy) of the Pharaoh,<sup>56</sup> afflicting you with the most evil suffering (by enslaving you to such laborious tasks as construction, transportation and farming<sup>57</sup>), slaughtering your sons and letting live your womenfolk (for further humiliation and suffering). In that was a grievous trial from your Lord.<sup>58</sup>

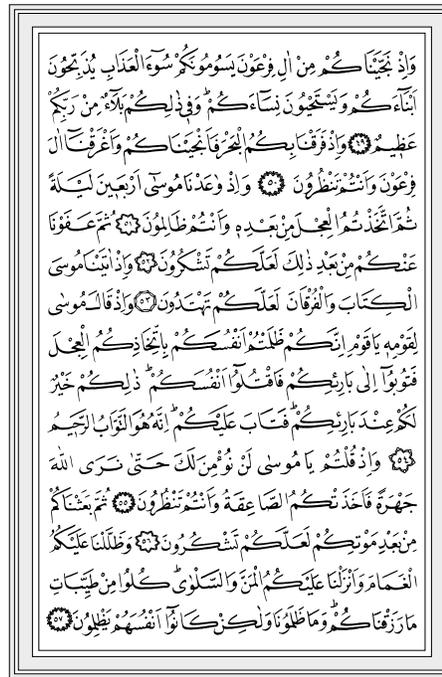
50. And remember when (after years of struggle to escape Egypt, you had just reached the sea with the army of the Pharaoh in close pursuit and) We parted the sea for you and saved you, and (as sheer grace from Us, which you had no part in) caused the clan of the Pharaoh to drown while you were looking on.

51. And when, on another occasion, We appointed with Moses forty nights,<sup>59</sup> then (during the time he stayed on Mount Sinai,) you adopted the (golden) calf as deity and worshipped it after him; and you were wronging yourselves thereby with a most heinous wrong.

52. Then (even though adopting as deity any other than God is an unpardonable sin, We accepted your atonement and) We pardoned you after that, that you might (acknowledge Our many and great favors to you and) give thanks (believing in God and worshipping Him alone, and carrying out His commandments).

53. And (remember) when We granted Moses (while he was on Mount Sinai for forty nights) the Book<sup>60</sup> and the Criterion (to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and the knowledge, and the power of judgment to put it into effect),<sup>61</sup> that you might be guided to truth and abide by it.<sup>62</sup>

54.<sup>63</sup> And when Moses said to his people: "O my people, assuredly you have wronged yourselves by adopting the (golden) calf as



Thereupon, the thunderbolt (that you saw come unexpectedly) seized you. Motionless, as if dead, you were gazing.<sup>66</sup>

56. Then after that death-like state (and your spiritual death), We revived you (recovering you from the death-like state) so that you might give thanks.

57. And (since, unaided, you would not be able to survive in the desert without

shelter and food) We caused the cloud (which you plainly saw was assigned for you) to shade you, and sent down upon you manna and quails: “Eat of the pure, wholesome things that We have provided for you.” Yet (in breaking the laws, in refusing to obey the injunctions about even those foods) they did not wrong Us, but they were wronging themselves.<sup>67</sup>

56. When the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, was taken to Egypt as a slave, the Hyksos dynasty ruled Egypt. They were a northwestern Arab or mixed Arab-Asiatic people who came to Egypt from Syria sometime between 1720 and 1710 BC and subdued the Middle Kingdom. The Muslim historians call them al-Amālik. From the time of Joseph (roughly the mid-seventeenth century BC), the Divine Religion represented by the Children of Israel (Prophet Jacob) became prevalent, and they had the authority in Egypt (Qur’ān, 5: 20). However, within two centuries thereafter, the native Copts took over the rule. Their kings were called Pharaohs. As understood from the Qur’ān, the Pharaoh ruled in Egypt with his clan, army, and a privileged aristocracy. What the Qur’ān means by *Āl-i Fir’awn* is this ruling oligarchy.

57. For a description of this period in history, see also *The Bible*, “Exodus,” 1: 11-14.

58. The Qur’ān uses the term *balā’* (trial) for the tormented life of the Children of Israel in Egypt. God tries people with both good and evils. When He tries with good such as success, wealth, high position, and physical beauty, it requires gratitude to God and attributing it to Him. When He tries with evils such as a misfortune, illness, or poverty, it requires patience without complaint. This, however, does not mean that one stricken by an evil should not try to escape from it. Being tried with evil is usually the result of a sin. Therefore, it also requires repentance and seeking forgiveness. Whether a believer is tried with good or evil it is

good with respect to its consequence, provided it is met with gratitude in case of the former and patience without complaint in case of the latter. In addition to serving for the forgiveness of the sin committed and bringing extra good, trial causes the stricken people to be saved from wrong conceptions, beliefs, and assertions, and it matures and perfects them. The trial of the Children of Israel resulted in their escaping a life of torment in Egypt and being favored with God’s guidance and a great kingdom.

59. The night (because it is quieter and there are fewer distractions than in the day) is particularly favored for spiritual journeying in God’s cause. We read in the Qur’ān that the Last Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, was commanded long night vigils, especially at the beginning of his mission, because night is more suitable for prayer and night vigils are more impressive, with the recitation in them being more certain and upright (*sūrah* 73: 2-6; *sūrah* 76: 26). The Messenger’s miraculous journey to Jerusalem and his Ascension also took place at night.

60. The Book wherein was light, guidance, mercy, and the solution to all the problems that would confront them. See *sūrah* 5: 44; *sūrah* 6: 91, 154; *sūrah* 7: 145.

61. The word translated as “the Criterion to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and the knowledge, insight, and power of judgment to put it into effect” is *al-Furqān*, as it is the means to distinguish truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and lawful and unlawful. In another verse (8: 29), the Qur’ān declares that

if those who believe keep their duty to God in fear and respect in order to deserve His protection, He will assign them a *furqān*. Here it means an inner sense or faculty of insight, discernment, inspiration, and power of judgment to distinguish between right and wrong. *Al-Furqān* is also one of the titles of the Qur'ān. God's Messenger said: "I have been given the Qur'ān and its like together with it" (Abū Dāwūd, "Sunnah," 5). The "like of the Qur'ān" is the Sunnah of the Messenger. In addition to its other functions, the Sunnah interprets the Qur'ān. In order to understand the Qur'ān correctly and fully, especially its commandments, we must, of necessity, depend upon the Sunnah. For this reason, as the Sunnah may be a *furqān*, the *Furqān* given to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, may be his Sunnah in the sense of the criteria by which to practice the Book in daily life.

62. The previous verse concludes with the need to give thanks – a comprehensive concept that includes carrying out God's commands and refraining from His prohibitions – for forgiveness after apostasy and returning to *tawḥīd*, while this verse, which mentions that God gave Moses the Book and the *Furqān*, ends with being guided to truth and abiding by it. This points to a very significant fact: the only way to find the Straight Path and follow it without deviancy is by obeying the Book in accordance with the *Furqān* – the Divine criteria. The concept includes both the Divine commandments in the Book and the criteria to apply them, namely the Sharī'ah. The rules and principles of the Sharī'ah are the citadel of religion. It is also the Sharī'ah which determines the limits and principles of the spiritual ways leading to God. Any spiritual or esoteric journeying trespassing its limits ends in a marsh of deviancy. It is also worthwhile noting that "Torah" means "law."

63. In a few verses, the Qur'ān has summarized the history of the Children of Israel from their life of slavery in Egypt to Moses being given the Book and the *Furqān* on Mount Sinai, reminding them of God's past favors to them. It has invited them to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and

blessings, about whom the Bible states that he resembles the Prophet Moses (*Deuteronomy*, 18: 18; also see the introduction to *Sūrat al-Qasas*), and thereby reform themselves to follow the Straight Path. At this point, it enters into certain details and mentions particular events in order to strengthen its encouragement and give greater contentment to minds and hearts. While following these events, we will note how the Qur'ān bases all the topics it discusses on belief in God, the Messenger, and the Last Day, and on worshipping and doing good deeds.

64. After many eventful years, the Prophet Moses, believing that his people had attained to the stage of forming a civilized community on the basis of the Divine laws, went to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. However, the Children of Israel adopted as deity the calf – one amongst them (called as-Sāmiriyy in the Qur'ān) made it of jewelry – and they began worshipping it. This demonstrated that belief in God as the only Lord to be worshipped was not yet ingrained in their hearts, and they were still enthralled by the impressions they had received in Egypt, where the cow was one of the deities. Moses postponed putting the Torah into effect and attempted to suppress this doctrinal uprising. He ordered them to "kill amongst yourselves those who have committed that great offense, thus purifying yourselves of this tremendous sin." Some interpreters are of the opinion that this order meant for them to kill their carnal, evil-commanding souls, that is, to reform themselves. However, it may well mean that an internal conflict ensued between those who remained loyal to the Divine Oneness and the apostates, and Moses ordered the killing of the latter. (Also, see note 70.) Killing the carnal, evil-commanding souls might be a consequence of this. The Bible is full of accounts of such punishments as mass-killing, exile, plagues, pestilence, and famine that came in return for certain grave sins. It records that 3000 people were killed because of taking to themselves the calf (*Exodus*, 32: 28).

65. In earlier verses, God draws attention to His favors by using the pronoun "We." This

verse presents the orders of the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, to his people. It indicates that after receiving the Book and the *Furqān*, Moses became a “Prophet-ruler.” Moses’ command, *kill amongst yourselves those who have committed that great offense, thus purifying yourselves of this tremendous sin*, as recorded in the Qur’ān, marks this change.

66. In order to petition God probably not to inflict another greater punishment on his people for their adopting the calf as deity, Moses, upon him be peace, chose seventy from amongst his people and took them to Mount Sinai (*sūrah* 7: 155). He also desired that they might witness God’s orders and persuade their people of the Divine origin of the orders. Although the Almighty did not speak to them directly, they witnessed the manifest, convincing signs of God’s revealing to Moses His orders (Yazır, 4: 2292–2293). Despite this, they demanded to openly see God speaking to Moses, upon him be peace. Thereupon, a thunderbolt seized them.

Although the seventy people or some amongst them made this demand and the thunderbolt seized them, since they represented the whole of the people and the people themselves had the same mood of deviancy, the Qur’ān attributes the offense to the Children of Israel as a whole. If the collective duties that fall upon the whole community and must be carried out by at least a group of responsible people are

totally neglected, then the punishment comes to the community as a whole. The verse, *And beware and guard yourselves against a trial that will surely not smite exclusively those among you who are engaged in wrongdoing; and know that God is severe in retribution* (8: 25), points to this fact. For this reason, the elite of any Islamic movement should continuously scrutinize themselves and their actions more than others.

67. God bestowed the three favors mentioned here on the Children of Israel for many years in the desert. A cloud constantly provided them with shade, quails poured down wherever they were in the evening, and manna came in abundance in the morning. Despite this, and despite the fact that the quails and manna came on the sixth day of the week in double the quantity of other days because they were forbidden to work on the seventh day (Sabbath) and therefore could not collect them, many of them went out to collect on that day. Also, though they were ordered not to leave the food they collected in the evening for the next day, some left it only to go bad, and still others collected more than their need (*Exodus*, 16: 4–31). In addition to many other wise purposes, these commandments surely aimed to purify their hearts of such evil attributes as avarice, hoarding, and selfishness, in order to perfect them morally and spiritually.



68. There is a clear link between the command in this verse and the command given to Adam (2: 35): *Dwell you, and your spouse, in the Garden, and eat (of the fruits) thereof to your hearts' content where you desire.*

69. It is not certain (either from the Qur'an or from the Bible) what town this was. In recounting historical events, the Qur'an focuses on the lessons to be taken from them, rather than chronicling details of the place, time, or individuals involved. What is of importance here is that, on entering a town triumphantly after a battle or with the aim of settling, one should enter humbly, as our Prophet did when entering Madīnah during the *Hijrah* and Makkah during its conquest, and giving praise, glory, and thanks to God, with loyal submission to His commands, and seeking His forgiveness for one's sins, and not thinking of plundering and massacring. The orders recorded in the Bible (*Leviticus*, 25, 26; *Numbers*, 15: 1-41) to be carried out while entering a town, such as keeping the Sabbath and offering sacrifice to the Lord, are of the same import. Beyond such commandments is the consciousness of being seen by God, and therefore, doing good with greater sincerity and diligence. God exhorts the believers to this level of spiritual awareness in doing good.

70. The scourge sent down from heaven was probably a plague in which, according to the Bible, 14,700 people died (*Numbers*, 16: 46-49). The Qur'an describes a pestilence, the causes of which are known, as a scourge sent down from heaven, and a means of suppressing an uprising against a Prophetic order. This teaches us to regard calamities (whether they strike individually or collectively) from the viewpoint of their real causes and the Divine wisdom in them, rather than their apparent "natural" causes. They come as the result of our negligence in God's laws governing our religious and "natural" lives, and of our transgressing the bounds established by Him. The great scholar, Hamdi Yazır, remarks:

God Almighty is the One of Majesty  
Who is powerful enough to pull up the

mountains and demolish them over the heads of people. He can change in an instant the gravity between things or objects. Those who have some sense should not forget how great and irresistible a force earthquake and volcanic eruption demonstrate. Some think that such events have nothing to do with the transgressions of humankind. This is a manifest error. Although it cannot be said that all of them are punitive, all of them are certainly linked to the life and actions of humankind. (Yazır, 4: 2322)

The function and dignity of humankind as vicegerent require this to be so.

71. The staff of Moses served as a means for many of his miracles. The gushing forth of water from the rock was one of them. This rock is still to be found in the Sinai and attracts tourists. It bears the signs of the slits and cracks made by the springs (al-Mawdūdī, 1, note:75).

By this miracle, the Almighty conveys the message that it is possible to benefit from the hidden treasures of His Mercy, and even to cause "the water of life" to gush forth from a place as hard as a rock, with simple tools such as a staff. In addition, He encourages humankind: O humankind! I gave to the hand of a servant of Mine who had perfect trust in Me such a staff that he could summon by it the "water of life" when he wished. If you rely on My Mercy and your studies are founded upon Its laws, you can discover an instrument like that staff. So, come on and discover! (*The Words*, "The 20<sup>th</sup> Word," 261-262)

This verse contains two other messages. One is that there is a "natural" cause, no matter how slight, in every miracle because humankind is tested in this world, not compelled. If there were no "natural" causes, then all would be compelled to believe. The Almighty opens a door to faith for human reason but does not compel it to pass through that door. Given their free will, human beings choose and determine

their way and, therefore, get their just deserts. The second message the verse conveys is that one who prays to God for any need should do whatever is normally required to attain the end desired. For example, if one is ill, one should both go to a doctor and pray. If one desires success, one should both work and pray. When Moses prayed for water, God could have sent down water from the sky, but He ordered him to strike a rock with his staff. Moses did what he was ordered without the slightest hesitation about whether water could or would come out from the rock. He had perfect reliance on God and was perfectly certain of his mission.

72. “Egypt (or some city)” translates *misr*, which can mean either. It might be a city that the Children of Israel passed on the way to Palestine, or it might be Egypt, which they had left. Their demand indicates that they still felt longing for their life in Egypt and it was also a sign of ignobility of character. That is why Moses, upon him be peace, might have meant in a satirically warning manner, “Get you down to Egypt where there was what you ask for, and return to your previous life of slavery.”

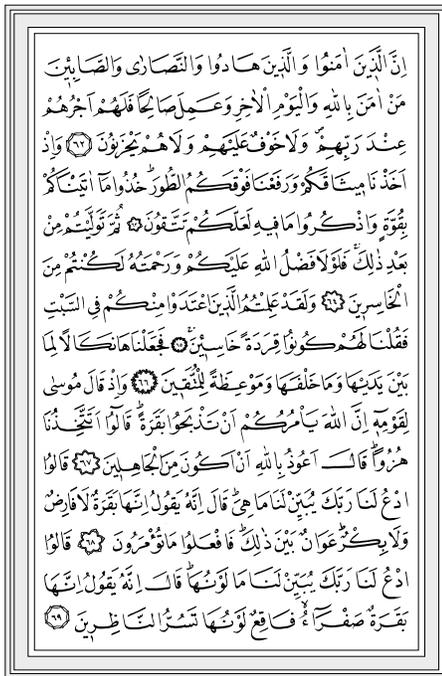
73. What the Children of Israel asked for was not, in itself, sinful. But by saying “your Lord” instead of “our Lord,” they manifested a sign of unbelief. Second, as a people on the way to becoming a civilized society un-

der the leadership of a great Messenger, they were expected to make demands required by a civilized life. By drawing attention to the ignominy and misery pitched upon them, and to their crimes, even after they became settled and founded a great kingdom during the reigns of the Prophets David and Solomon, upon them be peace, the Qur’ān illustrates how they relapsed into their character of slavery. In telling of the humiliating punishment they earned from God’s wrath, the verse links back to, and interprets, “those who have incurred (Your) wrath” in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*.

Considered in the light of this verse, the Prophetic saying warning the Muslims against the causes of ignominy and misery becomes more apt: “When you let yourselves go into speculative transactions and are occupied with animal-breeding only and content with agriculture and abandon striving in God’s cause to preach His religion, God will subject you to such a humiliation that He will not remove it from you until you return to your Religion” (Abū Dāwūd, “Buyū’,” 54; Ibn Hanbal, 2: 84).

It may serve as a comparison that the apostles of Jesus, upon him be peace, made a similar demand from him, also using the expression, “your Lord.” However, while the Children of Israel demanded what the soil produces, Jesus’ apostles demanded a table from heaven (*sūrah* 5: 112).

الْبَيْتِ



62. (The truth is not as they – the Jews – claim, but this:) Those who believe (i.e. professing to be Muslims) or those who declare Judaism, or the Christians or the Sabaeans (or those of some other faith) – whoever truly believes in God and the Last Day and does good, righteous deeds, surely their reward is with their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.<sup>74</sup>

63. And (remember) when We took your promise (to keep Our covenant) and (in order to stress the importance of both the covenant and keeping it, and warn you against breaking it,) We raised the Mount (causing it to tower) over you: “Hold firmly to what We have given you (of the Book) and study its commandments and

instructions so that you may attain reverent piety towards God and His protection (against any kind of straying and its consequent punishment in this world and the Hereafter).”

64. Then, after that, you turned away again (breaking your promise and disobeying the commandments of the Book). So, had it not been for the grace of God to you and His mercy (overlooking your offenses and forgiving you), surely you would have been of the losers (in this world and the next).

65. You surely know of those among you who exceeded the bounds with respect to the Sabbath, and so We said to them, “Be you apes, miserably slinking and rejected.”<sup>75</sup>

66. We made it a severe affliction exemplary for their own generations and those to follow them, and instruction and guidance for the God-revering, pious.

67. And (remember) when Moses told his people: “God commands you to sacrifice a cow.” They responded: “Are you making fun of us?” He replied: “I seek refuge in God lest I should be among the ignorant (by making fun of anybody).”<sup>76</sup>

68. They said, “Pray for us to your Lord that He may make clear to us what it should be like.” (Moses) answered: “He says, it should be a cow neither old nor virgin, middling between the two. So do what you are commanded.”

69. They (continuing to make trouble about the matter) responded: “Pray for us to your Lord that He may make clear to us what color it should be.” (Moses) answered: “He says, it should be a yellow cow, radiant in its color, gladdening those who see.”

74. The aim of the verse is to repudiate the illusion cherished by the Jews that, by virtue of their being Jews, they have a monopoly over salvation. They had long asserted their belief that a special and exclusive relationship existed between themselves and God. They thought that Jews as Jews were predestined to salvation, regardless of their beliefs and actions, whereas all non-Jews were predestined to serve as fuel for the Fire.

The context of the verse makes it clear that it does not aim to enumerate in full all the articles of faith in which one should believe in order to be saved. They are mentioned elsewhere, in the appropriate places. No one should conclude from this verse that for eternal salvation, it is not compulsory to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and follow his way. There is a clear relationship between this verse and verse 38 – *If, henceforth, a guidance (like a Book through a Messenger) comes to you from Me, and whoever follows My guidance (and turns to Me with faith and worship), they will have no fear (in this world and the next, for they will always find My help and support with them), nor will they grieve.* – and the beginning of the *sūrah*, where belief in the Qurʾān and the previous Books, together with establishing the Prayer and spending in God's cause, are mentioned as the attributes of the believers who prosper. Verses 41, 42, 43 – *Believe in that which I have sent down (the Qurʾān), confirming that which is with you (of the truth), and do not be the first to disbelieve in it. And (you scribes, fearful of losing your status and the worldly benefit accruing from it) do not sell My Revelations for a trifling price (such as worldly gains, status and renown); and in Me alone seek refuge through piety and reverence for Me. Do not confound the truth by mixing it with falsehood, and do not conceal the truth while you know (the meaning and outcome of what you do, and that what you strive to hide is true, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, the Messenger whose coming you have been anticipating). Establish the Prayer*

*in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the Zakāh); and bow (in the Prayer, not by forming a different community or congregation, but) together with those who bow (the Muslims).* – explicitly address the Jews and explicitly invite them to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

In order to fully understand the message of this verse, verse 22: 17 should also be taken into consideration.

75. The event outlined here is told in detail in *sūrah* 7: 163–166.

It was laid down that the Children of Israel should consecrate the Sabbath – Saturday – for rest and worship. They were required to abstain from all worldly acts. The injunctions in this connection were so strict that breaking the Sabbath was punishable by death (*Exodus*, 31: 12–17).

There are several passages in the Old Testament concerning the Sabbath (*Exodus*, 16: 21–30; 20: 8–11; 31: 12–17; *Deuteronomy*, 5: 12–15). As can be understood from *Deuteronomy*, one of the reasons for its consecration may have been that the Children of Israel should not forget their life of slavery in Egypt and be mindful of perceiving God's blessings upon them, as well as serving as a day of respite for slaves and animals.

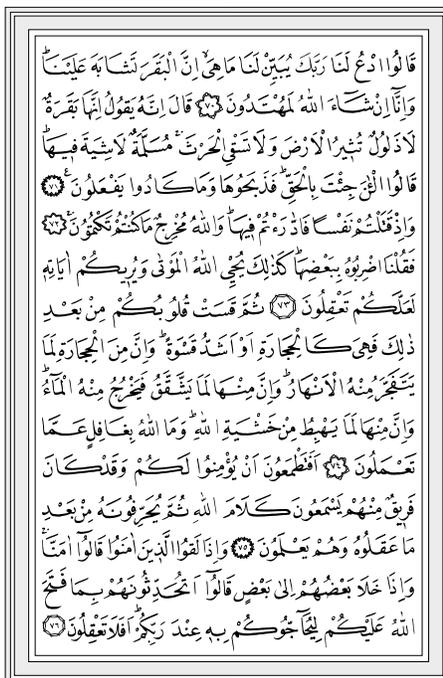
God's "saying" an order is identical with expressing and executing His will: *When He wills a thing to be, He but says to it "Be!" and (in the selfsame instant) it is (sūrah* 36: 82).

76. Despite numerous signs of God through many eventful years, the Children of Israel began, very soon after Moses went to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, to worship a calf made of jewelry. This deviancy, happening in defiance of the Prophet Aaron, demonstrated the extent to which the Israelites had absorbed the attitudes of the native people of Egypt, in particular their sanctifying cattle. As may be understood from their demanding of Moses what the soil produces – the green herbs, cucumbers, corn, lentils, and onions – their occupation as farm laborers in Egypt may also have contrib-

uted to their veneration of the cow. By commanding them to sacrifice a cow, God willed to disabuse them of this attitude. However, it is with great difficulty that human nature can free itself from long and deeply ingrained prejudices. Accordingly, the Israelites, who had been expected to sacrifice any cow, chose to make trouble about it. Although the useless questions they asked and the expressions they used such as “your Lord,” that displayed their disrespect for God, brought them to the door of perdition, the mercy and gentle forbearance of God rescued them once more, and they were able to carry out the order. There are lessons for Muslim guides to take from this event.

As pointed out before, establishing faith in the Hereafter in minds and hearts is one of the four cardinal purposes of the Qur’ān. For this

reason, while narrating an event even from a different perspective or for a different purpose, if it is possible to open a way through it to one of its main purposes or essentials of faith, the Qur’ān always does so. The main reason for the order of sacrificing a cow was, as we said, to disabuse the Israelites of their reverence for cattle. However, in order to disclose the identity of a murderer which they had been hiding, God created a miracle. Upon His order, they smote the corpse with some part of the sacrificed cow and the corpse, restored to life, told who his murderer was. This showed that God can restore the dead to life in any way He wills, so it is foolishness to doubt or question whether God can revive the dead. Such doubts and questions indicate a deficiency in the use of reason, or its abuse.



70. They (still unwilling to carry out the order) replied: “Pray for us to your Lord that He may make clear to us what it should be like; cows are much alike to us; and if God wills, we will then be guided (to find the precise type of cow we are commanded to sacrifice, and sacrifice it).”

71. (Moses) answered: “He says, it is a cow unyoked to plough the earth or water the tillage, one kept secure and sound, with no blemish on it.” “Now you have brought the truth,” they answered; and they sacrificed it, though they all but did not.

72. And (remember also) when you had killed a living soul, and were accusing one another to deny the responsibility, but God would disclose what you were concealing.

73. So We commanded: “Strike him (the corpse) with part of it (the sacrificed cow).” (So they did and the corpse, brought to life, informed of the murderer.) Even so God brings to life the dead and shows you the signs (of His Power, Oneness and way of acting), that you may understand the truth (and have no doubt at all, concerning the essentials of faith).<sup>77</sup>

74. Then, a while after that, your hearts became hardened; they were like rocks, or even harder, for there are rocks from which rivers come gushing; there are some that split and water issues from them; and there are still others that roll down for fear and awe of God. (Whereas your hearts are harder than rocks, and) God is not unaware and unmindful of what you do.<sup>78</sup>

75. (O community of the believers!) Do you hope that those people (whose hearts

have become more hardened than rocks and who have continually shown disloyalty to God) will believe you (and believe in the Prophet Muhammad, and in the Book he brought and the Religion he preaches)? (It is surely not possible) when there has been a party among them that hear the Word of God, and then, after they reasoned and judged it (to be the Word of God), have tampered with it knowingly.<sup>79</sup>

76. When they meet those who believe, they declare (hypocritically), “We believe (in what you believe in);” but when they are alone with one another, in private, they say (chiding each other): “Will you tell them what God has disclosed to you that they might use it as an argument against you before your Lord? Do you have no sense?”<sup>80</sup>

77. Like every other Prophetic miracle, this miracle also marks a horizon for scientific advances. In the future, it may well become possible to discover, for example, the murderer of a victim by “interrogating” some of the cells of the brain that remain alive for some time after death, or trace the murderer through some other element of the victim’s body, analogous to the way that traces of the murderer’s DNA found on the victim or at the crime scene can lead to definitive identification.

78. Hard rocks give way to the roots and fibers of plants. Those fibers, though as soft as silk, can, saying “In the Name of God”, pierce and pass through hard stones and earth. By their mentioning the Name of God, the Name of the Merciful, everything becomes subjected to them.

As a result of the awesome manifestations of Divine Majesty in the form of earthquakes and other abrupt geological events, we can see huge rocks fall from the high summits of mountains (mostly formed, long ago, from thickened and cooled molten fluid) and shatter. Some of these crumble and disintegrate further to become soil for plantation. Others remain as rocks, and are scattered down to the valleys and plains. They serve many uses in the works of the earth’s inhabitants, as in their houses. In submission to the Divine Power and Wisdom that foresees hidden purposes and benefits, mountains and rocks are thus ever ready and willing to be used in accordance with the principles of the Divine Wisdom. It is neither in vain nor accidental that, out of awe of God, they leave their lofty positions at the summits and choose the lower places in humility and become the means of those significant benefits. Rocks are so wonderfully subjugated to God’s commands that rivers do appear to gush out of them. However, it is not possible that the mountains could be the actual source of the mighty rivers in the world such as the Tigris, Euphrates, and the Nile. Even if the mountains were made up entirely and only of water, like giant conical reservoirs, the swift and abundant flow of those great rivers would exhaust their

supply of water in only a few months. Also, the rain, which only penetrates about a meter into the earth, cannot be sufficient income for such a high expenditure. In fact, reason cannot yet satisfactorily explain the sources and flow of these rivers in terms of “natural causes.” The All-Majestic Creator makes the rivers flow forth in a truly wonderful fashion from an unseen “treasury.”

By drawing attention to the benefits of rocks, and by comparing the rocks favorably with the hardened hearts of the Israelites, the Qur’an gives the following instruction to all humankind:

O Children of Israel and O children of Adam! Despite your weakness and impotence, what sorts of hearts do you have that, in their hardness, they resist the commands of the Divine Being? By contrast, massive formations of rocks carry out their subtle tasks perfectly in darkness, in utmost submission to His commands. Indeed, the rocks act as a store and conduit for water (and other means of life) for all the living creatures on the earth. In the hand of Power of the All-Wise One of Majesty, the hard rocks become, unresistingly, as malleable as wax or air, making way for the flowing waters, and the delicate roots and silk-like fibers of plant life, which, also, are acting under the command of God.

O Children of Israel and children of Adam! Through hardness of heart and lack of feeling, you disobey the commandments of One of such awesome Majesty and life-giving Power; through heedlessness, you close your eyes to the light of the Knowledge of such an Everlasting Sun. He makes mighty rivers like the Nile gush from solid rocks and makes the land of Egypt fertile –and yet you fail to notice and take heed. He produces for the heart of the universe and the mind of the earth miracles of His Power, and witnesses to His Oneness as strong and abundant as those mighty rivers, and makes them flow to the hearts and minds of the jinn and humankind. How, then, is it that you are

blind to the light of His Knowledge and do not see the truth? (*The Words*, “The 20<sup>th</sup> Word,” 262)

79. One of the aims of the Qur’ān in presenting diverse aspects of the history of the Children of Israel is to make them known to the nascent Muslim community in Madīnah and the succeeding Muslim generations. Prior to the Emigration (*Hijrah*), the Jewish communities in Madīnah were better off than the native Arab tribes, al-Aws and Khazraj, being more knowledgeable of worldly affairs and belonging to a heavenly religion. Whenever a conflict arose between them and the Arabs, they threatened that a Prophet would appear among them and that, under his leadership, they would triumph over them. Thus, they had been anticipating the coming of the Last Prophet. However, when he appeared not among them but among the Arabs, they refused to believe in him. It was partly because of this background that the Muslims of Madīnah had expected that they would be the first to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Accordingly, the Muslim converts among the Arab tribes approached their Jewish friends and neighbors and invited them to embrace Islam. When the Jews declined to do so, this was exploited by the hypocrites and other enemies of Islam as an argument for creating doubts about the truth of Islam. In order to warn the new Muslim converts against such doubts and the mischief the Jewish communities might bring about, the Qur’ān

draws attention to their character and past history, and the real reasons for their reluctance to embrace Islam.

80. Among the Jewish rabbis were some who partly preserved their loyalty to their religion. They had told the members of al-Aws and Khazraj tribes about the attributes of the Last Prophet they had been anticipating. Since all of these attributes were seen in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām, the greatest among them, accepted Islam. It was because of such factors that at least some among them felt compelled to admit faith when they encountered the Muslims. However, when they were alone with one another, they chided each other or those who admitted faith, saying: “God had disclosed to you some secrets about the Last Prophet in the Book He sent to you. By telling the Muslims these secrets, would you like it if they use them as an argument against you in the presence of your Lord?” In thinking and acting in this way, they demonstrated that they did not have true knowledge of God, but rather had a conception of Him such that He does not know what people keep secret. Also, by using the expression “your Lord,” they demonstrated that they believed that they had a Lord exclusive to themselves. (This is a false conception: either it means that God is not the Lord of all, or, equally bad, it means that God practices a sort of “favoritism” on behalf of some of His creatures to the neglect or detriment of others.)

الْحَجُّهُ الْأَذَى

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 أَوْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ  
 أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا آمَاتٍ وَرَأَى هُمْ الْأَبْطُلُونَ  
 ﴿۷۸﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ  
 هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ  
 بِمَا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ بِمَا يَكْسِبُونَ  
 ﴿۷۹﴾ وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً قُلْ  
 أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَأَمْ  
 تَعْلَمُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿۸۰﴾ بَلَى مَنْ كَسَبَ  
 سَيِّئَةً وَآخَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ  
 هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿۸۱﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
 أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿۸۲﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا  
 مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْعَهْدَ أَنْ قَالُوا لَنَا اللَّهُ وَمَا لَنَا بِاللَّهِ  
 إِحْسَابًا وَرَبِّ الْقُرْآنِ وَالنَّاسِ وَالسَّكِينِ وَقُولُوا  
 لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ  
 ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿۸۳﴾

77. Do they not know that surely God knows what they keep concealed and what they disclose?

78. Among them are the unlettered folk who do not know anything about the Book except fancies from hearsay, and merely follow their conjectures.

79. Woe, then, to those who write the Book with their hands (interpolating into it their readings of the Scriptures and their explanatory notes thereto, stories from their national history, superstitious ideas and fancies, philosophical doctrines and legal rules) and then, in order to sell it for

a trifling price (such as worldly benefit, status, and renown), they declare: “This is from God.” So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned (of the worldly income and the sin thereby).<sup>81</sup>

80. They say (despite all that): “The Fire will not touch us at all except for a certain number of days.”<sup>82</sup> Say, then, (to them): “Have you made a covenant with God and received a promise from Him? If so, God will never break His covenant. Or do you say things against God that you do not know?”

81. (It is indeed the case that you speak in ignorance. The truth is,) rather, that whoever earns an evil (by his free will) and his vices engulf him – those are the companions of the Fire;<sup>83</sup> therein they will abide.

82. While those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, those are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein.

83. And (remember) when We took a promise from the Children of Israel: You shall worship none save God (as the only Deity, Lord, and Sovereign), and do good to parents in the best way possible, and to the near (relatives), to the orphans, and to the destitute; and speak kindly and well to the people; and establish the Prescribed Prayer in conformity with its conditions; and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the *Zakāh*). But then you turned away in aversion, all except a few of you; in fact you are a people always avoiding your compacts and responsibilities.<sup>84</sup>

81. In addition to interpreting the Book of God according to their wishes for the sake of fame, status, and worldly gain, the rabbis interpolated into it their own readings of the Scriptures, stories from their national history, superstitious ideas and fancies, philosophical doctrines

and legal rules, and attributed these to God. This caused what was human and what was Divine to be confounded. Furthermore, they expected others to believe in whatever there was in the Book, and they regarded rejection of their additions as being identical with un-

belief. As pointed out in verse 78, the common people were unlettered. They tended to believe in whatever they were told in the name of religion, and thus they were dragged along into conjectures and fancies through mere imitation.

As in other similar verses, this one contains significant warning for the learned scholars and the unlearned Muslims of this community. As pointed out by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, the religious books written by scholars should serve as “binoculars” to look at the Qur’ān, not as substitutes for it. This and similar verses also shed light on why God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, showed some reluctance in the early years of his mission to have his sayings written down.

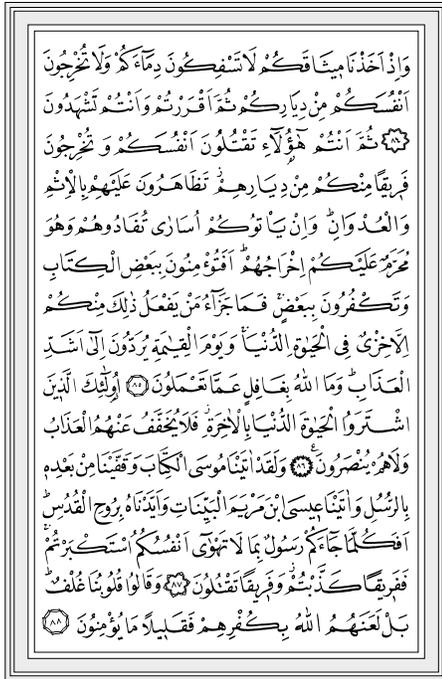
82. Left without any means to object to the Qur’ān’s unveiling their past and inner world, some Jewish rabbis attempted to defend themselves by claiming that the Fire would not touch the Israelites except for a definite number of days – as many days as they had worshipped the calf. They put forward as an excuse their being Jewish and a nation exalted above others, whereas this was not intended in terms of supremacy in virtue, but was for a determined period when they were granted a great kingdom during the reigns of the Prophets David and Solomon, upon them be peace. They even went so far as to claim that they were the children of God and His beloved ones (5: 18). The only true criterion in the sight of God in judging people is *taqwā*; as stressed in verse 2: 62, being a Jew, Christian, or Muslim by name does not suffice for salvation.

83. There is a close relation between this and the following verse (82), as well as verses 2: 28 and 29. This verse is also linked to verse 24 which threatens those who reject belief in the Qur’ān. The words and expressions used here – evil, earning evil, vices, and vices engulfing the person – describe the people of Hell, who are deprived of faith and engulfed in sins. The

verse also implies a warning for those Jews that the sins they committed in their past history and were still committing in Madīnah were of the kind that, contrary to their claim that the Fire would not touch them except for a certain number of days, had contaminated their very being and would doom them to being companions of the Fire eternally.

84. When the noble Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, emigrated to Madīnah, three Jewish tribes were living there, namely Banū (the Children of) Qurayzah, Banū Qaynuqa’ and Banū Nadīr. The Messenger made a written contract with each of them, as co-citizens of the city-state of Madīnah, then in process of establishment. None of these tribes remained loyal to the contract, and they went so far as to attempt to kill God’s Messenger, and to make secret agreements with the enemy forces during the Battle of the Trench against the Muslims.

The verses in this *sūrah* recounting God’s favors to the Children of Israel, inviting them to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and making them known to the Muslim community, did not come on a single occasion but covered a period of at least five or six years. They were intended to warn the nascent Muslim community in Madīnah and all the Muslims to come until the Last Day against any conspiracy to put doubt in the mind concerning the tenets of Islam. They were also intended to invite and encourage the Jews to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and follow him. To this end, by reminding them of God’s favors to them during their history, stressing their continual disloyalty, and drawing their attention to the calamities that struck them because of their transgressions, these verses would have stirred their inner human resources – to return good with good, to take lessons from past experiences, to feel remorse for wrongs done, and to reform themselves.



84. And (remember also) when We took a promise from you: you shall not shed blood among yourselves, and shall not expel one another from your habitations. You confirmed it, and you yourselves were (and still must be) witnesses to it.

85. Then, here you are, killing one another, and expelling a party of your own from their habitations, conspiring against them in iniquity and enmity. If you take them as captives, you hold them to ransom, and if they are brought to you as captives, you ransom them; yet their expulsion was made religiously forbidden to you.<sup>85</sup> Then (like a people having no sense), do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part? What else, then, could be the recompense of those of you who act thus than disgrace

in the life of this world? On the Day of Resurrection, they will be consigned to the severest of punishments. God is not unaware and unmindful of what you do.

86. Such are the ones who have bought the present, worldly life (the life of corporeal desires and ambitions) in exchange for the Hereafter. So (in consequence of this exchange) the punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be helped (not saved from the punishment in any of the ways they resort to in the world such as bribery, influence, or unjust intercession).

87. (That is their just deserts. For) We assuredly granted Moses the Book, and after him sent succeeding Messengers (in the footsteps of Moses to judge according to the Book, and thus We have never left them without guides and the light of guidance). And (in the same succession) We granted Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs of the truth (and of his Messengership), and confirmed him with the Spirit of Holiness.<sup>86</sup>

Is it (ever so) that whenever a Messenger comes to you with what (as a message and commandments) does not suit your selves, you grow arrogant, denying some of them (the Messengers) and killing others?

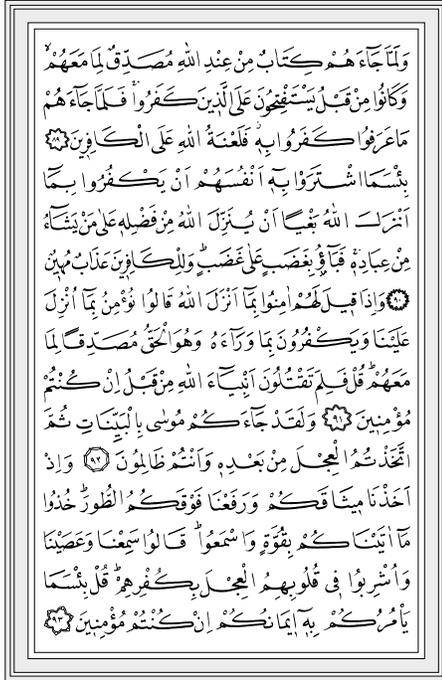
88. (Despite all such favors, affection, forgiveness, advice, and truths, they refuse to believe, and by way of excuse, they ask derisively: “Do we need any of what you have to tell?” Recognizing that what they are told has no effect on them) they say: “Our hearts have become covered (callous, no longer having any ability to believe).” No! Rather, because of their unbelief, God has cursed them (excluded them from His mercy and set a seal on their hearts and hearing, and a veil on their eyes.) So, little do they believe (or can admit of the truth).

85. The style of the verses is of a nature to guide to a historical review and understanding of events. Past and present are linked and brought together in a meaningful juxtaposition. This is how narration of the past becomes, instead of a random chronicling of events, a meaningful history – an account of life still vivid and relevant for the present, full of lessons connected with its continuing effects. In addition, since the characters of the past and those of the present share the same attitudes and qualities, all the events, those of the past and the present, give the impression that they occur around the same characters. That is why in the foreground we see the persons, with their characteristics, intentions, and attributes, rather than the events.

Before the emigration of God's Messenger to Madīnah, the Jewish tribes had concluded an alliance with the Arab tribes of al-Aws and Khazraj, who were then polytheists. When fighting broke out between the Arab tribes, each Jewish tribe fought against another on the side of its allies, which led to fratricide and, therefore, to a violation of the Divine Book. Furthermore, when the war ended, the captives were ransomed. They justified the ransom on the basis of scriptural arguments. They venerated the Book when it allowed the ransom of captives, but when it came to its prohibition of mutual feuding, they paid no heed to it.

86. Different views have been put forward about

the Spirit of Holiness with which Jesus, upon him be peace, was confirmed. Literally meaning the spirit of extraordinary purity, cleanliness, and blessing, it is, according to some, a spirit from God, while some are of the opinion that it is one of the Greatest Names of God, and still others maintain that it is the Gospel. Others hold that it is the Archangel Gabriel, upon him be peace, whom the Qur'ān calls the Spirit of Holiness (*sūrah* 16: 102) and One Trustworthy (*sūrah* 81: 21). Still some others opine that the Spirit whose holiness is stressed with respect to Jesus, and both holiness and trustworthiness with respect to the Prophet Muḥammad, is the same being or entity. According to Imam al-Ghazzālī, he is an angel (or angel-like being) whom God employs in breathing each one's spirit into his/her body. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi maintains that there is a spirit representing every thing, every being. In the light of these opinions, it can be said that there is a Spirit which functions differently according to the particular mission of each Prophet. It is a Spirit of Law for the Prophet Moses, a Spirit of Holiness and Trustworthiness for the Prophet Muḥammad, and a Spirit of Holiness for the Prophet Jesus. The Qur'ān's mentioning of Jesus being confirmed with the Spirit of *Holiness* is because spirituality had precedence in Jesus' mission. Muḥammad's mission is distinguished with both holiness and trustworthiness, more than the missions of other Prophets. (Also see *sūrah* 70, note 1.)



89. And when there has (now) come to them a Book from God, confirming what (of the truth) they already possess – and though before that they were asking for a victory over the (tribes of al-Aws and Khazraj who were then) unbelievers, (saying: “The Last Prophet will come and we will defeat and destroy you under his leadership”) – and when there has come to them what they recognize (as well as their own sons), they have disbelieved in it. Then God’s curse (rejection) is on the unbelievers.

90. How evil is that for which they have sold themselves: (they have disbelieved in what God has sent down) begrudging that God should send down out of His grace the Book (and bestow Messengership) on whomever He wills of His servants. So they have earned wrath upon wrath. And

(as with other unbelievers who, defeated by their haughtiness, malicious envy, racial prejudice, worldly desires, and ambitions, knowingly reject the truth,) for those unbelievers is a shameful, humiliating punishment.

91. And when they are told (since the sign of a believer is believing in whatever God has sent down): “Believe in that which He has sent down (on Muḥammad, namely the Qur’an),” they retort: “We believe in only what was sent down on us,” and they disbelieve in what is beyond that, though it is the truth, confirming what (of the truth) they already possess.<sup>87</sup> Say (to them, O Messenger): “Why then did you kill the Prophets of God before, if indeed you are believers (loyal to what was sent down on you)?”

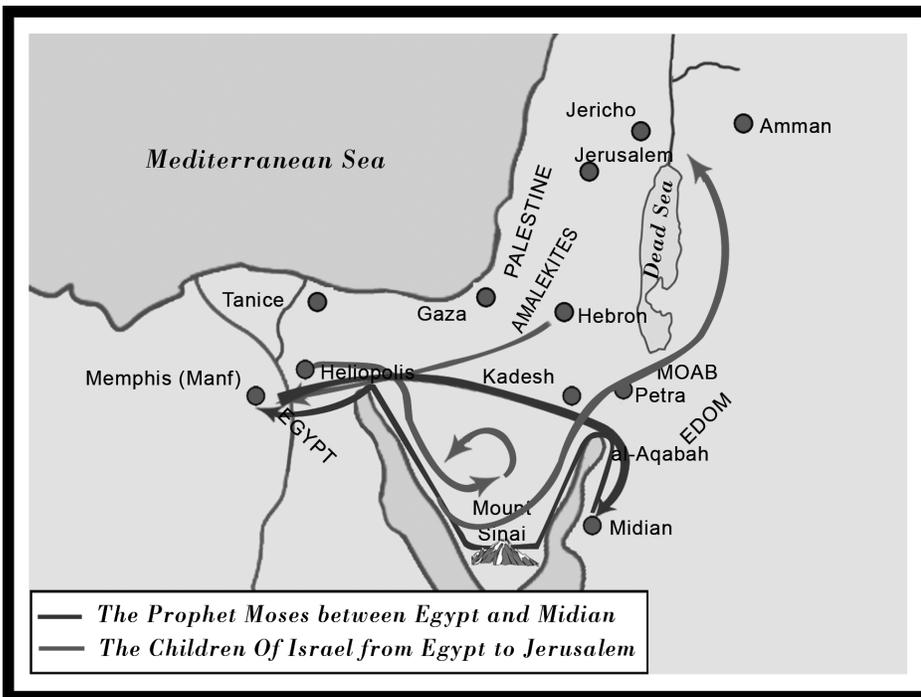
92. Assuredly Moses came to you with clear proofs of the truth. Then, however, very soon after he left you, you adopted the calf as deity, proving yourselves to be wrongdoers (who were continually committing such sins as breaking your covenants with God and serving false deities in His place).

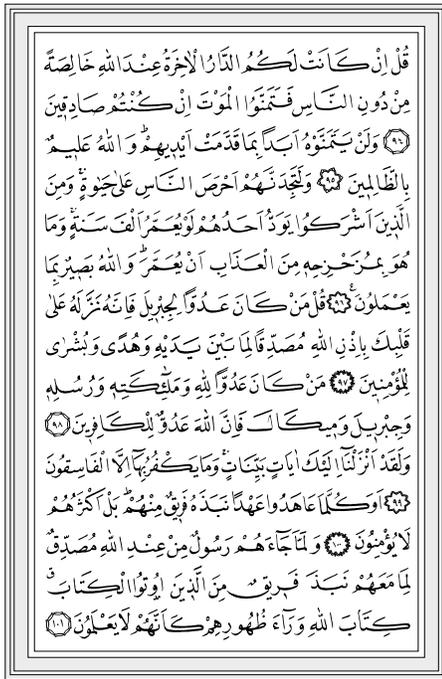
93. And (remember) when We took your promise (to keep Our covenant) and (in order to stress the importance of both the covenant and keeping it, and warn you against breaking it) We raised the Mount (and caused it to tower) above you: Hold firmly to what We have given you (of the Book) and give ear (to Our commandments and obey Moses). They replied: “We give ear,” (but by doing the opposite of what they were commanded, they meant) “we disobey.” Because of their unbelief, they were made to drink into their hearts (love of) the calf (with then no place left therein for faith). Say (to them): “How evil is that which your belief enjoins on you, if you are believers.”<sup>88</sup>

87. Every unfair, unjust individual and community surely acts in this way. For them, faith is no more than a mere assertion by which they make a display of themselves. They will not acknowledge a Prophet or a scholar as such, if he does not belong to their community or nation. It has often been this self-centered haughtiness, this kind of racist nationalism, which has brought about rifts within a people and led them to associate partners with God, and

to oppose right with sophistry and intrigue or brute force. It was the same kind of attitude that caused *Iblis* to be expelled from the Presence and Mercy of God.

88. Even if action is not a part, an essential element of faith, faith exhibits itself through actions commanded or required by it. Actions are the mirror that show whether one is a believer or not.





94. Say: “If (as you claim, you are the beloved ones of God and the sole followers of the Straight Path, and therefore) the abode of the Hereafter with God is reserved for you alone, excluding other people, then long for death, if you are sincere in your belief and truthful in your claim.”

95. But because of what they have forwarded with their own hands (to the Hereafter, namely the sins and offenses which have destroyed the desire in them to meet God), they will never long for it. God has full knowledge of the wrongdoers (who wrong their own selves by what they have done).

96. And you will undoubtedly find them the greediest of all people for life, more greedy than even those who associate part-

ners with God. Everyone of them wishes if only he might be spared for a thousand years,<sup>89</sup> yet his being spared to live will not remove him from the punishment. God sees well all that they do.

97. (This is not all. They feel enmity towards Gabriel because he brings the Qur’ān to you, not to one among them.) Say (O Messenger, to them): “(The Lord of the worlds, my and your Lord, declares:) ‘Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel (should know that) it is he who brings down the Qur’ān on your heart by the leave of God, (not of his own accord), confirming (the Divine origin of and the truths still contained in) the Revelations prior to it, and (serving as) guidance and glad tidings for the believers.’”<sup>90</sup>

98. (Enmity to Gabriel, who does nothing other than what he is commanded to do by God, means enmity to God and to His will.) Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His Messengers and (so) Gabriel and Michael, (should know that) God is surely an enemy to the unbelievers.

99. (O Messenger, do not grieve about their persistence in unbelief!) Assuredly We have sent down to you truths so manifest (that they both prove your Messengership and the Divine authorship of the Qur’ān as brightly as the sunlight). None disbelieve in them except transgressors (who have strayed from the Straight Path in belief, thought, and conduct).

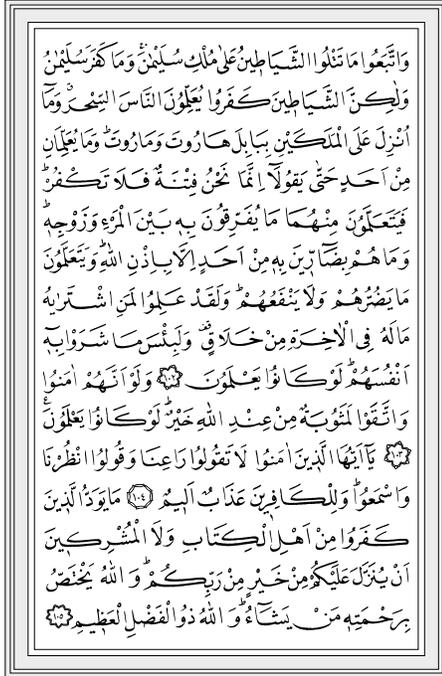
100. Is it not ever so that whenever they (those transgressors) make a covenant, a party of them set it aside? (Indeed, they do so, and they are not a small party,) rather, most of them do not believe (so that they might be expected to keep their covenant).

101. (This is not all.) When (finally) there has come to them a Messenger from God, confirming what (of the truth) they already possess, a party of those who were given the Book (the Torah) have (instead of paying heed to what it contains concerning the Last Messenger) flung the Book of God (the Qur'ān) behind their backs, as if they did not know (that it is a Book from God and that the Messenger who has brought it is the Last Prophet they have been anticipating).

89. God's Messenger warns: "Love of the world is the source of all errors and sins" (al-Bayhaqī, 7: 338).

90. The link between this verse and the opening verses of the *sūrah*, describing the praiseworthy qualities of the believers, is explicit. The believers mentioned here are as described in those verses – that is, they are those who believe in the Unseen, establish the Prayer, and spend, out of whatever God provides for them, to help those in need, and who believe in what has been sent down to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and what was sent down before him, and who have certain faith in the Hereafter. The opening verses of every *sūrah* are of pivotal importance to an understanding of its meaning.

Gabriel (*Jibrīl* in the Qur'ān) denotes the angelic existence above every other power with the exception of the Divine, and the spirit that no material force can resist, and whose works are irreversible and indispensable. Since Revelation has an absolute certainty with no room for the intervention of any mortal being, the name *Jibrīl* (by which the angel bringing it is called) also serves as a definition of that angel. He has other titles as well (e.g., a Spirit from God, the Trustworthy Spirit, and even the Spirit of Holiness according to some: see note 85), and is described in the Qur'ān as a noble, honored messenger, mighty, having a high, secured position with the Lord of the Supreme Throne, obeyed by other angels, and trustworthy (81: 18–21) (Yazır, 1: 432).



102. And (just as their ancestors did) they follow the fictions the satans invented and spread about the rule of Solomon (falsely attributing his employment of the jinn, devils, and animals in his kingdom to sorcery). But (ascribing creativity or creative effect to sorcery is a kind of unbelief and) Solomon (being a Prophet and excellent servant of God) never disbelieved. Rather, the satans (who spread false things about his rule) disbelieved, teaching people sorcery and the (distorted form of the) knowledge that was sent down on Hārūt and Mārūt, the two angels in Babylon. And they (these two angels charged with teaching people some occult sciences such as breaking a spell and protection against sorcery) never taught them to anyone without first warning, “We are a trial, so do not disbelieve (– It is risky to learn the knowledge given to us, therefore use it in lawful ways, and beware of committing an act of unbelief

by abusing it).” And (yet) they (those who followed the falsehoods of the satans) learned from them (the two angels) that by which they might divide a man and his wife. But (though they wrongly attributed creative power to sorcery, in fact) they could not harm anyone thereby save by the leave of God. And they learned what would harm them, not what would benefit them. Assuredly they knew well that he who bought it (in exchange for God’s Book) will have no (happy) portion in the Hereafter. How evil was that for which they sold their selves; and if only they had known (acted like people of true knowledge and understanding).<sup>91</sup>

103. And if only they had believed and, in fear and reverence of God, sought to deserve His protection (against their straying and His punishment), a reward from God (of which they could not conceive) would have been absolutely good; if only they had known (acted like people of true knowledge and understanding).<sup>92</sup>

104. O you who believe!<sup>93</sup> Do not say (in your relationship and conversations with God’s Messenger,) *rā’inā* (please attend to us), but say, *unzurnā*<sup>94</sup> (favor us with your attention), and pay heed to him. (And be assured that) for the unbelievers (who are disrespectful to God’s Messenger) is a painful punishment.

105. Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book (by denying any of the Prophets or Divine Books or associating partners with God or cherishing enmity to His angels or in another way), and those who associate partners with God (among the people of Makkah and others) love not that there should be sent down on you any good from your Lord. But God singles out for His mercy (of favoring with Prophethood or another similar mission) whom He wills. God is of tremendous grace and bounty.

91. In addition to many miracles and miraculous achievements, the Prophet Solomon, upon him be peace, was distinguished by his ability, by the leave of God, to subjugate the jinn and satans to his command and employ them in diverse tasks. Once, they made an attempt to revolt against him but failed. After his death, satans began to whisper to their intimates among the devilish people that Solomon had derived his power from sorcery. When moral and material decline set in among the Children of Israel, they turned increasingly to black magic, sorcery, and charms in order to ensure the achievement of their desired ends.

During their life of exile in Babylon, a very ancient center of science, especially of the science of astronomy, God sent them two angels, called Hārūt and Mārūt, in order to teach them some occult sciences so that they might be protected against sorcery and the evils it caused. The angels, as dutiful servants of God with the power to assume the form most fitting for the specific task assigned to them, must have come to them in human form, just as the angels sent to the Prophet Lot came in the form of handsome youths (11: 69–81). While teaching people some occult knowledge, they warned them, saying: “Any knowledge is indeed a trial and temptation. So what we teach you may be used for undesirable ends by some evil ones. Beware that these evil ones do not lead you to any act of unbelief.” Any knowledge, indeed even elements as essential to human life as fire and water, can be turned into a means for evil in the hands of evil people. The evil ones among the Israelites were interested only in how they could sow discord between a man and his wife. This indicates the depth of moral corruption to which these people had fallen.

The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, said: “Satan sends his agents to all parts of the world. On their return these agents report their accomplishments, each mentioning his own special evil act. But Satan is not satisfied with any of them. It is only when an agent reports that he was able

to separate a wife from her husband that Satan becomes joyful and embraces him” (al-Bukhārī, “Talaq,” 25).

We might consider the teaching of the Kabala and certain similar esoteric doctrines and rituals of some secret organizations in the light of this verse. (We may note in passing that, there was a deity called Madruk among the deities of Babylon, a deity of magic.)

92. Both this and the preceding verse conclude with the words literally meaning, *If only they had known*. However, in the light of – *Assuredly they knew very well that he who bought it (in exchange for God’s Book) has no share, (no happy portion) in the Hereafter* – these words mean that these people did know, but they did not act according to what they knew as men of true knowledge and understanding. We can conclude that any knowledge which does not lead its possessors to act according to it is of no benefit to them, and thus is not regarded as “true knowledge” by the Qur’ān. Another point to note here is that in some of its verses (e.g. 3: 19), the Qur’ān refers to the Divine Book or Revelation as “knowledge.” Therefore, those who do not act according to this “knowledge” are ignorant, even though they may be knowledgeable in some other matters. All that we would wish to explain here is succinctly expressed by the verse (35: 28): *Of all His servants, only those possessed of true knowledge have awe of God*. The pre-Islamic period is called the “Age of Ignorance” (*Jāhiliyyah*). This is not because the people living in that era were ignorant, but because they believed and acted like people without (true) knowledge and understanding.

93. In the Qur’ān, the phrase, *O you who believe!* occurs in about eighty places. This address is to those who declare their belief (with their tongue) and perform the Prescribed Prayer (the *Salāḥ*) in congregation with the Muslims, pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the *Zakāḥ*) due on their wealth, including property held in the open (such as livestock and agricultural produce), and eat of the animals

sacrificed by the Muslims. Obeying the commandments that follow the use of this address is a requirement of being a believer. Only one who sincerely believes in the essentials of faith and obeys the prescribed commandments from the heart, purely for the good pleasure and approval of God, is a true believer.

94. In their conversation with God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the Companions, may God be pleased with them, sometimes used the expression *ra'īnā*, meaning "kindly lend ear to us" or "please attend to us," when they wanted to request a short pause. However, when some local Jews visited the Messenger, they tried to vent their spite by using ambiguous expressions in their greetings and conversation. They either used words

with double meanings, one innocent and the other offensive, or changed the pronunciation of the expressions used by the Companions, may God be pleased with them. They would pronounce *ra'īnā* to sound like a Hebrew word meaning "Listen, may you become deaf", and sometimes like an Arabic word meaning "our shepherd." To prevent the expression *ra'īnā* from being abused in this way, the Muslims were asked to avoid it and use instead the straightforward expression *unzurnā*, meaning "kindly favor us with your attention," or "kindly grant us a while to follow." The verse draws attention to the importance of showing the necessary respect to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and paying heed to his teachings.

مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِخُهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٦﴾ أَمْ تَرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَنْتَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ الْإِيمَانَ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَذَكَرْنَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْلَا رُزُقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيْمَانِكُمْ هَذَا حَسْبًا مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْتَفُوا وَاسْتَخَفُوا حَتَّى بَاتَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْيُنِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُدْمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَ كُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾



106. (Though they would exploit the abrogation of some rules of secondary degree to challenge your authority, the truth is that) We do not abrogate any verse or omit it (leaving it to be forgotten) but We bring one better than it or the like of it (more suited to the time and conditions in the course of perfecting the Religion and completing Our favor upon you).<sup>95</sup> Do you not know (and surely you do know) that God has full power over everything?

107. Do you not know (and surely you do know) that God is He to Whom belongs the sovereignty (absolute ownership and dominion) of the heavens and the earth (with all that is therein)? (He acts as He wills in His dominion, and you are His servants wholly submitted to Him. Given this, and unless He wills,) you have, apart from God, neither a guardian (to whom you can entrust your affairs) nor a helper.

108. Or do you desire (prompted by the unbelievers among the People of the Book, and without perceiving the wisdom in the abrogation of some verses) to harass your Messenger with senseless questions and unanswerable demands (such as seeing God plainly), as Moses was harassed before? Whoever exchanges faith for unbelief has surely strayed from the right, even way.

109. Many among the People of the Book, out of the envy ingrained in their souls, wish they could restore you as unbelievers after you have believed, after the truth was clear to them (that the Qur'ān is God's Word and Muḥammad is the last, awaited Messenger). Yet pardon and overlook them (avoiding useless debates and polemics with them) until God brings in His verdict about them. Surely God has full power over everything.

110. (Let your concern be to) establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions

and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms. Whatever good you send ahead (to your future life in this world and the next) to your own souls' account, you will find it with God. Whatever (good or evil) you do, surely God sees it well.

111. They (Jews or Christians) say that none will enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. That is their wishfulness (vain desires and fancies). Say: "Produce your proof if you are truthful (in and convinced of your claim)!"

112. No! Rather, whoever submits his whole being to God (and does so) as one devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing him, his reward is with his Lord, and all such will have no fear, (for they will always find My help and support with them), nor will they grieve.<sup>96</sup>

95. With regard to legislation, Islam followed three principal ways:

- It retained the commandments that pre-dated it, in the previous Books or in the custom and practice of the community in which Islam appeared, and which were not contradictory with its essential principles.
- It corrected or amended the ones that were not in conformity with its principles.
- It installed new legislation.

In establishing new legislation, it considered both life's unchanging (essential) and changing (temporal) aspects. In the second case, it laid down rules that could be revised when necessary, according to time and conditions, and in conformity with its essentials of faith, worship, and morality; and it established legal principles to maintain this process. The best known and most important of these are analogy (*qiyās*); deduction of new laws through reasoning based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah (*ijtihād*); adoption of what is good and beneficial (*istiḥsān*); maintaining without change what has already been approved (*istiḥāb*); taking what is suited to the public benefit and discarding what is harmful (*maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*); and blocking corruption and what is unlawful (*sadd az-zarā'ī*). The same procedure was also followed in the time of the Prophet himself, during which

the Qur'ān was revealed. God abrogated some verses, either with the injunction contained in their wording or with both their wording and the command they contained. This process was called *naskh*; the verses abrogated, *mansūkh*; and the new ones substituting the previous ones, *nāsikh*.

Scholars differ over the number of abrogated verses. However, it must always be remembered that the Qur'ān has absolute authority until Judgment Day and that human life consists of ups, downs, and twists. Given this, there may be times when some of the commands replacing or abrogating others should be temporarily neglected or viewed as not-yet-revealed, especially in preaching Islam to people. This process of *naskh* contributes a great deal to Islam's dynamism, for preaching Islam and transforming people into true and perfect Muslims is a process. Also, the principles or commands conveyed to new believers or those who are interested have different priorities.

96. We sometimes need to stress the relationships between individual verses and how the *sūrah* turns round its opening verses. The relationship between this verse and verses 2: 38 and 62 is manifest. These three verses are especially important with respect to linking the events narrated to the pivot or main theme of the *sūrah* and drawing attention to that link.

113. The Jews say the Christians have nothing (from God) to be based on, and the Christians say the Jews have nothing (from God) to be based on; yet they (both) recite the Book. So, too, those who have no knowledge (from God) say the like of their word. God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning what they have been disputing.

114. Who is more in the wrong than he who bars God's places of worship, so that His Name be not mentioned and invoked in them, and strives to ruin them?<sup>97</sup> Such people might never enter them, save in fear (whether because of their alienation from the Religion or because they try to destroy them owing to their animosity against God). For them is disgrace in the world, and in the Hereafter a mighty punishment.<sup>98</sup>

115. (They attempt to exploit the issue of *qiblah* – the direction of the Prayer – as a pretext to bar God's places of worship so that His Name be not mentioned in them.) To God belong the east and the west (and, therefore, the whole earth: wherever you are, you can turn to Him in the Prayer). Then, to whatever direction you turn, there is the "Face" of God.<sup>99</sup> God is All-Embracing (with His Mercy), All-Knowing.

116. And (despite this fact, and the fact that God is infinite, with nothing to restrict Him and, therefore, has no equal or like) they claim that God has taken to Him a son. All-Glorified is He (in that He is absolutely above having any attributes particular to those contained in time and space). Rather, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth (under His absolute rule);<sup>100</sup> all are (by their very nature, as beings created by Him) subservient to Him.

117. The Originator of the heavens and the earth with nothing preceding Him to imitate. When He decrees a thing, He does but say to it "Be!" and it is.<sup>101</sup>

الْمُجْرِمُونَ

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَى عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى لَيْسَتِ  
الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا  
فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ  
أَنْ يُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسُمِّيَ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ  
يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا تَائِبِينَ هُمْ فِي الذُّنُوبِ خِزْيٌ وَهُمْ فِي  
الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا  
فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَسَّعَ عِلْمُهُ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ  
وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بَلْ لَمْ يَمَأ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلِّ لَهٍ  
فَاقْنُوتُ ﴿١١٧﴾ بَدِيعَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا  
فَأَنشَأَ يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
لَوْلَا يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَاءُ بِهَذَا قَوْلُ بَعْضِهِمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا  
الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِآيَاتِنَا  
بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُنْفِلْ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٢٠﴾

118. Those who have no knowledge (from Him, and, therefore, lead an ignorant life) say: "Why does not God speak to us (directly), or a manifest sign (a miracle) come to us?" So spoke those before them, a word like theirs. Their hearts are alike. Yet We have made clear the signs (and the Revelations establishing the Unity and Sovereignty of God, the Messengership of Muḥammad, and the Divine authorship of the Qur'an) to a people who seek certainty (with open, inquiring minds).

119. (Let not what they say grieve you.) Assuredly, We have sent you as a Messenger with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness) and as a warner (against the consequences of straying and transgression). You (carry out your duty perfectly, and therefore) will not be questioned concerning the companions of the Blazing Flame.

97. The verse asks rhetorically if there is a greater wrongdoing than barring God's places of worship so that His Name is not extolled there, and striving to ruin them. This does not mean that it is uniquely the greatest wrongdoing. Rather, it is one of the greatest offenses, some others being concealing a truth revealed and established by God concerning faith (2: 140), knowingly denying God's Revelations (6: 21, 93), and turning away from God's Revelations in purposeful denial (32: 22). Each of these is among the greatest wrongdoings.

98. This verse severely denounces any offenses against God's places of worship, and alludes to such historical examples as the Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem being ruined by the Assyrian kings, by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylon king, and by the Roman emperor Titus and other Roman rulers such as Adrianus. It also refers to the Muslims being prevented from worshipping in the Ka'bah. In general, it warns against any attempt in the future to close down places of worship or ban people from worshipping in them.

99. The Laws of the previous Prophets stated that worship should be performed in specific places. For example, Jews worship in synagogues and Christians in churches. But Islam allows worship in any clean place (al-Bukhārī, "Tayammum," 1; "Salāh," 56). This verse also clarifies that God's "Face" is not connected with a specific direction, for God is not contained by time or space. Specifying a certain spot, such as the Ka'bah, was done only to establish unity and solidarity among Muslims in the Prayer and all other matters.

100. Since absolutism was prevalent among ancient peoples, they held that any son they attributed to a deity must also be a deity, as the son of a king succeeded to his father's rank and powers. By categorically refuting the doctrine that God might have a son and clarifying that God, being the Infinite, cannot have any like, the Qur'an decisively rejects Christians' attributing Divine sonship to Jesus, and some Jews' attributing the same to Ezra. Just as God cannot have a like, so too there cannot be any partner with Him in the dominion of the heavens and the earth, for it is He Who originated them without any help from any other, and without any precedent or example to follow.

101. There is no contradiction between God's saying to a thing "Be!" when He wills to create it – indicating that creation is instantaneous – and creation's appearing to us in our perspectives to be a process that takes time.

Existence has two dimensions, one corporeal, where matter and material causes, time and space have their relevance, and the other purely spiritual and transcendental, where neither matter and material causes nor time and space have any part at all, and where thought and action are almost identical. The Divine Power mainly operates in this second dimension in the act of creation, linking it to matter and material causes, as well as time and space. Any corporeal thing comes into existence in that way because the Divine Wisdom requires it to be so.

Second, neither matter and material causes, nor time and space, can put any constraints on the Divine Being of God nor on His Power. Above the corporeal realm or dimension are many other realms or dimensions, all of which are spiritual and transcendental to varying degrees, and in each of which the measure of time is completely different. All of these realms are infinitely contained by the Divine "Realm," where any aspect of corporeality is out of the question. The operations of the Divine Power originating in this "Realm" are manifested in the other realms according to the characteristic of each realm.

As many saintly scholars such as Muhyi'd-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1165–1240) and Mawlānā Jalālu'd-Dīn ar-Rūmī (1207–1273) have observed in several places in their works and as – in different terms – modern quantum physics also asserts, what we see as a solid, corporeal world really consists in continuous movement. The universe is in a continuous cycle of appearance and disappearance by God's Power.

We witness even in this corporeal or material world that things come into existence as if all at once. Especially when we observe the lack of proportion between causes and effects – that is, Almighty God makes the existence of huge things dependent on minute seeds, or causes minute things to end in great consequences – we can conclude that the manifestation of the Divine Power, even in this world, is also instantaneous. (Also see *sūrah* 36: 83, note 27.)

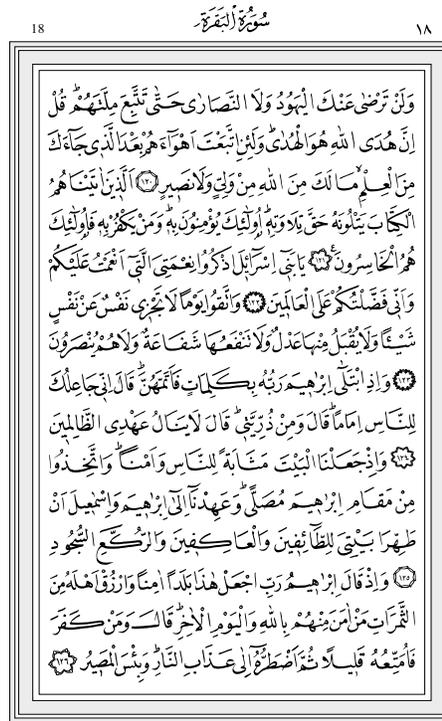
120. Never will the Jews be pleased with you, nor the Christians, unless you follow their way of faith and life.<sup>102</sup> Say (to them, O Messenger): “God’s guidance (represented by the Qur’ān) is the true guidance.” If (supposing the impossible) you were to follow their lusts and fancies after the knowledge<sup>103</sup> that has come to you, you will have against God neither a guardian (who can protect you from His punishment), nor a helper.

121. Those (people) to whom We gave the Book (and who) recite it with true recitation, (following its commandments without making any changes or distortions in it), they have (ever-strengthening) faith in it. Whoever disbelieves in it (conceals and distorts the truths the Book contains), they are the losers (in both this world and the Hereafter).

122. O Children of Israel! Remember My favor that I bestowed upon you (by choosing Prophets and Messengers from amongst you and granting you a great kingdom, and by giving you a Book and guiding you to the Straight Path), and that I once exalted you above all peoples.

123. And be fearful and strive to be guarded against a day when (everybody will be seeking a means to save himself, and when) no soul will pay on behalf of another, nor will compensation be accepted from any of them, nor will any intercession (of the sort common in the world but which does not meet with God’s permission and approval) be of use to them, nor will they be helped.

124. (You refuse to believe in and follow Muḥammad chiefly because Prophethood was not retained with you, and so he did not appear amongst you. But you surely do admit Abraham’s Prophethood, so)<sup>104</sup> remember that his Lord tested Abraham with commands and ordeals (such as his



being thrown into a fire, the destruction of the people of his kinsman, Lot, and his being ordered to sacrifice his son, Ishmael), and he fulfilled them thoroughly. He said: “Indeed I will make you an imām for all people.” He (Abraham) pleaded: “(Will You appoint imāms) also from my offspring?” (His Lord) answered: “(I will appoint from amongst those who merit it. But) My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.”<sup>105</sup>

125. Remember, again, that We made the House (the Ka’bah in Makkah) a resort for people, and a refuge of safety (a sanctuary, that is, a sign of the truth). Stand in the Prayer (O believers, as you did in earlier times) in the Station of Abraham. And We imposed a duty on Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My House for those who go around it as a rite of worship, and those who abide in devotion, and those who bow and prostrate (in the Prayer).”<sup>106</sup>

126. And (remember) once Abraham prayed: “My Lord! Make this (untilled valley) a land of security, and provide its people with the produce of earth, such of them as believe in God and the Last Day.”<sup>107</sup> He (his Lord) answered: “(I will bestow provi-

sion upon both believers and unbelievers. But) whoever is thankless and disbelieves, I will provide for him to enjoy himself for a short while (in this life), then I will compel him to the punishment of the Fire – how evil a destination to arrive at!

102. The word *millah*, here translated as “way of belief and life,” comes from the infinitive *imlāl*, meaning dictation or writing down from memory. As a term, it means the way followed, whether it be straight or twisted and crooked. The Qur’ān uses it in the meaning of a system of faith and conduct, a lifestyle. For this reason, it is attributed to people, not to God. We say, for example, the *millah* of Abraham, not the *millah* of God.

103. As we said in note 91 above, by “knowledge,” the Qur’ān refers primarily to either the knowledge based on the Divine Revelation, or the Revelation itself. Its opposite is the output of human lusts and fancies based on nothing certain or proven, and conjectures having nothing to do with established knowledge (see *sūrah* 3: 4, 157; *sūrah* 10: 36, 66; *sūrah* 53: 23, 28). Thus, the first and primary source of knowledge in Islam is Divine Revelation or the Qur’ān and the established Sunnah – the sayings and actions of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. The other sources are sound intellect or reason and sound perceptions, and, therefore, observation and experiment.

104. The explanatory words that we put (usually in brackets) before or within the translations of the verses are not additions to, nor any sort of adaptations of, the meaning of the verses. They express the full normal meaning of the words, understood individually and in context. By “context” we mean both the context of the passage or the *sūrah* or the Qur’ān as a whole, and also the historical context, the situation that is the background to the verses. Also, we should be aware that the Qur’ān is miraculous in its power of concision, of conveying

much in few words. Sometimes this concision is achieved through the powerful compactness of the structures and syntax of Arabic, raised to inimitable perfection in the Qur’ān. A relatively uninflected language like English simply cannot reproduce the full meaning without adding words to convey the meaning that is carried in the words of the Arabic by their inflection, position in the sentence, etc. Sometimes the concision of the Qur’ān is achieved through ellipsis, that is, through omission of what is already known or easily knowable to one familiar with the language and the subject-matter. Concision by ellipsis is most briefly illustrated from narrative passages, such as in the wonderful *Sūrah Yūsuf* (“the best of narratives”): For example, between verse 12: 45 (*Then said he – of the two [prisoners] the one who was released – remembering after a long time, ‘I will inform you of its meaning, so send me forth....’*) and the next verse (12: 46, beginning *Joseph, O man of truth!*) a number of events are passed over because they are not immediately relevant to the meaning being conveyed, and because the listener or reader can supply what is missing from familiarity with the story and/or ordinary common sense: “He left the king’s court to get to the prison. He arrived there and, on receiving permission from the prison guard to enter, did so. He came to Joseph and, after exchanging greetings with him, said: ‘Joseph, O man of truth...’.”

The occasions on which the verses were revealed require explanations (as well as notes) because the historical context is not known to us in the way that it was known to the first addressees of the Qur’ān. However, it is important to clarify that, while the historical context

is important for the meaning of the verses and, equally important, for the links between them, it does not restrict their meaning. Everyone should respond to the Qur'ān as if its words and meanings were being revealed to them as the first addressees of the Revelation. Knowing the historical context of certain verses or passages, in fact, enhances understanding of their present and permanent relevance, but it does not diminish or restrict it.

105. God accorded to Abraham a very high rank and charged him with a very significant function: the Imamate for people. The meaning of *Imāmah* includes any important leadership function, from leading others in the Prayer to leading a formally constituted group or institution in specific matters, to leading the Muslim community as a whole in all matters. The main function of the Imamate is acting as a means for the guidance of people in God's cause (*sūrah* 21: 73; *sūrah* 32: 24). Being a very important mission requiring competence and qualification, it usually comes, as stated in this verse and *sūrah* 32: 24, after great tests and trials demanding patience, and needs, as stressed in the same verse, expert knowledge. So, one who will lead Muslims in all matters should have certainty in matters of faith, scholarly expertise in the religious sciences, and discernment of the outer and inner meaning of things and events. It is significant that the Qur'ān describes as "wrongdoers" those who are not worthy of such a mission. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, "wrongdoing" (*ẓulm*) includes a wide range of wrong actions from deviancy in a small matter to the unforgivable sin of associating partners with God. It literally means putting something in what is not its proper place, or doing something not at the proper time or place and in the wrong way. One who has come to be known as a "wrongdoer" (*ẓālim*) cannot be an Imam. The verse allusively explains why Prophethood and the Imamate were not retained with the Children of Israel, who, though descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, all of whom were appointed as Imams, engaged in wrongdoing, including adoption of the calf as deity and attributing a son to God.

The Shi'ah, especially the so-called Twelver-Shi'ah, typically rest their doctrine of Imamate on this verse. They claim that the Imamate was accorded to Abraham, upon him be peace, after he became a Prophet and Messenger, and, therefore, it is a greater rank than both Prophethood and Messengership. As is well-known, a Messenger is a Prophet who usually receives a Book or Scrolls and is charged with preaching God's Message, while a Prophet usually follows in the footsteps of the Messenger preceding him. The Shi'ah, therefore, argue that the Twelve Imams, the first of whom is 'Ali, the fourth Caliph and the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, the others having come from the line of Imam Husayn, the son of 'Ali, are greater than all the Prophets and Messengers except the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. However, this argument contradicts their doctrine of Imamate, as none of the Twelve is either a Prophet or a Messenger. Second, according to the Qur'ān, imamate is, rather than an office or institution, a function. It is for this reason that all of the Prophets and Messengers were also imams. Third, the Qur'ān never associates the concepts of Prophet and Messenger with a negative value, whereas the concept of imam, because it is a function, is associated in that way: for example, there may be imams "of unbelief" (*sūrah* 9: 12) and imams "calling to the Fire" (*sūrah* 28: 41).

106. The Station of Abraham is (the place of) the stone on which Abraham reportedly stood while building the Ka'bah. By mentioning that in older times people used to visit the Ka'bah for the purpose of worship, going around it and abiding there in devotion, the verse refers to the fact that the real and historical center of the true Religion that God chose for humankind is the Ka'bah. It thereby prepares hearts and minds for the changing of the *qiblah* (the direction to which people turn in Prayer) from Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem to the Ka'bah. It also prepares the way for the commandment of the *Hajj* (the Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah), which is the fifth pillar of Islam.

The Ka'bah was the first building to be built in the world. It was built by the Prophet Adam, upon him be peace. The Prophets Abraham and Ishmael, upon them be peace, rebuilt it upon its original foundations. Abraham's rebuilding it with his son, Ishmael, the forefather of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and not with Isaac, is an important symbol and sign that the Last Prophet, who would make the Ka'bah the focus for his followers in Religion, was to appear among the descendants of Ishmael, upon him be peace.

107. Believing in God and believing in the Last Day are two of the cardinal elements of the Islamic faith. That does not mean that

the essentials of faith are restricted to these two elements. Nor does it lead to the conclusion that salvation is possible without believing in the other essentials – notably, believing in Moses, upon him be peace, and the Torah as it was during the time of Moses, together with the Prophets and Books preceding him; in Jesus, upon him be peace, and the Gospel as it was during Jesus' time, together with those preceding him; and finally, in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and the Qur'ān as the seal of the Prophets and Divine Books, without excluding any of the other Prophets or Books in their original forms.



The Ka'bah toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (A painting by R. Yazdani, reproduced from a photo from the Yıldız Sarayı archives in Istanbul.)

127. And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised the foundations of the House (they were praying): “Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

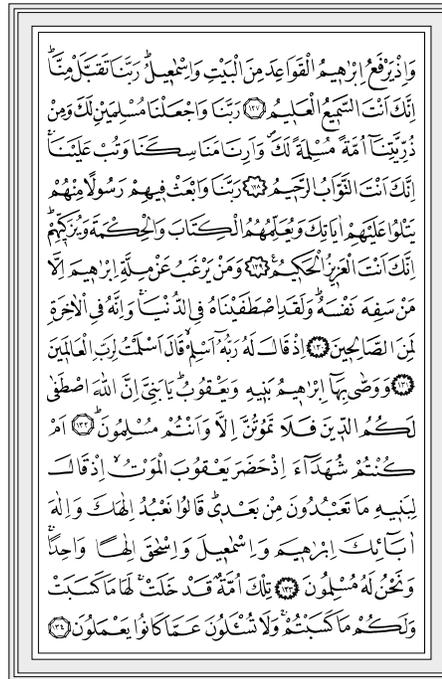
128. “Our Lord! Make us Muslims, submissive to You, and of our offspring, a community Muslim, submissive to You. Show us our rites of worship (including particularly the rites of the Pilgrimage), and accept our repentance (for our inability to worship You as worshipping You requires). Surely You are the One Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, the All-Compassionate.

129. “Our Lord! Raise up among that community a Messenger of their own, reciting to them Your Revelations, and instructing them in the Book (that You will reveal to him) and the Wisdom,<sup>108</sup> and purifying them (of false beliefs and doctrines, of sins and all kinds of uncleanness). Surely You are the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.”

130. Who (therefore) shrinks from the Way of Abraham, save him who makes himself a fool? Indeed We chose him as one pure and distinguished in the world, and he is surely among the righteous in the Hereafter.

131. When his Lord told him, “Submit yourself wholly (to your Lord),” he responded: “I have submitted myself wholly to the Lord of the worlds.”<sup>109</sup>

132. Abraham bequeathed and enjoined this submission to his sons (Ishmael and Isaac) and (to his grandson) Jacob, saying: “My sons, God has chosen for you (from different ways of faith and life) the Religion (of Islam,<sup>110</sup> based on submission to Him, and absolutely free from any kind



of associating partners with Him). Therefore, make sure that you do not die except as Muslims (those submitted to Him).”

133. Or were you (O Children of Israel, of Jacob,) witnesses when death came to Jacob (so that you might claim that he bequeathed and enjoined a religion otherwise than as Abraham did, to give yourselves an excuse for refusing Islam,) when he said to his sons: “What will you worship after me?” They answered: “We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, One God; we are Muslims submitted to Him.”

134. Those were a people that passed away. Theirs is what they earned, and yours is what you earn. You will not be called to account for what they used to do.

108. By “the Wisdom” is meant the ways of understanding the Book and the ways of practicing or applying it in daily life. In this meaning, “the Wisdom” is almost synonymous with the Sunnah of the Messenger, and this is why many scholars have interpreted it as the Sunnah. It also includes knowing the meaning of things and events in the universe, in the human realm in particular. (For a detailed explanation, see note 159.)

109. This very short verse is a wonderfully concise summary of the Prophet Abraham’s life from the beginning of his mission in Babylon to his being made an Imam for all people and rebuilding the Ka’bah. God presents Himself as “his” Lord when He orders him to submit to Him. This signifies the initial phase of Abraham’s mission: initially his relationship was with God as “his” Lord when he had not yet been charged with preaching. After this, he acquired knowledge of the outer and inner dimensions of existence, began preaching the Religion, and passed through many severe tests. Finally, he attained the “universal rank of relationship” with God as the Lord of the worlds, and he was appointed as an Imām for people. This is a significant point to help differentiate sainthood and Prophethood and the various ranks in each. Saints, no matter what their “station,” can build a relationship with God only as the Lord of the heart of each. But a Prophet, especially one who is also a Messenger, has a relationship, according to his degree, with God as the Lord of his people, of all humankind, and of all existence as a whole. This explains in what sense the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings,

as the heir to the missions of all the Prophets and Messengers before him, is the greatest of all, as his mission began in the “universal relation” with God as Lord of the worlds, for he was sent to all of humankind and the jinn and as a mercy for the whole of creation.

110. The Religion which God Almighty sent from the time of Adam is Islam, which means, as well as submission to God, peace, harmony, order, and serenity. In its essentials – the pillars of faith, the principles of devotion or worship, and the moral and ethical standards for individual and collective behavior – it has remained the same. It is only with respect to the changing aspects of life that, as explained in note 95, it laid down rules subject to revision in the light of both changing conditions and the unchanging essentials of faith, worship, and morality, and it established legal principles to maintain this process.

At the cosmic level, Islam is the religion or universal system which the whole of existence, including the very bodies of the unbelievers, follow unconditionally. That is, the whole universe maintains its life in perfect and unconditional submission to God’s laws. This is why there is a perfect stability, order and harmony throughout it. What falls on humankind is to follow the counterparts of these laws in their lives, not unconditionally but of their free will. If they do that, the same stability, order, and harmony will prevail in their lives and their relationships with each other, individually and collectively, and with their “natural” environment. As stated above, the word *islām* means, as well as submission to God, peace, harmony, order, and serenity.

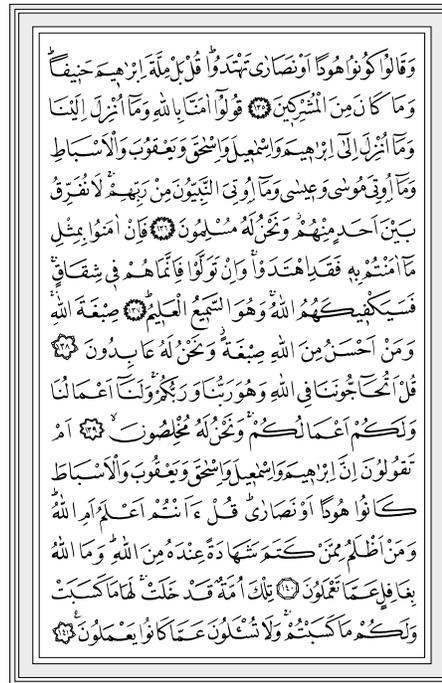
135. And they (the Jews) say, “Be Jews,” or (the Christians say,) “Be Christians (*hūdan aw nasārā*),<sup>111</sup> that you may be rightly guided.” Say: “Rather, the Way of Abraham of pure faith (is what we choose, the Way free from unbelief, associating partners with God and hypocrisy, that we may be rightly guided).” Abraham was never of those who associate partners with God.

136. (O Muslims! You) declare: “We have believed in God (without associating any partners with Him), and that which has been sent down to us, and that which was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that (knowledge, wisdom and Prophethood) which was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them (in believing), and we are Muslims (submitted to Him wholly and exclusively).”

137. If (the Jews and Christians who claim to be guided) believe in the same as that which you believe in, they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, then they are in schism. God suffices you against them. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

138. (O Muslims, say: “We take) the “color” of God (the “color” that He has put on the whole universe, not the color some party put upon themselves through some rites in the name of religion<sup>112</sup>).” Who is better than God in coloring, (and whose color is better than God’s)? And We are those who worship Him (as He is to be worshipped,) exclusively.”

139. Say: “Do you dispute with us concerning God (as if He had said Paradise is only for the Jews or the Christians), seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord (He has created and provides for us as well as



for you). (Whatever He commands us to believe, He also commands you to believe. Yet if you persist in disputing and asserting your superiority, we say) to us are accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. It is we who are sincere to Him (in believing in Him and worshipping Him exclusively).”

140. Or do you claim that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes were “Jews” or “Christians?” Say (to them): “Do you know better, or does God?” (They know well that none of the Prophets were either “Jews” or “Christians,” but they conceal the truth.) Who is more in the wrong than he who conceals the testimony he has from God? God is never unaware and unmindful of what you do.

**141.** Those were a people that passed away. Theirs is what they earned, and yours is what you earn. You will not be called to account for what they used to do.

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111. The Qurʾān does not typically use the term “Jews.” Rather, as is clear from many preceding verses, it prefers the honorific phrase “Children of Israel” to designate the Jews. As we briefly explained in note 46, the Qurʾān uses the term “Jews” for those among the Children of Israel who describe themselves as such. As for the term *Nazarenes* (Christians), it was invented by pagan Romans as a pejorative term to des-

ignate the followers of “Jesus of Nazareth.” The Qurʾān prefers the term “the People of the Book” for both the Christians and Jews as an honorary title and to encourage them to obey the commandments of the Books given to each and, therefore, to accept Islam.

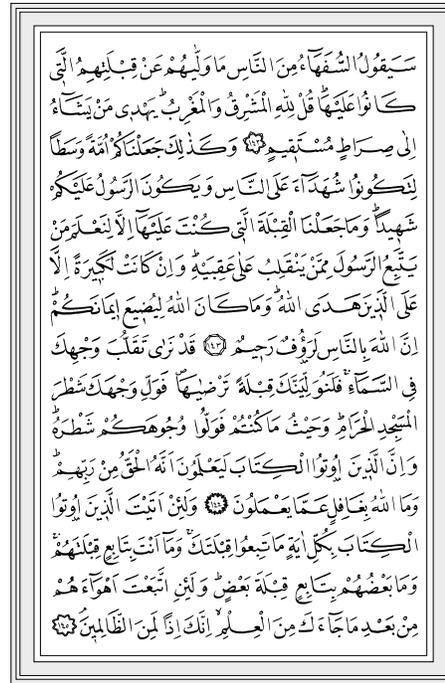
112. The Arab Christians used to mix a dye or color in the baptismal water, signifying that the person baptized took on a new color in life.

142. The (hypocritical) fools among the people will say, “What has turned them from the direction they were facing in the Prayer?” Say (O Messenger): “To God belong the east and the west (and, therefore, the whole earth with its easts and wests; in whatever direction He wants us to turn, we turn). He guides whomever He wills to a straight path.”

143. And in that way (O Community of Muḥammad, whereas others turn in different directions and, straying from the Straight Path, falter between extremes in thought and belief), We have made you a middle-way community, that you may be witnesses for the people (as to the ways they follow), and that the (most noble) Messenger may be a witness for you.<sup>113</sup>

We formerly appointed (the Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem) the direction to turn in the Prayer (and now are changing it) so that We may mark out and distinguish who truly follows the Messenger from him who turns back on his heels (when the Messenger’s way does not suit his desires). And indeed that testing is burdensome, save for those whom God has guided (and made steadfast in faith). God will never let your faith go to waste.<sup>114</sup> Surely God is for humankind All-Pitying, All-Compassionate.

144. Certainly We have seen you (O Messenger) often turning your face to heaven (in expectation of a Revelation. Do not worry, for) We will surely turn you towards a direction that will please and satisfy you. (Now the time has come, so) turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. (And you, O believers,) turn your faces towards it wherever you are. Surely those who were given the Book (before, no matter if the hypocrites or the foolish among



them deny or object to it) do know (the coming of this Prophet and this change of *qiblah*) to be true (commandments) from their Lord.<sup>115</sup> God is not unaware and unmindful of whatever they do.

145. Even if (O Messenger) you were to bring to those who were given the Book (before) all kinds of signs and evidences, they would not follow your direction (*qiblah*). Indeed you are not a follower of their direction, nor are they followers of one another’s direction. (Theirs is an attitude arising from their lusts and fancies, not from knowledge.) Were you to follow their lusts and fancies after the knowledge that has come to you, then you would surely be among the wrongdoers (those who wrong themselves because of the errors they have done).

113. The most distinguishing characteristic of Islam and, when loyal to that characteristic, of the community of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is that it is far from all kinds of extremism. Islam represents the middle way in all aspects of life. For example, it is neither spiritualism nor materialism, neither realism nor idealism, neither capitalism nor socialism, neither individualism nor statism, neither absolutism nor anarchism, and neither this-worldly and hedonist, nor purely other-worldly or monastic. As it is unique in its worldview and social, economic, and political aspects, it is also unique in the moral education it gives to individuals. The human being has three cardinal drives or faculties, namely the intellect or reasoning power, lust or worldly appetite, and anger or the impulse to self-assertion or defense. Each of these faculties has an upper and lower extreme. For example, the extremes of the intellect are demagoguery or deceitful reasoning, and the refusal or failure to reason, namely stupidity; the extreme conditions of lust are wanton self-indulgence and listlessness, and of anger arrogant, thoughtless rashness; and self-abasing cowardice. The teachings of Islam discipline and balance these faculties. The disciplining of the intellect enables the acquisition of knowledge that is sound and functions as wisdom. The disciplining of lust results in the development of the virtues of restraint and chastity and, subsequently, forbearance. The disciplining of anger results in the ability to live and act with courage in the cause of right and justice. Representing the middle way in its creed, its rites of worship, its social, economic and political principles, and the moral training it gives to people, Islam as a way of life means peace, balance, harmony, and salvation.

Islam being the consummation or final, universal form of the Divine religion, which corrects the deviations into which the earlier communities had lapsed during the course of history, the community of Muḥammad will bear witness on behalf of the communities of the previous Prophets in the Hereafter, and the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, on behalf of them.

114. The sentence, “God will never let your faith go to waste” has usually been interpreted to mean: “God will never let the Prayers you did turning to the Bayt al-Maqdis go to waste.” However, it also conveys more general and important truths, such as:

- Faith cannot be separated from action. One’s way of life and acting demonstrate whether one is a believer or not.
- The Prayer has an essential relation with faith. The Prayer, together with the intention in it and the way of doing it, is a definite sign of the character and depth of one’s faith.
- Good deeds or actions done only for the good pleasure of God and based on faith will profit in the Hereafter. Whatever is done as a requirement of faith never goes to waste, provided one preserves one’s faith and goes to the other world with that faith strong and intact.

115. The expression “true (commandments) from their Lord”, that is, the Lord of those who were given the Book before, is to stress that the Prophet Muḥammad was predicted in the previous Divine Books with all his attributes including the fact that he would turn in the Prayer towards the Sacred Mosque (the Mosque of the Ka’bah) in Makkah.



116. The Jews and Christians of that time recognized God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. After his conversion, 'Umar asked 'Abdullāh ibn as-Salām, the most renowned Jewish scholar of the time, who converted after the Messenger's emigration to Madīnah, if he had recognized God's Messenger. "I recognized him," Ibn as-Salām answered and added, "I may doubt my children – my wife might have deceived me – but I have no doubt about God's Messenger being the Last Prophet." (aṣ-Ṣābūnī, 1: 140)

For the indications to the Prophet Muḥammad's coming that still exist in the Bible, see Appendix 1.

117. The sentence *Wherever you may be, God will bring you all together* has a wide range of meaning, such as:

- The Muslims will be scattered throughout the world and turn towards the Ka'bah in the Prayer as a single community.
- Islam will spread throughout the world extensively, among many diverse peoples and societies, having superiority or dominance over other religions.
- God will bring all the people together in the Place of Supreme Gathering and judge them.

118. Thankfulness or gratitude is the door to

faith, and ingratitude is the way to unbelief. The Qur'ān uses the same word – *kufṛ* – for both unbelief and ingratitude. *Kufṛ* (unbelief) literally means overlaying or concealing, and as a term, it means concealing and rejecting or denying any of the pillars of faith and the established religious commandments. Denying God or not recognizing Him with His essential Attributes such as His being the Creator, the Provider, the absolute Ruler and Governor of the universe, the Sustainer, and the Self-Subsisting One, etc., is primarily included in *kufṛ*. Those who do not recognize God with His Attributes, will attribute anything good or praiseworthy in their lives to themselves, instead of attributing it to God. Such an attitude is obviously identical with ingratitude.

119. The verse's ending with *God is with the persevering and patient*, not "God is with those who establish the Prayer and those who are persevering and patient," indicates that establishing the Prayer properly itself requires persevering patience (as, indeed, it also enables it). As mentioned in note 54, enduring the difficulties of the duty of servanthood to God or steadfastness in regular worship is one of the categories of patience. The verse's ending also links it to the verses to come that announce how God tests His servants. Being successful in the test obviously demands patience.

154. And say not of those who are killed in God's cause: "They are dead." Rather they are alive,<sup>120</sup> but you are not aware.

155. We will certainly test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth, and lives, and fruits (earnings);<sup>121</sup> but give glad tidings to the persevering and patient:

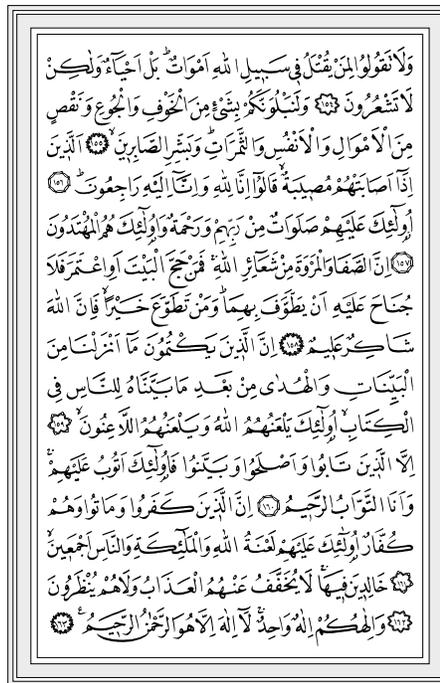
156. Those who, when a disaster befalls them, say, "Surely we belong to God (as His creatures and servants), and surely to Him we are bound to return." (And they act accordingly).<sup>122</sup>

157. Such are those upon whom are blessings from their Lord (such as forgiveness, answering their calls, and satisfying their needs) and mercy (to come in the form of help in both this world and Hereafter, and favors in Paradise beyond human imagination); and they are those who are rightly guided.

158.<sup>123</sup> (The hills of) aş-Safā and Marwah are among the emblems God has appointed (to represent Islam and the Muslim community).<sup>124</sup> Hence, whoever does the *Hajj* (the Major Pilgrimage) to the House (of God, the Ka'bah) or the *Umrah* (the Minor Pilgrimage), there is no blame on him to run between them (and let them run after they go round the Ka'bah as an obligatory rite). And whoever does a good work voluntarily (such as additional going-round the Ka'bah and running between aş-Safā and Marwah, and other kinds of good works), surely God is All-Responsive to thankfulness, All-Knowing.

159. Those who conceal anything of the clear truths (concerning the fundamentals of the Religion, including Muḥammad's Messengership in particular) and (the Revelations conveying) the guidance (that We have sent down), after We have made them clear in the Book – God curses such people (excludes them from His mercy) and so do all who (have any authority to) curse.

160. Except those who repent and mend



their ways, and openly declare (those truths and Revelations) – for those, I return their repentance with forgiveness. I am the One Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, the All-Compassionate.

161. But those who reject faith (demonstrated in their persisting in concealing the truths) and die unbelievers, on them is the curse of God and the angels, and of all humankind.<sup>125</sup>

162. Abiding therein (in the Fire, the consequence or place of the curse); the punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.

163. (So, O people, refrain from concealing the truths and from disbelieving, and do not seek in vain another source of help and a refuge for yourselves. For) Your God is One God; there is no deity but He, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.<sup>126</sup>

120. Human life has five degrees:

- Our life which depends on certain conditions and the fulfillment of certain needs.
- The life of Khidr and Ilyās (Elijah), upon them be peace, which is free to some extent from the necessities of our life. They can be present in different places at the same time.
- The life of the Prophets Jesus and Enoch. upon them be peace. These two Prophets live in heaven free of the necessities of human life in their “astral” bodies.
- The life of martyrs – those who are killed in God’s cause. Martyrs do not feel the pangs of death and know themselves to be transferred into a better world where they enjoy the blessings of God.
- The life of the dead. Death means one’s being discharged from worldly duties with the soul set free. (See *The Letters*, “The 1<sup>st</sup> Letter,” 1-3.)

121. The believers, both individually and collectively, pass through one or some of these tests. These include the religious obligations which would come after the revelation of this verse, such as war, which causes fear and the loss of wealth and lives, and the fasting of Ramadan. The main purpose for testing is to mature and perfect the believers both as individuals and as a community, purify them, distinguish the true believers among them from the hypocritical ones, develop their capacities, prepare them for the future and make them worthy of Paradise.

122. This is the reaction of a sincere believer when visited by one of the tests mentioned in the previous verse. It signifies the highest spiritual degree, which is complete resignation to what God has decreed for the believer. The following verse explains the glad tidings (the door to which was opened in the preceding verses, 2: 153–55) given to those who have attained this degree.

123. The verses up to here have followed a line of argument that, either through exhortation

or admonition, urges the Children of Israel to accept Islam and thereby re-discover their original way. They also contain warnings for the young Muslim community against dangers that may originate within itself and/or from within the communities of the Jews and Christians. Besides, these verses prepare minds and hearts for the kind of *jihad* with their possessions and persons that may become unavoidable for the Muslims. (Also see note 147)

The approach and style the Qur’ān deploys are miraculous and unique to it. The Qur’ān turns around its main purposes, namely God’s Oneness, Prophethood, the Hereafter, and worship and justice. It deals with the Religion and life as a whole and with different aspects of each. Just as we can see our “natural” environment both as a whole and in its constituent elements when we look at it, so too, the Qur’ān directs our minds and hearts through all the elements of life. As a matter of fact, the best of styles or the highest degree of eloquence can be attained by approximating the way the natural world impresses itself upon our senses and understanding. The Qur’ān is, in fact, a perfect translation or another copy of the “books” of the universe and humanity, which is the miniature specimen of the universe.

124. Aṣ-Ṣafā and al-Marwah are two hills near the Ka’bah in Makkah. The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, left his wife, Hagar, together with his son, Ishmael, near these two hills. In order to find water or see whether there was a caravan nearby, Hagar ran between these two hills. Pilgrims run between these two hills, four times from aṣ-Ṣafā to al-Marwah and three times the other way. This is called *sa’y* (speedy walking). Emblems (*shī’ār*), like the call to the Prayer, Prayer in congregation, most particularly the congregational prayers of *Jumu’ah* and the two ‘*Īds*, and the *Hajj* with its rituals, mosques, sacrifice, etc., are (as well as having their religious meaning for the individual and the community) public symbols that identify Islam and the Muslim community. Such emblems or public symbols, even those established by the Prophet himself and not directly by God, are more important than the individual obliga-

tory prayers or rituals for the life and maintenance of the Muslim community.

125. This verse explains the phrase “all who curse” at the end of 2: 159. They are the angels who are extremely averse to unbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, and other sins. The curse of all humankind may rather be related to the Hereafter, when all the truths will be manifest. All kinds of relations between people, especially those between the unbelievers, such as ties of blood, or economic or political interest, or of leadership or subservience, will be severed. They will curse and blame each other. The

curse of God means His excluding from His forgiveness and special mercy, while the curse of the angels, who continuously pray for the believers, denotes their asking God to exclude those deserving the curse from His mercy and condemn them to punishment.

126. This verse marks a conclusion with respect to the topics discussed up to this point. It links all those topics with the *Basmalah* (In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate), which is the seed of Islam, and the Opening Chapter (the *Fātiḥah*, the core of the Book), and the initial verses of this *sūrah*.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
 وَالْمَاءِ الَّتِي تَنْجَرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ يَمَّا يَنْقَعُ النَّاسُ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا  
 اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَخْيَسَ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا  
 وَسَبَّ فِيهَا مَنْ كَفَرَ دَابَّةً وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ وَالشَّجَارِ  
 الْمُسْفِرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ آيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾  
 وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ  
 اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا  
 إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ  
 شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٥﴾ إِذْ تَبَرَأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا  
 وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا  
 لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةٌ فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّأُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ  
 أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا  
 النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا مَحْلُوبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ  
 الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ  
 وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

164. Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day (with their periods shortening and lengthening), and the vessels sailing in the sea with profit to people, and the water that God sends down from the sky, therewith reviving the earth after its death and dispersing therein all kinds of living creatures, and His disposal of the winds, and the clouds subservient between the sky and earth – surely there are signs (demonstrating that He is the One God deserving worship, and the sole Refuge and Helper) for a people who reason and understand.

165. Yet there are among humankind those who take to themselves objects of worship as rivals to God, loving them with a love like that which is the due of God only – while those who truly believe are firmer in their love of God. If only those who commit this (greatest) wrong could see – as they will see when they behold the punishment – that the power altogether belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment.<sup>127</sup>

166. At that time when (they see it), those who were followed (in the world as elders, heads, or leaders, and were loved as only God is to be loved) disown those who followed them and declare themselves innocent of their evil deeds, and they see the punishment, and the relations between them are cut off.

167. And those who followed say: “If only we might return (to the world) and disown them, as they have disowned us.” Thus does God show them their deeds in a manner that will cause them bitter regrets. Never will they come out of the Fire.

168. O humankind! (Observe whatever God commands you. He has made you dwell on the earth, so) eat of what is on the earth provided it is lawful, and pure and wholesome (in composition and religiously); and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, (who deceives both those who are followed and those who follow); indeed he is a manifest enemy to you.

169. He only commands you to evil and indecency and that you should speak against God the things about which you have no (sure) knowledge.<sup>128</sup>

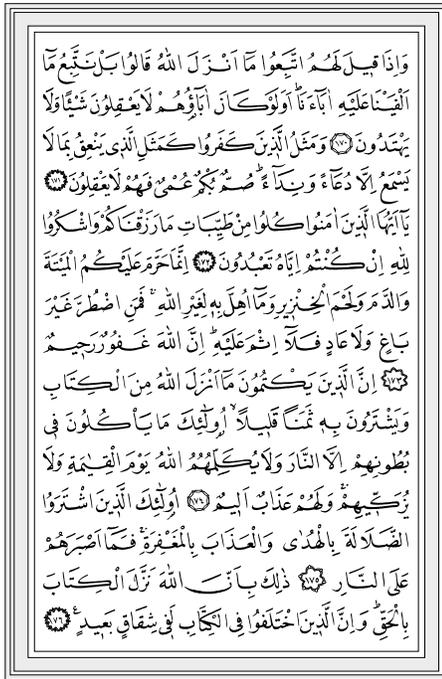
127. The verses emphasize the Oneness of God as the only Object of Worship, and the sole Refuge and Helper of humanity. None other than God is worthy of being worshipped and being regarded as a deity. Those who love their

Prophets or leaders or elders with a love due to God only, and go so far as to see in them attributes belonging exclusively to God, and obey them willingly in their orders contrary to those of God, have rebelled against God and

associated partners with Him, and therefore committed the greatest wrong. Such people are those who do not use their reason and cannot see the uncountable manifest signs in the universe and in human life that demonstrate God and His Oneness. It is only when they see the punishment of God that they will perceive that the power altogether belongs to God. This verse also refers to the absolute necessity of following God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and accepting him as the leader, a fact announced in the verse (*sūrah* 3: 31): *Say (O Messenger): "If you indeed love God, then follow me, so that God will love you and forgive you your sins."*

128. Satan deceives people. He continuously

whispers evils and indecency into their hearts, urges them to utter what they do not know concerning God, and invites them to disbelieve in Him or to associate partners with Him. He is insistent in this whispering and draws people under his influence to the extent that the Qur'an describes this as "commanding." Another important point included in the meaning of Satan's "commanding" is that those who follow in the footsteps of Satan are, so to speak, acting on his authority as his officials and agents. What Satan commands them to utter about God without any knowledge are wrong conceptions of God's very Being or Essence, and errors of thought, attitude, and action in relation to His Attributes, acts, and commandments.



170. When it is said to them (who follow in the footsteps of Satan), “Follow what God has sent down,” they respond: “No, but we follow that (the traditions, customs, beliefs, and practices) which we found our forefathers in.” What! even though their forefathers had no understanding of anything, and were not rightly guided?

171. The likeness of those who refuse to believe is that of those who hear, from the one who is calling them, nothing except a shouting and crying out – they are deaf, dumb and blind, and so they have no understanding of (what is said to them).<sup>129</sup>

172. O you who believe! (Without concern for the rules the unbelievers contrive in regard to food,) eat of the pure, wholesome things that We have provided for you, and (in return) give thanks to God, if you worship Him alone.

173. He has made unlawful to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which is offered in the name of other than God. Yet whoever is constrained by dire necessity to eat of them, provided he does not covet (that which is unlawful) nor exceed the bounds of necessity, no sin shall be on him. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

174. Those who conceal the truths and commandments in the Book that God has sent down, and sell them for a trifling price (such as worldly benefit, status, and renown), they eat nothing but fire in their bellies. And God will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, (when they will be in dire need to speak to Him to implore forgiveness and mercy), nor will He absolve them to pronounce them pure. For them is a painful punishment.

175. Such are the ones who have bought straying in exchange for guidance, and punishment in exchange for forgiveness. How they persevere in their striving to reach the Fire (and enduring it)!<sup>130</sup>

176. That is so because God is sending down the Book with the truth, and there is nothing false in it. Those who are at variance regarding the Book (believing in part of it, disbelieving in part, and believing in one or some of the Divine Books, while disbelieving in the others), have certainly veered far (from the truth) into wide schism.

129. This parable has two aspects. On the one hand, it suggests that the unbelievers are like animals that only follow their herdsmen and obey them without knowing or understanding why. On the other hand, it also suggests that when the truth is preached to them, they show such insensitivity to it that one may as well be addressing animals that merely comprehend sounds but are incapable of understanding their meaning. “Shouting and crying” allude to the

fact that the call is “loud” enough to be easily registered as sound, but they are incapable of any effort to make sense of it.

130. Those unbelievers who have no patience when it comes to heeding the truth, doing good, and refraining from the unlawful pleasures of the world, are nevertheless steadfast and persevering in deserving the Fire, which it is impossible to endure. This is an astonishing disposition, impossible to understand.



لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ  
وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَآتَى مَالَهُ  
وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ  
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ  
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا  
وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالصَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ  
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ  
آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ أَلْحِقُوا بِالَّذِي  
قَاتَلْتُمْ بِأَخِيهِ مِثْلَ مَا قَاتَلْتُمُوهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْأَخْيَ  
بِالْأَخِي فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَأَدِّ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَضْفِيفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَرَحْمَةٌ  
فَمَنْ عَصَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ عَذَابُ الْبَيْتِ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَكِنْ فِي  
الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾ كُتِبَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةَ  
لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾  
فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَأَمَّا إِمْنُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ  
يَبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨١﴾

177. Godliness and virtue is not that you should turn your faces in the direction of the east and west; but he is godly and virtuous who believes in God and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets, and gives away of his property with pleasure, although he loves it, to relatives, orphans, the destitute, the wayfarer, and those who have to beg (or who need a loan), and for the liberation of slaves, and establishes the Prayer, and pays the Prescribed Purifying Alms. And those (are godly and virtuous) who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a cov-

enant, and who are patient and persevering in hardship, and disease, and at the time of stress (such as a battle between truth and falsehood). Those are they who are true (in their faith), and those are they who have achieved righteousness, piety, and due reverence for God.

178. O you who believe! Prescribed for you is retaliation in cases of (deliberate, unjust) killing: freeman for freeman, slave for slave, female for female. Yet if he (the murderer) is granted some remission by his brother (any of the heirs of the victim), then what falls on the pardoning side is fulfilling in fairness what has been agreed on, and the other side is making the payment kindly enough to please the other side.<sup>131</sup> This is a lightening from your Lord, and a mercy. Whoever offends after that, for him is a painful punishment.

179. There is life for you in retaliation (if you understand), O people of discernment, so it may be that you (will perceive it and fulfill God's command, and in so doing,) attain the desired piety and righteousness and deserve His protection.

180. Prescribed for you, when any of you is visited by death, if he leaves behind wealth, is to make testament in favor of his parents and near relatives according to customary good and religiously approvable practice<sup>132</sup> – a duty for the truly God-revering, pious.

181. Then if anyone changes the will after hearing it (and the will is not carried out as it must be), then the sin thereof is on those who change it. Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

131. The law of retaliation was also prescribed in the Bible: "He who strikes a man, so that he dies, shall surely be put to death." (*Exodus*, 21: 12) "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And he who

kidnaps a man and sells him, of if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death." (*Exodus*, 21: 15–6) However, there is no law of remission in the Bible. Islamic law decrees retaliation but also decrees that if the injured par-

ties (or in cases of murder, the heirs of the deceased) pardon the guilty person either outright or in return for some compensation, then retribution is not executed. Insofar as modern law reserves the right to punish for the state, it denies that right to the victim. This is, on the face of it, an offense against natural justice. Whoever is a victim of an offense must have the right to punish or pardon.

Although some countries recognize and apply the death penalty, imprisonment is the usual mode of punishment for murder in the West. However, to make a brief, general comparison, although an offense is something concrete, imprisonment is not. Second, an offense and its punishment should be considered together in the same context, and they should be of the same sort, like an oil spill being cleaned with oil-based soap. Thirdly, an offense and its punishment must be of the same nature. For example, killing and stealing are two offenses of a different nature. Yet modern law gives the same kind and nature of punishment for both, namely imprisonment. The difference is only in quantity. However, quantity can never serve as a substitute for quality or nature. As for Islam, the punishment it gives for any offense is of the same nature as the offense. Fourth, the criminal law of Islam is based on justice and mercy. According to the declaration in the next verse, *There is life for you in retaliation (if you understand), O people of discernment*, it takes into consideration both the criminal and the victim, as well as the society and the fundamental moral and spiritual values all together, and it is of a nature that it trains, reforms, prevents, and satisfies the victim. But there is none of these attributes in imprisonment. It is neither reformatory nor preventive, and it is not satisfactory for the victim, either. In addition, it destroys the spirit and personality, and excludes the person from social life.

In conclusion, like all of its other laws, the criminal law of Islam is reformatory and based on justice, balance, and mercy.

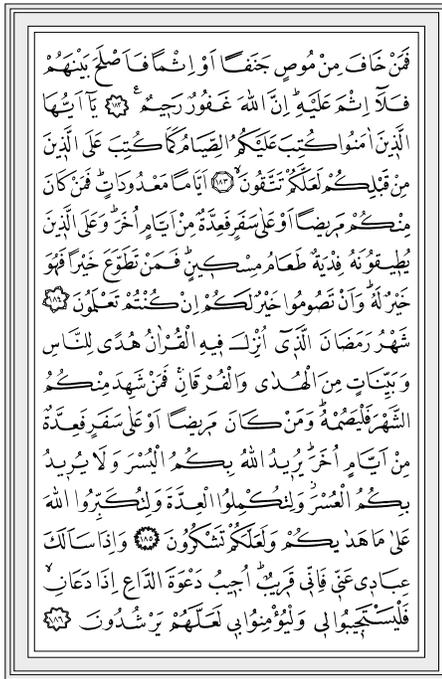
Although Islam allows retaliation or retaliation in case of wrong as a requirement of justice, as inviolate values demand retaliation and

equal respect (*sūrah* 2: 194), it advises an individual to forgive an offense done to himself or herself, or better, to repel it with what is better. For a discussion of this matter, see *sūrah* 22, note 18.

The expressions *freeman for freeman, slave for slave, female for female* do not mean that a freeman will not be liable to retaliation for a crime against a slave, or that a man will not be liable to retaliation for a crime against a woman. On the contrary, the Qur'an put an end to a practice widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia and still existing in the present world – if a respected member of the tribe was killed by an ordinary member of another, they would kill several members of the murderer's tribe as well as the murderer himself. Also, if the murderer was a man of high standing, the pre-Islamic Arabs were unwilling to permit the murderer to be executed. Even today, those nations that are supposedly the most civilized often proclaim that if one of their citizens is killed, they will execute scores of the killer's compatriots.

132. This commandment relates to the period when there were no rules for the distribution of inheritance. Thus, everyone was required to make testament in order not to deprive parents and nearest relatives of some inheritance that would otherwise have been distributed, most probably, only among one's children. Later, when God revealed a set of laws regarding the distribution of the inheritance (*sūrah* 4: 11–12), the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, clarified the laws relating to testaments and inheritance. These may be summarized as follows:

Provisions in a will cannot be made in favor of any of an individual's legal heirs, i.e. those whose different portions are specified in the Qur'an, as no changes can be made therein. Second, the will may specify the distribution of only one-third of the deceased's whole estate. When a person has died, his or her debts (if any) are cleared, the person's last will and testament (within the limitations just mentioned) is carried out, and then the estate is divided among the legal heirs according to the Qur'anic injunctions.



182. But if anyone fears from the testator an injustice or sin and brings about a settlement between the parties (by making the necessary change), then no sin will be on him. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

183. O you who believe! Prescribed for you is the Fast, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may deserve God's protection (against the temptations of your carnal soul) and attain piety.

184. (Fasting is for) a fixed number of days. If any of you is so ill that he cannot fast, or on a journey, he must fast the same number of other days. But for those who can no longer manage to fast, there is a redemption (penance) by feeding a person in destitution (for each day missed, or giving him the same amount in money). Yet better it is for him who volunteers greater good (by either giving more or fasting in case of recovery), and that you should fast (when you are able to) is better for you, if you but knew (the worth of fasting).

185. The month of Ramaḍān (is the month) in which the Qur'an was sent down as guidance for people, and as clear truths of the guidance and the Criterion (between truth and falsehood). Therefore, whoever of you is present this month must fast it, and whoever is so ill that he cannot fast or is on a journey (must fast instead for the same) number of other days. God will ease for you, and He does not will hardship for you, so that you can complete the number of the days required, and exalt God for He has guided you, and so it may be that you will give thanks (due to Him).

186. And when (O Messenger) My servants ask you about Me, then surely I am near: I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he prays to Me.<sup>133</sup> So let them respond to My call (without hesitation), and believe and trust in Me (in the way required of them), so that they may be guided to spiritual and intellectual excellence and right conduct.

133. Prayer or supplication is the essence of worship or servanthood to God. What rises to God from the whole creation is prayer. It has kinds and degrees:

- The first kind is the prayer of all organisms, plant, animal and human, through

the natural disposition of their bodies and their functioning in line with their duties in creation. This kind of prayer is always acceptable.

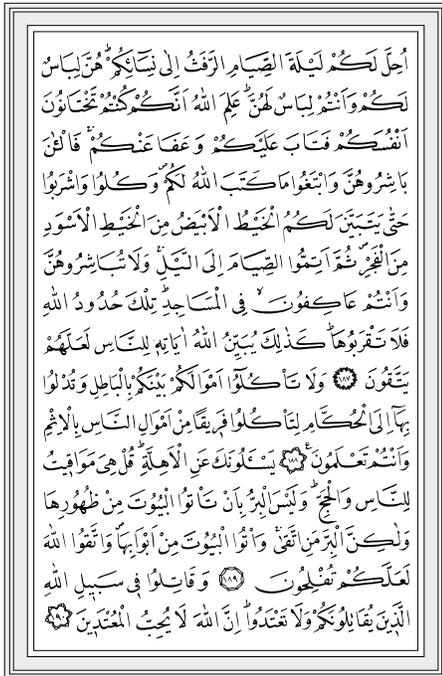
- The second kind is that which is uttered by all organisms, plant, animal,

and human, in the tongue of vital needs. God meets these needs just on time, with the exception that plants, and the animals relatively weaker and less intelligent (as compared to others, such as wolves and foxes), are nourished more easily than the others. The more powerful and intelligent and more self-subsisting a creature is, the greater hardship it suffers to get nourishment. All that a baby has to do in order to procure its need is cry.

- The third kind of prayer is that which is done by human beings. This falls into two categories:
- The first category is the active prayer. It means complying with the laws that God has set for life. For example, a farmer's plowing the soil is knocking

on the door of Divine providence. A patient's going to the doctor's is appealing to God for cure. This kind of prayer is usually accepted.

- The second category is the verbal prayer that we do. This kind of prayer is also answered. But answering is different from accepting. God answers all the prayers done sincerely. However, He answers sometimes by giving whatever is asked for, sometimes by giving what is better, sometimes by postponing giving to the afterlife, and sometimes by not giving at all, since it will not turn out in favor of the one who prays. The way that God answers a prayer depends on His Wisdom. (See *The Words*, "The 23<sup>rd</sup> Word," 333-334.)



187. It is made lawful for you to go in to your wives on the night of the Fast. (There is such intimacy between you that) they are a garment for you (enfolding you to protect you against illicit relations and beautifying you) and you are (in the same way, for the same reasons) a garment for them. God knows that (you felt that) you were betraying yourselves (by doing what you supposed was prohibited), and has turned to you in lenience (and protected you from possible sins by not legislating such a prohibition). So now associate in intimacy with them and seek what God has ordained for you. And (you are permitted to) eat and drink until you discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night; then observe the Fast until night sets in.<sup>134</sup> But do not associate in intimacy with them (your wives) dur-

ing the period when you are in retreat in the mosques. These are the bounds set by God; do not draw near them (keep a safe distance away from them).<sup>135</sup> Thus does God make His Revelations clear to people so that they may attain piety and be protected against the punishment therefor.

188. (Eat and drink, but do the kinds of worship that help you to control your soul such as the Fast.) And do not consume your wealth among yourselves in false ways (in vanities, sins, and crimes such as theft, usurpation, bribery, usury, and gambling); nor proffer it to those in authority so that you may sinfully consume a portion of other people's goods, and that knowingly.

189. They ask you (O Messenger) about the new moons (because of the month of Ramaḍān). Say: "They are appointed times (markers) for the people (to determine time periods) and for the Pilgrimage." (Do not link them to superstitions and superstitious behavior like entering dwellings by the back rather than the front.) It is not virtue that you enter dwellings from the backs of them, but virtue is (the state of) one who (truly believing in God) strives to attain righteousness and piety (by carrying out His commandments and refraining from His prohibitions). So come to dwellings (in the normal way) by their doors. (Do everything according to the rule, and establish relations with your leader and among yourselves in proper terms.) And strive to obey God in due reverence and piety so that you may prosper.<sup>136</sup>

190. Fight in God's cause (in order to exalt His Name) against those who fight against you, but do not exceed the bounds (set by God),<sup>137</sup> for surely God loves not those who exceed the bounds.

134. In fixing the time of obligatory rites, God has decreed what is so clear and simple that people in all times and places, and at any stage of scientific development, can observe them. Accordingly, the timing of the rites is done with reference to conspicuous and familiar natural phenomena.

Some people argue that this method is not feasible in zones close to the poles, where night and day each last for about six months. However, in these zones, signs of morning and evening do appear with unfailing regularity and the people know them. It is on the basis of these signs that people time their sleeping and waking patterns. In the days before watches were common, the inhabitants of countries like Finland, Norway, and Greenland used to fix the hours of the day and night by means of various signs that appeared on the horizon. Just as those signs helped them to determine their schedules in other matters, they should also enable them to time their various prayers, the pre-fast meal, and the breaking of the Fast.

135. The phrase, *in retreat in the mosques* refers to the practice of spending some time in Ramaḍān in a mosque in devotion to God. God's Messenger used to dedicate the last ten days of Ramaḍān to such retreat in the mosque. While in this state, known as *iṭikāf*, one may go out of the mosque for only the absolutely necessary requirements of life, and one must refrain from gratifying sexual desire.

136. The waxing and waning of the moon attracted people's attention in the pre-Islamic era, as it still does today, and some fanciful ideas and superstitions were associated with it. The moon was considered the basis of good and bad omens. The Qur'ān warns against such superstitious notions.

It also draws attention to another important matter, namely propriety and good sense in controlling curiosity, so that it does not become, nor lead to, idle or vain preoccupations. It is unbecoming to believers that they should ask pointless questions and become preoccupied with useless things. But if such questions are put, the teacher or leader should give an answer that will, rather than satisfying their curiosity, keep the questioners curious but direct their curiosity towards more worthy or useful matters.

As to the questions put to the Messenger about the waxing and waning of the moon, the worthwhile, useful element of the questioners' curiosity is indicated in the response of God: it is necessary for them to know the beginning and end of months and the periods between, so that the time of the great religious rites can be determined by reference to phenomena literally visible or knowable by all human beings. That tells us what the waxing and waning is for and how the knowledge thereof helps us. It also tells us that such knowledge should be useful and open – it should not become difficult, secret, mysterious, and, therefore, liable to degenerate into superstition among the ignorant and malicious manipulation of the ignorant by the knowledgeable. Any questions related to *how* the moon waxes and wanes or *why* it does so could not, at that time, have been answered in any way which was both accurate and intelligible to the questioners. Indulging curiosity of this kind is precisely what breeds ignorance and superstition. Curiosity needs to be disciplined so that it approaches what is unknown through questions that can be answered intelligibly in a way that sustains the questioning – questions that, if asked and answered truthfully, increase the stock of human knowledge and strengthen the pillars of faith in the knowledge and wisdom of the Creator Who made this world, made it intelligible, and made human beings, within certain limitations, capable of understanding it.

The verse uses the occasion of the Prophet's being asked about the new moons to establish or emphasize the proper rules and norms in people's relations among themselves and with their leader/teacher. It invites them again to true piety and godliness. Clearly the verse has a fundamental connection with all the verses of the *sūrah* to this point, especially *sūrah* 2: 177 and the opening verses describing "those who prosper" (*sūrah* 2: 1-5). Next, the Qur'ān goes on to lay down important principles concerning war in order to put an end to the *Jāhiliyyah* wars that recognized no rules, and to educate the believers, as individuals and a community, in the best conduct.

137. For a detailed explanation concerning Islam and war, see Appendices 2 and 3.

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ قَبضْتُمْهُمْ وَاحْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجَكُمُ وَالَّذِينَ  
 أَتَدْرُونَ الْقَتْلَ وَالنَّفَاكَةَ عِنْدَ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ تَبْلُغُوا الْكُوفَةَ  
 فَإِن قَاتَلْتُمُوهُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِن هُمْ  
 اللَّهُ عَنُورٌ رَّجِيمٌ ﴿١٩٤﴾ وَقَالُوا هَرَجَىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونَ  
 الذِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ الْفَالِغِينَ ﴿١٩٥﴾ اللَّهُ  
 الْحَرَامُ وَالْمُرْمَاتُ فَمَا صِرْتُمْ عَلَىٰ حَتَّىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعْتَدُوا  
 عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اسْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
 مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا  
 بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَىٰ التَّالِفَةِ وَأَخْسِنُوا إِنَّا  
 اللَّهُ جُحِبُّ الْحُسَيْنِ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ  
 فَإِن أُخْضِرْتُمْ فِيهَا فَسَا اسْتَيْسِرْ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَخْفَوْا  
 وَرُؤْسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَبْلُغُوا مَنَازِلَ الْحُدُجِ  
 فَإِن كَانَتْ مِنْكُمْ أَرْبَابٌ أَوْ بَنَاتٌ مُّضْمَرٌ مِنْ رِيَابِ  
 أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ فَإِذَا أَرْتُمْهُنَّ مِنْ تَمَجُّعٍ  
 بِالْمَسْعَرَةِ إِلَىٰ الْحَجِّ فَسَا اسْتَيْسِرْ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ  
 فَمَنْ تَرَجَّدَ فَصَلِّ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةً  
 إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ  
 أَهْلَهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
 شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٨﴾

191. (While at war) kill them wherever you come upon them, and drive them out from where they drove you out (thus recovering your lands from their usurpation). (Though killing is something you feel aversion to,) disorder (rooted in rebellion against God and recognizing no laws) is worse than killing.<sup>138</sup> Do not fight against them in the vicinities of the Sacred Mosque unless they fight against you there; but if they fight against you (there), kill them – such is the recompense of the (rebellious) unbelievers.

192. Then if they desist (from fighting), surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

193. (But if they persist in causing disorder, continue to) fight against them until there is no longer disorder (rooted in rebellion against God), and the religion (the right for worship and the authority to or-

der the way of life) is recognized for God. However, if they desist, then there is no hostility except to the wrongdoers.<sup>139</sup>

194. A sacred month is retributive for another sacred month, and the inviolate values demand retaliation. So whoever attacks you, attack them in like manner as they attacked you. Nevertheless, fear God and remain within the bounds of piety and righteousness, and know that God is with the God-revering, pious.<sup>140</sup>

195. (Just retaliation, as well as war or other defensive measures to maintain your existence, are not possible without expense. So) spend in God's cause (out of whatever you have) and do not ruin yourselves by your own hands (by refraining from spending. Whatever you do,) do it in the best way, in the awareness that God sees it. Surely God loves those who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

196. Complete the *Hajj* (the Major Pilgrimage) and the *Umrah* (the Minor Pilgrimage) for God, and if you are impeded (after you have already put on the Pilgrimage attire), then send (to Makkah) a sacrificial offering you can afford. Do not shave your heads (to mark the end of the state of consecration for the Pilgrimage) until the offering has reached its destination and is sacrificed. However, if any of you is ill (so that he is obliged to leave the state of consecration) or has an ailment of the head, he must make redemption by fasting, or giving alms, or offering a sacrifice. When you are secure (when the Pilgrimage is not impeded, or the impediment is removed), then whoever takes advantage of the *Umrah* before the *Hajj* must give a sacrificial offering he can afford. For whoever cannot afford the offering, a fast for three days during the *Hajj*, and for seven days when you return home, that is, ten days in all. This is for those whose families do not live in the environs of the Sa-

cred Mosque. Act in due reverence for God and piety (avoiding disobedience to Him and

obeying His ordinances), and know that God is severe in retribution.

138. The verse regards *fitnah* (here translated as “disorder [rooted in rebellion against God and recognizing no laws]”) as one of the most prominent reasons for war. War is something undesired and abhorrent; nevertheless, situations do arise that will make it inevitable. *Fitnah* is just such a situation or, rather, all such situations share characteristics that may be summed up as *fitnah*. In most Qur’anic contexts, it denotes associating partners with God and adopting this as a lifestyle, spreading unbelief and apostasy, committing major sins with willful, insolent abandon, open hostilities to Islam, causing public disorder, and oppression, all of which are worse than killing. Although each of these can constitute a reason for war, the term *fitnah* covers all of them.

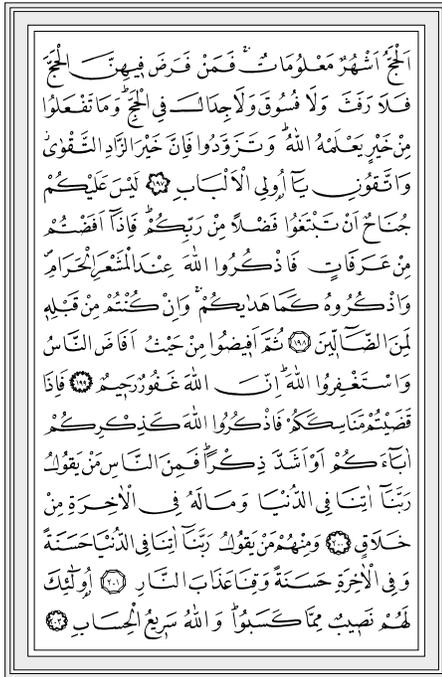
139. Believing in God’s Oneness entails accepting Him as the sole Deity, Lord, and Object of Worship. That, in turn, means recognizing Him as having the exclusive authority to make things lawful or unlawful. So His laws must prevail in human life. If some people, exploiting any means available to them, attempt to usurp this authority and establish a social order according to their own desires and, moreover, force others to obey them, this is the *fitnah* which the Muslims are ordered to fight against. Islam seeks to eradicate *fitnah* and set up a stable environment of justice and freedom for all, without excuses for injustice, oppression, violation of essential human rights, for anarchy, and terror. Under the rule of Islam, properly constituted and administered, all people are allowed to live according to their faith and practice their religion individually and collectively.

140. The months of Dhu’l-Qa’dah, Dhu’l-Hijjah, Muharram, and Rajab (the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> months of the lunar year, respectively) were consecrated, and warfare, killing, and pillage were prohibited during these months. However, in order to have an advantage over others, the polytheist Arabs frequently violated the sanctity of these months and tried to compensate for this violation by substituting one of the other months for the vio-

lated sacred month. In order not to allow them this advantage over the Muslims, and because of the principle expressed in, *the inviolate values demand retaliation*, the Qur’an permitted the Muslims to attack their enemies in which-ever month they first attacked them.

This verse establishes an important principle in social life, in the penal code, and in international relations. The Islamic Law recognizes as priorities the protection of religion, life, reason, family and lineage, and private property. Whoever is killed while defending one of these dies a martyr. It is because of the sanctity of these five things that offending religion and religious values (apostasy and blasphemy), killing and murder, alcohol and narcotics (which enfeeble reason), fornication and adultery (which dishonor as well as confound lineage), and theft and usurpation, are among the major sins. The life or property of no one individual or nation or race is more sacred than another. So, since there is equality between these things which the Qur’an calls *the inviolate values*, it requires that any violation is reciprocated only within the strict measure of just and equal retaliation. This is also what natural justice demands. However, an individual may forgive anything wrong done to him or her; such forgiving is praised and commended by the Qur’an as virtue. However, one does not have the right to pardon on behalf of others, to pardon an offense against public order or property or against national values or security.

Islam allows retaliation but prohibits doing harm or returning harm with harm. That is, if someone or some group does wrong or evil, the victims of the wrong are not licensed to do the same; still less is the wrong or evil to be accepted as the normal way of doing things. Retaliation must be for the sake of restoring justice and must be strict as to means and proportionality. Islam strives for peace and for the removal of violations. That is why the verse continues with the command to remain within the bounds of piety, meaning that any further offense or exceeding the bounds in repelling an attack is prohibited.



197. The *Hajj* is in the months well-known.<sup>141</sup> Whoever undertakes the duty of *Hajj* in them, there is no sensual indulgence, nor wicked conduct, nor disputing during the *Hajj*. Whatever good you do (all that you are commanded and more than that, especially to help others), God knows it. Take your provisions for the *Hajj* (and do not be a burden upon others). In truth, the best provision is righteousness and piety, so be provided with righteousness and piety to guard against My punishment, O people of discernment!

198. There is no blame on you that you should seek of the bounty of your Lord (by trading during the *Hajj*, but beware of preoccupation to the extent of neglecting any of the rites of the *Hajj*). When you press on in multitude from ‘Arafāt (after you have stayed there for some time), mention God at Mash‘ar al-Harām (al-Muzdalifah); mention Him aware of how He has guided you, for formerly you were surely of those astray.

199. Then (do not choose to remain in Muzdalifah without climbing ‘Arafāt in order to refrain from mixing with other people because of vanity. Instead,) press on in multitude from where all the (other) people press on, and implore God’s forgiveness (for your opposing Him in any way before now, and for the mistakes you have made during the *Hajj*). Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

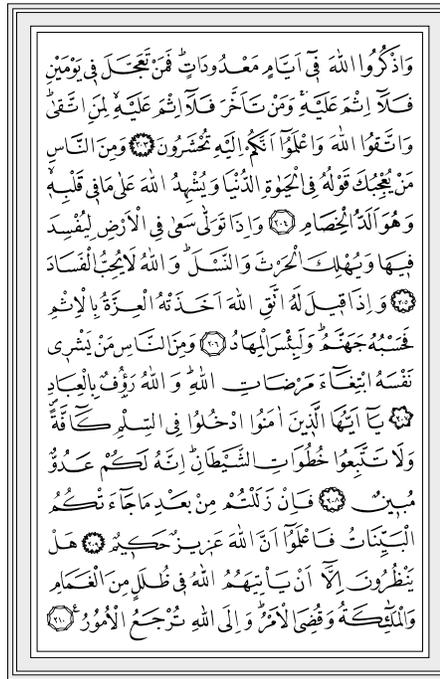
200. And when you have performed those rites, mention God, as you mentioned your fathers (with the merits you approve of in them), or yet more intensely. For there are, among humankind, those who pray, “Our Lord, grant us in the world,” and they have no share in the Hereafter.

201. And among them are those who pray, “Our Lord, grant us in the world what is good, and in the Hereafter what is good, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”

202. Those people – for them is a portion, each according to what they have earned. God is swift at reckoning.

141. The months of the *Hajj* are Shawwāl, Dhu’l-Qa’dah, and Dhu’l-Hijjah. The *Hajj* cannot be performed in another month than these ones. One of the two pillars of the *Hajj* is staying for some time on the mount of ‘Arafāt. This is done on the ninth day of Dhu’l-Hijjah,

the eve of the *‘Īd al-adhā* (the religious festival of the day of sacrifice). The time of performing the other pillar, which is the Circumambulation of *ifādah* – the obligatory going round the Ka’bah seven times – begins on the first of the three days of *‘Īd al-adhā*.



203. Mention God during the (three) appointed days (of *Īd al-aḏḩā*). Whoever is in haste and content with two days (of mentioning God, having performed the rite of throwing pebbles at Satan), it is no sin for him; and whoever delays (continuing the rite to the third day), it is no sin for him, for him who is careful of the bounds of piety. Keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety, and know that you will be gathered to Him.

204. Among the people there is he whose conversation on (the affairs of) the present, worldly life fascinates you, and he calls on God to bear testimony to what is in his heart, yet he is most fierce in enmity.

205. When he leaves (you) or attains authority, he rushes about the land to foment disorder and corruption therein, and to ruin the sources of life and human generations. Surely God does not love disorder and corruption.

206. When he is told “Be fearful of your duty to God (and so follow His commands),” vainglory seizes and thrusts him towards (greater) sin. Hell will settle the account for him – how evil a cradle indeed it is!

207. And (in contrast, there is) among the people one who sells himself in pursuit of God’s good pleasure. God is All-Pitying towards His servants (and therefore commends to them reverent piety and fear of His punishment).

208. O you who believe! Come in full

submission to God, all of you, (without allowing any discord among you due to worldly reasons), and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, for indeed he is a manifest enemy to you (seeking to seduce you to rebel against God with glittering promises).

209. If you stumble and fall back (from following God’s way to realize peace and agreement) after the clear proofs of the truth have come to you, then know that God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.<sup>142</sup>

210. What do those (who fail to come in full submission to God) look for but that God(’s command of destruction) should come to them in the shades of clouds with angels, and the matter be settled? To God are all matters ultimately referred (and whatever He wills occurs).

142. The conclusions of verses are particularly important to understanding their meaning. For example, this verse concludes with the declaration that God is *'Azīzun Ḥakīm* (All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise). It reminds us that it can neither harm nor benefit God whether we are submitted to Him and, therefore, able to come to peace and agreement among ourselves, or not. In whatever way we act, God is All-Glorious with irresistible might and does whatever He wills. While we cannot do anything to Him, He can, if He wills, punish and destroy us. However, He is also All-Wise; there are many instances of wisdom in what-

ever He does. He tests us in this world. That is why life here has laws particular to itself. For this reason, while evaluating the events and outcomes of human history, we should be ever mindful that God is All-Wise as well as All-Glorious with irresistible might. We may make judgments in partial or complete ignorance of our own and others' motives, of the near and far consequences of the conditions and events in which we are immersed, but God sees the whole future as He sees the whole past, and His Power and Wisdom are manifested throughout. The following verse sheds further light on this point.

سَلِّبِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ يَدٍ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٣١﴾ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ بَرُّؤُومٌ لِيَسَاءَ بَعْدَ حِسَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾ كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَعَمَّ اللَّهُ النَّسَبَيْنِ مَبْتَرَيْنِ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُنَّ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ أَرْحَبُ نَحْوًا أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزَلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نِعْمَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نَصَرَنَا اللَّهُ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَسْتَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَكَانُوا الَّذِينَ وَالِ الْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالِيتَانِي وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

211. Ask the Children of Israel how many clear proofs We gave to them (and what happened when they heeded them or did not heed them). Whoever tampers with God's blessing after it has come to him (whoever alters the guidance or exchanges it for straying): surely God is severe in retribution.<sup>143</sup>

212. The present, worldly life is decked out to be appealing to those who are ungrateful to God's blessing and disbelieve, and they deride those who believe. But those who obey God in due reverence for Him and piety will be above them on the Day of Resurrection. God provides for whomever He wills without reckoning.

213. Humankind was (in the beginning) one community (following one way of life without disputing over provision and other similar things. Later on, differences arose and) God sent Prophets as bearers of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness) and warners (against the consequences of straying and transgression), and He sent down with them the Book with the truth (containing nothing false in it) so that it might judge between the people concerning that on which they were differing. And only those who were given it differed concerning it, after the most manifest truths came to them, because of envious rivalry and insolence among themselves. God has guided by His leave those who have believed (in the Book and the Prophets, those who now believe in the Qur'an and Muhammad) to the truth about that on which they were differing. God guides whomever He wills to a straight path.<sup>144</sup>

214. (Given the history of humankind in this world,) do you think that you will enter Paradise while there has not yet come upon you the like of what came upon those who passed away before you? They were visited by such hardships and adversities, and were so shaken as by earthquake that the Messenger and those who believed in his company nearly cried out: "When comes God's help?" Beware! the help of God is surely near!<sup>145</sup>

215. They ask you what they will spend (to provide sustenance for the needy). Say: "Whatever you spend of your wealth is for (your) parents and the near relatives, and the (needy) orphans, the destitute, and the wayfarer." Whatever good you do, surely God has full knowledge of it.<sup>146</sup>

143. The punishment that the Qur’ān mentions in return for the sins or crimes that people commit or for the discord among them arising from tampering with God’s blessing of guidance should not be understood as restricted in reference to the Hereafter. God has laws that He has established for the worldly life of humankind. A person gets the recompense for obedience to those laws, or for disobedience to them, more in this world than in the Hereafter. Conversely, for the laws of God as presented through the *Dīn* or Religion, human compliance or non-compliance is, for the most part, recompensed in the Hereafter. Whether as individuals or as a community, human beings meet their just deserts both in this world and Hereafter. Accordingly, we should understand God’s punishment to include the consequences of our actions in both this world and in the Hereafter.

The verses above warn the believers against discord and disagreements which may arise from failure in full submission to God. The shades of clouds in verse 210 may be alluding to various kinds of disasters they may suffer because of the disagreements among them. The verse to come (212) explains the cardinal cause for failure in full submission to God. It is attachment to the allurements of the worldly life, which is also the principal cause for unbelief.

144. This verse explains the right understanding or philosophy of history. God declared in 2: 38-39, with which this verse has a clear link, that He would send guidance to humankind, who was destined to live on the earth – that is, He would show them the way they should follow. In the early period of their earthly life, they followed a way under the leadership of Prophet Adam, to whom some Divine Scrolls were reportedly given. As alluded to in the previous verse (2: 212), there was no competition among them about how to share the products of their labor and what the earth yielded. When such competition eventually arose, it resulted in differences, clashes, and bloodshed. God, out of compassion, raised up Messengers among them and sent Books with some and Scrolls with some others so that they might live in justice and be guided to the truth in what they differed on. He also raised up Prophets in the footsteps of the Messengers to continue their

way. Nevertheless, because of rivalry, greed and envy, those who were given the Book differed on it, and this history continued so until, finally, the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, came with the Qur’ān. Some of those who had been given the Book before believed in him and some did not.

This verse clarifies that the primary reason for the conflicts among the peoples of the Book, as well as among other peoples, is envious rivalry. It also clarifies that the final source or reference for the solution of the problems among people is the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

There have been differences of opinion among the Muslims in understanding some verses and commandments of the Qur’ān. This is very natural. The recourse for the settlement of these differences is the Sunnah of the Prophet. The Sunnah interprets the Qur’ān, expanding on what is brief in it, particularizing what is general in it, and generalizing what is particular in it. It also has the authority to make new legislation. For this reason, opposing, even attacking, the Sunnah means opposing and attacking one of the two foundations of Islam.

145. This verse points to way marks in the history of those following the Straight Path. This Path is no easy route. It passes through privations, persecutions, and even sufferings of war to the point where the believers all but cry out, “When comes the help of God?” This point, when the followers of the Straight Path are convinced that it is only God Who gives success, is also the point when God’s help is at hand, and which leads on to the final triumph or prosperity in both worlds. However, testing of the quality of faith and obedience continues: it requires thankfulness and controlling the drives of the carnal soul, so as to guard against rebellion.

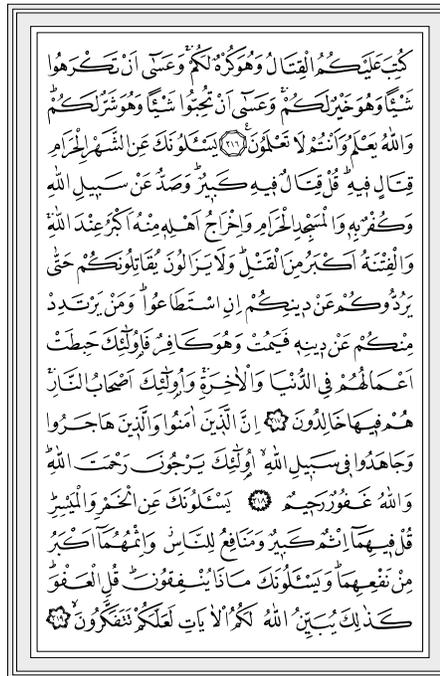
146. Even if the verses seem independent of each other, they are linked in that they draw attention to the important marks of the way leading to the final triumph and Paradise, and teach how to follow that way. It requires patience through all hardships and privations and, as mentioned in the preceding verse, spending in God’s cause for the relatives and needy – in other words, building “social” bridges between various strata in society.

216. Prescribed for you is fighting, though it is disliked by you. It may well be that you dislike a thing but it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing but it is bad for you. God knows, and you do not know.

217. They ask you about the Sacred Month and fighting in it. Say: "Fighting in it is a grave sin; but barring people from the way of God, unbelief in Him, and denying entry into the Sacred Mosque, and expelling its inmates from it, are far graver and more sinful in the sight of God; disorder (rooted rebellion to God and recognizing no laws) is even far graver and more sinful than killing. And they will not cease fighting against you until they turn you from your Religion, if they can. Whoever of you turns away from his Religion and dies an unbeliever – those are they whose works have been wasted in both the world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire; therein they will abide.

218. Surely those who believe, those who emigrate and strive in God's cause<sup>147</sup> – they are the ones who may hope for the mercy of God. God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

219. They ask you about intoxicating drinks and games of chance. Say: "In both



there is great evil, though some use for people, but their evil is greater than their usefulness." They also ask you what they should spend (in God's cause and for the needy). Say: "What is left over (after you have spent on your dependents' needs)." Thus does God make clear to you His Revelations, that you may reflect<sup>148</sup>

147. *Jihād* denotes, literally, doing one's utmost to achieve something. It is not the equivalent of war, for which the Arabic and Qur'anic word is *qitāl*. Jihad does not mean Holy War either; in fact that term was coined during the Crusades to mean a war against Muslims. It does not have a counterpart in Islam, and *jihad* is certainly not its translation. Although warfare is contained in the meaning of *jihād*, the root meaning is doing one's best to achieve something.

*Jihād* has a wider connotation and embraces every kind of striving in God's cause for His good pleasure. *Mujāhids* (those who do *jihād*) are sincerely devoted to the cause of Islam, expend the utmost of their intellect and spirit in its service, and deploy all the force at their command to defend Islam against aggression, and, whenever necessary, they do not hesitate to risk their very lives for Islam. All this is *jihād*. *Jihād* in God's cause is that striving in which a person engages exclusively to win

God's good pleasure, and to make His Word superior to all other words.

There are two aspects of *jihād*. One is fighting against superstitions and wrong convictions and also against carnal desires and evil inclinations; it is, therefore, a seeking of enlightenment, both intellectual and spiritual. This is called the *greater jihād*. The other is encouraging others to seek and achieve the same objective, and it is called the *lesser jihād*.

The *lesser jihād*, which has usually been taken to mean fighting for God's cause, does not refer only to the form of striving done on battlefields. The term is comprehensive. It includes every action, from speaking out when necessary (for example, to challenge tyranny) to presenting oneself on the battlefield – provided the effort is done for God's sake. Whether speaking or keeping silent, smiling or making a sour face, joining a meeting or leaving it, every action taken to ameliorate the lot of humanity, whether by individuals or communities, is also included in the meaning of the *lesser jihād*.

While the *lesser jihād* depends on the mobilization of outward or material facilities and is done in the outer world, and the *greater jihād* is an inward struggle against the carnal soul, the two forms of *jihād* cannot really be separated from each other. Only those who are sincere in battling their carnal selves can initiate and sustain the *lesser jihād* in the right way, which, in turn, helps them to succeed in the *greater jihād*.

The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, combined these two aspects of *jihād* in the most perfect way in his person. He displayed monumental courage in communicating God's Message, and he was the most devoted in worshipping God. He was consumed with love and fear of God in his Prayer, and those who saw him felt great tenderness towards him. He frequently fasted every other day or even on successive days. Sometimes he would spend almost the whole night in the Prayer and his feet would swell up as a result of long periods of standing in the Prayer. As recorded in *al-Bukhārī*, 'Ā'ishah,

thinking his persistence in the Prayer excessive, once asked him why he exhausted himself so, considering that all his sins had been forgiven. He said in reply: *Shall I not be a servant grateful to God?*

As explained above, striving in God's cause entails, besides conveying the Message to others, a believer's struggle with the carnal soul to build a true spiritual character, overflowing with faith and ardent with the love of God. A believer's struggle in God's cause, with these two dimensions of it, continues, in the individual sphere, until the believer's death, and up to the Last Day in the collective sphere.

Islam did not come to cause dissension among humankind; it came to establish spiritual contentment in the inner worlds of human beings and to make them at peace with God, with each other, with nature, and with the whole of being as such, in its entirety. It came to eradicate injustice and corruption on the earth, and to "unite" the earth with the heavens in peace and harmony. Islam calls people to the faith with wisdom and fair exhortation, and does not resort to force until those who desire to maintain the corrupted order they built on injustice, oppression, self-interest and exploitation of others, and the usurpation of their rights, resist it with force, determined to prevent its being preached.

148. Alcohol and games of chance were deeply established and widespread among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era (the *Jāhiliyyah* or "Age of Ignorance"). It is not easy to eradicate such evil habits in a community. As in almost all other such matters, the Qur'ān followed a step-wise approach in forbidding alcohol and gambling: instead of forbidding them outright, it first persuaded the believers of their evil. When the final commandment of prohibition came, there was no one among the believers who did not willingly renounce these habits. The same procedure was followed in establishing new patterns of conduct. For example, before commanding the women to wear the head-scarf or veil, the Qur'ān first persuaded the Muslim community of the value and good of women wearing head-scarves. Several people

came to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and asked him when he would order the women to veil themselves. When the order of veiling came, as stated by ‘Ā’ishah, may God be pleased with her, all the women without exception put on the veil willingly.

As another important example, the next two verses instruct the Muslims on how to treat the orphans and manage their affairs, and forbid the Muslims to marry idolaters. Although seemingly disconnected, these two verses together prepared the hearts of the believers to marry orphan girls. Before verse 3 in *Sūrat al-Nisā’* was revealed, which allowed marriage to more than one woman, these verses encouraged wealthy men to prefer orphans if they were considering more than one marriage.

This is the Qur’ān, the Word of God, the

Lord of the worlds. While God’s Word is available to instruct humankind, minds and hearts should be turned to it with the utmost attentiveness, so that we may reform ourselves and our societies according to His will, Who created us, and provides us. The Muslims, especially those who feel responsibility to guide and teach others, should avoid being diverted by fashionable theories and agendas with little connection to the Qur’ānic foundations of thought, faith, worship, morality, social and political relationships, and economy. They should strive to return to those foundations. In particular, they should heed the Qur’ān’s way of guiding, its way of teaching, and achieving vital reforms. No effort exerted in the name of Islam, yet neither based upon the Qur’ān nor permitted by it, can be successful.

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ  
 وَإِنْ تُخَالُطُوهُمْ فَارْحَمُوا أَمْثَلَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ  
 وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَأَعْنَبَكُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٠﴾ وَلَا  
 تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَا مَهْمٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ حُرٌّ مُّشْرِكٌ  
 وَلَا أَحَبُّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبُدُوا  
 مُؤْمِنِينَ حُرًّا مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَا يُجْبِكُمْهُ أُولِيكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى التَّارِكِ  
 وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ  
 لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢١﴾ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجَحِضِ  
 قُلْ هُوَ آذَىٰ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْجَحِضِ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ  
 حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ  
 اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾ نِسَاءُ الَّذِينَ  
 حَارَبْتُمْ قَالُوا خَرُّنَاكُمْ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذُو انْقِصَابٍ  
 وَاسْتَعْمُوا اللَّهَ وَعَاوَلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَادُونَهُمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾ وَلَا  
 تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عُزُورًا لِأَنَّيَا نَبِيَّكُمْ أَنْ تَقْرَبُوا وَتَسْتَفْتُوا  
 وَتُضِلُّوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

220. Upon this world and the Hereafter (with all the truths related to both). And they ask you about (how they should act in regard to) orphans. Say (to them): “(Rather than doing nothing for fear of doing wrong) set their affairs aright for their good; that is the best. If you intermix (your expenses) with theirs, (there is no harm in that for) they are your brothers(-in-religion, and brotherhood demands doing what is good for one’s brothers). God knows well him who causes disorder from him who sets aright. Had God willed, He would have imposed on you exacting conditions. Indeed He is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

221. Do not marry the women who associate partners with God until they believe. A believing bondsmaid is better than a (free) woman who associates partners with God,

even though she pleases and attracts you (with her beauty, wealth, status, or family). Nor marry (your believing women) to the men who associate partners with God until they believe. A believing slave is better than a (free) man who associates partners with God, even though he pleases and attracts you. Those call to the Fire, while God calls to Paradise and forgiveness (of your sins) by His leave. He makes clear His Revelations for people, that they may reflect and be mindful (of their duty to God).

222. They also ask you about (the injunctions concerning) menstruation. Say: “It is a state of hurt (and ritual impurity), so keep away from them during their menstruation and do not approach them until they are cleansed.<sup>149</sup> When they are cleansed, then (you can) go to them inasmuch as God has commanded you (according to the urge He has placed in your nature, and within the terms He has enjoined upon you). Surely God loves those who turn to Him in sincere repentance (of past sins and errors), and He loves those who cleanse themselves.<sup>150</sup>

223. Your women are like a tilth for you (where you plant seed to obtain produce), so come to your tilth as you wish, and send ahead (good issue) for (the future of) your souls. Act in due reverence for God, keeping within the bounds of piety and obedience to Him (both in your relations with your women and bringing up offspring, as in all other matters).<sup>151</sup> And know that you are to meet with Him; and give glad tidings to the believers (of what they will find in His Presence).

224. (Do not make thoughtless oaths by God,) and do not (in striving to keep your oaths) make Him a hindrance by your oaths to doing greater good, acting from piety, and making peace among people. And God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

149. This verse, which answers a question from male believers, ensures that women are protected from sexual intercourse during their menstrual cycle. Many other intimacies between husband and wife are permitted. Numerous Prophetic Traditions indicate that Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, continued to eat from the same plate and sleep with his menstruating wife. He prayed while his clothes touched his menstruating wife or while his wife lay in bed in front of him. His menstruating wife would comb his hair. He recited the Qurʾān while reclining his head in the lap of his menstruating wife. He said to her: “Your menstruation is not in your hand.” The Prophet thereby challenged the prevailing view in his era that menstruating women should be banished from all social life.

A woman in her menstrual period is excused from *aṣ-Ṣalāh* (ritual Prayer) and fasting. This condition also applies to women during post-partum bleeding (40 days), but does not apply to all conditions in which women experience bleeding (“*al-istihāḍa*” or bleeding from the womb in-between a woman’s periods). She is not required to make up her missed Prayers, though she must make up whatever days of fasting she missed during *Ramaḍān*. She may continue with supplementary prayer during her period. During the *Ḥajj* (Pilgrimage), she cannot circumambulate the Kaʿbah. The Prophet specifically ordered that menstruating women should take part in the two *ʿĪd* festivals and other religious gatherings of Muslims. The schools of Islamic law generally rule that a woman in her period cannot enter a mosque and cannot touch the Qurʾān or recite it, except the petitionary sentences in it with the intention of saying prayers. However, there are some jurists who rule that during her period, she may continue to teach or study the Qurʾān not in the entirety of its verses but in

words or phrases. (Also see Appendix 4, “The Status of Women in Islam.”)

150. As the Qurʾān draws attention to the spiritual garment of piety where it mentions bodily dress (*sūrah* 7: 26), and spiritual nourishment where it mentions provision (*sūrah* 2: 197), so here it draws attention to spiritual purity or being cleansed of sins through repentance, where it mentions being clean of body. This is because true beauty and good rest not in “turning one’s face towards east or west” but in the proper orientation of the heart and spirit. The form is something shaped by the essence and revealing it. The commandments of the Religion are intended to lead humanity to intellectual and spiritual excellence and purity, and, therefore, to personal integrity.

151. In a few concise statements, this verse reminds us that the true purpose of marital relations is not carnal pleasures but reproduction and having good issue, that is, bringing up children properly. The satisfaction of carnal desires is a sort of advance reward to encourage the realization of this purpose. As mentioned in some related verses (*sūrah* 2: 187), there are other instances of wisdom in marriage – for example, that the spouses are a garment for each other (to protect each other from unlawful relations and to enhance each other’s spiritual beauty), and that they become life-companions sharing each other’s joys and sorrows. For this reason, as implied in this verse and stated in a *hadith* (al-Bukhārī, “Nikāh,” 15), sincere piety is the best quality to look for in a marriage partner. After that, as also pointed out by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the spouses should be as closely matched as possible in certain qualities, so that their companionship may be richer and more respectful (at-Tirmidhī, “Nikāh,” 3).

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ  
 قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرْتِيضًا  
 أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَسَأُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾ وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا  
 الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾ وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَتَّبْنَ الْفَيْسُورَ ثَلَاثَةَ  
 قُرُوبٍ وَلَا يُجِلُّ لهنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ  
 يُؤْمِنُنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِعَوْنِهِنَّ أَحْسَنُ بَرِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ  
 أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَنْ يُغْلِبَ الَّذِينَ عَلَىٰ نِسَائِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّيَالِي عَالِيَةٌ  
 دَرَجَةً وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾ الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ فَإِمَّا سَأَكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ  
 أَوْ تَتَّبِعُوا بِالْحَسَنِ وَلَا يُجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا بِمَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا  
 إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُهَيِّمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقْبِلَا  
 حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلا يُجَسَّعَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ  
 فَلا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾  
 فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلا يُجِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ سِحِّ النَّكِحِ أَرْبَعَةَ  
 قُرُوبٍ فَإِنْ ظَلَمَهَا فَلا تُجَسَّعْ عَلَيْهَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَلَمَ أَنْ يَتَّيِّمَا  
 حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾

225. God does not take you to task for a slip in your oaths, but He takes you to task for what your hearts have earned (through intention). And God is All-Forgiving, All-Clement.

226. For those who vow abstinence from their wives, there is a respite of four months. Then, if they go back on their vow (within this period by atoning), then surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

227. But if (the period ends and) they resolve on divorce, (know that) God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (well aware of what they say and do).

228. Divorced women shall keep themselves in waiting for three menstrual courses, and it is not lawful for them, if they believe in God and the Last Day, to conceal what God has created in their wombs. In such time, their husbands have

better right to take them back if they desire a settlement. According to customary good and religiously approvable practice, women have rights similar to those against them (that men have), but men (in respect of their heavier duty and responsibility) have a degree above them, (which they must not abuse). And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

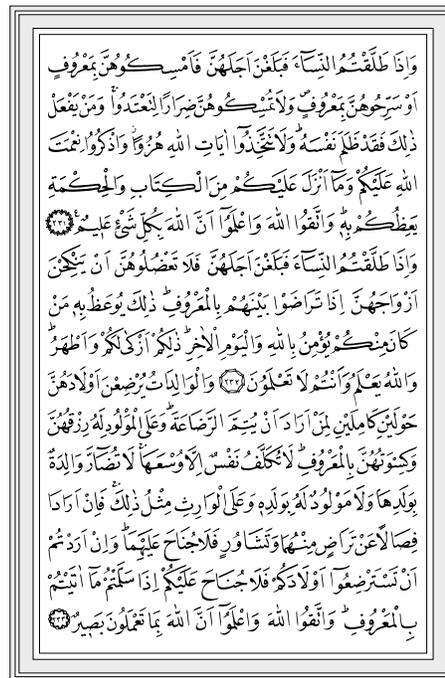
229. Divorce is (to be) pronounced twice. Then (at the end of each pronouncement) the husband should either retain (his wife) without offending her honor and in a fair manner, or release (her) kindly and in a manner fairer and pleasing (to her). (In the event of divorce) it is not lawful for you to take back anything of what you have given them (as bridal-due or wedding gift, or gifts on other occasions), unless both fear that they might not be able to keep within the bounds set by God. If you fear that they might not be able to keep within the bounds set by God (and deviate into unlawful acts, particularly because of the wife's disgust with the husband), there is no blame on them that the wife might pay some compensation to be released from the marriage tie. Those are the bounds set by God; therefore, do not exceed them. Whoever exceeds the bounds set by God, such are wrongdoers.

230. If he divorces her (finally, for the third time), she will no longer be lawful to him unless she takes another husband in wedlock (of her own volition). (If she and her new husband do not get along well and) if he divorces her, there is no blame on them (the woman and her first husband, if they agree) to return to each other if they think that they can keep within the bounds set by God. These are the bounds set by God; He makes them clear for a people who know (the wisdom and benefit in the bounds prescribed for them by their Creator).

231. And when you divorce women and they reach the end of their waiting term, then either retain them without offending their honor and in a fair manner, or release them without offending their honor and in a fair manner. Do not retain them to their hurt and to transgress (their rights). Whoever does that, surely he has wronged himself. Do not take God's Revelations for a mockery (by not paying them due heed), and remember God's favor on you and what He has sent down on you of the Book and the Wisdom, wherewith He exhorts you (to guidance). Keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety, and know that God has full knowledge of everything.

232. When you divorce women and they have reached the end of their waiting term, (then, you judges, and you who are guardians of either party,) do not debar them from marrying their (former) husbands, (and O former husbands of them), from marrying other men if they have come to an agreement between them on equitable terms.<sup>152</sup> This is an admonition to whoever among you truly believes in God and the Last Day; that is a cleaner and purer way for you. And God knows, and you do not know.<sup>153</sup>

233. Mothers (whether married or divorced) are to suckle their children for two complete years if the fathers wish that the period be completed. It is incumbent upon him who fathered the child to provide the mothers (during this period) with sustenance and clothing according to customary good and religiously approvable practice. But no soul is charged save to its capacity; a mother should not be made to suf-



fer because of her child, nor the one who fathered the child because of his child. The same duty (towards the suckling mother) rests with the heir (of a father who has died). If the couple desire by mutual consent and consultation to wean the child (before the completion of the two years' period), then there is no blame on them. And if you desire to seek nursing for your children, there is no blame on you (O fathers), provided you pay what is due from you according to customary good and religiously approvable practice. Keep from disobedience to God and try to act within the bounds of piety, and know that whatever you do, surely God sees it well.

152. Islam makes divorce possible when it is established beyond doubt that the spouses cannot get along with each other and marriage has

lost its meaning and function. Nevertheless, as is clear in the verses, Islam makes the arrangement of divorce difficult inasmuch as the

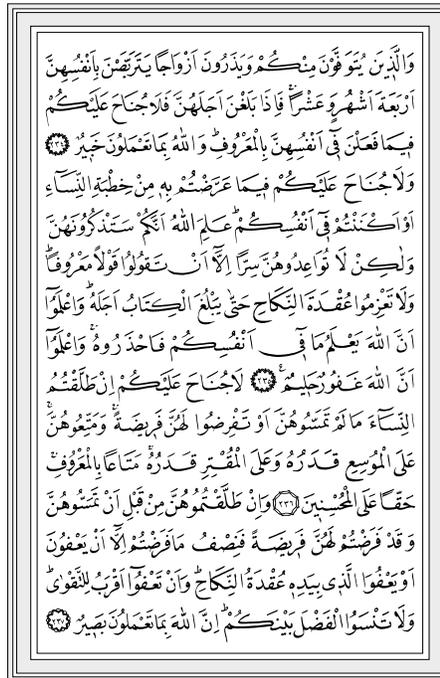
arrangement contains the opportunity for both spouses to re-think, and again re-think, their decision. Also, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said: "Of the permitted things, the most abhorrent to God is divorce." (Abū Dāwūd, "Talaq," 3)

Divorce initiated by the husband is in this way: he pronounces divorce at a time when his wife has no period. The wife then waits for three monthly courses, during which the husband is obliged to provide for her and may not force her to leave home. They may turn to each other during this period. If they do so, they do not have to renew the marriage contract. If they turn to each other after the end of this period, they do. The divorce may be pro-

nounced a second time, but if it is repeated for the third time, they can no longer be reunited unless the woman first marries another man and then divorces or is divorced by him.

The wife also has a right to initiate divorce. If she feels disgust at her husband, and it is feared that either or both of them may deviate into unlawful ways, she can refer the matter to the judge and demand divorce. In the event of such a divorce, the woman pays something to the husband, whereas when the husband initiates divorce he cannot claim anything of what he gave her by way of dower or after marriage.

153. For a brief outline of the status of women in Islam, see Appendix 4.



234. Those among you who die, leaving behind their wives: they (the wives) shall keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days,<sup>154</sup> (during which they should refrain from marrying and from self-adornment with a view to presenting themselves for marriage). When they have reached the end of the waiting term, then there is no blame on you for what they may do by themselves within (the bounds of) decency. God is fully aware of all that you do.

235. There is no blame on you that (during this waiting period) you indicate a marriage proposal to such women or keep it hidden in yourselves. God knows that you will think of them (with such proposals in mind), but do not make any secret engagement with them, except that you speak it properly in decent words. Do not resolve on the marriage tie until the ordained term has come to its end. Know that God knows what is in your hearts, so be careful about Him; and know that God is All-Forgiving, All-Clement, (Who shows no haste in punishing).

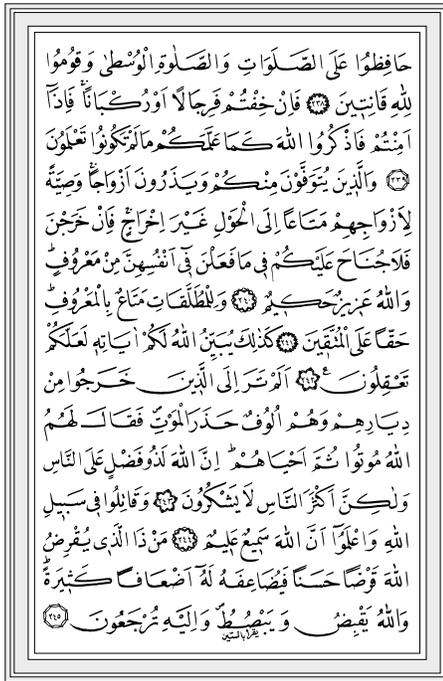
236. There is no blame on you if you divorce women (with whom you made a marriage contract,) while as yet you have not touched them nor appointed any bridal-due for them. Yet, make some provision for them, the affluent according to his means, and the straitened according to his means – a provision according to custom-

ary good and religiously approvable practice, as a duty upon those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

237. If you divorce them before you have touched them, but have already appointed for them a bridal-due, then (give them) half of what you appointed, unless they make remission and forgo it, or he in whose hand the marriage tie is makes remission (and pays the full amount). If you make remission, this is nearer and more suited to piety, and do not forget magnanimity among yourselves. Whatever you do, surely God sees it well.

154. A pregnant widow is exempted from this rule. Her waiting period expires with childbirth, irrespective of whether the time between

the husband's death and the birth is shorter or longer than the waiting period here prescribed.



without expulsion. If they themselves leave (of their own accord), there is no blame on you for what they may do of lawful deeds by themselves. Surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

241. Likewise, there should be a provision for the divorced women according to customary good and religiously approvable practice, as a duty upon the God-revering pious.

242. Thus does God make His Revelations (and signpost of His way) clear to you, that you may reason and understand (where your benefit lies and act accordingly).

243. Do you not call to mind those who went forth from their habitations for fear of death even though they were in thousands? God said to them “Die!”; then He restored them to life. Indeed, God is gracious and bountiful for humankind, but most of humankind do not give thanks.

244. (Do not act in fear of death; rather,) fight in God’s cause, and know that God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

245. Who is he that (by spending out of his wealth purely in God’s cause) lends to God a handsome loan that He will return after multiplying it for him manifold? God straitens (your means of livelihood), and He enlarges it; (in either case,) you are being returned to Him.

238. Be ever mindful and protective of the Prescribed Prayers, and the Middle Prayer, and stand in the presence of God in utmost devotion and obedience.

239. If you are exposed to danger, (and it is impossible for you to perform the Prayer standing in a place, then pray) afoot or mounted. When you are secure, mention God (and establish the Prayer) as He has taught you what you did not know (of faith, Book, and the Prayer).<sup>155</sup>

240. Those of you who (are about to) die leaving behind wives should make testament in their favor of one year’s provision

155. Having explained the rules for a happy family and social life, God rounds off this address by emphasizing the Prayer, for the Prayer

has an indispensable function in the spiritual education of humanity. It instills the ideals of goodness and purity, and it nurtures the dispo-

sition to obey the ordinances of God; it fosters adherence to piety and religious seriousness; and it forbids indecency and iniquities (*sūrah* 29: 45). The order to be mindful and protective of the Prescribed Prayers gains even greater importance in the light of verse 239. For a Muslim can in no wise neglect the Prayer. Even in times of danger, one must perform it whether “afoot or mounted.” One can only postpone it during actual fighting on a battlefield.

There are different opinions on the “middle

Prayer.” According to the majority of scholars, it is the Afternoon Prayer, i.e. *ʿasr*. Since this is the time of the day when daily work draws to its end, people may neglect the Prayer prescribed for this time. Being the third of the five daily Prayers, the Afternoon Prayer may also be the middle Prayer in that sense. However, given that, in the Islamic tradition, the day is usually considered to start after sunset, the third or middle Prayer could then be the Morning Prayer (*fajr*).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلِكِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّهِمْ لَهُمْ آيَاتُ أَنْتَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نُوحٍ وَمَا لَنَا أَنْ نَقْتُلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أَخْرَجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَانَا فَمَا كُنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ الْقِتَالُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجَسَدِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلِكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الشَّارِبُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

246. Do you not consider what happened with the elders of the Children of Israel after Moses: once they appealed to a Prophet chosen for them, saying: “Set up for us a king and we will fight in God’s cause.” He

said: “Is it possible you would hold back from fighting if fighting were prescribed for you?” They said: “Why should we not fight in God’s cause, when we have been driven from our habitations and our children?” But when fighting was prescribed for them, they did turn away, except a few of them. God has full knowledge of (such) wrongdoers.

247. Their Prophet said to them: “God has set up Saul (Tālūt) for you as king.” They said: “How can he have kingdom over us when we are more deserving of kingdom than him, seeing that he has not been given abundance of wealth?” He said: “God has chosen him over you and increased him abundantly in knowledge and physical power (so that he can execute his decrees). God bestows kingdom on whom-ever He wills, and God is All-Embracing (with His mercy), All-Knowing.”

248. Their Prophet added: “The sign of his kingdom is that the Ark will come to you, in which there is inward peace and assurance from your Lord, and a remnant of what the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind, the angels bearing it. Truly in that is a sign for you if you are (true) believers.”

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ  
 بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَكَانَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ  
 فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ  
 إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ  
 قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ  
 قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهَ كَرِهُوا اللَّهَ  
 وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَظُنُّوا  
 أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَأَلَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ  
 ذَوُو فَضْلٍ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

249. And when Saul (Tālūt) set out with the army and said (to them): “God will put you to a test by (means of) a river: whoever then drinks of it is not of my company, and whoever does not taste it, he is of my company; but forgiven will he be who takes thereof in the hollow of his hand. But they drank thereof, all save a few of them; and when he crossed it, he and those who believed with him (those who, with weak faith, took of the river in the hollow of their hands) said: “Today we have no power against Goliath and his forces.” But those who had certainty of their meeting with God and felt as if always standing in His Presence said: “Many a small company has overcome a numerous company by God’s leave.” God is with the patient and persevering.

250. And when they went forth against Goliath and his forces, they prayed: “Our Lord, pour out upon us steadfastness, and set our feet firm, and help us to victory over the disbelieving people.”

251. So they routed them by God’s leave, and David killed Goliath, and God granted him kingdom and Wisdom, and taught him of that which He willed. Were it not that God repelled people, some by means of others, the earth would surely be cor-

rupted; but God is gracious and bountiful for all the worlds.<sup>156</sup>

252. Those are the Revelations of God and His signs (demonstrating Him with His Names and Attributes) that We recite to you in truth, for indeed you (O Muḥammad) are one of the Messengers (sent with the Book and receiving Revelation).

156. The event described in these verses, which reveal the wisdom in war as a reality of human history, and an important part of the dynamics of the believers’ prevailing over the unbelievers, was a turning-point in the history of the Children of Israel. God had delivered them from the oppression of the Pharaohs in Egypt and guided them towards Palestine. However, never inwardly free from the influence of their lives

as slaves in Egypt, their hearts had not revived spiritually. After many years spent in the desert, new generations brought up in the climate of Divine Revelation replaced the old ones. The verse 2: 243 may be referring to this fact.

After Moses, upon him be peace, they conquered Jericho under the leadership of the Prophet Joshua (Yūshā), upon him be peace. Then came the period of the Judges, which

lasted almost five centuries. During this period, the Children of Israel sometimes got the upper hand over their enemies and sometimes lost ground to them. The event described in these verses happened during the period of the Prophet Samuel, upon him be peace. The Israelites defeated the pagan Philistines and founded the greatest and most powerful state in their history. David, upon him be peace, became the first Prophet-Caliph of this state.

The Ark referred to in sūrah 2: 248, was, as mentioned in various places in the Old Testa-

ment (*Exodus*, 25: 10–16, 40: 20–21; *Deuteronomy*, 10: 1–5; *Joshua*, 3: 3) and mentioned by some interpreters of the Qur’ān (See al-Qurṭubī), a wooden coffer containing the tablets on which the Torah was inscribed, and some “remnant of what the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind.” The Israelites carried it ahead of them in their marches in the desert and military campaigns. It was an emblem of their triumph. It had evidently been lost during the centuries following Moses, or it may have been captured by their enemies.

## الْحُجُورِ الثَّالِثِ

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41

ثَلَاثَ الرُّسُلِ فَضَلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ  
 وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَنَاتِ  
 وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ  
 بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنْ اخْتَلَفُوا فَوَيْلٌ  
 مِنَ آمَنٍ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿٤١﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا يَمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ  
 مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا يَبِيعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خَالَةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ  
 وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ  
 الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا  
 خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ  
 السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ  
 الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ  
 فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ  
 بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٤﴾



253. Of those Messengers, some We have exalted above others (in some respects). Among them are those to whom God spoke (in a peculiar fashion), and He raised some others in degrees. We granted Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs (of his Messenger-ship), and confirmed him with the Spirit of Holiness. Had God willed (to deny humankind free will and compelled them to act in a pre-determined way), those who came after them would not have fought one against the other after the most manifest truths had come to them; but they differed among themselves, some of them believing and some disbelieving. Yet had God so willed, they would not have fought one against the other, but God does whatever He wills.

254. O you who believe! (So that you may enjoy solidarity and discipline, as a cohesive, peaceful community) spend (in God's cause and for the needy) out of what We have provided for you (of wealth, power, and knowledge, etc.) before there comes a Day when there will be no trading nor friendship (which will bring any benefit), nor intercession (of the sort you resort to unjustly in the world). The unbelievers – it is they who are wrongdoers (those unable to discern the truth, who darken both their inner and outer world, and who wrong, first and most of all, themselves).

255. God, there is no deity but He; the All-Living, the Self-Subsisting (by Whom all subsist). Slumber does not seize Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. Who is there that will intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them

and what lies after them (what lies in their future and in their past, what is known to them and what is hidden from them); and they do not comprehend anything of His Knowledge save what He wills. His Seat (of dominion) embraces the heavens and the earth, and the preserving of them does not weary Him; He is the All-Exalted, the Supreme.

256. There is no compulsion in the Religion. The right way stands there clearly distinguished from the false. Hence, he who rejects the *ṭāghūt* (false deities and powers of evil which institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God) and believes in God (as the only Deity, Lord, and Object of Worship) has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle; and God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ  
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَا لَهُمُ الظُّلُمَاتُ يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ  
 إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا  
 خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ أَنبِئَهُ  
 اللَّهُ الْمَلَكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كُنْتُ  
 أَتَىٰ أَخِي فَأَتَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فَأَذَّابَهُ فَأَقْبَلَ الْتَمَسِ مِنَ  
 الْمَشْرِقِ فَجَاءَتْ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ  
 وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٩﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
 أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِ  
 الْأَنْهَارُ فَجَعَلَ جِبَالًا فَرَّادٍ شَاهِدَةً لِّمَن يَدْعُوهُ  
 لِيَذَرَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ظُهُورُهم لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 وَأَن يَضْحَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَصَلَاصَةٌ لِّمَن يَدْعُوهُ  
 بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَن يَضْحَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَصَلَاصَةٌ  
 لِّمَن يَدْعُوهُ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَن يَضْحَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ  
 فَصَلَاصَةٌ لِّمَن يَدْعُوهُ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَن يَضْحَكُوا  
 عَلَيْهِمْ فَصَلَاصَةٌ لِّمَن يَدْعُوهُ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّهِمْ

257. God is the Guardian of those who believe (to Whom they can entrust their affairs and on Whom they can rely), bringing them out from all kinds of (intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) darkness into the light, and keeping them firm therein. And those who disbelieve, their guardians are the *ṭāghūt*; bringing them out from the light into all kinds of darkness.<sup>157</sup> Those are companions of the Fire; therein they will abide.

157. The verse may cause one to ask whether the unbelievers whom the *ṭāghūt* bring out from the light into all kinds of darkness were in the light. So this statement has been interpreted that, first, it came by way of comparison with the previous statement: *God brings*

258. Do you not consider the one who remonstrated with Abraham about his Lord (in defiance of Him) because of the kingdom God had granted him? When Abraham said, “My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die,” he retorted: “I give life and cause to die.” Said Abraham: “Surely God causes the sun to rise in the east, now you cause it to rise in the west.” Thus was the unbeliever utterly confounded.<sup>158</sup> God does not guide (such) wrongdoing people.

259. Or (as another proof that it is God alone Who gives and takes life, and will restore life to the dead, call to mind) him who passed by a town that had fallen into utter ruin, and asked himself (in bewilderment): “How will God restore life to this town that is now dead?” So God made him remain dead for a hundred years and then raised him to life, and asked him: “How long did you remain in this state?” He said: “I remained so for a day or part of a day.” God said: “No, you have rather remained thus for a hundred years. But look at your food and drink: it has not spoiled; and look at your donkey! So We would make you a sign for the people (that they might understand how We have created them and will restore them to life after their death). And look at the bones, how We will set them up, and then clothe them with flesh.” Thus when the truth became clear to him, he said: “I know that God has full power over everything.”

*the believers out from all kinds of darkness into the light.* Secondly, the *ṭāghūt* call the believing people to darkness (unbelief, associating partners with God, transgression, etc.) and try to cause them to fall into it. Thirdly, as stated in a *hadith*, everyone is born with a

disposition to believe in God and submit to Him, but his parents (and environment) cause them to deviate (al-Bukhārī, “Janā’iz,” 80, 93). This is what the *ṭāghūt* do, that is, they strive to mislead generations.

158. This event (not recounted in the Bible) is told in the Talmud in considerable harmony with the Qur’ānic description. The exchange referred to must have taken place between the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, and the Chaldaean king, Nimrod, who ruled at that time over Mesopotamia. According to the Talmud, the father of Abraham held a high office in the government of Nimrod. When Abraham, upon him be peace, began preaching *tawḥīd*, belief in God’s Oneness, and smashed the idols in the temple, his father lodged a complaint against him before the king. This was followed by the conversation mentioned here.

All disbelieving peoples from the earliest times have either rejected God’s Existence, being materialists or atheists in a general sense, or associated partners with Him. Some of those who associate partners with God share out His absolute authority in the universe among physical things (such as natural forces) or nominal entities (such as the so-called “laws of nature”), or other things or beings (such as angels, spirits, and heavenly bodies). Some others who accept God’s universal authority nevertheless invent for themselves religions or systems for the di-

rection of human life in all its aspects, and force others to obey them. They attempt to appropriate for themselves God’s absolute sovereignty in the human realm. As is understood from the verse, Nimrod associated himself as a partner with God in ruling the people in his kingdom. He desired absolute rule over them. For this reason, he stood utterly confounded when Abraham, upon him be peace, moved from giving and taking life in the particular field of humanity to the universal field. The earth is a part of the universe, and humankind is a part of all beings: whoever owns true sovereignty in the cosmic realm, must also own it in the human realm. Seeing that human beings regard themselves as being so powerful as to dispute with God concerning sovereignty, yet have no part (to say nothing of the creation and maintenance of the universe) in even their own coming into existence, the time and place of their birth and death, their family environment, the specific features and operation of their bodies, or the characteristics of their personalities, what falls on them is to submit to God’s authority. This is what the Prophet Abraham, the breaker of idols, upon him be peace, declared before the Pharaoh of his time, and it was universally pronounced and preached and inculcated in minds and hearts by his most illustrious descendant, the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ  
 قُلْتُمْ قَوْلًا بِئْسَ الَّذِي كُفِّرُوا عَنْهُ قَوْلًا كَلِمَاتٍ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَتَقْوَى  
 مِنَ الْغَيْبِ فَصَرَّفْنَا إِلَيْكَ سُحُبًا مَعَكِمْ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ  
 مِنْهُنَّ مُزْنَةٌ أُنزِلَتْ إِذْ هُمْ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَأَنْتُمْ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ كَالْغَابِطِ الْبَسِيفِ الْيَاقِينِ ﴿٢٦٠﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ تَرْجُونَ  
 أَنْ تُنَادِيَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يَبْعِثُوا كِسْفًا مِمَّنْ لَهُمْ  
 أَعْيُنٌ مِثْلَ آبَائِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطِ  
 بِرَبِّهِمْ إِذْ كَانُوا فِي الْوَادِي الْأَخْضَرِ ﴿٢٦١﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ  
 رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَى الْبَصِيرِ ﴿٢٦٢﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ تَرْجُونَ  
 أَنْ تُنَادِيَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يَبْعِثُوا كِسْفًا مِمَّنْ لَهُمْ  
 أَعْيُنٌ مِثْلَ آبَائِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطِ  
 بِرَبِّهِمْ إِذْ كَانُوا فِي الْوَادِي الْأَخْضَرِ ﴿٢٦٣﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ  
 رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَى الْبَصِيرِ ﴿٢٦٤﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ تَرْجُونَ  
 أَنْ تُنَادِيَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يَبْعِثُوا كِسْفًا مِمَّنْ لَهُمْ  
 أَعْيُنٌ مِثْلَ آبَائِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطِ  
 بِرَبِّهِمْ إِذْ كَانُوا فِي الْوَادِي الْأَخْضَرِ ﴿٢٦٥﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ  
 رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَى الْبَصِيرِ ﴿٢٦٦﴾



260. And recall when Abraham said: “My Lord, show me how You will restore life to the dead!” God said: “Why? Do you not believe?” Abraham said: “Yes, but that my heart may be at rest.” (His Lord) said: “Then take four of the birds (of different kinds), and tame them to yourself to know them fully. Then (cut them into pieces and mix the pieces with each other, and) put on every one of the hills a piece from each, and then summon them, and they will come to you flying. Know that surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

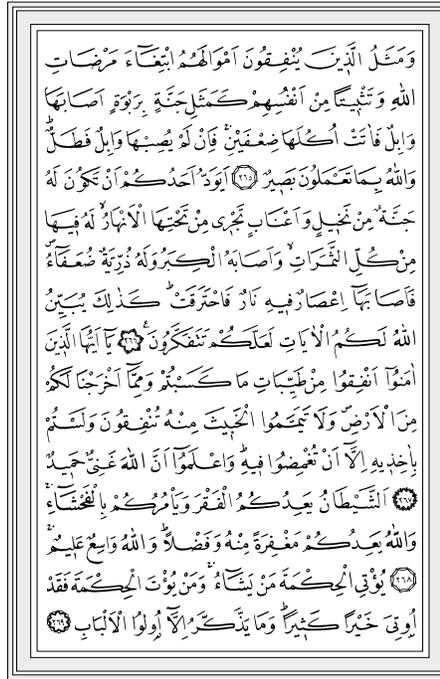
261. The parable of those who spend their wealth in God’s cause is like that of a grain that sprouts seven ears, and in every ear, there are a hundred grains. God multiplies

for whom He wills. God is All-Embracing (with His mercy), All-Knowing.

262. Those who spend their wealth in God’s cause and then do not follow up what they have spent with putting (the receiver) under obligation and taunting, their reward is with their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

263. A kind word and forgiving (people’s faults) are better than almsgiving followed by taunting. God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient, (absolutely independent of the charity of people), All-Clement (Who shows no haste in punishing.)

264. O you who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by putting (the receiver) under an obligation and taunting – like him who spends his wealth to show off to people and be praised by them, and believes not in God and the Last Day. The parable of his spending is that of a rock on which there is soil; a heavy rain falls upon it, and leaves it barren. They have no power (control) over what they have earned. God guides not such disbelieving people (to attain their goals).



265. The parable of those who spend their wealth in pursuit of where God's good pleasure lies and to make their hearts firmly established (in faith) is that of a garden on a hilltop: a heavy rain falls upon it, and it yields its produce twofold; even if no heavy rain falls upon it, yet a light shower suffices. Whatever you do, God sees it well.

266. Would any of you wish to have a garden of palms and vines with rivers flowing in it, where he has all kinds of crops, and that, when old age has come upon him while he has offspring still too small (to look after their affairs), a fiery whirlwind should smite it, and it should be burnt up? Thus does God make clear to you the Revelations (and signs of truth), that you may reflect (on them and act accordingly).

267. O you who believe! Spend (in God's cause and for the needy) out of the pure, wholesome things you have earned and of what We have produced for you from the earth, and do not seek after the bad things to spend thereof (in alms and in God's cause) when you would not take it save with disdain; and know that God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (absolutely independent of the charity of people), All-Praiseworthy (as your Lord, Who provides

for you and all other beings and meets all your needs).

268. Satan frightens you with poverty and bids you into indecencies, whereas God promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. God is All-Embracing (with His Mercy), All-Knowing.

269. He grants the Wisdom<sup>159</sup> to whom-ever He wills, and whoever is granted the Wisdom has indeed been granted much good. Yet none except people of discernment reflect and are mindful.

159. Although the term has a broad range of meanings, "the Wisdom" basically signifies insight, discernment, and knowledge of creation, life, right and wrong, and of the Divine sys-

tem prevailing in the universe, so as to enable persuasive, convincing answers for such questions as "Who am I? What is the purpose for my existence in this world? Who has sent me

to this world and why? Where did I come from and where am I heading? What does death ask of me?" It also signifies the true nature and purpose behind the things and events in the universe, including especially human life; in other words, it may be regarded, from one perspective, as harmony with Divine Destiny or knowledge of It. The Qur'ān is the source of knowledge in all these vital matters. The Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, being the system or prin-

ciples by which to understand and practice the Qur'ān in daily life, comes to mind first of all when speaking of "the Wisdom."

Deceived by Satan, worldly people believe that it is the height of wisdom to be constantly concerned with saving out of one's earnings and to be perpetually on the look-out for a higher income. But those granted wisdom aim at eternal happiness in the eternal world, which requires spending in God's cause and giving to the needy for a balanced, happy social life.

## الْبَقَرَةُ

٤٥

45

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٢٧٠﴾ إِنَّ تُبَّارًا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
 قَدِ انْقَرَّتْ وَرَأَتْ عَظْمَهَا وَعُوقُواهَا وَقَدْ أُخْرِجَتِ الرُّخَصَاءُ فَمَهْمُ  
 خَيْرٍ لَكُمْ وَيَكْفُر عَنْكُمْ مِنْ شَيْءِكُمْ  
 وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ لَكُمْ حَسَنَاتٍ لَكُمْ وَلِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾ كَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا لِمَا هَدَيْنَاهُمْ  
 وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ  
 فَلَا يُنْفِقْكُمْ وَمَا تَنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا اتَّيَسَّرَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ  
 وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ  
 لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٢﴾ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُخْضِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ  
 الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ  
 لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِعْجَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ  
 فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ  
 بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ  
 عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٤﴾



270. Whatever you spend (whether little or much, good or bad, in God's cause or in the way of Satan) and whatever vow you make, God surely knows it. (Even though they may regard their future as secured,) the wrongdoers have no helpers (with regard to their ultimate future).

271. If you dispense your alms openly, it is well, but if you conceal it and give it to the poor (in secret), this is better for you; and God will (make it an atonement to) blot out some of your evil deeds. God is fully aware of all that you do.

272. (O Messenger! Your mission is to convey all such commandments, so) it is not your duty to secure their guidance (in every matter); but God guides whom-ever He wills. Whatever good you spend in alms is to your own benefit, and (as believers) you do not spend but in search of God's "Face" (seeking to be worthy of His approval). Whatever good you spend will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.

273. That (which you spend) is for the poor who, having dedicated themselves to God's cause, are in distressed circumstances. They are unable to move about the earth (to render service in God's cause and earn their livelihood). Those who are unaware (of their circumstances) suppose them wealthy because of their abstinence and dignified bearing, but you will know them by their countenance - they do not beg of people importunately. And whatever good you spend, surely God has full knowledge of it.

274. Those who spend their wealth night and day, secretly and in public, their reward is with their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُوا  
 الَّذِينَ يَخْرُجُونَ الشَّيْطَانَ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ بِآيَاتِهِمْ قَالُوا  
 إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ  
 جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى  
 اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧٥﴾ تَحْنُ  
 اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرِي الضَّعَافَةَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٧٦﴾ إِنَّ  
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ  
 لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ  
 ﴿٢٧٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا  
 إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧٨﴾ كَانَ لَهُ قَسَمًا لَأُذَبْنَ قَادُوا يَحْرَبَ مِنْ  
 اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ زُجُجُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ  
 لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ  
 فَنظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ  
 إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى  
 اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

**275.** As to those who consume interest, (even though they seem, for a time, to be making a profit), they turn out like one whom Satan has bewitched and confounded by his touch, (and they will rise up from their graves in the same way before God). That is because they say interest is just like trading, whereas God has made trading lawful, and interest unlawful.<sup>160</sup> To whomever an instruction comes from his Lord, and he desists (from interest), he may keep his past gains (legally), and his affair is committed to God (– if he repents sincerely and never again reverts to taking interest, he may hope that God will forgive him). But whoever reverts to it (by judging to be lawful), they are companions of the Fire; therein they will abide.

**276.** God deprives interest (which is thought to increase wealth) of any blessing, and blights it, but makes alms-giving (which is thought to decrease wealth) productive. God does not love any obstinate unbeliever (who regards what God has made lawful as unlawful, or vice versa), any obstinate sinner.

**277.** Those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, and establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, their reward is with their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

**278.** O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God and try to attain piety in due reverence for Him, and give up what remains (due to you) from interest if you are (in truth) believers.

**279.** If you do not (and you persist in taking interest, whether regarding it as lawful or not), be warned of war from God and His Messenger. If you sincerely repent (and give up all interest transactions completely), you will have your principal. Then you will neither be doing wrong nor being wronged.

**280.** If the debtor is in straitened circumstances, let him have respite until the time of ease; if you make any remission (of his debt) by way of charity, this is better for you, if only you knew.

**281.** And guard yourselves against a Day in which you will be brought back to God (with all your deeds referred to His judgment). Then every soul will be repaid in full what it has earned (while in the world), and they will not be wronged.

160. As with the implementation of other Islamic injunctions, interest was forbidden gradually, and all kinds of interest transactions were utterly stopped during the Farewell Pilgrimage just three months before the death of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi writes on interest very succinctly as follows:

The cause of all revolutions and social corruption, and the root of all moral failings, are these two attitudes:

First: I do not care if others die of hunger so long as my own stomach is full.

Second: You must bear the costs of my ease – you must work so that I may eat.

The cure for the first attitude is the obligation of the *Zakāh*, the Purifying Alms prescribed by the Qur'ān. The cure for the second attitude is the prohibition of all interest transactions. The justice of the Qur'ān stands at the door of the world and turns away interest, proclaiming: "No! You have no right to enter." Humankind did not heed this prohibition and have suffered terrible blows in consequence. Let them heed it now to avoid still greater suffering. (*The Words*, "The 25<sup>th</sup> Word," 427-428)

As will be seen in the following verses, the Qur'ān is extremely strict on interest, so much so that regarding it as lawful amounts to persistence in unbelief and sin, and still taking interest while regarding it as unlawful because

of God's prohibition of it amounts to warring with God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

Interest is the principal mechanism for the concentration of wealth, for making the rich richer and the poor poorer. The present state of the world, where the poor countries are crushed under the burden of loans to the rich ones, and the rich people live off the poor, is an example of this. Interest is the means for the maintenance of oppression both on a world scale and within a country. In addition to the corruption it causes in the economy, by its very nature, interest breeds meanness, selfishness, apathy, and cruelty towards others. It leads to the worship of money, to the valuing of it for its own sake, and it destroys fellow-feeling and the spirit of altruistic cooperation among people. Thus, it is ruinous for humankind from both an economic and a moral viewpoint.

When Islam is fully applied, there is no need for interest-based loans and transactions. Islamic economics encourages partnership-based investment, in which participants share directly in the profit or loss of a venture, and mutual helping, cooperation, and altruism. The prohibition of interest reduces the cost of such ventures, and also suppresses inflation. Money is a means of exchanging goods. To make money itself a subject of (what is in practice) risk-free trade is irrational and exploitative, and it generates a host of essentially parasitic attitudes and activities.

## الْبُرُجُ الْثَالِثُ

٤٧

47

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا سَدَّ بَيْنَكُمْ يَدَيْنِ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى  
فَأَكْتُمُوا لَهُ وَلْيُكْتَبْ بَيْنَكُمُ الْكِتَابُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْتِ  
كِتَابٌ أَنْ يَكْتُمِبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَ اللَّهُ فَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَيُنْفِئِ  
الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَخْسِفَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا  
فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْطِيعُ  
أَنْ يُحْلِلَ هُوَ فَلْيُقْبَلْ مِنْهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ  
مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ  
تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشَّهَادَةِ أَنْ تَضَلَّ أَحَدُهُمَا فَتَذَكَّرْ أَحَدُهُمَا  
الْأُخْرَى وَلَا يَأْتِ الشَّهَادَةَ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْمَعُوا أَنْ  
تَكْتُمُوا صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَى أَجَلٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَقْطَعُ  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ  
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ  
جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُمُوا بِهَا وَإِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَ  
كِتَابٌ وَلَا شَهِدَةٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فَاِنَّهُ مُسَوِّغٌ بِكُمْ  
وَأَنْفَعُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦١﴾



**282.** O you who believe! When you contract a debt between you for a fixed term, record it in writing. Let a scribe write it down between you justly, and let no scribe refuse to write it down: as God has taught him (through the Qur'an and His Messenger), so let him write. And let the debtor dictate, and let him avoid disobeying God, his Lord (Who has created him and brought him up with mercy

and grace) and curtail no part of it. If the debtor be weak of mind or body, or incapable of dictating, let his guardian dictate justly. And call upon two (Muslim) men among you as witnesses. If two men are not there, then let there be one man and two women,<sup>161</sup> from among those of whom you approve as witnesses, that if either of the two women errs (through forgetfulness), the other may remind her. Let the witnesses not refuse when they are summoned (to give evidence). And (you, O scribes) be not loath to write down (the contract), whether it be small or great, with the term of the contract. Your doing so (O you who believe), is more equitable in the sight of God, more upright for testimony, and more likely that you will not be in doubt. If it be a matter of buying and selling concluded on the spot, then there will be no blame on you if you do not write it down; but do take witnesses when you settle commercial transactions with one another, and let no harm be done to either scribe or witness (nor let either of them act in a way to injure the parties). If you act (in a way to harm either party or the scribe and witnesses), indeed it will be transgression on your part. (Always) act in due reverence for God and try to attain piety. God teaches you (whatever you need in life, and the way you must follow in every matter); God has full knowledge of everything.

161. The reason why the Qur'an demands two women in place of one man in commercial transactions is straightforward. It does not at all mean that the Qur'an regards a woman as half of a man. For what is important here is not the relative status of women or men but reli-

ability, justice, and equity in business transactions, particularly transactions involving debt.

Typically, across the diverse cultures in the world, men engage in business more than women, and men are directly responsible for the livelihood of the family. Furthermore,

again typically (but not always), women are more emotional than men and more susceptible to forgetting. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that, in matters wherein they are not typically engaged, women may be more susceptible to erring or forgetting than men. Of course, there will always be some women with a keener memory than some men, and some men more emotional than some women. However, rather than exceptions, the norm and the typical majority are considered in matters relating to institutions for the community.

Islam does not demand two women in place of one man in all cases of bearing testimony. For example, whether it be a wife or husband, whoever accuses his/her spouse of adultery, he or she must swear by God four times. Likewise, there is no difference between a man and woman in scanning the sky and

bearing testimony to seeing the crescent in order to establish whether a lunar month has begun or ended. In addition, the testimony of two women is not sought in place of a man in the matters in which women have greater knowledge or specialty than men.

It is of considerable significance that this verse contains the rules necessary for the establishment of the office of “notary public.” It is one of the many proofs for the universality of the Qur’ān, for its being timeless, that it established these rules at a time when, and for a society in which, there were few who knew how to read and write, and there was almost no paper to write on. These rules are based on justice, equity, ensuring accuracy in testimony, and removing all doubts concerning the terms of the transaction, thus reducing the potential for future disagreement.

وَأَنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَعِيرٍ وَلَوْ يُحَدِّثُوا كِتَابًا فَمَهْمُكُمْ  
 فَإِنْ آمَنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ فَلْيُؤَدِّ الْأُتْمَانَةَ  
 وَلْيَقْرَأُوا بِاللَّهِ رَبِّهِ وَلَا يَكْفُرُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْهَا فَإِنَّهُ  
 أَسْفَهٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ اللَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ  
 وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنْ شُبِّدَ وَآمَىٰ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفَوُوهُ  
 يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَنْزِلُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ أَمَّا الرَّسُولُ فَمَا نَزَّلَ إِلَيْهِ  
 مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ  
 وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا تُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا  
 سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٥٠﴾ لَا يَكْفُرُ  
 اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ  
 رَبَّنَا لَا نُؤَدِّ أَخْذَاتَكَ إِنْ نَسَبْنَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ  
 عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا  
 مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْزِلْنَا  
 أَنْتَ سَائِلًا فَاغْفِرْ عَلَيْنَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥١﴾



**283.** If you are (in circumstances like being) on a journey and cannot find a scribe, then a pledge in hand will suffice. But if you trust one another, let him (the debtor) who is trusted fulfill his trust, and let him act in piety and keep from disobedience to God, his Lord, (by fulfilling the conditions of the contract). And do not conceal the testimony; he who conceals it, surely his heart (which is the center of faith) is contaminated with sin. God has full knowledge of what you do.

**284.** To God belongs all that is in the

heavens and the earth; whether you reveal what is within yourselves (of intentions, plans) or keep it secret, God will call you to account for it. He forgives whom He wills (either from His grace, or His grace responding to the repentance of the sinful), and He punishes whom He wills (as a requirement of His justice). God has full power over everything.

**285.** The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and so do the believers; each one believes in God, and His angels, and His Books, and His Messengers: “We make no distinction between any of His Messengers (in believing in them).” And they say: “We have heard (the call to faith in God) and (unlike some of the people of Moses) obeyed. Our Lord, grant us Your forgiveness, and to You is the homecoming.”

**286.** (O believers, if you are worried that God will take every soul to account even for what the soul keeps within it of intentions and plans, know that) God burdens no soul except within its capacity: in its favor is whatever (good) it earns, and against it whatever (evil) it merits. (So, pray thus to your Lord:) “Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget or make mistakes. Our Lord, lay not on us a burden<sup>162</sup> such as You laid on those gone before us. Our Lord, impose not on us what we do not have the power to bear. And overlook our faults, and forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our Guardian and Owner (to Whom We entrust our affairs and on Whom we rely), so help us and grant us victory against the disbelieving people!”<sup>163</sup>

162. The burden which was laid upon the previous communities was some commandments required by the education they had to receive according to the time and conditions and to their disposition. (Also see *sūrah* 7, note 38.)

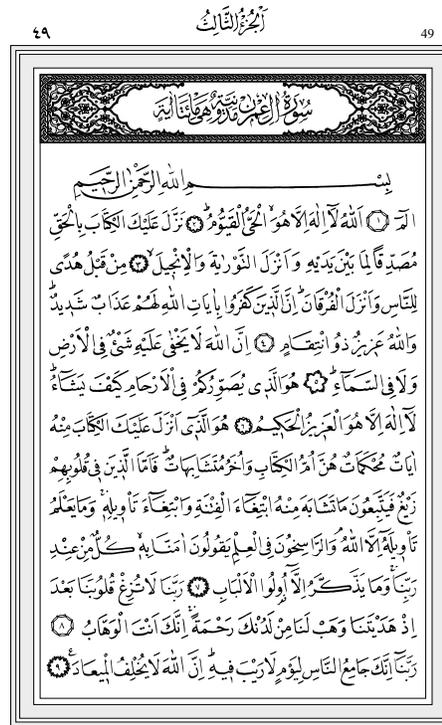
163. The last two verses were revealed to God’s Messenger during the Ascension. It is a highly meritorious Sunnah act to recite them before going to bed every night. The Messenger advised the parents to teach them to their children.

## SŪRAH 3

## ĀL IMRĀN (THE FAMILY OF 'IMRĀN)

Madīnah Period

This *sūrah* takes its name from the family of Virgin Mary. It was revealed in Madīnah and consists of 200 verses. It deals with many matters concerning the relations of the Muslims with the People of the Book, in particular, the Christians. It clarifies some important points regarding Jesus, including his birth, the miracles he performed, and his mission. It discusses at length the lessons to be taken from the Battle of Uhud and teaches the believers about many important points with respect to belief, reliance on God, preference of the other world over the present one, and the wisdom contained in historical events.



In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

1. *Alif. Lām. Mīm.*
2. God, there is no deity but He, the All-Living, the Self-Subsisting (by Whom all subsist).
3. He sends down on you the Book in parts with the truth, confirming (the Divine origin of, and the truths still contained by) the Revelations prior to it; and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel
4. In time past, as guidance for the people; and He has sent down the Criterion (to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and the knowledge, and power of judgment to put it into effect).<sup>1</sup> Those who disbelieve in the Revelations of God, for them is a severe punishment. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, Ever-Able to Requite.
5. Surely God – nothing whatever on the earth and in the heaven is hidden from Him.
6. It is He Who fashions you in the wombs

- as He wills. There is no deity but He, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.
7. It is He Who has sent down on you this Book, in which there are verses explicit in meaning and content and decisive: they are the core of the Book, others being allegorical.<sup>2</sup> Those in whose hearts is swerving pursue what is allegorical in it, seeking (to cause) dissension, and seeking to make it open to arbitrary interpretation, although none knows its interpretation save God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say: “We believe in it (in the entirety of its verses, both explicit and allegorical); all is from our Lord;” yet none derives admonition except the people of discernment.
  8. (They entreat God:) “Our Lord, do not let our hearts swerve after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Your Presence. Surely You are the All-Bestowing.

9. "Our Lord, You it is Who will gather humankind for a Day about (the coming

of) which there is no doubt. Surely God does not fail to keep the promise."

1. For the Criterion, refer to *sūrah* 2: 53, note 61.

As for the Torah and the Gospel, which are confirmed by the Qur'ān: the Torah, in the Qur'ānic usage, signifies the Book which was given to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, and included the Ten Commandments, which were handed over to him inscribed on tablets on Mount Sinai. Moses, upon him be peace, took down the rest of the revealed injunctions and handed over one copy to each of the tribes, and one copy to the Levites for safe-keeping. It is this book which was known as the Torah, and it existed until the first destruction of Jerusalem. The copy entrusted to the Levites was put beside the Ark (of the Covenant) along with the tablets of Commandments and the Israelites knew this as the Torah. The Jews, however, neglected the Book: during the reign of Josiah, the king of Judah, the Temple of Solomon was under repair and the high priest, Hilkiah, chanced to find the Book lying in the construction area. He gave it to the King's secretary, Shaphan, who in turn took it to the King; they acted as if this were a strange object to find (see: *II Kings*, 22: 8-13).

Hence, when the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Jerusalem and razed it and the Temple of Solomon to the ground, the Israelites lost forever the few original copies of the Torah which they had possessed. At the time of Ezra, some Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon, and when Jerusalem was rebuilt, the entire history of Israel, which comprises the first 14 books of the Old Testament, was recorded by Ezra with the assistance of some other elders of the community. Four of these books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, consist of a biographical narrative of Moses, upon him be peace. In this biography, those verses of the Torah available to Ezra and the other elders were also recorded, along with the contexts in which they were revealed. The present Torah, therefore, comprises fragments of the original book interspersed throughout with a biography of Moses (composed in the manner described above).

In locating these fragments of the original Torah there are certain expressions which help us. These are interspersed between the different pieces of biographical narrative and usually open with words such as: "Then the Lord said to Moses," and "Moses said, the Lord your God commands you." These expressions, then, are most probably fragments of the original Torah. When the biographical narration re-commences, however, we can be sure that the fragments of the true Torah cease. Wherever authors and editors of the Bible have added anything of their own accord, by way of their elaboration or elucidation, it becomes very difficult for an ordinary reader to distinguish the original from the explanatory additions. Those with insight into Divine Scripture, however, do have the capacity to distinguish between the original revealed fragments and the later human interpolations.

It is the original Book revealed to Moses, some of the verses of which are to be found in the Bible, which the Qur'ān terms as the Torah, and it is this which it confirms. When these fragments are compared with the Qur'ān, there is no difference between the two as regards the fundamental teachings. Whatever differences do exist relate to legal matters and are of secondary importance. Even today, a careful reader can appreciate that the Torah and the Qur'ān have sprung from the same Divine source.

Likewise, the *Injil* signifies the inspired orations and utterances of Jesus (upon him be peace), which he delivered during the last three years of his life in his capacity as a Messenger. There are no certain means by which we can definitely establish whether or not his statements were recorded during his lifetime. It is possible that some people took notes of them and that some followers committed them to memory. After a period of time, however, several treatises on the life of Jesus were written. The authors of these treatises recorded, in connection with the biographical account, those sayings of his which they had received from the previous generation of co-religionists, in the form of either oral traditions or written notes

about events in his life. As a result, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, whose authors belonged to the second or third generation after Jesus, and which were chosen from among more than 300 other similar versions and accepted by the Church as the Canonical Gospels, are not identical with the *Injil*. Rather, the *Injil* consists of those statements by Jesus which form part of these Gospels. Unfortunately, we have no means of distinguishing the fragments of the original *Injil* from the pieces written by the authors themselves. All we can say is that only those sections explicitly attributed to Jesus, for example statements such as: “And Jesus said” and “And Jesus taught,” most probably constitute the true *Injil*. It is the totality of such fragments which is designated as the *Injil* by the Qur’ān, and it is the teachings contained in these fragments that the Qur’ān confirms. If these fragments are put together and compared with the teachings of the Qur’ān, one notices very few discrepancies between the two, and any discrepancies that are found can be resolved easily by unbiased reflection (Largely quoted from al-Mawdūdī, 1: 233–234).

2. *Muḥkam* means that which has been made firm and perfect, while *mutashābih* derives from the root *shibh*, which means resemblance. All the verses of the Qur’ān are *muḥkam* in the sense that there is no doubt about their Divine authorship, yet they are *mutashābih* as well in the sense that they are interrelated with one another. Nevertheless, what is meant in this verse by *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* is as follows:

The *muḥkam* verses are those verses whose meaning is so clear that they are not open to any ambiguity or equivocation. Such verses are the core of the Qur’ān. They embody admonition and instruction, as well as the refutation of erroneous doctrines. They also contain the essentials of the true faith, teachings related to faith, worship, daily life and morality, and the mandatory duties and prohibitions. These are the verses which will guide the genuine seeker of the truth, which will guide those who turn to the Qur’ān in order to find out what they ought or ought not to do.

The *mutashābih* verses are those which, having more than one meaning, require other ev-

idence in order to be understood. The reason for these multiple meanings is that time progresses, conditions change, human information increases, and there are as many levels of understanding as there are people. The Qur’ān, being the Word of God, addresses all levels of understanding from the time of its revelation to the Day of Resurrection. It explains to people matters which cannot be easily understood by using metaphors, similes, personifications, and parables. This way of explanation does not harm the unchanging, essential truths of religion, for God has clearly informed us of what He demands from us relating to faith, worship, morality, and the mandatory duties and prohibitions. The *mutashābih* (allegorical) verses contain relative truths which can be understood by considering the relevant verses and referring to the *muḥkam* ones.

Because of the realities of human life in this world, the relative truths are more in number than the absolute, unchanging ones. In order to understand this point, let us take a crystal chandelier as an example. While the light remains the same, those sitting around it perceive different colors or light of varying strength as their positions change. Such differences arise from the different shapes of the crystals in the chandelier, and the different angles of the crystals. In the same way, God Almighty included in the Qur’ān several allegorical verses in order to provide unlimited meanings with limited words to all people, whatever their level of knowledge or understanding might be, in order to teach them until the Last Day; in this way they are invited to reflect on the Book and to be guided to the truth. It should not be forgotten that an exact resemblance is not sought between that which is compared and that to which it is being compared.

Since the allegorical verses have multiple meanings, the interpreters of the Qur’ān may be able to discover one or more of those meanings. Each of their discoveries can be regarded as being true, provided it is in conformity with the *muḥkam* verses and the essentials of Islam, the rules of Qur’ānic Arabic and the rules of the science of interpretation. But whatever true meaning is arrived at by a scholar, the exact meaning of these verses is always referred to God, the All-Knowing; this is exegesis.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ آموَالَهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادَهُمْ مِنَ  
 اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْقَادِرُونَ عَلَىٰ كَذِبِ آلِ  
 فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَآخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
 بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 سَعَابُونَ وَتُخْتَضِرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَيَسُورُ الْمِهَادِ ﴿١١﴾ قَدْ  
 كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِتْنَةِ الْقُرْآنِ فَتَهُ تَفَارِقَ فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَىٰ كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلَيْهِمْ رَأَى  
 الْعَصِيبُ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصَرِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
 لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿١٢﴾ ذُرِّيَّتُ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ  
 مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ  
 وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْخَرْبِ ذَلِكَ  
 مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ  
 أَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِكُمْ بِحَيْثُ مَخَّرْتُمْ مِنَ الذِّكْرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّعَمُوا عِشْدَ رَبِّهِمْ  
 جَاءَتْ نَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ  
 مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿١٤﴾

the believers) as twice their actual number (during fighting). God confirms with His help and victory whom He wills. Surely in that is a lesson for those who have insight.

10. Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their offspring will avail them at all against God; they are fuel for the Fire.

11. It is just as that which happened to the clan (the court and military aristocracy) of the Pharaoh, and those before them. They denied Our signs and Revelations, and so God seized them for their sins. God is severe in retribution.

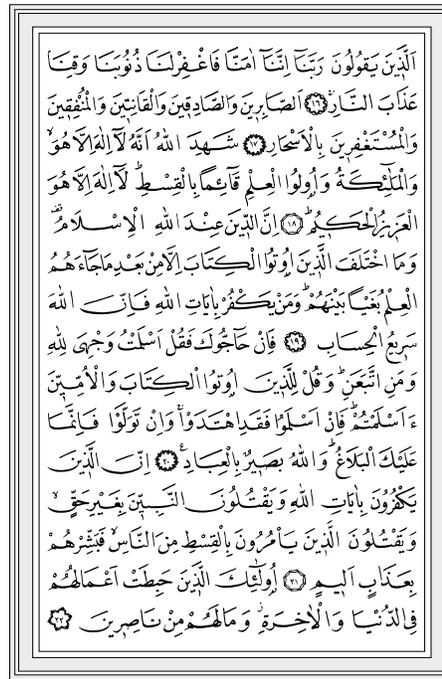
12. Say to those who disbelieve: “You will soon be overpowered and gathered into Hell!” – How evil a cradle it is!

13. Indeed there has been a manifest sign (of the truth of God’s way) and lesson for you in the two hosts that encountered (at the Battle of Badr): one host fighting in God’s cause, and the other disbelieving, who saw with their very eyes (the host of

14. Made innately appealing to men are passionate love for women, children, (hoarded) treasures of gold and silver, branded horses, cattle, and plantations. Such are enjoyments of the present, worldly life; yet with God is the best of the goals to pursue.

15. Say (to them): “Shall I inform you of what is better than those (things that you so passionately seek to obtain)? For those who keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety there are, with their Lord, Gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide, and spouses purified, and God’s good pleasure (with them). God sees the servants well.

## الْأَنْبِيَاءُ



16. Those (the God-revering, pious) pray: “Our Lord, we do indeed believe, so forgive us our sins and guard us against the punishment of the Fire;”

17. Those who are persevering (in misfortune and steadfast in fulfilling God’s commandments and in refraining from sins), and truthful (in their words and actions, and true to their covenants), and devoutly obedient, and who spend (out of what God has provided for them, in His cause and for the needy), and who implore God’s forgiveness before daybreak.

18. God (Himself) testifies that there surely is no deity but He, and so do the angels and those of knowledge, being firm in upholding truth and uprightness: (these all testify that) there is no deity but He, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.<sup>3</sup>

19. The (true) Religion with God is Islam. Those who were given the Book before differed only after the knowledge (of truth) came to them because of envious rivalry and insolence among themselves. Whoever disbelieves in the Revelations of God (should know that) God is swift at reckoning.

20. If they still remonstrate with you, say (to them, O Messenger): “I have submitted my whole being to God, and so have those who follow me.” And ask those

who were given the Book before, and the common folk who know nothing about the Book: “Have you also submitted (to God)?” If they have submitted, then they are indeed rightly guided; but if they turn away, then what rests with you is only to convey the Message fully and clearly. God sees the servants well.

21. Those who disbelieve in the Revelations of God, and frequently kill the Prophets (sent to them) against all right, and who kill those who advocate and try to establish equity and justice – give them the glad tidings of a painful punishment.

22. Those are the ones whose works have been wasted in both this world and the Hereafter, and they have no helpers (to restore their works to their benefit and save them from punishment).

3. This verse, by virtue of its being the greatest evidence of God’s Existence and Oneness, of being the verse that is the most expressive of this, is regarded as being equal to God’s Greatest Name.

Everything in the universe, from the minutest particles to the most expansive galaxies, and every event that takes place in it, bears decisive evidence of the Existence and Oneness of God. For with a thing’s coming into existence, with its life and particularities, and with the function it fulfills in the general network of existence, every creature and every object points to a single Deity Who has absolute and infinite Attributes, including, in particular, Knowledge, Power, and Will.

Imagine that you are standing by a river at midday. In each of the bubbles floating by on this river there can be seen a tiny, shining sun. When those bubbles go into a distant tunnel, the tiny suns can no longer be seen. But in the bubbles that are passing in front of us at that moment, we can still see the same tiny suns. This proves that the suns found in the bubbles do not actually belong to the bubbles themselves, nor are they of their own making. They are the reflections of the one, single sun in the sky. This is how each bubble bears witness to the existence and oneness of the sun. It also shows that the sun provides light. (If we look at the sun through a prism, we are able to discern the light of the sun in different colors.) The tiny suns continue to be reflected in new bubbles that pass us by, while others are getting lost in the tunnel – all this goes to demonstrate that the sun is a permanent object.

Thus, all the things in the universe are like a bubble. The coming into existence of these things, provided as they are with the necessary equipment for life in the proper environment, goes to prove the Existence of a Creator Who has full knowledge of both the object and the universe, for every object has a relationship with almost everything else in the whole of the universe. The power that those living creatures have to see and hear indicates that the Creator sees and hears, and their ability to satisfy their vital needs proves that the Creator is All-

Providing. The death of living beings and their being replaced by new ones show that the Creator is Permanent. Likewise, the order of the universe and the reality that its components mutually help one another also indicate the fact that the Creator is One. For example, in order for a morsel of food to enter the human body as sustenance, the sun, soil, water, and the plant from which the morsel has been produced, and all the organs of the human body must cooperate. This can only be explained by attributing this cooperation to a Unique Being Who has full knowledge of, and power over, all these things. It is clear that whoever has created and directs the solar system has also created the human body and directs it. Among creatures, humanity has will and consciousness. Despite this, no human being plays a role in their coming into this world, in the choice of their family, color or race, nor in the time or their place of birth and death. Moreover, human beings have the minutest part even in their most ordinary acts, like eating and drinking. It is not we who make it necessary for us to eat or drink; someone else has designed this body, which works automatically, outside of our free will; someone else has placed us in this welcoming environment and has determined the relationship between our body and the environment, including what is edible and what is not. The part we play in eating only consists of putting the morsel in our mouth and chewing. All this clearly demonstrates that the One Who has designed the human body with all its vital needs and organs is the same Being as the One Who has created its environment including the sun, the soil, water and plants, and Who has undertaken to meet these vital needs. That Being is One Who has full knowledge of the universe and humanity and has enough power to create and direct them all at the same time, with an absolutely free will.

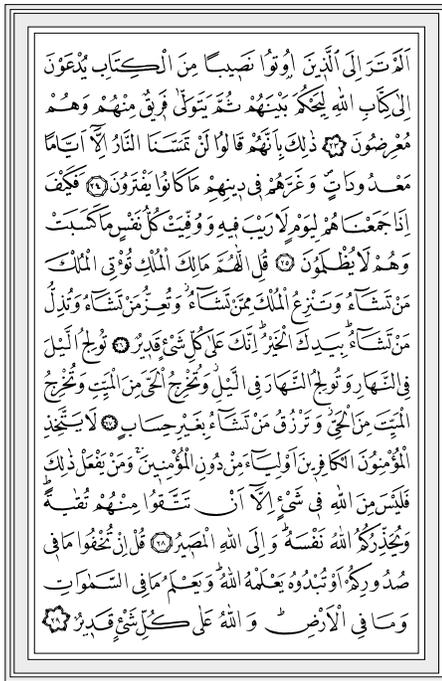
Apart from this “objective” reality, there is the fact that human beings feel in their conscience the Existence of God as a point of reliance, especially in instances when they are left with nothing to resort to in order to achieve their desire or to be saved from a calamity; it is

at this time that they ask for help. Humans feel that there must be One Who can help them to achieve their desires or save them from danger. Even if they do not encounter difficult situations, all humans have an innate feeling for His Existence.

In short, it is absolutely impossible to explain existence without the Existence of God. His Existence is more manifest than anything else in the universe. The person who denies Him is no different from one who closes their eyes at midday and claims that there is no sun in the universe. God's Existence is even more manifest than that of the sun. A person can act like a sophist and doubt their own existence, but they cannot doubt God's Existence or Oneness. Certain factors, such as vainglory, wrongdoing, having an incorrect perspective of existence because of, for example, the education that one has had, or the environment in which one has grown up, or the lifestyle that one leads and one's personal interests, may have sealed the faculties of "seeing," "hearing," and "thinking," which lead some to the denial of God. However, the angels and those possessed of "knowledge," who view and study things and events with eyes that are able to "see," with ears that are able to "hear," with a heart that is keen and lively enough to understand, and with a pure conscience, and those who rely on the knowledge that the Prophets received from God through Revelation, witness that God exists and that He is One.

4. Literally, Islam means submission, salvation, and peace. It is possible only through submission to God that one can attain peace in both individual and social spheres, and salvation in

both this world and the next. This is why all the Prophets came with the same doctrine of faith, the same precepts of worship and good conduct, and the same principles for regulating social life. It is only in some secondary matters of law that they differed; and this was only in connection with the time and conditions in which they lived. The name of the religion that encompasses this doctrine and these precepts and principles is Islam. Names such as "Judaism" and "Christianity" were given to this standard religion by either its followers or by its opponents, and they were given some time after Moses and Jesus, upon them both be peace, had left this world. What this means is that all the Prophets came with Islam and communicated it, but individual followers failed to observe and preserve it, making changes in it over time. It was communicated for the final time by the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, in a way that would *embrace all people until the end of time*. So it is only "the Islam" which the Prophet Muḥammad preached that is approved by God as the true religion: *Say (O Messenger): "We have believed in God (without associating any partners with Him), and that which has been sent down on us, and that which was sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes, and that which was given to Moses, Jesus, and all other Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them (in believing), and we are Muslims (submitted to Him exclusively). Whoever seeks as religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers"* (sūrah 3: 84-85).



23. Do you not consider those who were given a portion from the Book? They are called to the Book of God to judge between them, and then (after the judgment was given), a party of them turn away in aversion.

24. (They venture to do so) because they claim: “The Fire will not touch us at all, except for a certain number of days.” (The false beliefs) that they used to invent have deluded them in their religion.

25. How then will they fare when We gather them all together for an (awesome) Day about (the coming of) which there is no doubt, and when every soul will be repaid in full for what it earned (while in the world), and none will be wronged?

26. Say: “O God, Master of all dominion! You give dominion to whom You will, and

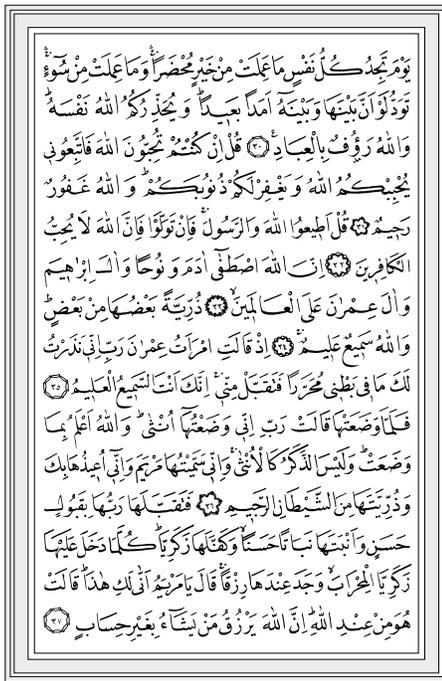
take away dominion from whom You will, and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will; in Your hand is all good; surely You have full power over everything.

27. “You make the night pass into the day and You make the day pass into the night (and so make each grow longer or shorter); You bring forth the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living, and You provide whomever You will without reckoning.”

28. Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends, guardians, and councilors in preference to the believers. Whoever does that is not on a way from God and has no connection with Him, unless it be to protect yourselves against them and take precautions (against the danger of being persecuted and forced to turn away from your Religion or betray your community, or of losing your life). And God warns you that you beware of Himself; and to God is the homecoming.<sup>5</sup>

29. Say (to the believers): “Whether you keep secret what is in your bosoms or reveal it, God knows it. He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. God has full power over everything.”

5. This verse does not forbid believers to treat others well; even if the others are unbelievers, the believers should do good to them. Obeying the law, remaining faithful to promises and covenants, earnestness and trustworthiness in transactions, doing good for others and showing mercy are all requirements of the faith. But believers cannot prefer unbelievers, especially if they are openly hostile to Islam and to Muslims, in the deputation of their affairs. They cannot establish a relationship with them in a way that will harm Islam or the Muslim community.



30. The Day when every soul will find whatever good it has done brought forward, and whatever evil it has done, it will wish that there were a far space between it and that evil. God warns you that you beware of Himself; and God is All-Pitying for the servants.

31. Say (to them, O Messenger): “If you indeed love God, then follow me, so that God will love you and forgive you your sins.” God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.<sup>6</sup>

32. Say (again): “Obey God, and the Messenger.” If they still turn away, (then know that only the unbelievers turn away from this call, and let them know that) God does not love the unbelievers.

33. (They refuse faith in you and some of the Prophets because you did not appear

among them, but God favors whomever He wishes with Messengership, and) God made pure Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of ‘Imrān, choosing them above all humankind,

34. As descendants of one another (and they were following the same way. Therefore, do not, in respect of believing in them as Prophets, make any distinction between the Prophets and do not think or speak ill of God’s preference). God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.<sup>7</sup>

35. (Remember) when the wife of ‘Imrān entreated: “My Lord, I have dedicated that which is in my womb to Your exclusive service. Accept it, then, from me. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”

36. When she was delivered of it, she said: “My Lord, I have given birth to a female.” – God knew best of what she was delivered, (so she did not need to be sorry, because) the male child (she expected) could not be the same as (the) female child (whom We bestowed on her and would honor with a great favor). – I have named her Mary and commend her and her offspring to You for protection from Satan eternally rejected (from God’s Mercy).<sup>8</sup>

37. (In response to her mother’s sincerity and purity of intention in dedicating the child,) her Lord accepted her with gracious favor and enabled to her a good growth (upbringing), and entrusted her to the care of Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah went in to her in the Sanctuary, he found her provided with food. “Mary,” he asked, “how does this come to you?” “From God,” she answered. Truly God provides to whomever He wills without reckoning.

6. This verse alone would be enough to proclaim the infallibility of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the importance of following his Sunnah, even if there were no other verse of equal importance.

Love is the very substance of existence and the link amongst all its parts. With all His essential Qualities originating in His very Essence, and Attributes, Names and acts, the Creator of existence is absolutely perfect. Any perfection is loved because of itself. Since God is All-Perfect and the source of all perfection in existence, He is worthy of love above everything else. Being the All-Loving, He loves Himself in a way suitable for His all-sacred and all-holy Essence. This love is the origin of existence or the universe. That is, due to His sacred love of Himself, He has created the universe and loves all of His creatures beyond all comparison. This infinite love is focused, first of all, on the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as he is both the seed and most illustrious fruit of creation: one who has manifested God with his whole life and the Religion he preached. He made God known to people and loved by them, thus realizing the purpose for God's creation of the universe. Humanity has the loftiest position and is expected to respond to God's love of creatures, including, in particular, humanity itself, with a recognition and love for Him. Love of God requires loving His most beloved servant and Messenger – the Prophet Muḥammad – because the door to the love of God opens through him. Loving him shows itself by following him and designing one's life according to the religion he preached. People cannot be sincere in their claim of love unless they follow the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad in their daily life and practice Islam. The following verse confirms this point.

7. Muslim scholars, such as Muḥyi'd-dīn ibn al-'Arabī and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi compare creation to a tree. A tree grows from a seed. This seed contains the laws God has established to govern the future life of the tree. The program and the general future form of the tree, with all its parts, are also encapsulated or en-

coded in the seed. The main substance or essence of the tree encoded or encapsulated in the seed is gradually refined and develops until it yields fruit. Just as the life of a tree begins with and ends in a seed, humanity is not only the fruit, but also the seed of the Tree of Creation.

The roots of the Tree of Creation are in the heavens. This Tree first produced its main two branches as the spiritual/metaphysical and material/physical worlds. The physical worlds are divided into two: the heavens and the earth, each being filled with its own inhabitants. The Tree of Creation finally yielded humanity as the main fruit.

Since the fruit contains the seed, and the seed, as pointed out above, contains all the characteristics of the tree, this means that in addition to humanity having particular aspects, such as will-power and speech as a developed system of communication, it also has both angelic and satanic, heavenly and earthly, elemental, vegetable, and animal aspects.

Although a tree yields much fruit, it grows from a single seed. Since humanity is endowed with free will and human beings vary in capacity, there are among them as many degrees in mental and spiritual progress as there are human beings. The Prophets are the most developed and perfect among human beings, these fruits of the Tree of Creation. They descended from the Families of Abraham and 'Imrān, the two being related, and their history dates back to Noah and Adam, upon them be peace. Therefore, all the Prophets are the descendants of Adam; and after him, Noah, and after him, they are from the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān. The family of 'Imrān was the family from which Jesus, upon him be peace, descended, while the family of Abraham, upon him be peace, is that from which the Prophet Muḥammad came. The chain of the Prophets was selected among all of humanity and finally, at the point of greatest perfection and purity, ended in the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. This means that as the Prophet Muḥammad is the most perfect and the purest fruit of the Tree of Creation, his nature and essence is the seed of the Tree of Creation.

The fact that the Prophets are the descendants of one another does not mean that one family or dynasty is given priority. The line to which the Prophets belong spreads throughout the Tree of Creation; in this way one or more Prophets came to every people. This is made quite clear in the Qur’ān, which declares that God will not punish a people unless He has raised a Prophet among them (*sūrah* 17: 15) and that He raised almost every Prophet among his own people (*sūrah* 26: 106, 124, 142, 161, 176).

The fact that all of the Prophets, upon them be peace, are pure and are chosen above all other people makes them distinguished by certain important qualities or characteristics, known as the characteristics of the Prophets. These characteristics are absolute truthfulness and trustworthiness, intellect and sagacity to the highest degree, sinlessness, communication of the Divine Message, and being exempt from all mental and bodily defects (*The Messenger of God*, 43).

هَذَاكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً  
 طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَفَتَدْتُمَّهُ الْمَلَكَةُ وَهُوَ  
 قَائِمٌ مُصَلٍّ فِي الْخُرَابِ أَنْ اللَّهَ يَبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ فَآقَا  
 بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَسَتِغَا وَحَصُورًا وَتَيْبًا مِنَ  
 الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي الْكِبَرُ  
 وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ  
 رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَاتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ  
 إِلَّا وُجْهًا وَآذُنًا وَذِكْرًا رَبِّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَخَّرَ بِالْعُسِيِّ وَالْإِنْبَاءِ ﴿٤٦﴾  
 وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ  
 وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي  
 لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ  
 نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُتْلَى أُولَآئِكَ الْآيَاتِ  
 الْكُبْرَىٰ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ إِسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ  
 عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

38. At that point, Zachariah turned to his Lord in prayer and said: “My Lord, bestow upon me out of Your grace a good, upright offspring. Truly, You are the All-Hearing of prayer.”

39. It was when, after some time, he stood praying in the Sanctuary that the angels called to him: “God gives you the glad tidings of John to confirm a Word from God, and as one lordly, perfectly chaste, a Prophet, among the righteous.”

40. “Lord,” said he (Zachariah), “How shall I have a son when old age has overtaken me, and my wife is barren?” “Just so,” he (the angel) said, (quoting God): “God does whatever He wills.”

41. “Lord,” he (Zachariah) entreated, “appoint a sign for me.” “Your sign,” He said, “is that you will not be able to speak to people for three days except by gesture. And (meanwhile) remember and mention your Lord much, and glorify Him in the afternoon and the early hours of morning.”

42. And (in due time came the moment) when the angels said: “Mary, God has chosen you and made you pure, and exalted you above all the women in the world.

43. “Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord, prostrate and bow (in the Prayer and devotion to Him) with those who bow!”

44. (O Messenger!) That is of the tidings of the things of the unseen (the things that took place in the past and have remained hidden from people with all their truth), which We reveal to you, for you were not present with them when they drew lots with their pens about who should have charge of Mary; nor were you present with them when they were disputing (about the matter).

45. And (remember) when the angels said: “Mary, God gives you the glad tidings of a Word from Him, to be called the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, highly honored in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those near-stationed to God.

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّبَاحِ ۗ قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۗ وَيَسْأَلُهُ الْكُتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ۗ وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلَقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنزِلُ الْأَنْعَامَ وَالْأَنْزَالَ وَأُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبِتُ بِالْأَنْزَالِ ۗ وَمَا تَدْرُجُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلِأَجْلِ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَحَدِّثْكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ۗ قُلْ أَخْسَرُ عِندَ رَبِّي مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۗ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَابِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْخَوَارِجُونَ ۗ نَحْنُ أَنْصَابُ اللَّهِ ۗ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّ مُسْلِمُونَ ۗ

49. “(And He will make him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel (saying to them, by way of explaining his mission): ‘Assuredly I have come to you with a clear proof from your Lord: I fashion for you out of clay something in the shape of a bird, then I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God’s leave. And I heal the blind from birth and the leper, and I revive the dead, by God’s leave. And I inform you of what things you eat, and what you store up in your houses. Surely in this is a clear proof for you (demonstrating that I am a Messenger of God), if you are sincere believers (as you claim).’<sup>8</sup>

50. ‘And confirming (the truth contained in) the Torah that was revealed before me, and to make lawful for you certain things that had been forbidden to you. Be sure that I have come to you with a clear proof (demonstrating that I am a Messenger of God) from your Lord. So keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety, and obey me.

51. ‘Surely, God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path (to follow).’<sup>9</sup>

52. (Having preached his message in this way for a long time,) Jesus perceived their willful persistence in unbelief (and open hostility), and called out: “Who will be my helpers (on this way) to God?” The disciples answered: “We are the helpers of God(’s cause). We believe in God, and (we call you to) bear witness that we are Muslims (submitted to Him exclusively).

46. “He will speak to people in the cradle and in manhood, and he is of the righteous.”

47. “Lord,” said Mary, “how shall I have a son seeing no mortal has ever touched me?” “That is how it is,” he (the Spirit who appeared before her) said, (quoting God): “God creates whatever He wills; when He decrees a thing, He does but say to it ‘Be!’ and it is.

48. “And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom – and the Torah and the Gospel,

8. While explaining the meaning of the Names taught to Adam, it was pointed out (note 32 to the previous *sūrah*) that the knowledge of things was given to Adam in a summarized form and was taught to the Messengers in relative detail during the course of history according to the mission of each. This is why the

Messengers also became the forerunners in scientific knowledge and progress, in addition to being guides in spirituality and morality. The knowledge given to the Prophets to make them the forerunners in scientific knowledge and progress was usually manifested as miracles. The miracles a Prophet worked, by God’s leave,

usually concerned the science that was being studied the most at that time. So, just as the miracles left the scientists of the time helpless in creating a similar miracle, they also marked the final point of progress which that science would be able to realize by the Last Day.

Through Jesus' miracles, such as healing the congenitally blind and the lepers, or in bringing the dead back to life by His leave, God Almighty means:

I gave two gifts to one of My servants who renounced the world for My sake: the remedy for spiritual ailments, and the cure for physical sicknesses. Dead hearts were quickened through the light of guidance, and sick people, who were like the dead, found health through his breath and cure. You may find the cure for all illnesses in My "pharmacy" in nature, where I attached many important purposes to each thing. Work and find it. (*The Words*, "The 20<sup>th</sup> Word," 268)

Thus, this verse marks the final point of medical development, which is far ahead of the present level, and urges us towards it.

The Prophetic Traditions that inform us that Jesus will return to the world towards the end of time suggest that the science of medicine will be in great demand and will have realized significant progress. The community of believers who will represent the Messianic spirit at that time will have to not only revive dead hearts with the light of faith, but also find cures for almost every illness.

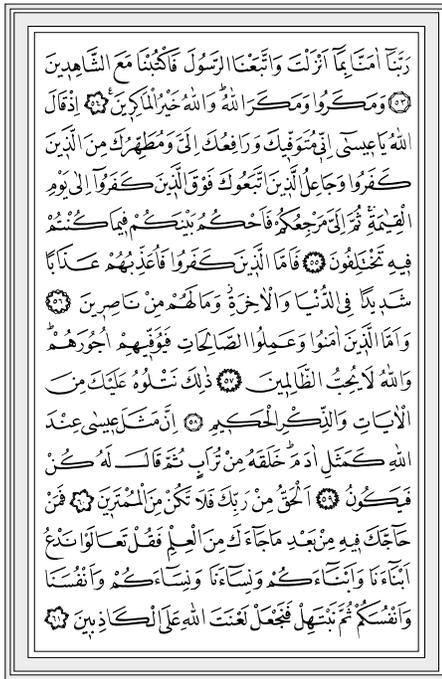
Jesus' insistence on repeating "by God's leave" while presenting his miracles is a serious warning that it is not Jesus, upon him be peace, who created all such miracles; rather it is God, underlining the fact that Jesus was

only a human being, neither a deity or a son of a deity.

9. The verses both refute those among the Jews who rejected the Prophethood of Jesus, upon him be peace, and reject the "divinity" of Jesus or a relationship of a "son" that is claimed by some Christians. If he had been an imposter, not designated by God, Jesus, upon him be peace, would surely have attempted to make use of his miracles to found an independent religion. He believed in, and confirmed, the validity of the teachings of the original Religion preached by the earlier Prophets. This is also clear in his statements in the existing Gospels: "Do not think not that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (*Matthew*, 5: 17). A Jewish lawyer asked, "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus, upon him be peace, replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is *the* first and great commandment. And the second *is* like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (*Ibid.*, 22: 35-40).

The fundamental points of Jesus' mission were the same as those of the other Prophets and were as follows:

- Humanity should believe, first of all, in the Existence and Oneness of God, and acknowledge His exclusive sovereignty, which demands absolute service and obedience to Him.
- Humanity should obey the Prophets since they have been designated by God to convey His Religion.
- God establishes the law which orders human life.



53. “Our Lord! We believe in what You have sent down and we follow the Messenger, so write us down among the witnesses (of Your Oneness and Lordship, and of the truth You have revealed).”

54. And they (the unbelievers) schemed (against Jesus), but God put His will into effect (and brought their scheme to nothing). God wills what is the best (for His believing servants) and makes His will prevail.

55. (It was part of His executing His will) when God said: “Jesus, (as your mission has ended,) I will take you back (to My-

self) and raise you up to Myself, and will purify you of (the groundless slanders of) those who disbelieve, and set your followers above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>10</sup> Then to Me you will all return, and I will judge between you concerning all that on which you were used to differ.

56. “As for those who disbelieve, I will punish them with a severe punishment in the world and the Hereafter; and they will have no helpers (against My punishment).

57. “As for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, He will pay their rewards in full. God does not love the wrongdoers (and Himself never does wrong).”

58. Thus (O Messenger,) all this that We recite to you consists of Revelations and is from the Wise Reminder (the Qur’an).

59. (The creation of) Jesus in reference to God resembles (the creation of) Adam. He created him from earth, then said He to him, “Be!” and he is.<sup>11</sup>

60. (As the truth always consists in what your Lord wills and decrees,) so is this the truth from your Lord (in this matter); do not then be (and you are never expected to be) of those who doubt.

61. After the (true) knowledge has come to you, whoever still disputes with you about him (Jesus), say (in challenging them): “Come, then! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, our selves and your selves, and then let us pray and invoke God’s curse upon those who lie.”

10. Like his coming into the world, Jesus’ departure from the world was unusual. He did not die as other people do, but God took back his spirit and body, which took on the form of, or changed into, an “astral” body. This can

be analogous with the Ascension of Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. However, while Jesus, upon him be peace, having completed his mission, remained where he ascended, the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him

be peace and blessings, returned to the world to complete his mission.

The Divine will that Jesus' followers will be above the unbelievers until the Day of Judgment has two meanings:

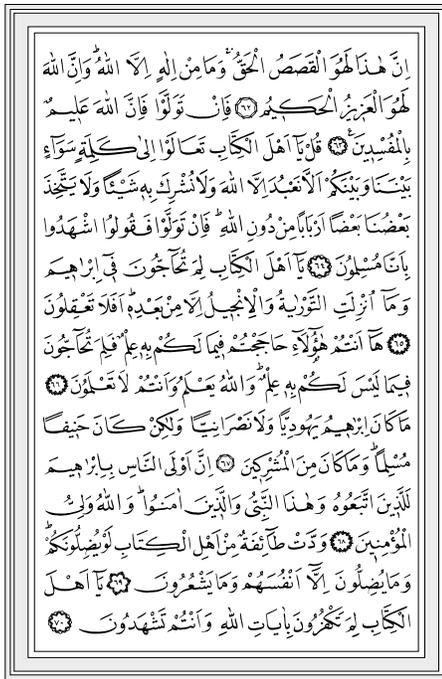
- The people of pure monotheism, including primarily the community of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, will generally be above the unbelievers until the Day of Resurrection. (Such rules are general, having certain exceptions, but an exception does not nullify the rule.)
- Those who believe and follow Jesus, upon him be peace, even with some errors and deviations, will generally be above the Jews who reject him.

11. The particles or atoms that formed Adam's body existed in the ground, water and air. As mentioned in note 7 above, the essence of humanity, which constitutes the essence or seed of the Tree of Creation, was inherent in the "roots, trunk," and the "main branches" of the corporeal and immaterial worlds during the process of its continual refinement. The corporeal or visible world ramified into the branches of the heavens and the earth. As understood from a supplication of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, which contains, "All-Glorified is He Who has laid soil over a fluid solidified," the earth was initially a hot fluid. The fluid was later solidified into a rock stratum and formed a crust. The rock stratum crumbled over a long period, and the soil stratum was formed. This stratum was prepared for life with rain that descended from the direction of heaven. The essence or seed of the Tree of Creation, which underwent a continual process of refinement, during

which it grew into many worlds inhabited by animate and inanimate beings that are particular to each, yielded the elements, vegetables, and animals as its twigs, leaves, and blossoms, each of which serve the other as source or main material in coming into existence and as food for its survival. At the final point of the refinement process and as the fruit of the Tree of Creation on the branch of the earth, God created Adam and Eve. The verse, *Did there pass (- and surely there passed -) over human a stretch of time when he was a thing not mentioned and remembered (as human)?* (76: 1, also see note 1) indicates this process of refinement during which the human essence existed at its center or origin, although there was as yet no mention of humanity.

In order to remove the doubts concerning creation which existed at that time (and still continue to exist in different forms today), as well as to balance the Jewish materialism with an accurate spiritualism of the Divine Religion, and to demonstrate His Will and Power in a more obvious way, God created Jesus as He had created Adam, upon them be peace. Out of the same elements from which He fashioned Adam in the "womb" of the earth, He fashioned Jesus in the womb of a virgin. The difference between this type of fashioning and the fashioning of other humans is that God, out of wisdom, uses sperm in the creation of the latter.

While narrating Adam's creation, the verse uses the past tense, but concludes with "*fe-yekūn*," meaning "becomes" or "is." This is done in order to stress that it is God alone Who creates and gives life; nothing else plays any part. This is the same for all living beings, including Adam and Jesus. The verse also implies that God creates every thing and every being separately and individually.



ing Abraham (whether he was a Jew or a Christian), when both the Torah and the Gospel were not sent down save after him? Will you ever not reason and understand?

66. Indeed, you are such people that you dispute concerning even a matter about which you have knowledge; why, then, should you dispute on a matter about which you have no knowledge? God knows, but you do not know.

67. Abraham was not a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was one pure of faith and Muslim (who submitted to God with a sound heart). He was never of those who associate partners with God.<sup>13</sup>

68. Surely those of humankind who have the best claim to relationship with Abraham are those who followed him (during the term of his mission), and this (most illustrious) Prophet, and those (in his company) who believe. God is the guardian of the believers (to Whom they can entrust their affairs and on Whom they can rely).

69. A party of the People of the Book wish that they could lead you astray; yet they lead none astray except themselves, but they do not perceive (that this is so).

70. O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve<sup>14</sup> in God's Revelations (the clear proofs of truth), when you yourselves bear witness (to their truth in your own Books)?

62. This is indeed the true narrative; and there is no deity but God, and truly God is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

63. If they (still) turn away, be assured that God has full knowledge of those engaged in causing disorder and corruption.

64. Say (to them, O Messenger): "O People of the Book, come to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but God, and associate none as partner with Him, and that none of us take others for Lords, apart from God." If they (still) turn away, then say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims (submitted to Him exclusively)."<sup>12</sup>

65. O People of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Why do you dispute concern-

12. This call, made by Islam 14 centuries ago to the People of the Book, is still being made to the People of the Book and people of learning today; it is of great significance, especially from the following viewpoints:

- In conveying Islam to others we should seek a common point on which to meet the audience. If it is worshipping One God without associating any partners with Him in relation to People of the Book, then when dealing with atheists it can be sharing the same human nature and destiny on the earth.
- Using an attractive, gentle style, and endearment are of great importance. If we can liken Islam to a magnificent palace that has as many roads to reach it as there are in the whole of creation and as many portals to enter it as there are human beings, then there is a door for each human being to enter it and what we must do is to be able to detect to whom we must show which door (*Kurʾan ʿdan ʾIḍrake*, 109–110).
- Despite their deliberately refractory attitude, the People of the Book are not cut off from the dialogue in the Qurʾān, indicating that common points should be given priority in this dialogue.
- “The verse has shown how various consciences, nations, religions, and books can unite in one essential conscience and word of truth, and how Islam has instructed the human realm in such a wide, open, and true path of salvation and law of freedom. It has been shown fully that this is not limited to Arab or non-Arab people. Religious progress is possible not by narrow consciences or by being separate from one another, but by being universal and broad” (Yazır, 2: 1131–32).
- Worshipping God without associating

any partners with Him in His Divinity and Lordship (His being the One Who nurtures, raises and trains all creation, the One Who has exclusive right to be worshipped, and the sole authority to establish the fundamental rules and principles to govern human life) is the primary condition of believing in One God and following His Religion.

13. The Jews claimed that their religion was the true religion and, therefore, Abraham, upon him be peace, was a Jew, whereas the Christians claimed that their religion was the true one and, therefore, Abraham was a Christian. Naturally this is impossible. While they could not agree on several matters contained by their Books and the matters like that of Jesus, upon him be peace, it was completely senseless that they made claims and disputed about matters about which they had no knowledge. It is impossible that Abraham should be a Jew or a Christian, because both the Torah and Gospel were revealed centuries after Abraham. Historically, Judaism and Christianity are the names given to the religions revealed to Moses and Jesus, upon them be peace, respectively by either their followers or opponents centuries later. So, Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a Muslim, one who submitted to God wholly or followed Islam, which is the unique Religion – the Religion of submission to God.

14. The Holy Qurʾān has broadened the meaning of many words and has introduced them as concepts. For this reason, it is almost impossible to render them in other languages with only one word. Such words require explanation or description when translated. The original of unbelief is “*kufr*.” It means concealing a truth and rejecting it willfully. In most cases, it originates in vainglory and egotism, obstinacy, mental and spiritual deviation, wrongdoing, having an incorrect viewpoint, seeking self-interest, and gratifying one’s ambitions.



## الْحُرُوفُ الثَّلَاثُ

٥٩

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وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤْنَ إِلَيْنَهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ لِغَشْبِهِ  
 مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ  
 وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ  
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيِّ أَنْ يُثْبِتَ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ  
 وَالنَّبِيَّةَ شَيْءًا يَقُولُ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
 وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُسَلِّونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ  
 تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَلَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَالِيَّةَ  
 وَالنَّيْبَ أَرْبَابًا أَيُّكُمْ بِالْكَفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ  
 ﴿٦١﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ  
 كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ فَتُجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِي قَالُوا أَتُؤَدُّونَ لِي  
 مَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَضْتُمْ وَآخَذْتُمْ  
 عَلَيَّ ذَلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَتُؤْرَثُ قَالَ أَفَأَشْهَدُوا وَإِنِّي  
 مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَمَنْ تَوَلَّى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ  
 هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَفَعَبَّرْتُمْ أَنْ يَضَعُوا إِلَهُهُمُ الَّذِي  
 رَبَّاهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَقْرَبُوا  
 مِنَ اللَّهِ عَدَاوَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

78. And among them is a party twisting (the words of) the Book with their tongues (during their reading, in order to distort its meaning), so that you may suppose it part of the Book, when it is not part of the Book; and they say it is from God's Presence, when it is not from God's Presence. They speak lies in attribution to God, and do so knowingly.

79. It is not (conceivable) that God should give a human being the Book, authority with sound, wise Judgment, and Prophethood, and then he should say to people: "Be servants to me, apart from God." Rather (he would say): "Be pure, dedicated servants of the Lord, in that you teach the Book and in that you study it."

80. And he never commands you to take the angels and the Prophets for Lords. Would he command you to unbelief, when you have (answered his call and) become Muslims (submitted to God exclusively)?

81. And when God took compact with the Prophets: "That I have given you a

Book and Wisdom; then there will come to you a Messenger confirming what (of the Divine Revelations) you already possess – you shall certainly believe in him and you shall certainly help him."<sup>15</sup> So saying, He asked: "Have you affirmed this and agreed to take up My burden (that I lay upon you) in this matter?" They answered: "We have affirmed (it)." He said: "Then bear witness (you and your communities), and I will be with you among the witnesses."

82. Then whoever after this turns away, those are the transgressors.

83. Do they now seek a religion other than God's, when to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, willingly or unwillingly,<sup>16</sup> and to Him they are being returned?

15. In a general sense, a Prophet is one who receives Revelation from God and has the duty of communicating it to people. In this sense, Messengership is included in the meaning of Prophethood. In a more particular sense, a Prophet is one who receives Divine Revelation, and follows the Book and the Law that the Messenger prior to him brought or follows a contemporary Messenger, without himself having received a separate Book. What is meant by the Book in the verse must be the Book or the part of it to which a Prophet becomes heir. Every Messenger is also a Prophet, but not vice versa.

Prior to the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, in former communities, there used to be several Prophets at the same time, even in the same place. When circumstances required a Messenger to come with a new Book, or Law, or some amendment, God sent one. Since the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, meticulous, pure scholars and great spiritual masters have carried on the mission of the Prophets, without, of course, receiving Revelation, and great "revivers," who have combined both scholarship and spiritual mastery, have become heirs to the mission of Messengership. The saying, "The scholars of my community are like the Prophets of the Children of Israel," attributed to the

Prophet Muḥammad, is not well-authenticated as a Hadith, but in respect of its meaning, it still remains true in that scholars and spiritual masters have done what the previous Prophets and Messengers did, with the exception that there is no longer any need for a new Book to be sent. No scholar or spiritual master, however great and virtuous he or she may be, can be on the same level with a Prophet in virtue.

16. God has two kinds of laws, one related to the creation and operation of the universe, including each separate being, and to human (biological) life; the other established to govern human individual and social life. The former constitutes the subject matter of sciences (physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, sociology, psychology, etc). Some aspects of human social life are also included in the scope of this kind of laws. For example, the fruit of working is frequently wealth or success, while that of laziness is poverty. The second kind of laws can be summed up as being Religion. The whole of creation absolutely obeys the first kind of laws, while obeying the second is optional. However, it is also God Who determines the results of obeying or disobeying both kinds of laws. Therefore, the whole universe, including the human kingdom, is subject to God's laws and no one can escape them.

قُلْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَا اُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا اُنزِلَ عَلٰى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ  
 وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيٰسُقُوْبَ وَالْاِسْحٰبٰطِ وَمَا اُوْتِيَ  
 مُوسٰى وَعِيسٰى وَالْيَسُوْرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا تُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ  
 مِنْهُمْ وَتَحٰلُ اِلَيْهِمْ سُبُوْحًا ۗ وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا  
 فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ۝ كَيْفَ  
 يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوْا اَنَّ  
 الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَجَآءَ هُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝  
 اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ اَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ  
 اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۗ وَالَّذِيْنَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا لَا يَخَفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ  
 يُنظَرُوْنَ ۗ ۝ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاسْلَمُوْا  
 فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ  
 ثُمَّ اَزَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّنْ نُقَبِّلَنَّ وُجُوْهَهُمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ  
 الضّٰلُوْنَ ۗ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفْرًا  
 فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمْ مِلَّةٌ اِلَّا دَرِيْسٌ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ اَفْدَى بِهٖ  
 اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ عَدٰلًا اِلَيْهِمْ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نٰصِرِيْنَ ۗ ۝

84. Say: “We have believed in God (without associating any partners with Him), and that which has been sent down on us, and that which was sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes, and that which was given to Moses, Jesus, and all other Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them (in believing), and we are Muslims (submitted to Him wholly and exclusively).”

85. Whoever seeks as Religion other than Islam, (which is the standard Religion conveyed by all the Prophets during history, and is based on complete submission to God,) it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.<sup>17</sup>

86. How would God guide a people who have disbelieved after their belief, and after they have borne witness that the Messenger is true and after the clear proofs (of His Messengership and the Divine origin of the Book he has brought) have come to them? God guides not wrongdoing people.

87. For those – their recompense is that on them rests the curse of God, and of the angels, and of humankind, all together.<sup>18</sup>

88. Therein will they abide. Neither will their punishment be lightened, nor will they be granted any respite.

89. Save those who afterwards repent and mend their ways. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

90. But those who have disbelieved after their (profession of) belief<sup>19</sup> and then have hardened in unbelief, (they have lost the capacity for believing so they can no longer return to faith, nor repent until they are held in the jaws of death, and) their repentance (at that moment) will not be accepted. And they are those who are altogether astray.

91. Assuredly, those who disbelieve and die unbelievers, no ransom even if it was as much gold as to fill the earth will be accepted from any of them. Such are those for whom is a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers (against it).

17. Verse 83 declares that the only, authentic Religion is God's Religion, because whoever is in the heavens and the earth submits to God willingly or unwillingly. In Verse 84 it is stated that all the Prophets followed and conveyed this Religion, and this verse gives its name: Islam. As is explicit in the verses, Islam is the only Religion in God's sight, and it is based on unconditional submission to God. The verses also make it clear that Islam is, first of all, the Religion of all things and beings that are outside the human realm, as they are submitted to God willingly and unwillingly, and because they lead their lives according to the laws that God has established. Second, human life, outside the aspects related to human free will, is also ruled by Islam. Third, Islam is the Religion that God wants human beings to follow in life through their free will as well. As mentioned above, all the Prophets followed and conveyed Islam, and the other religions, such as Judaism and Christianity, are the forms it took on over time after being preached primarily by Moses and Jesus, upon them be peace, respectively. Moreover, these names, at least in case of Christianity, were given to them by outsiders, rather than by their own followers.

As the whole universe is submitted to, and strictly follows, the laws of One God as the Single Deity, Lord, and Sovereign, in it there is magnificent peace, balance, and harmony. What humanity must do as that part of existence that enjoys free will is to take part in this chorus of peace, balance, and harmony with that free will, and attain true happiness in both worlds. Any other belief or act would result in nothing more than corruption, unrest, anarchy, and wrongdoing in the world and torment and darkness upon darkness in the Hereafter.

18. Even though the majority of people are not usually true believers, the human conscience does not admit or confirm unbelief, wrongdoing, and transgression. Humans fall into unbelief

only after they follow their evil-commanding carnal souls and silence their conscience. However, as the human conscience rejects unbelief, and wrongdoing, and transgression, the destruction that these cause in both individual and social life never remains hidden. For this reason, succeeding generations have cursed their predecessors who have transgressed. This is why the Prophets are remembered and mentioned with feelings of blessing, even after thousands of years, and why the unjust tyrants of human history are always cursed. Such people will be cursed by God, the angels, and all humankind, especially in the Hereafter.

God's cursing means excluding from His mercy and condemning to punishment. Cursing by others denotes their asking God to exclude those deserving the curse from His mercy and condemn them to punishment.

19. Like unbelief, belief or faith is an act of confirmation by the heart. So, both have two aspects, one true, and the other apparent and related to the law. A human being who professes belief and fulfills the legal requirements of being a Muslim member of a Muslim community (such as giving the Prescribed Alms - the *Zakāh*) is regarded as a believer and a Muslim. Whether he or she is truly so must be referred to God. The Qur'ān includes such people in its address of, "O you who believe," and by doing so, it encourages believers to do what they are expected to as professors of the faith. It is hoped that they may confirm their profession of their faith through their actions, and belief may be implanted in their hearts. Despite their never-ending conspiracies, the hypocrites were always treated as believers and Muslims by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, unless ordered to do otherwise by God; an example of such a case is the matter of 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the hypocrites. When he died, the Messenger was forbidden by the Revelation to perform the funeral prayer for him.

لَنْ يَتَّكِلُوا الْبِرْحَىٰ تُنْفِثُوا مِمَّا يُحْيُونَ وَمَا تُنْفِثُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ  
 اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَيْهِ ۖ كُلُّ الظَّالِمِ كَانَ جَدًّا لِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا  
 مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ ۗ قُلْ  
 فَاتَّبِعُوا تَوْرِيهِ فَاتَّبَعُوا ۗ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْ صَادِقِينَ لَمْ يَدْرُوا عَلَىٰ  
 اللَّهِ الْكِبْرَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۖ قُلْ صَدَقَ  
 اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۗ إِنَّ  
 أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ۗ  
 فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا ۗ  
 وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ  
 اللَّهَ يُخَيِّطُ الْعَمَلِينَ ۗ قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَجْهَرُوا بِآيَاتِ  
 اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ ۗ قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ  
 لَا تَصِدُّوْنَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَن أَمَنَ تَتَّبِعُوا فِيهَا عِوَجًا  
 وَأَنْتُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِعَاقِلٍ ۗ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾  
 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّا نَطْبَعُهَا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَوْفُوا  
 الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُمُ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَمَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

92. You will never be able to attain godliness and virtue until you spend of what you love (in God's cause or to provide sustenance for the needy). Whatever you spend, God has full knowledge of it."<sup>20</sup>

93. All (kinds of) food (that are lawful in the Law revealed to Muhammad) were lawful to the Children of Israel (in the beginning) except what Israel (i.e. Prophet Jacob) forbade for himself before the Torah was sent down. Say (to them, O Messenger): "Bring the Torah and recite it, if you are truthful (in your claim that there is no abrogation in it)."<sup>21</sup>

94. So whoever fabricates falsehood in attribution to God after that (statement, above, of the truth of the matter) – such are the wrongdoers.

95. Say: "God speaks the truth." Therefore, follow the way of Abraham as people of pure faith (a faith free of unbelief, of associating partners with God, and of hypocrisy). He was never of those who associate partners with God.

96. Behold, the first House (of Prayer) established for humankind is the one at Bakkah (Makkah), a blessed place and a (center or focus of) guidance for all peoples.

97. In it, there are clear signs (demonstrating that it is a blessed sanctuary, chosen by God as the center of guidance), and the Station of Abraham. Whoever enters it is in security (against attack and fear). Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by all who can afford a way

to it. And whoever refuses (the obligation of the Pilgrimage) or is ungrateful to God (by not fulfilling this command), God is absolutely independent of all creatures.

98. Say: "O People of the Book! Why do you conceal and disbelieve in God's Revelations, God being Witness to all that you do?"

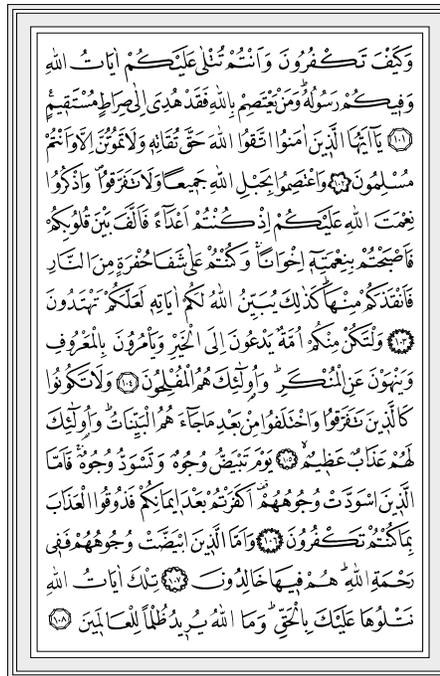
99. Say: "O People of the Book! Why do you bar from God's way those who believe, seeking to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves are witnesses (to its being the right way)? God is not unaware and unmindful of all that you do."

100. O you who believe! Were you to obey a party of those who were given the Book, they would turn you, after your faith, into unbelievers.

20. *Birr*, which it is preferable to translate as “godliness,” is an elevated rank in goodness and virtue. Those who have attained this rank are called the *barr* (plural *abrār*). Love of God and seeking out His approval or good pleasure lie at the essence of worship. In order to be regarded among the *abrār*, a believer must have acquired the spiritual refinement that enables one to spend in God’s way or to give others of what one loves. Godliness, or virtue, or piety, cannot be attained only by fulfilling certain formalities.

21. When the *qiblah* was changed from Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem to the Ka’bah in Makkah, some Israelite rabbis objected, claiming that this was an abrogation (*naskh*) and that there had been no abrogation in the Torah. Whereas, this verse, which openly declares the Torah to be a witness, announces that all kinds of

food that are lawful in the Law revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad were lawful to the Children of Israel in the beginning except what the Prophet Jacob forbade for himself before the Torah was sent down. However, verse 4: 160 says that, because of the wrong committed by the Jews, God made unlawful for them many pure, wholesome things which had (hitherto) been lawful for them. And verse 6: 146 explains that for those who are Jews God has made unlawful every animal with claws; and of oxen and sheep He has made unlawful to them their fat save that upon their backs or the entrails, or that which is mixed with the bone, and that it was because He recompensed them for their insolence and defiance. So, all this shows explicitly that there has been abrogation in the Torah as well. (Also see *Leviticus*, 7: 23–26.)



101. How do you disbelieve, seeing you are the ones to whom God's Revelations are recited, and His Messenger is amidst you? Whoever holds fast to God, he has certainly been guided to a straight path.

102. O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverent piety, with all the reverence that is due to Him, and see that you do not die save as Muslims (submitted to Him exclusively).

103. And hold fast all together to the rope of God, and never be divided. Remember God's favor upon you: you were once enemies, and He reconciled your hearts so that through His favor you became like brothers. You stood on the brink of a pit of fire, and He delivered you from it. Thus, God makes His signs of truth (Revelations) clear to you that you may be guided (to the Straight Path in all matters, and be steadfast on it).

104. There must be among you a community calling to good, and enjoining and promoting what is right and good, and forbidding and trying to prevent evil (in appropriate ways). They are those who are the prosperous.

105. Be not as those who split into parties and followed different ways after the manifest truths had come to them. Those are the ones for whom is a tremendous punishment.

106. On the Day when some faces turn bright and some faces turn dark; and as to those whose faces have turned dark (they will be told): "What! did you disbelieve after having believed? Taste, then, the punishment because you used to follow the way of unbelief!"

107. As for those whose faces have turned bright, they are (embraced) in God's mercy, therein abiding forever.

108. These are God's Revelations: We recite them to you in truth, and God wills not any wrong to the world's people.<sup>22</sup>

22. These verses inform the Muslim nation, a nation that is, and indeed should be, a solid, well-compacted structure under a leader, of the keys to true success and prosperity in both worlds:

- In order to maintain their existence and unity and be able to follow the Straight Path without any deviation, Muslims must regard as good whatever God has decreed good and as evil whatever He has decreed evil. They must always depend on the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and the principles originating from these two main sources, and refrain from referring to another source or confirming and imitating the People of the Book in any mistaken creeds and false ways.
- The Sunnah of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is a high-way upon which all Muslims come together to form a strong united body.
- Following the Sunnah leads one to hold fast to God.
- Piety of the highest degree – refraining from disobeying God and doing one’s best to perform His commands – guarantees that one follows the Sunnah and holds fast to God.
- By following the Sunnah and, thereby, by holding fast to God and the highest degree of piety, a Muslim offers God an irrefutable petition to be able to remain a Muslim until the time of their death, and to accomplish the goal of dying a Muslim (submitted to Him exclusively).
- By following the Sunnah, a Muslim follows the Qur’ān and, in a general sense, the religion of Islam based on these two cardinal sources. The Sunnah, in the broadest sense, is how God’s Messenger understood and practiced Islam dependent on the Qur’ān in both the life of the individual and society, and the principles God established for this purpose.
- Remembering God’s favors as often as possible, and paying the required thanks, thus being a thankful servant, saves a Muslim against falling into unbelief after having believed. In this way, Muslims are also protected from any sort of misleading errors.
- Enjoining and promoting what is right or good and forbidding what is evil means teaching and advising people about whatever God and His Messenger commanded and what the public view, based on the Qur’ān and Sunnah, regards as good, and preventing the spread of evil in the community. This important duty can and should be performed by every individual in a proper way. However, for this purpose a group should be formed of individuals who have the requisite qualities, or an institution or a governmental department should be established.
- If people go astray after they have seen and experienced the clear truths, this is because they have followed their evil-commanding carnal souls. This leads people to do wrong and to oppress one another, causing the appearance of different factions, each of which pursues its own interests. This is the main cause of the appearance of different ways followed in the name of the same religion; the consequence of this is a fatal disease that threatens both the life of the individual and society.
- Belief in the Hereafter, the realm where everyone will be called to account for whatever they have done in the world, and where everyone will see the consequences of their actions, is the most effective way for preventing sins and evil in the life of both the individual and society.

وَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ  
 الْاُمُوْرُ ثُمَّ كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُوْنَ  
 بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُوْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَوْ اَمَنَ  
 اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ  
 وَاَكْفَرُهُمْ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ كَنْ يَصْرُوْكُمْ اِلَّا اَذٰى وَاِنْ  
 يَقٰمُوْكُمْ يُوْثِقُوْكُمْ اِلَّا ذٰبًا رَّشَعًا لَا يَبْصُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ صُرِبَتْ  
 عَلَيْهِمُ الدِّلَّةُ اَيْنَ مَا نَفَقُوْا اِلَّا يَحْتَبِلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبِلُ  
 مِنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاٍ يُعْضَبُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَصُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ  
 ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ  
 الْاَنْبِيَاءَ يَقْتَرِبُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾  
 لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءٌ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قٰنِئَةٌ بِسَلُوْنِ آيٰتِ  
 اللّٰهِ اَنْتَآءَ السَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْتَفْخِدُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
 الْاٰخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُوْنَ  
 فِي الْحَيْرٰتِ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا  
 مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوْهُ وَاَللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ بِالْمُنْفِقِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**109.** (How could that be so, seeing that) to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and on the earth, and to God are all matters ultimately referred (and whatever He wills occurs).

**110.** (O Community of Muḥammad!) You are the best community ever brought forth for (the good of) humankind, enjoining and promoting what is right and good and forbidding and trying to prevent evil, and (this you do because) you believe in God.<sup>23</sup>

If only the People of the Book believed (as you do), this would be sheer good for them. Among them there are believers, but most of them are transgressors.

**111.** They will never be able to harm you except hurting a little (mostly with their tongues). If they fight against you, they will turn their backs in flight; then they will not be helped (to victory over you).

**112.** Ignominy has been their (the Jews') portion wherever they have been found except for (when they held on to) a rope from God or a rope from other peoples; and they were visited with a wrath (humiliating punishment) from God, and misery has been pitched upon them<sup>24</sup> – and all this because they were persistently disbelieving in Our Revelations, rejecting Our signs of truth (that they continually observed in their lives), and killing the Prophets

against all right; and all this because they disobeyed and kept on transgressing (the bounds of the Law).

**113.** (Yet) they are not all alike: among the People of the Book there is an upright community, reciting God's Revelations in the watches of the night and prostrating (themselves in worship).

**114.** They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin and promote what is right and good and forbid and try to prevent evil, and hasten to do good deeds as if competing with one another. Those are of the righteous ones.

**115.** Whatever good they do, they will never be denied the reward of it; and God has full knowledge of the God-revering, pious.

23. The Muslims, when they truly and sincerely follow Islam, are the best people among humankind in terms of character and morals, and they have developed in theory and practice the qualities essential for truly righteous leadership, namely the commitment to promoting good and suppressing evil and the acknowledgement of the One True God as their Lord and Master. In view of the mission entrusted to them, they should become conscious of their responsibilities and avoid the mistakes committed by their predecessors.

24. So long as they continue to have the qualities mentioned in notes 22 and 23 above, God has promised that no power in the world can harm the Muslims; and history bears witness that God has fulfilled His promise.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi explains why Israel presently enjoys the upper hand against the Muslim Arabs: the Jews are much more

obedient to the commandments of their religion, even if it has been abrogated, than the Muslims are to Islam, and more respectful of their religious heritage. They are also supported by many governments throughout the world. That is, the Jews are now holding on to a rope both from God and from other nations. As for the Christians, they, especially the administrative elite of Christendom, are more respectful of their religion than the Muslim governments are of Islam, and Christianity plays a specific part in their policies. Moreover, as mentioned before, God has two kinds of laws, one governing the universe, and the other which has been manifested as Religion. Christendom has discovered God's laws governing the universe and human life – even if they call them the laws of nature – and lives according to them. This is why, as well as the Jews, the Christians have enjoyed a certain degree of supremacy over the Muslims for the last two or three centuries.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اَنْ تُغْنِيَهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنْ  
 اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا وَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيْهَا خَالِدُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ  
 مَا يُفْسِقُوْنَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيْحٍ فِيْهَا صِرٌّ  
 اَصَابَتْ حَرَّتْ فَوْقَ ظُلْمٍ اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَاَهْلَكَتُهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ  
 اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ يَا اَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا  
 يَظٰلِمَةً مِنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَأْتُوْنَكُمْ بِحٰلٍ وَّذٰوَا مَا عٰبَدْتُمْ قَدْ  
 بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِيْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ قَدْ  
 بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيٰتِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ هَا اَنْتُمْ اَوْلَادُ  
 تُجَيُّوْهُمْ وَلَا يُجَيُّوْكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ كُلِّهِ وَاِذَا  
 لَقُوْهُمُ قَالُوْا اٰمَنَّا وَاِذَا عٰلَمُوْا عَصَوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَلَا تَاْمَلُ مِنْ  
 الْعٰظِمٰتِ قُلُوْبُ مَوْتُوْا يَغِيْطُكُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ بِذٰتِ الصُّدُوْرِ  
 ﴿١١٩﴾ اِنْ تَمَسَسْتُمْ حَسَنَةً تَنْسُوْهُمْ وَاِنْ تَصَيَّبْتُمْ سَيِّئَةً  
 يَفْرَحُوْا بِهَا وَاِنْ نَصِرْتُمْ لَاصْتَرْكُمُ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا اِنَّ  
 اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَمْسَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَاِذْ عَدُوْتُ مِنْ اَهْلِيْكَ بُرَيِّ  
 الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتٰلِ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٢١﴾

116. As to those who disbelieve, their riches will not avail them in the least, nor their children, against God; and those are the companions of the Fire; therein they will abide.

117. Their spending (to attain their goals in humanitarian or religious guises) in this life of the world is like a biting wind accompanied with frost that smites the harvest of a people who wronged themselves (by their wrong belief and their wrong actions), and devastates it. God has never wronged them but they do wrong themselves.

118. O you who believe! Take not for intimates from among others than your own people, for those (who especially cherish hostility towards you) spare no effort to ruin you, and yearn for you to always suffer. Hatred has shown itself by their mouths, and what their bosoms conceal is even greater. Now We have told you the manifest truths, if you reason and understand.

119. You are such (frank, clear-hearted) people that you love them (even those who are enemies to you), but they do not love you; and you believe in the whole of the Book (without making any distinction between the verses, and believe in all of the God-revealed Books). When they meet you, they say (hypocritically), "We believe;"

but when they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. Say (to them): "Perish in your rage!" Assuredly God has full knowledge of what lies hidden in the bosoms.

120. If anything good happens to you, this grieves them; if any evil befalls you, they rejoice at it. Yet if you endure and persevere in your way and act in piety, keeping from evil and any injustice, their guile will never harm you. Surely God fully encompasses (with His Knowledge and Power) all that they do.

121. (Remember, O Messenger,) when you set forth from your home at dawn to place the believers in battle order – God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (He heard and knew all that was happening and being talked about on that day).<sup>25</sup>

25. The verses to come up to 175 are concerned with the Battle of Uhud, which took place one year after the Battle of Badr, the attitudes of the hypocrites during the war, its aftermath, and the lessons to get from it.

The victory of Badr alerted Arabia's hostile forces. The Muslims were in a state of unease, and they endured the wrath of most neighboring societies.

The Quraysh were still smarting from their defeat in the Battle of Badr. Their women were mourning their dead warriors almost daily, and encouraging the survivors to avenge themselves. In addition, the Jewish efforts to rouse their feelings of revenge were like pouring oil on flames. Within a year, the Quraysh attacked

Madīnah with an army of 3,000 soldiers, including 700 in coats of mail and 200 cavalrymen.

Informed of the Makkans' march upon Madīnah, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, consulted with his Companions about how to meet this threat. He knew that the Makkan army was coming to fight on open ground, but he thought that they should defend themselves within Madīnah's boundaries. If they defended themselves within Madīnah, the Makkan army could not mount a long siege. However, several young people who had not fought at Badr and longed for martyrdom wanted to fight the enemy outside of Madīnah. Ultimately, the Messenger gave in to this majority demand (Ibn Hishām, 3: 64-67).

اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَآئِفَتَانِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْسِكَا وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيَهُمَا وَعَلَى  
 اللّٰهِ قَلْبَتَاكَمَا الْوُثُوْنُ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرِ وَاَنْتُمْ  
 اَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ  
 لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا اِنْ يَكْفِيْكُمْ اَنْ يُمَدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ اَلْفٍ  
 مِنْ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنَزَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ بَلَى اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَاُوْتُوْكُمْ مِنْ قُوْرِهِمْ  
 هٰذَا يُمَدِّدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اَلْفٍ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُّسَوِّمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾  
 وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰى لَكُمْ وَلِيُظَمِّنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَا النَّصْرُ  
 اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿١٢٥﴾ لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَقًا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ  
 كَفَرُوْا اَوْ يَكْتَسِبُهُمْ فَيُنْقَلِبُوْا حَتٰبِيْنَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ  
 الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ اَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ اَوْ يَعَذِّبَهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾  
 وَلِيَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ  
 مَنْ يَشَآءُ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ يَا اَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا  
 لَا تَاْكُلُوْا الرِّبٰوَا اَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
 تُفْلِحُوْٓنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾  
 وَاطِيعُوْا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾

122. When two parties of you were about to lose heart, although God was their helper and protector; and in God let the believers put all their trust.<sup>26</sup>

123. For sure God had helped you to victory at Badr when you were a despised (small) force. So observe your duty to God in due reverence for Him, that you may be thankful.

124. When you said to the believers: “Does it not suffice you that your Lord will come to your help with three thousand angels sent down?”

125. Surely it does. (More than that), if you are steadfast and act in piety, to deserve His protection, and the enemy should fall upon you all at once, your Lord will come to your help with five thousand angels swooping down.

126. God did not ordain this save as a message of good hope for you, and so that thereby your hearts might be at peace and rest. Victory comes only from God, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

127. And that (through you) He might cut off a (leading) party of those who disbelieved, or overwhelm them, so that they (and others) would retreat in utter disappointment.

128. (O Messenger, you are a servant charged with a certain duty, therefore) it is not a matter for you whether He turns towards them in mercy (to accept their repentance for their unbelief, and grants

them faith) or punishes them because they are wrongdoers.

129. To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

130. O you who believe! Do not consume usury, doubled and redoubled; and act in piety, keeping from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him, so that you may prosper (in both worlds).<sup>27</sup>

131. And (be careful of your acts and transactions and) guard yourselves against the Fire, prepared for the unbelievers.

132. Obey God and the Messenger so that you may be shown mercy (granted a good, virtuous life in this world and eternal happiness in the Hereafter).

26. Having decided to follow the majority, the Messenger and 1,000 warriors left Madīnah for Uhud, a volcanic hill only a few miles from its western outskirts. Its main feature was a plain that stretched out before it. When they were only half way there, however, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the hypocrites, turned back with his 300 men (*Ibid.*, 3: 68). This event, coming just before the battle began, caused such perplexity and confusion that the Banū Salamah and Banū Hārithah tribes also wanted to turn back. Eventually, they were persuaded to remain.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, advanced with the remaining ill-equipped 700 Muslims. He lined them up at the foot of Mount Uhud so that the mountain was behind them and the Makkah army was in front of them. The enemy could launch a surprise attack from only one mountain pass. The Messenger posted 50 archers there under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr. He told him not to let anyone approach or move from that spot, adding: "Even if you see birds fly off with our flesh, do not move from this place" (*al-Bukhārī*, "Jihād," 164).

Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was the standard bearer, Zubayr ibn 'Awwām commanded the cavalry, and Hamzah commanded the infantry. The army was ready to fight. To encourage his Companions, the Prophet brought forth a sword and asked: "Who would like to have this sword in return for giving its due?" Abu Dujānah asked: "What is its due?" "To fight with it until it is broken," the Prophet said (*Muslim*, "Faḍāil aṣ-Ṣahābah," 128). Abu Dujānah took it and fought. Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās and 'Abdullah ibn

Jahsh prayed to God to let them meet the strongest enemy soldiers. Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle and "Lion of God," was among those who were on the forefront.

27. It is highly significant that an admonition is given while war is being discussed. It should be stressed, before everything else, that the Qur'ān takes a holistic, not a fragmentary, view of life and the universe. It does not consider the matters relating to individuals as being separate from social matters, nor does it see social matters as being apart from the economy, nor the economy from spirituality and other internal matters, such as education, security, and foreign relations. None of these can be viewed or treated as being separate from the others. In view of this, the use of interest is no longer only an economic matter; it is also deeply connected with the life of the society and the individual. It affects both the spiritual and moral nature of the individual, and their participation in the social and economic life of the society. Therefore, interest will have a significant effect on a person's attitude to war, which requires them to take away egotism and worldliness from their heart. Interest destroys social solidarity, and the desire to help one another, as well as undermining confidence within a society; these are all important factors if a nation wants to succeed in a war. So, this verse, which, when viewed superficially, may seem to be out of place, is actually just where it should be. It warns us that, instead of making our limited minds or reason the criterion or judge when approaching the Qur'ān, we should design our thinking system according to the Qur'ān.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ  
 وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ  
 وَالْكُلُوبِ وَالْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ  
 ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا  
 اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَسْفُرْ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا  
 اللَّهُ وَلَهُ يَصِيرُوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ أُولَئِكَ  
 جَزَاءُ وُجْهِهِمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّتِ النَّجْمُ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
 الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قَدْ  
 خَلَقْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا  
 كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ  
 وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا  
 وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِنْ يَسْتَسْخِرُوا  
 قَوْمًا مِمَّنْ لَقَوْمُهُمْ فَمِنْهُمْ مِثْلَهُ وَسِوَالِكِ الْآيَاتِ  
 تُدَاوِئُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَاءَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾



**133.** And hasten, as if competing with one another, to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a Garden as spacious as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-revering, pious.

**134.** They spend (out of what God has provided for them) both in ease and hardship, ever-restraining their rage (even when provoked and able to retaliate), and pardoning people (their offenses). God loves (such) people who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

**135.** They are also the ones who, when they have committed a shameful deed or wronged themselves (through any kind of sinful act), immediately remember God and implore Him to forgive their sins – for who will forgive sins save God? – and do not persist knowingly in whatever (evil) they have committed.

**136.** Such are the ones whose reward is forgiveness from their Lord and Gardens through which rivers flow, to abide therein. How excellent is the reward of those who always do good deeds!

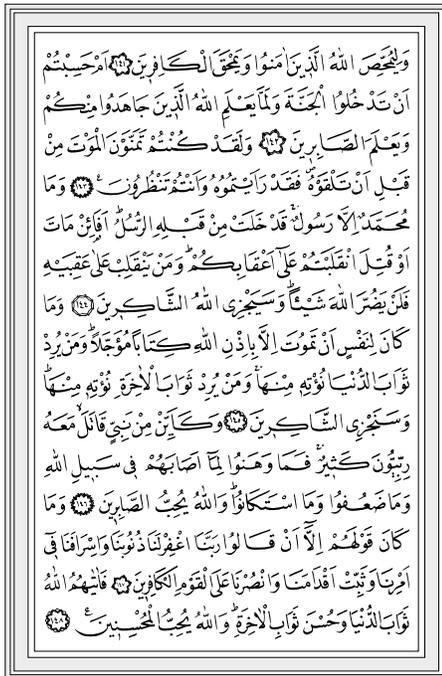
**137.** Assuredly, before you have passed many ways of life and practices (that illustrate the law God has established for the life of human societies). Go about, then, on the earth and behold how the outcome was for those who denied (God's manifest signs and Messengers).

**138.** This (history of peoples past) is a plain

exposition (of the *ajr*) for all people, and a clear guidance (to a more substantial faith and devotion) and an instruction for the God-revering, pious.

**139.** Do not, then, be faint of heart, nor grieve, for you are always the superior side if you are (true) believers.

**140.** If a wound has touched you (at Uhud), (you know that) a similar wound touched those (disbelieving) people (at Badr). Such (historic, eventful) days – We deal them out in turns among people so that God may mark out those who (truly) believe and select from among you such as bear witness to the truth (with their lives); – (it is a fact that) God does not love the wrongdoers (and in the end He punishes wrong and makes the truth superior) –



141. And that He may purify the believers (individually, of all base metal, and collectively, of the hypocrites among them), and gradually blot out the unbelievers.

142. Did you suppose that you should enter Paradise without God marking out those among you who really strive hard (in His cause), and marking out the patient and steadfast?

143. You did indeed long for death (for God's cause) before you came face-to-face with it; now you have faced it (on the battlefield), only observing it with your own eyes (without doing anything to meet it).

144. (Did you think that this cause of Islam subsisted not by God but while Muḥammad was alive among you? If so, know that this cause depends on God and

as for his part in it, know that) Muḥammad is but a Messenger, and Messengers passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heels? Whoever turns back on his heels can in no way harm God. But God will (abundantly) reward the thankful ones (those who are steadfast in God's cause).

145. It never occurs that a soul dies save by God's leave, at a time appointed. So whoever desires the reward of this world, We give him of it (in the world); and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We give him of it; and We will soon reward the thankful.

146. And how many a Prophet has had to fight (for God's cause), followed by numbers of godly, dedicated servants of God; and they did not become faint of heart for all that befell them in God's cause, nor did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves (before the enemy). And God loves the patient and steadfast.

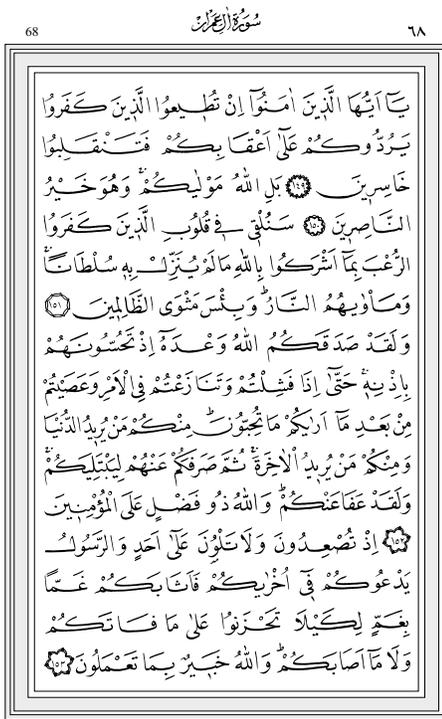
147. What they said (when they encountered the enemy) was: "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and any wasteful act we may have done in our duty, and set our feet firm, and help us to victory over the disbelieving people!"

148. So God granted them the reward of this world as well as the best reward of the Hereafter. Indeed God loves those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them



Views from Mount Uhud (photo by H. Akarsu)





**149.** O you who believe! If you follow those who disbelieve (the hypocrites and Jews in Madinah who spread negative propaganda concerning the events at Uhud), they will drive you back on your heels (into unbelief), and you will turn utter losers (in both this world and the next).<sup>28</sup>

**150.** But God is your Guardian and Owner, and He is the Best of helpers.

**151.** We will throw alarm into the hearts of those who disbelieve because they as-

sociate with God partners, for which He has sent no authority at all, and their refuge will be the Fire; and how evil is the dwelling of the wrongdoers!

**152.** God did indeed fulfill His promise to you when you routed them by His leave, up to (the point) when you lost heart, and disagreed about the order (given to the archers among you not to leave their positions), and disobeyed, after He had brought you within sight of that (victory) for which you were longing. Among you were such as cared for this world, and among you were such as cared for the Hereafter. Then He diverted you from them (the enemy), that He might try you. But He has surely pardoned you: God is gracious and bountiful for the believers.<sup>29</sup>

**153.** When you were running off (from the battlefield), paying no heed to anyone, and at your rear the Messenger was calling out to you (to stay in the battle), then God requited you with grief after grief so that you might not grieve either for what escaped you, or for what befell you.<sup>30</sup> God is fully aware of all that you do.

28. As mentioned in the Foreword, the occasion on which a verse was revealed is important in correctly understanding it. If the occasion were not known, it would be possible for us to incorrectly interpret the verse and to overlook some of the significant aspects of the meaning of the verse. For example, this verse commands that the

believers should not obey the unbelievers. However, like many commandments in the Qur'an, this one also has relative aspects, according to time and conditions. Moreover, the verse is connected with the verses that precede and follow it. Seeing this connection sometimes requires knowing the reason for the revelation of the verse.

After the Battle of Uhud, the local hypocrites and the Jews began to propagate the idea that had Muḥammad been a true Prophet, he would not have suffered the reverse he faced at Uhud. They tried to persuade the Muslims to turn back to their former state of unbelief. The Muslims to whom this verse was addressed in Madīnah understood what the verse was about specifically. For this reason, in order to clarify the meaning and the direct purpose of the verse's revelation, in translation, explanatory additions are necessary. However, by doing this, we should not forget that with respect to its meaning, connotations, and the commandments contained, a verse can never be restricted only to the occasion on which it was revealed. "The fact that a verse was revealed on a certain occasion does not prevent the commandment contained in the verse from having a general, inclusive enforcement," is a rule in both Qur'ānic interpretation and Islamic jurisprudence.

29. In the first stage of the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims defeated the enemy so easily that Abu Dujānah, with the sword the Prophet had given him, pushed into the center of the Makkan army. There he met Abū Sufyan's (the Makkan commander) wife, Hind. He tried to kill her but, "in order not to use the sword given by the Prophet to kill a woman," spared her (al-Haythamī, 6: 109). All who carried the enemy standard were killed one after the other. Self-sacrificing heroes of the Muslim army flung themselves upon the enemy and routed them.

When the enemy began to flee, the Muslims gathered the spoils. The archers on the mountain pass saw this and said to themselves: "God has defeated the enemy, and our brothers are collecting the spoils. Let's join them." 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr reminded them of the Prophet's order, but they said: "He ordered us to do that without knowing the outcome of the battle." All but a few left their posts and began to collect booty. Khālid ibn Walīd, still an unbeliever and commander of the Makkan cavalry, seized this opportunity to lead his men around Mount Uhud and attacked the Muslims' flank through the pass. 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr's depleted forces could not repel them.

The fleeing enemy soldiers came back and joined the attack from the front. Now, the battle turned against the Muslims. Both of these sudden attacks by superior forces caused great confusion among the Muslims. The enemy wanted to seize the Messenger alive or kill him, and so attacked him from all sides with swords, spears, arrows, and stones. Those who defended him fought heroically. Hamzah, the Messenger's uncle, was martyred.

Ibn Kāmi'ah martyred Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr, the Muslims' standard-bearer who had been fighting in front of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Muṣ'ab resembled God's Messenger in build and complexion, and this caused Ibn Kāmi'a to announce that he had killed the Messenger. Meanwhile, the Messenger had been wounded by a sword and some stones. Falling into a pit and bleeding profusely, he stretched his hands and prayed: "O God, forgive my people, because they do not know (the truth)" (Qadi 'Iyad, 1: 78-79).

The rumor of the Prophet's martyrdom led many Companions to lose courage. However, several among them fought self-sacrificingly. Some Muslim women heard the rumor and rushed to the battlefield. Sumayrā, of the Banū Dinār tribe, had lost her husband, father, and brother. Yet all she asked about was the Messenger. When she saw him, she said: "All misfortunes mean nothing to me as long as you are alive, O Messenger!" (Ibn Hishām, 3: 99)

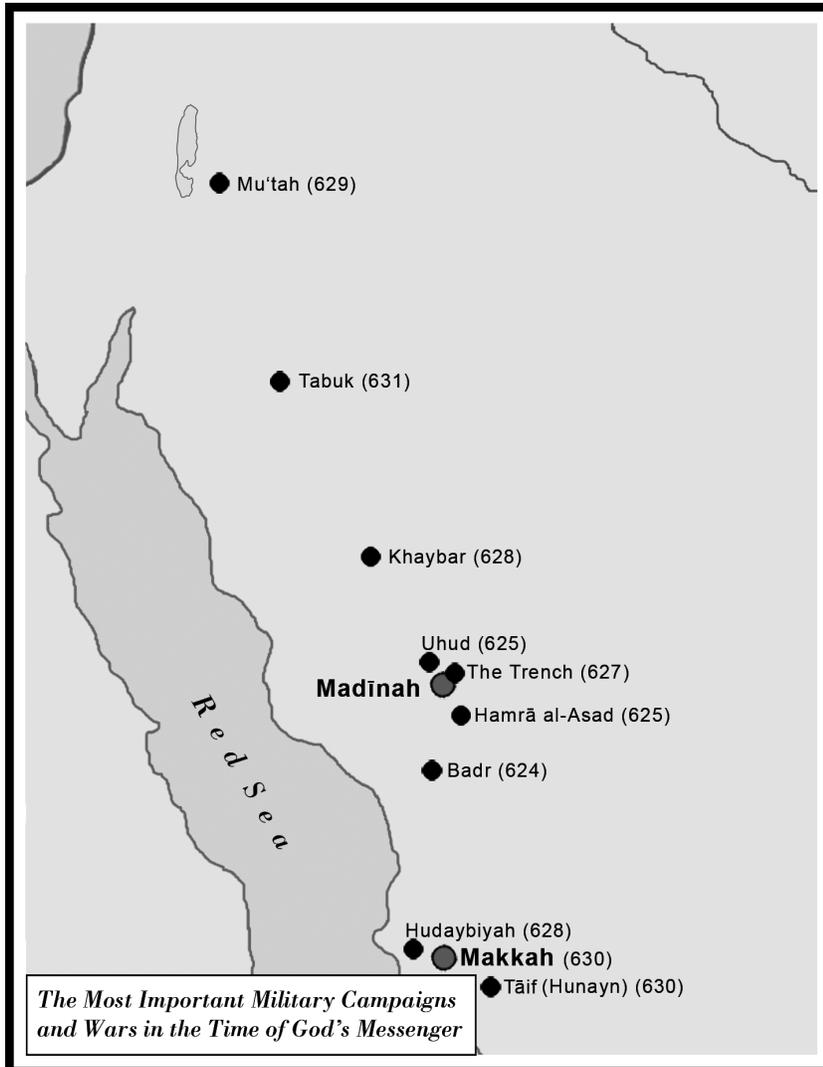
Umm 'Umārah fought before the Messenger so heroically that he asked her: "Who else can endure all that you endure?" That pride of womanhood took this opportunity to ask him to pray for her: "O Messenger of God, pray to God that I may be in your company in Paradise!" The Messenger did so, and she responded: "Whatever happens to me from now on does not matter" (Ibn Sa'd, 8: 415).

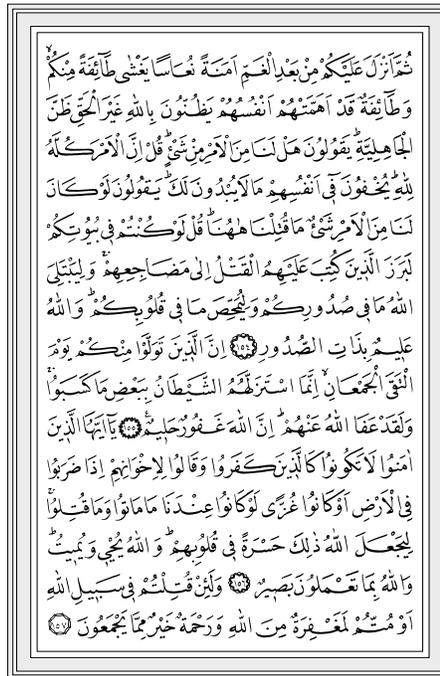
Despite the indescribable resistance of the Muslim warriors such as 'Ali, Abū Dujānah, Sahl ibn Hunayf, Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullāh, Anas ibn Naḍr, and 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh, around the Messenger, defeat seemed inevitable until Ka'b ibn Mālik, seeing the Messenger, shouted: "O Muslims! Good tidings for you! This is the

Messenger, here!” The scattered Companions advanced towards him from all sides, rallied around him, and led him to the safety of the mountain.

30. This verse states a very significant aspect of human psychology: if a person is visited by successive hardships and disasters, the later one causes the previous one to be forgotten. This helps a person to develop immunity towards disasters and realize that one should neither grieve for losing anything of this world or for the disasters that befall one nor rejoice excessively at

any good. Even though disasters may befall a believer in return for their sins or errors, such events are accompanied by several rewards. For example, God forgives believers the sins or errors which caused the disaster and repays it with future rewards; this helps the believers to develop endurance against disasters and come to know the true nature of the worldly life. What is expected of a believer who is visited by a disaster is that they should show patience, especially at the first moment and they should preserve their faith, confidence, and trust in God.





154. Then, after grief, He sent down peace and security for you: a slumber overtook some of you; and some, being concerned (merely) about themselves, were entertaining false notions about God – notions of (the pre-Islamic) Ignorance – and saying: “Do we have any part in the authority (in the decision-making)?” Say: “The authority rests with God exclusively.” Indeed, they concealed within themselves what they would not reveal to you, and were saying (among themselves): “If only we had had a part in the authority (in the decision-making), we would not have been killed here.” Say (O Messenger): “Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom killing had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the places where they were to lie (in death).”<sup>31</sup> (All of this happened as it did) so that He may test what (thoughts, intentions, and inclinations) is in your bosoms, and purify and prove what is (the faith) in your hearts. God has full knowledge of what lies hidden in the bosoms.

155. Those of you who turned away on the day when the two hosts encountered

(at Uhud), Satan made them slip because of some of the errors they themselves had committed. But now God has pardoned them. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Clement.

156. O you who believe! Be not as those who disbelieve and say of their brothers who (died) after having set out on a journey or gone forth to war, “Had they remained with us, they would not have died or been killed.” God wills that such thoughts as this should be a cause of sighs and anguish in their hearts. God (He alone) gives life and causes to die; and whatever you do, God sees it well.

157. And if you are killed, or die, in God’s cause, then forgiveness from God and mercy are far better than all that they could amass (in this life).

31. This verse teaches three significant points concerning Divine Destiny and human free will: (1) In one respect, Destiny is identical with God's eternal Knowledge, so knowing something beforehand does not mean that it compels that thing to take place. God knows beforehand how each person will use their free will, and He has determined their fate. (2) Destiny considers the cause and its effect or result together; there are not two separate destinies, one for the cause and the other for the effect. If God has destined for a person to be killed in

a battle, considering, of course, how that person uses their free will, they will set out for the battle and will be killed. (3) The past and any misfortunes are and should be considered from the viewpoint of Destiny. We should take the necessary lessons from these events, but not spend time regretting them in vain, and we should avoid mutual accusations for them.

The verse also teaches us that if a decision reached after consultation does not give the expected result, we should not criticize it or the consultative assembly.

وَلَيْنَ مُتَمَدًّا أَوْ قَلِيلًا لَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُخَشِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ فِيمَا رَحِمَهُ مِنَ  
 اللَّهُ لَئِن لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ وَتَوْكَلْتُمْ فَطَغَّ غَلِيظَ الْكُفْرِ لَآتَمِصُّوا مِنْ  
 حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَسَأَلَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرِ قَالُوا  
 عَزَيْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُخَشِرُ الْكُفْرَانَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ إِنْ يَضُرُّكُمْ  
 اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمْ فَهَذَا الَّذِي يَضُرُّكُمْ  
 مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ  
 أَنْ يَعْزَلَ وَرَأَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ بِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ تَوَفَّى كُلَّ  
 نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظَلَّمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ أَفَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ  
 اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ بِبُحْطٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾  
 هُمْ ذَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ لَقَدْ مَنَّ  
 اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا  
 عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَرَزَقَهُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ  
 وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ لَيْسَ دَالِّينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ أَوَلَمْ  
 أَصَابِكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ بِهَا قُلُوبَكُمْ أَنْ هَذَا قُلُوبُ  
 هَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

158. And, assuredly, if you die or are killed, it is to God that you will be gathered.

159. It was by a mercy from God that (at the time of the setback), you (O Messenger) were lenient with them (your Companions). Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from about you. Then pardon them, pray for their forgiveness, and take counsel with them in the affairs (of public concern); and when you are resolved (on a course of action), put your trust in God.<sup>32</sup> Surely God loves those who put their trust (in Him).

160. If God helps you, there will be none who can overcome you; if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you thereafter? In God, then, let the believers put all their trust.

161. It is not conceivable that a Prophet defrauds; and whoever defrauds (by stealing from public property or war-gains) will come with what he gained by his fraud on the Day of Resurrection. Then, every soul shall be repaid in full what it has earned (while in the world), and they will not be wronged.

162. What! is he who strives after God's good pleasure and approval like him who is laden with God's condemnation and

whose refuge is Hell? How evil a destination to arrive at!

163. They are in varying grades in God's sight, and God sees well all that they do.

164. Assuredly God has done the believers a great kindness by raising among them a Messenger of their own, reciting to them His Revelations, and purifying them (of false beliefs and doctrines, and sins, and all kinds of uncleanness), and instructing them in the Book and the Wisdom; whereas, before that, they were lost in obvious error.

165. And do you, now that a disaster has befallen you, though you inflicted the double (of that on your foes at Badr), say: "Whence is this?" Say (to them, O Messenger): "It is from your own selves." Surely God has full power over everything.

32. Like many other verses, this verse also contains several important principles.

- It is of great significance that a leader should be lenient towards those around him after any attempt made with a good intention has ended in failure due to unintentional mistakes.
- In addition to establishing devotion to One God, promoting what is good and right and preventing evil, establishing justice through the rule of law, obedience to the leader save in sin and rebellion to God, freedom of thought and speech, provided they are not against the public benefit and what is good or right, and an advisory system of government – all these make up essential articles of the Constitution of Islamic rule. When a decision has been reached through counsel, the leader or the head of the government implements the decision in complete reliance on God. If the leader turns back under the pressure of those who have different opinions or have changed their minds, this will cause a confusion of views and faltering among the people.
- The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, sought counsel with his Companions about how to handle the approaching en-

emy before the Battle of Uhud. Although he and the elder Companions were of the opinion that they should face the enemy outside Madīnah and lead a defensive war, the young members of the army, who formed the majority, insisted on fighting in the open field. After consultation, the elders warned the younger ones and pressed them to change their minds. They came to the Messenger and informed him that the young people had changed their minds. The Messenger, who had already donned his armor, responded: “When a Prophet has donned his armor, he does not take it off” (al-Bukhārī, “I’tiṣām,” 28).

- Although one of the reasons for the setback at the Battle of Uhud was the decision to go out to face the enemy upon the insistence of the younger members during consultation, it is highly significant for the importance of consultation that God still orders it even after such a setback.
- One of the points that attract our attention is that the Qur’ān uses historical events to teach important lessons, make significant warnings and create new legislations. This teaches us that action and thought should go side by side, the former engendering thought and the latter leading to action.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَيَا ذُنُوبَ اللَّهِ وَيَلْعَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
 وَيَلْعَلُ الَّذِينَ نَاقَمُوا وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَقَالُوا قَالُوا فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ أَوْ اذْفَعُوا قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ هِيَ الَّذِينَ فَزَرْنَا  
 يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ يَقُولُونَ يَا فَوَهِهُمَا مَا لِلَّذِينَ فِي  
 قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ  
 وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُوا مَا فُتِنُوا قُلْ قَادِرُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَتَدْرُونَ  
 إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاؤُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ يَرْزُقُونَهُمْ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا أَنبَاهُمُ  
 اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ يَا الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ  
 مِنْ حَلْفِهِمْ أَلا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ  
 بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلِهِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَأَيُّضِعُ الْجَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
 الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ  
 لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ الَّذِينَ  
 قَالُوهُمْ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ  
 فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

166. What befell you on the day when the two hosts met (in battle) was by God's leave, and that He might mark out the (true) believers.

167. And that He might mark out those who acted in hypocrisy. When they were told, "Come and fight in God's cause, or defend yourselves (actively, in order to keep the enemy outside the city)," they said: "If we but knew there would be fighting, we would indeed follow you." They, that day, were nearer to unbelief than to faith, uttering with their mouths what was not in their hearts. God knows very well what they were concealing.

168. They who, having themselves held back (from fighting), say of their (slain) brothers, "Had they but paid heed to us, they would not have been killed." Say (to them, O Messenger): "Avert, then, death from yourselves, if you are truthful (in your claim)."

169. Do not think at all of those killed in God's cause as dead. Rather, they are alive; with their Lord they have their sustenance,

170. Rejoicing in what God has granted them out of His bounty, and joyful in the glad tidings for those left behind who have not yet joined them, that (in the event of martyrdom) they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

171. They are joyful in the glad tidings of God's blessing and bounty (that He has prepared for the martyrs), and in (the promise) that God never leaves to waste the reward of the believers.<sup>33</sup>

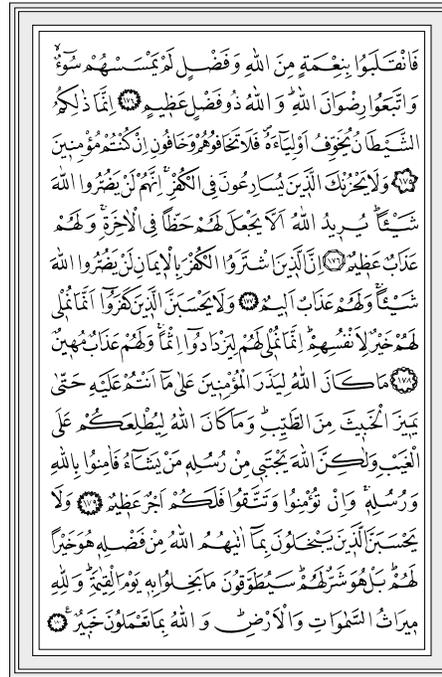
172. Those who responded to the call of God and the Messenger after the hurt had befallen them – for all those of them who persevered in doing good, aware that God was seeing them, and acted in reverence for God and piety, there is a tremendous reward.

173. Those to whom some people said: "Look, those people have gathered against you, therefore be fearful of them." But it increased them only in faith, and they responded: "God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Guardian He is!"

33. Why the Muslims experienced a setback can be summarized as follows:

- The Messenger, the commander-in-chief, thought they should stay within Madīnah. The younger Companions, inexperienced and excited, urged him to march out of the city. This was a mistake, even though for the sake of martyrdom in God's cause, since the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, intended to apply different tactics in battles and knew in advance that the Quraysh army was coming to fight in an open field.
- The archers posted to defend the army left their posts. They misinterpreted the Messenger's order not to leave for any reason and went to collect booty.
- Three hundred hypocrites, one-third of the army, deserted half-way and returned to Madīnah. This undermined the morale of the Banūh Salamah and Banū Hārithah tribes, who were persuaded only with difficulty not to leave. Moreover, a small group of hypocrites demoralized the Muslims during the battle.
- Several Companions became impatient. They acted, in certain respects, inconsistently with the dictates of piety and were lured by material wealth.
- Some believers thought that as long as the Messenger was with them, and as long as they enjoyed God's support and help, the unbelievers could never beat them. However true this was, the setback taught them that deserving God's help requires, besides belief and devotion, deliberation, strategy, and steadfastness. They also perceived that the world is a field of testing and trial.
- Those who had not taken part at the Battle of Badr – especially the young ones – sincerely prayed to God for martyrdom. They were deeply devoted to Islam and longed to meet God. Some, like Hamzah, 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh, Anas ibn Nadr, Sa'd ibn Rabi', and 'Amr ibn Jamūh, may God be pleased with them all, tasted the pleasure of martyrdom; the martyrdom of the others was delayed.
- Any success or triumph lies with God, Who does whatever He wills and cannot be questioned. Belief in God's Unity means that believers must always ascribe their accomplishments to God and never appropriate anything good for themselves. If the decisive victory of Badr gave some Muslims a sort of self-pride, and if they imputed the victory to their own prudence, wise arrangement, or some material causes, this might have been part of the reason for their setback.
- Among the Makkan army were several eminent soldiers and commanders (such as Khālid ibn Walid, Ikrimah ibn Abī Jahl, 'Amr ibn al-'As, and Ibn Hishām) who were destined by God to be great servants of Islam in the future. They were the ones most esteemed and respected among the people. For the sake of their future service, God may not have willed to hurt their feelings of honor completely. So, as expressed by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, the Companions of the future defeated the Companions of the present (*Lemalar* ["The Gleams"], 28). (*The Messenger of God*, 233–235)

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174. So they returned with favor and bounty from God, having suffered no harm. They strove after God's good pleasure by acting in the way He approved of. God is of tremendous grace and bounty.<sup>34</sup>

175. It was but that (human) devil who (by provoking alarm,) desires to make you fearful of his allies. So do not fear them, but fear Me,<sup>35</sup> if you are (true) believers.<sup>36</sup>

176. Let not those who rush in unbelief as if competing with one another grieve you; they can in no way harm God (and His true friends). God wills that they will have no share in (the blessings of) the Hereafter. For them is a tremendous punishment.

177. Those who have bought unbelief in exchange for faith can in no way harm God (and His true friends who fear and rely on Him). For them is a tremendous punishment.

178. And let not those who disbelieve think that Our giving them rein is good for them. We give them rein only that they may grow in sin and wickedness (and deserve God's punishment).<sup>37</sup> For them is a shameful, humiliating punishment.

179. It was not (the will) of God to leave the believers in the state you are now in (with the people of true faith indistinguishable from the hypocrites,) until He distinguishes the corrupt from the pure. Nor was it (the will of God) that He would make you aware of the Unseen (so that you would know your future and have insight into the hearts of people). But God chooses of His Messengers whom He wills (and imparts to him some

of the knowledge of the Unseen and completes the test to which He puts you in the world). So believe in God and His Messengers: if you (truly) believe and live in piety, keeping from disobedience to Him and to His Messenger, then there is for you a tremendous reward.

180. Let not those who are niggardly with what God has granted them out of His bounty think that it is good for them: rather, it is bad for them. What they are niggardly with, they will have it hung about their necks on the Day of Resurrection. (Why are they niggardly, seeing that to God belongs the absolute ownership of the heavens and the earth? And) He will inherit them in the end. And God is fully aware of all that you do.

34. After the Muslims' setback in the Battle of Uhud, the Makkan army returned and headed for Makkah. However, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, worried that they might return and launch another attack on Madīnah. On the second day of Uhud, therefore, he ordered those who had fought the day before to gather together and pursue the unbelievers. Some of the Banū 'Abdī'l-Qays, appointed by Abū Sufyan, the commander of the Makkan army, tried to discourage this line of action by saying: "Those people have gathered against you, therefore, be fearful of them." But this only increased the faith of the believers, who retorted: "God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Guardian He is!"

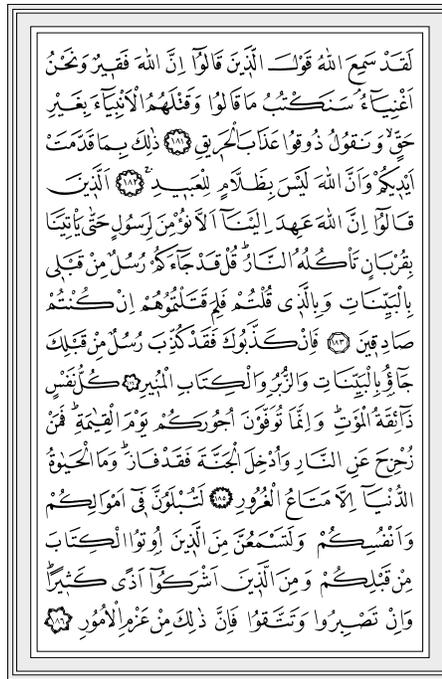
Most were seriously wounded; some could not stand and had to be carried by their friends. At this highly critical moment, they girded up their loins and prepared to lay down their lives at the Messenger's behest. They accompanied him to Hamra' al-Asad, eight miles from Madīnah. The Makkan polytheists had halted and were talking about a second attack on Madīnah. However, when they saw the believers they had supposedly just defeated coming towards them, they could not muster sufficient courage and so continued on to Makkah. The Messenger's prudence and military genius, by God's will, had turned a defeat into a victory (Ibn Hishām, 3: 240-242).

35. While returning from the Battle of Uhud, Abū Sufyan had challenged the Muslims to another encounter at Badr the following year. But when the appointed time arrived, Abū Sufyan's courage failed him in his anticipated fight against God's Messenger. As a face-saving device, he sent an agent, Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud, who was then an unbeliever, to Madīnah to spread the rumor that the Quraysh were making tremendous war preparations and that they were gathering a huge army which no other power in the whole of Arabia could resist. However, when the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, reached Badr with an army of fifteen hundred fighters, they found there no one to fight with them. They stayed at Badr for eight days awaiting the threatened

encounter, and when no sign of the Quraysh army appeared, they returned to Madīnah. This campaign was called *Badr al-Sughrā* (Badr the Minor).

36. It is not possible to find this relationship between God and the servant in other religions. Belief in only One God, bowing before Him alone, and both a fear and a love of Him, liberate and save the servant from fearing and bowing before any other power – such as other human beings, Satan, death, and the so-called natural forces and (evil) spirits – and from suffering all other kinds of fruitless love. One who serves God is a servant, but such servants do not degrade themselves to serve even the greatest of the created; they are so dignified that they do not even pursue Paradise in return for service. They are humble, and only humble themselves voluntarily to their Creator, never exceeding what He has permitted. They are aware of their inherent weaknesses and needs, but are independent of all creation because of what the Munificent Owner has prepared for them in the Hereafter. Relying on the infinite Power of their Master, they are powerful. Their fear of Him makes them fearless of everything else and, as it draws them to Him, is as pleasant as love of Him.

37. As mentioned before, the Qur'ānic expressions used for this particular kind of God's way of acting and which may give the impression that God wishes for the perdition of some people, should be viewed according to His laws of the creation and operation of the universe, as well as the human individual and social life. That is, God has laws which He has established for the life of the individual, the society and humanity, which are followed out of free will, or which are obeyed or disobeyed and which receive the requital of this obedience or disobedience. Since it is God Who has established these laws and since it is the whole of creation, including humanity, which lives within their limits, the Qur'ān uses such expressions. So, the above verse actually says: "These people use the rein We give them only to increase in sin and wickedness in such a way that they deserve God's punishment."



**181.** God has indeed heard the saying of those who said, “God is poor, and we are rich.” We will record what they have said, as well as their killing the Prophets against all right; and We will say (to them): “Taste the punishment of the scorching fire!”

**182.** This is because of (the unrighteous deeds) that your own hands have forwarded, for never does God do the least wrong to the servants.

**183.** (Also it is) they who said: “God made covenant with us, that we believe not in any Messenger unless he brings us an offering which (as a sign of its being accepted by God) a fire (from heaven) will consume.” Say (to them, O Messenger): “Before me there came to you Messengers with the clear proofs (of their Messengership) and with that (same miracle) which you describe: why, then, did you kill them, if you are true in your claim?”

**184.** (O Messenger!) If they deny you, (do not grieve,) for in the same way Messengers were denied before you, who came with the clear proofs (of their Messengership), Scrolls (full of wisdom and advice), and the Book (like the Torah and the the Gospel), enlightening (their minds and hearts,) and illuminating (their way).

**185.** (No one will live forever doing what they do:) Every soul is bound to taste death.<sup>38</sup> So (O people), you will but be repaid in full on the Day of Resurrection (for whatever you have done in the world). Whoever is spared the Fire and

admitted into Paradise has indeed prospered and triumphed. (Know that) the present, worldly life is nothing but a transient enjoyment of delusion.

**186.** (So O believers, as a requirement of the wisdom in, and purpose for, your worldly life,) you will surely be tested in respect of your properties and your selves, and you will certainly hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you and those who associate partners with God. If you are patient steadfast (in your Religion and observe the bounds set by God in your relations with them) and keep within the limits of piety (in obeying God, and in your conduct towards them), (know that) this is among meritorious things requiring great resolution to fulfill.

38. *Nafs* (translated as soul) has two meanings: (1) the self of a living being, whether transcendent and incorporeal, like that of God or that composed of a spirit and body; and (2) the faculty which is the source or mechanism of the worldly life, as possessed by humankind and the jinn. So, considered from the viewpoint of its first meaning, the souls meant in the following phrase, “Every soul is bound to taste death” are those of humankind and the jinn. This is also corroborated by the context.

The idea of a soul (in the meaning of the self of the living being) tasting death also implies that the living being has a part of it which tastes death but does not itself die. This entails that while the body dies, the spirit is transferred to the other world alive. However, the verse,

*Everything is perishable (and so perishing) except His “Face” (His eternal Self and what is done in seeking His good pleasure) (28: 88)* alludes to the idea that the spirits and spiritual beings, like angels, will also taste death, even though for only a short while. On the other hand, if, by the expression *Except those whom God wills (to exempt)* in the verse, *The Trumpet will be blown, and so all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will fall dead, except those whom God wills (to exempt) (39: 68)*, the absolute authority of the Divine Will is not intended to be emphasized (i.e., if God wills, He may cause whomever He wills to live without tasting death) then it can be said that, in some cases, there will be some living beings who will never taste death. God knows best.

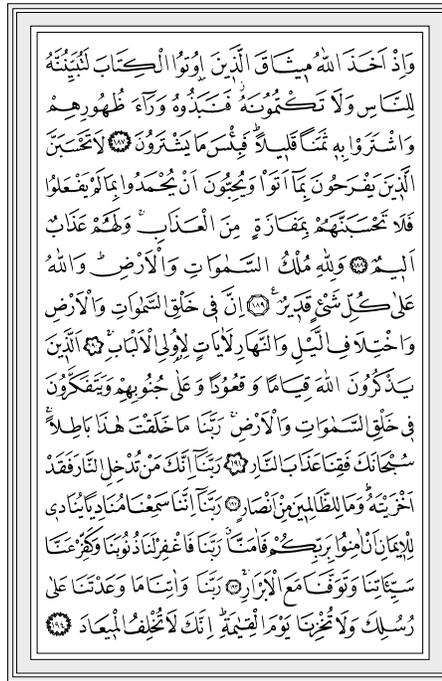
187. (Remember) when God took a covenant from those who were given the Book: “You shall make clear to the people (the whole truth of all that is in) the Book (including mention of the Last, promised Prophet), and not conceal it.” But they paid no heed to it, flinging it behind their backs, and sold it for a trifling price (such as worldly advantage and position, status, and renown). How evil a bargain they made!

188. Never suppose that those who rejoice in what they have thus contrived, and who love to be (famed and) praised for what they have not achieved (such as being devout and pious and defenders of God’s law) – never suppose that they have saved themselves from the punishment: for them is a painful punishment.

189. And God’s is the sovereignty (absolute ownership and dominion) of the heavens and the earth, and God has full power over everything.

190. Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day (with their periods shortening and lengthening), there are signs (manifesting the truth) for the people of discernment.

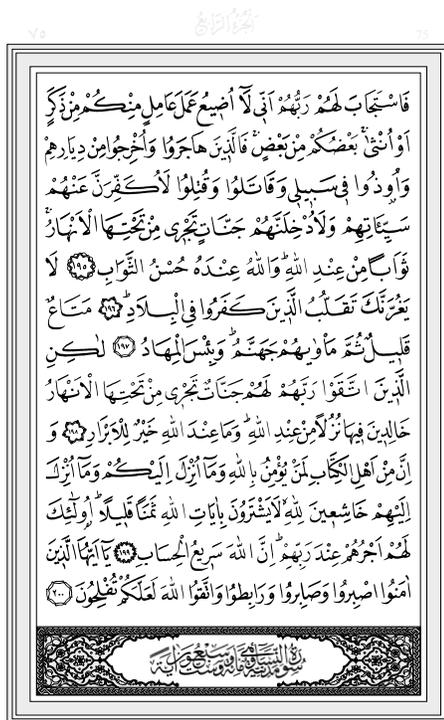
191. They remember and mention God (with their tongues and hearts), standing and sitting and lying down on their sides (whether during the Prayer or not), and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. (Having grasped the purpose of their creation and the meaning they contain, they conclude and say): “Our Lord, You have not created this (the universe) without meaning and purpose. All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above doing anything meaningless and purposeless), so save us from (having wrong conceptions of Your acts and acting against Your purpose for creation, and so deserving) the punishment of the Fire!



192. “Our Lord! Whomever You admit into the Fire, indeed You have brought him to disgrace. (Having concealed or rejected God’s signs in the heavens and on the earth, and so denied God or fallen into associating partners with Him,) the wrongdoers will have no helpers (against the Fire).

193. “Our Lord! Indeed We have heard a caller calling to faith, saying: ‘Believe in your Lord!’, so we did believe. Our Lord, forgive us, then, our sins, and blot out from us our evil deeds, and take us to You in death in the company of the truly godly and virtuous.

194. “Our Lord! Grant us what You have promised us through Your Messengers. Do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection; indeed You never break Your promise.”



195. And thus does their (All-Gracious and Generous) Lord answer them: “I do not leave to waste the work of any of you (engaged in doing good), whether male or female. (As males and females following the same way) you are all one from the other. Hence, those who have emigrated (in My cause) and been expelled from their homelands and suffered hurt in My cause, and have fought and been killed, indeed I will blot out from them their evil deeds and will admit them into Gardens through which rivers flow, as a reward from God (with infinite Mercy and Power to fulfill whatever He promises).” With God lies the best reward.

196. Let it not deceive you (O Messenger) that those who disbelieve strut about the land in pomp and show of dominion.

197. It is but a brief enjoyment, with Hell

thereafter as their final refuge: how evil a cradle it is!

198. Whereas those who keep from disobedience to their Lord (Who created and raised them, and sustains them, and Who has sent them the best of laws to order their lives), and act within the limits of piety – for them are Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide: a hospitality from the Presence of God; and that which is with God is best for the truly godly and virtuous.

199. And, behold, among the People of the Book are those who believe in God and what has been sent down to you, and what was sent down to them, those humbling themselves before God in reverence, not selling God’s Revelations for a trifling price. Such are those whose reward is with their Lord. God is swift at reckoning.

200. O you who believe! Be patient (persevere through what befalls you in the world in God’s cause); encourage each other to patience vying in it with one another and outdoing all others in it; and observe your duties to God in solidarity, and keep from disobedience to God in due reverence for Him and piety, so that you may prosper (in both worlds).

## SŪRAH 4

## AN-NISĀ' (WOMEN)

Madinah Period

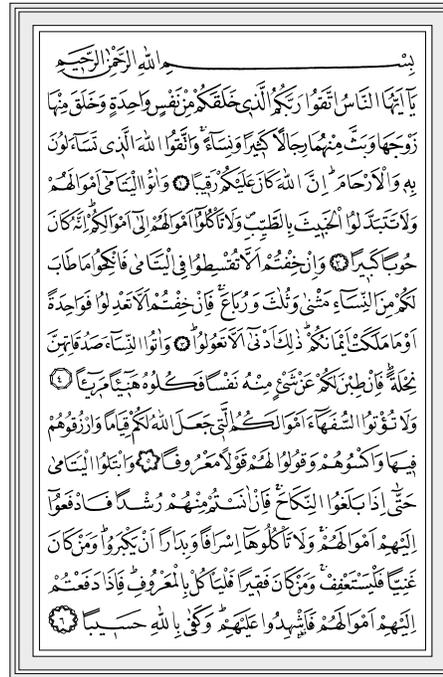
This *sūrah*, which has 176 verses, was revealed around the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the *Hijrah*. It is the first of two *sūrahs* that begin with the phrase "O humankind!" When the Qur'an is divided into two equal parts, *Sūrat an-Nisā'* is the fourth *sūrah* of the first part, while *Sūrah Hajj*, the second *sūrah* that begins with "O humankind!" is the fourth *sūrah* of the second part. After addressing us in this way, the *sūrah* draws attention to the origin or beginning of humankind; *Sūrah Hajj*, in contrast, focuses on the afterlife. Most of the principles that were revealed to govern Muslim civil life are found in this *sūrah*.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

1. O humankind! In due reverence for your Lord, keep from disobedience to Him Who created you from a single human self, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad a multitude of men and women. In due reverence for God, keep from disobedience to Him in Whose name you make demands of one another, and (duly observe) the rights of the wombs (i.e. of kinship, thus observing piety in your relations with God and with human beings). God is ever watchful over you.<sup>1</sup>

2. Restore their property to the orphans (in your custody, when they come of age), and do not exchange the corrupt for the good (the unlawful for the lawful), nor consume their property by mixing it up with your own. For doing that would be a great crime (whereby you risk the spiritual reward you hope for by caring for them).

3. If you fear that you will not be able to observe their rights with exact fairness



when you marry the orphan girls (in your custody), you can marry, from among other women (who are permitted to you in marriage and) who seem good to you, two, or three, or four.<sup>2</sup> However, if you fear that (in your marital obligations) you will not be able to observe justice among them, then content yourselves with only one, or the captives that your right hands possess.<sup>3</sup> Doing so is more likely that you will not act rebelliously.

4. Give to the women (whom you marry) their bridal-due (*mahr*) willingly and for good (i.e. without expecting a return); however, if of their own accord they remit any part of it to you, then you are welcome to enjoy it gladly.

5. Do not give to those of weak mind your property that God has put in your charge (as a means of support for you and for

the needy), but feed and clothe them out of it (especially with the profit you will make by exploiting it), and speak to them kindly and words of honest advice.

6. (Care for and) test the orphans well until they reach the age of marriage. Then, if you find them to be mature of mind, hand over to them their property; and do not consume it by wasteful spending, nor do so in haste fearing that they will

come of age (and so take it over). If the guardian is rich (enough to support himself and his family), let him abstain (from his ward's property); but if he is poor, let him consume thereof in a just and reasonable manner. When you hand (their property) over to them, let there be witnesses on their behalf. God suffices as One Who reckons and settles the accounts (of His servants).

1. From many different aspects this verse is very significant. However, due to the scope of this study, we can only discuss a few points here:

The original Arabic that has been translated as "a single human self" is *nafṣ wāhidah* (literally, a single self or soul). As mentioned before, *nafṣ* has two basic meanings: the self of a being, and the faculty which is the source or mechanism of the worldly life possessed by humankind and the jinn. When both meanings are taken into consideration, the phrase "a single human self" is preferable as a translation for *nafṣ wāhidah*.

There are similar verses in the Qur'ān that support such a choice. For example: *And among His signs is that He has created for you, from your selves, mates, that you may incline towards them and find rest in them, and He has engendered love and tenderness between you* (30: 21); *God has made for you, from your selves, mates (spouses), and has made for you from your mates children and grandchildren, and has provided you with good, wholesome things* (16: 72); *The Originator of the heavens and the earth, each with particular features; He has made for you, from your selves, mates, and from the cattle mates (of their own kind) ....* (42: 11). What these verses are referring to by the phrase "your selves" is humankind, or the human self or nature. These verses draw our attention to the fact that everything exists in the universe in pairs, as is made clear in the verse: *And all things We have created in pairs, so that you may reflect and be mindful* (51:49).

Some are of the opinion that what the verse refers to by "a single human self" is Adam. This

is not contrary to the preference made in this study, for the Qur'ān presents Adam in the Garden before his earthly life as one who represents humankind or the human self, rather than as an individual man. However, Adam being used as the representative of the human self is a very subtle point. It is the male that inseminates and is the primary factor in reproduction. Insemination can result in either a male child or a female child. That is, a male can beget both either a male or female. If nature had a creative power, as materialists or naturalists claim, a male could not beget a female; for nature is regularity and constancy. Yet, a female is neither a "natural" product nor a continuation of a male, nor vice versa. The male and female are the two halves or mates of a whole; these two halves complete each other, and each has features that are peculiar to itself. The existence of each depends solely on the Creator's Will and Power, which are absolute. Nature is neither an originator nor a creative power; rather, it is a creation, a model, a regular system established by the Creator.

Since the male has the inseminating function in reproduction in pairs, and the human self from which its mate was created is represented primarily by Adam, women mean more as a blessing for men than men mean for women. As pointed out before (*sūrah* 2, note 21), it is from this perspective that the Qur'ān mentions women as being among the primary blessings of Paradise for men. The fact that the male has the inseminating function in reproduction in pairs means men have a more dominant position and are charged naturally with the responsibilities required by this position.

*Sūrat an-Nisā'* is, in addition to including other aspects, the source of Islamic civil law. This is why it is of great significance that it begins with the address, "O humankind!" With such an address, the Qur'ān appeals to human feelings, and brings out the need for being human in relationships. What is meant is that: "Each of you is a human being that shares the same human nature. You are all the offspring of the same father and mother, and, therefore, you are all brothers and sisters. This requires that you treat each other as brothers and sisters, without making any discrimination based on color, race, or language." By focusing attention on the rights of kinship, this verse underlines this point, and by mentioning these rights along with the observation of God's rights, it stresses their importance.

2. Some people wrongfully criticize Islam because it allows polygamy. Such a criticism, from several perspectives, is not justifiable; some of these perspectives are as follows:

- Polygamy is a very ancient practice found in many human societies. The Bible did not condemn polygamy. On the contrary, the Old Testament and Rabbinic writings frequently attest to the legality of polygamy. King Solomon and King David had many wives and concubines (2 *Samuel*, 5: 13). According to Father Eugene Hillman in his insightful book, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, "Nowhere in the New Testament is there any explicit commandment that marriage should be monogamous or any explicit commandment forbidding polygamy." Moreover, Jesus did not speak against polygamy, even though it was practiced by the Jews in his society. Father Hillman stresses the fact that the Church in Rome banned polygamy in order to conform to the Greco-Roman culture (which prescribed only one legal wife while tolerating concubinage and prostitution). The Qur'ān, contrary to the Bible, limits the maximum number of wives to four, and it imposes the strict condition that all the wives be treated equally and justly. This should not be seen as the Qur'ān exhort-
- ing believers to practice polygamy, or that polygamy is considered as an ideal state. In other words, the Qur'ān tolerates or allows polygamy, and nothing more. But why is polygamy permissible? The answer is simple: there are places and times in which there are compelling social and moral reasons for polygamy. Islam, as a universal religion suitable for all places and all times, cannot ignore these compelling reasons.
- In most human societies, females outnumber males. In America today there are at least eight million more women than men. In a country like Guinea there are 122 females for every 100 males. In Tanzania, there are 95.1 males per 100 females (Hillman, 88-93). What should a society do when faced with such an unbalanced sex ratio? There are various solutions; some might suggest celibacy, while others prefer female infanticide (which tragically happens in even some "civilized" societies in the world today!) Yet others may think the only solution is that society should tolerate all manners of sexual permissiveness: prostitution, infidelity, homosexuality, etc.
  - Such an imbalance in the sex ratios becomes truly problematic in times of war. Native American Indian tribes used to suffer highly unbalanced sex ratios after military losses. The women in these tribes, who in fact enjoyed a fairly high status, accepted polygamy as being the best protection against indulgence in indecent activities. After the Second World War, there were 7,300,000 more women than men in Germany (3.3 million of them were widows). Many of these women needed a man not only as a companion, but also as a provider for the household in a time of unprecedented misery and hardship. What is more dignified for a woman – to be an accepted and respected second wife, as in the Native Indians' approach, or to be nothing more than a prostitute? In 1987, a poll conducted by the student newspaper at the University of California

at Berkeley asked the students whether they agreed that men should be allowed by law to have more than one wife. This question was posed in response to a perceived shortage of male marriage candidates in California. Almost all of the students polled approved of the idea (J. Lang, *Struggling to Surrender*, 172).

- Up to the present day, polygamy continues to be a viable solution for some of the social ills in modern society. Philip Kilbride, an American anthropologist with a Roman Catholic background, proposes polygamy as a solution to some of the ills found in American society in his provocative book, *Plural Marriage for Our Time*. He argues that plural marriage may serve as a potential alternative for divorce in many cases, where it would obviate the damaging impact that divorce has on many children (Kilbride, 118).

Moreover, many jurists allow women to stipulate in their marriage contracts (required for a Muslim marriage to be valid) that the husband may not take a second wife or that he must divorce the first wife (with all financial rights that accrue to her when the husband initiates a divorce) if he takes a second wife.

- It should be noted that in many Muslim societies today the practice of polygamy is rare, since there is a better balance between the ratio of the sexes. One can safely say that the rate of polygamous marriages in the Muslim world is much lower than the rate of extramarital affairs in the West. In other words, men in the Muslim world today are far more monogamous, in the absolute sense of the word, than men in the Western world.
- Billy Graham, the eminent Christian evangelist has recognized this fact: “Christianity cannot compromise on the question of polygamy. If present-day Christianity cannot do so, it is to its own detriment. Islam has permitted polygamy as a solution to social ills and has allowed a certain degree of latitude to human nature, but only within the strictly defined framework of

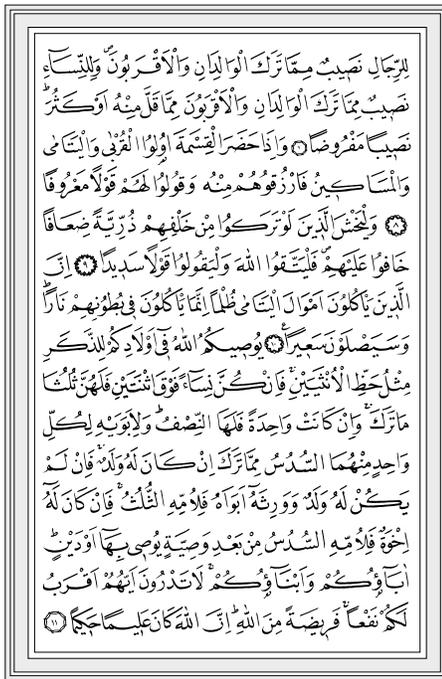
the law. Christian countries make a great show of monogamy, but actually they practice polygamy. No one is unaware of the part mistresses play in Western society. In this respect Islam is a fundamentally honest religion, and permits a Muslim to marry a second wife if he must, but strictly forbids all clandestine amatory associations in order to safeguard the moral probity of the community” (‘Abd ar-Rahmān Doi, *Woman in Shari’ah*, 76).

- There are even psychological factors calling for polygamy. For example, many young African brides, whatever their religion, would prefer to marry a man who has already proved himself to be a responsible husband. Many African wives urge their husbands to get a second wife so that they will not feel lonely (Hillman, 92–97). A survey of over six thousand women, ranging in age from 15 to 59, conducted in the second largest city in Nigeria showed that 60 percent of these women would be pleased if their husbands took another wife. In a survey undertaken in rural Kenya, 25 out of 27 women considered polygamy to be better than monogamy. These women felt polygamy can be a happy and beneficial experience if the co-wives cooperate with each other (Kilbride, 108–109).
- Modern civilization rejects polygamy as unwise and disadvantageous to social life. As observed even in animals and plants, the purpose for and wisdom in sexual relations is reproduction. The resulting pleasure is a small payment determined by Divine Mercy to realize this duty. Marriage is for reproduction and the perpetuation of the species. Being able to give birth at most once a year, able to become pregnant during half of a month, and entering menopause around 50, a woman is at a reproductive disadvantage compared to a man, so to speak, who can sometimes impregnate women until the age of 70 or more. That is why, in most cases, modern civilization is obliged to find new ways

of impregnation at great cost. Even if the purpose of marriage were merely sexual gratification, polygamy would be a lawful way to realize it. (Summarized from Sherif Muḥammad.)

3. The following points should be considered when viewing the matter of (female-)slavery from within the matrix of Islam:

- Islam did not invent or establish the institution of (female-)slavery; rather it found itself in an international arena where (female-)slavery was practiced in the most abominable manner. Islam viewed the matter as related to wartime and dealt with this subject as if it were a matter of how to treat prisoners of war. Although (female-)slavery, in various forms, was in practice until recently, Islam adopted a process to abolish it over the course of time, fourteen centuries ago. It was not Islam, but those who related themselves to Islam, that were responsible for certain objectionable practices that have been witnessed in some Muslim communities over the previous centuries.
- While international law in the modern world does not date back to more than a few centuries, Islam established principles and laws in matters concerning international relations, such as war and the treatment of the prisoners-of-war over fourteen centuries ago. Imam Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, who lived twelve centuries ago, was the first to write a book on international law, *al-Siyar al-Kabīr*. This book is based on the relevant injunctions in the Qur'ān and on the practice of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.
- Islam forbade the killing of prisoners-of-war, and in place of this, instructed that they be distributed among Muslim families. Great importance was attached to their education and their "owners" were advised to marry the women among them. Such "prisoners-of-war" were to be given the status of free women when they gave birth to a child. Islam aims at their final emancipation and the eradication of (female-)slavery. As recompense for many sinful acts, such as breaking fast before the proper time, Islam required the emancipation of a (female-)slave, and exhorted believers to emancipate their (female-)slaves, stating that this is a very meritorious act.
- Without making any gender discrimination, Islam attaches great value to human-kind. It aims at elevating all human beings to the true rank of humanity, as this is the best pattern of creation. It regards the women who have attained this rank with their level of education, character and virtuousness, as being *muhṣan* (protected women). A woman devoid of such lofty moral and spiritual values, one who presents herself as merely a physical object of sex cannot be a *muhṣan*. Attaining this rank requires true education, and Islam has established rules for each stage or grade. Therefore the matter of (female-)slavery has educational and psychological dimensions, in addition to social and international ones.
- As pointed out before (*Sūrah*: 2, note: 95), with regard to legislation, Islam follows three principal ways: it retains the commandments that existed in previous Books or that prevailed in the community in which it appeared, and which were not contradictory to its essential principles; it corrected or amended the ones that were not in conformity with its principles; and finally, it installed new legislations. In each of these ways, Islam followed a gradual process, especially in matters where it required a long time to eradicate old habits or establish a new approach. The matter of (female-)slavery is one such issue, especially due to its international dimension.



truth and proper words (in respect of the division of the inheritance and their treatment of the orphans).

10. Surely those who consume the property of orphans wrongfully, certainly they consume a fire in their bellies; and soon they will be roasting in a Blaze (the like of which you have never seen, and the degree of whose intensity none knows except God).

11. God commands you in (the matter of the division of the inheritance among) your children: for the male is the equivalent of the portion of two females. If there are more than two females (with no males), for them is two-thirds of the inheritance; if there is only one, then the half. As for the parents (of the deceased): for each of the two is one-sixth of the inheritance, in case of his having left a child; but if he has left no children and his parents are his only heirs, then for his mother is one-third. If he has (a surviving mother and, together with or without sisters,) two or more (surviving) brothers, then for his mother is one-sixth – (all these commands to be put into effect) after deduction for any bequest he may have made (provided such bequest is in conformity with the relevant teachings of Islam) and any debt (incurred by him) (– first the debt is paid, then the bequest is fulfilled, and then the inheritance is shared). Your parents and your children: you do not know which of them is nearer to you in (bringing you) benefit. This (law of inheritance) is an ordinance from God (that you must absolutely obey). Surely God is All-Knowing (of your affairs and what benefits or harms you), and All-Wise.

7. For the male heirs is a share out of what parents and near kindred leave behind, and for the female heirs is a share of what parents and near kindred leave behind, whether it (the inheritance) be little or much – a share ordained by God.<sup>4</sup>

8. If some from among other relatives (who do not have a legally defined share), and orphans, and the destitute are present at the division (of the inheritance), give them something thereof (for their provision), and speak to them kindly and pleasing words.

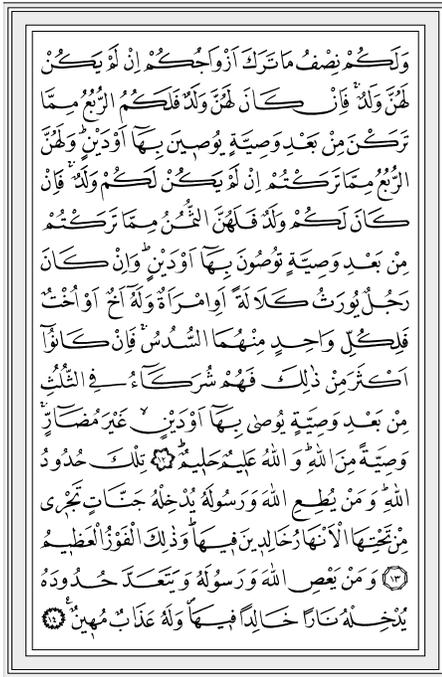
9. Let those be anxious (for the rights of the orphans) who, if they themselves were to leave behind weak offspring, would be fearful on their account – and let them keep from disobedience to God for fear of His punishment, and let them speak the

4. This short verse contains the basic principles of the Islamic law of inheritance established by the Qur'ān, as well as a significant warning:

- Like men, women also have a share in inheritance.
- The property left behind by a deceased person is inherited, no matter the amount.
- It makes no difference whether the inherited property is movable or immovable.
- Any children, parents, grandparents or other near relatives can inherit from another person. If there are near kindred, those who are of collateral relations cannot inherit.

- Heirs cannot be deprived of inheritance, except for exceptional cases such as if they have killed their testator (at-Tirmidhī, "Farā'id," 17) (Suat Yıldırım, 77).

The significant warning that is contained in the verse is as follows: In the pre-Islamic age, women were forbidden from inheriting. By mentioning women or female heirs separately, in the same way that male heirs are mentioned, i.e. by reiteration, an emphasis is made, stressing that whether the inheritance is great or small, women cannot be deprived of it on any pretext, such as the amount being insignificant.



12. And for you is a half of what your wives leave behind if they have no children, but if they have a child, then you shall have one-fourth of what they leave behind – after deduction for any bequest they may have made and any debt (incurred by them). And for them is one-

fourth of what you leave behind, if you have no children; but if you have a child, then they shall have one-eighth of what you leave behind – after deduction for any bequest you may have made and any debt (incurred by you). And if a man or a woman has no heir in the direct line, but has a brother or a sister (on the mother's side), for him or her is one-sixth; but if there are two or more, then they shall be sharers in one-third – after deduction for any bequest that may have been made or debt; neither (bequest or debt) intending harm (to the rights of the heirs, in such ways as declaring fictitious debts or bequeathing more than one-third of one's estate). A commandment from God. God is All-Knowing (of all your intentions, actions, and outcomes), All-Clement (not hasty to punish the errors of His servants).<sup>5</sup>

13. These are the bounds set by God. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger (by remaining within these bounds), God will admit him into Gardens through which rivers flow, abiding therein. That is the supreme triumph.

14. But whoever disobeys God and His Messenger and exceeds His bounds, God will admit him into a Fire, to abide therein, and for him is a shameful, humiliating punishment.

5. In these last two verses, the basic principles and standards of the Islamic law of inheritance are laid down; the precise details have been established on these standards and on the practice of the Prophet and his Companions. Before elucidating some points, we should consider the fact that these two verses present the Islamic law of inheritance as God's absolute command, and in their conclusive pronouncements declare that they are based on God's Knowledge and Wisdom. Therefore, what we should do is to try to find instanc-

es of His Divine Wisdom in them. Breaching these orders means disobedience to God and His Messenger, while rejecting them amounts to unbelief. Secondly, Islam is not a religion that takes up a position of answering objections. Whatever it decrees, is right and just. So, our intention, while explaining Islam's position in matters that have been made the target of objections during recent times, is to illuminate sincere minds.

- According to the Islamic law of inheritance, with the exception of the father and

mother, and in some cases, the brothers and sisters, a son receives twice as much as a daughter, a brother twice as much as a sister and a husband twice as much as a wife.

- Islam is universal, taking into consideration and addressing the conditions of all ages and communities. Its worldview is holistic and it deals with particular matters in a universal frame. So, when viewing its law of inheritance, we should consider many psychological and sociological factors, such as the psychology of women and men, their positions and financial responsibilities in the family and society, and their contribution to the economy. We should evaluate every matter with respect to its own nature and within its own framework, and not be misled by theoretical abstractions disconnected from lived reality, such as absolute equality, the pursuit of which can often result in loss of equity and balance.
- In order to understand the rationale behind why Islam in some cases gives women half the share of men, one must take into account the fact that the financial obligations of men in Islam far exceed those of women. A bridegroom must provide his bride with a marriage gift. This gift becomes her exclusive property and remains so even if she is later divorced. The bride is under no obligation to present any gifts to her husband. Moreover, the Muslim husband is charged with the maintenance of his wife and children. The wife, on the other hand, is not obliged to help him in this regard. Her property and earnings are for her use alone, except what she may voluntarily offer her husband. Moreover, one has to realize that Islam strongly advocates family life. It positively encourages young people to get married and discourages divorce. Therefore, in a truly Islamic society, family life is the norm, while single life is the rare exception. That is, almost all women and men of a marriageable age will be married in an Islamic society. In light of these facts, one can appreciate that Muslim men, in general, have greater financial bur-

dens than Muslim women, and the inheritance rules take account of this reality (See Sherif Muḥammad).

- When a woman inherits less than a man does, she is not actually deprived of anything for which she has worked. Any property that is inherited is not the result of her earning or her endeavors. It is something that comes from a neutral source, something additional or extra. It is something that neither the man nor the woman has struggled for. It is a sort of aid, and any aid has to be distributed according to the most urgent needs and responsibilities, especially when the distribution is regulated by God's law (<http://www.thewaytotruth.org/womaninislam/financial.html>).
- The Qur'ānic injunction of inheritance is a perfect mercy for women, in addition to its being perfectly just. Because a young girl is sensitive, and vulnerable; she must be looked on with affection by her father. Thanks to the Qur'ānic injunction concerning inheritance, the father does not see her as a child who will cause him loss by carrying away to others half of his wealth. In addition, her brothers feel compassion for her and protect her, without feeling envy; they do not consider her as a rival in the division of the family possessions. Thus, the affection and compassion which the girl enjoys through her family compensates for her apparent loss in inheritance.
- Some still object that a woman's share should, from the beginning, be equal to that of man, and then we would not be compelled to compensate her by allowing her a dowry and maintenance on the part of her husband.

Those who make this objection think that the dowry and the maintenance are the results of women's peculiar position with regard to inheritance, whereas the reality is just the opposite. Furthermore, they seem to be under the impression that the financial aspect is the only consideration.

Had that been the only consideration, obviously there would have been neither a need for the system of dowry and maintenance, nor would there be a disparity between the shares of men and women. As we have mentioned earlier, Islam has taken into consideration many aspects, some of them natural and others psychological. In most cases, in her parents' house, her contribution to the family income is much less than that of her brother(s). Also, a son has to look after his mother if the father dies, while the mother will not have to support herself from this portion, nor will any unmarried daughter have to support herself from her share in an Islamic society; in effect, their shares are for their personal use. Other psychological and social aspects, which help in the consolidation of domestic relations, have also been considered (M. Mutahhari).

- It is for this reason that it would be a severe injustice, and not at all a kindness, to institute a larger share for a girl or wom-

an, to give her more than is her due, merely out of "compassion." This is unrealistic because no one can be more compassionate than God. Rather, if Qur'anic bounds are exceeded, women may become, for the reasons we have given, vulnerable to exploitation and tyranny in the family, especially in view of the barbaric selfishness of certain times. As for the Qur'anic injunctions, all of them, like those pertaining to inheritance, prove the truth expressed in the verse, *We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as an unequalled mercy for all the worlds (sūrah 21: 107).*

- Islam does not support the idea that wealth is a fortune circulated among a small minority. It wants the wealth to be distributed among as many people as possible. Concerning inheritance, considering that God's grace and bountifulness have a share in it, it is strongly advised, even ordered, that distant relatives, orphans, and the poor should also benefit from any wealth.

وَالَّذِي يَأْتِيَنَّ مِنَ الْفَاحِشَةِ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَامْسِكُوهُنَّ بِأَعْيُنِكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيََنَّ بِتُوبَةٍ أَوْ يَتُوبَا إِلَيْكُمْ فَانكِحُواهُمَا بِطُرُقِ الْحَدِيثِ وَغَيْرِهَا بِمَا نَكَحْتُمُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُتُوءِ حَتَّىٰ يُتَوَفَّيَهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ وَالذَّاتِ  
يَأْتِيَنَّهَا مِنْكُمْ فَادْخُلُوهُمَا فَإِن تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا  
فَاعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا  
۝١٥ إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ  
بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ  
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝١٦ وَلَئِن تَوَسَّطَ  
التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمْ  
المُوتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ يَا رَبُّ وَالَّذِينَ يُتُوبُونَ وَهُمْ كُمْفَاتٌ  
أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝١٧ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرْهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ  
لِتَدْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مِمَّا اسْتَيْمَوْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ  
مُّبِينَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ  
أَنْ يَكُونَ خَيْرًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۝١٨

15. Such of your women as have committed indecency (unlawful sex), there must be four male witnesses of you who (having seen them in the act) will testify against them (within one succeeding month in towns, and six succeeding months in the rural areas). If they do bear witness, then confine those women to their houses until death takes them away or God opens some way for them.

16. When two from among you have committed it, then punish them both by scolding and beating; but if they are remorseful and repent, and make amends, then withdraw from them.<sup>6</sup> Surely God is He Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, All-Compassionate.

17. God's acceptance of repentance is only for those who commit evil due to ignorance (an instance of defeat to the evil-commanding soul), and then (pull themselves together and) repent shortly afterwards. It is they whose repentance God returns with forgiveness; and God is All-Knowing (of what everyone does and why), and All-Wise.

18. But of no avail is the repentance of those who commit evil (for a lifetime) until, when one of them is visited by death, he says, "Indeed, now I repent." Nor (likewise does the repentance avail) of those who (spend their lives in unbelief and offer to repent just at the time of death, but)

die as unbelievers (since such repentance is not acceptable). For such, We have prepared a painful punishment.

19. O you who believe! It is not lawful for you to become inheritors, against their will, of women (of your deceased kinsmen, marrying them against their will, without paying their bridal-due, or forcing them to marry others in return for their bridal-due, as though they were a part of heritable property); nor should you constrain your wives in order to take away anything of what you have given them (as bridal-due or bridal gift), unless they be guilty of indecency in an obvious manner (such as to justify divorce). Consort with them in a good manner, for if you are not pleased with them, it may well be that you dislike something but God has set in it much good.

6. Unjust killing, fornication and adultery, theft and usurpation, anarchy and terror, open and rebellious apostasy, slander, and partaking of intoxicating substances, including drugs, are the most grievous crimes in Islam. Muslim Law aims at the protection of the faith, the mind, life, property, and healthy reproduction; the most severe punishments are applied for their violation.

Although there are different opinions concerning these two verses, the view which has been most widely accepted is that they are complementary to one another. While verse 15 is concerned only with Muslim women guilty of indulging in unlawful sex, verse 16 concerns the act of unlawful sex, the partners of which are known. The reason why the Qur'an has established the matter in this way and mentions women separately must be that, just as there are brothels and similar places in modern societies, women engaged in prostitution were also around during the pre-Islamic period of *Jāhiliyyah*. So, as an important step on the way to the decisive banning and prevention of prostitution, and of any other kind of unlawful sex, the Qur'an mentions women separately. Then, it proceeds to mention individual cases of unlawful sex where the partners are known to have committed this act.

As with several other commandments, Islam followed a gradual process in laying down the final penalty for unlawful sex. First, in these two verses, it prescribed that the Muslims who had committed such an act should be scolded and beaten, and that the female partners be kept in houses in order to prevent prostitution. The expression, *or God opens some way for them*, which meant that a new, final commandment would be revealed, resulted in the execution of the adulterous married couples according to the Prophet's practice, and striking the unmarried ones with a whip 100 times (See 24: 2).

In note 131 in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the basic principles upon which the Islamic Penal Law is based were summarized. Taking into consideration the penalty for adultery, we should add the following points:

- During the Makkan period, the following was revealed to the believers (*sūrah* 18: 26, 31-35, 59): give relatives, the needy and wayfarers their due; kill nobody unjustly, including children; refrain from adultery; do not consume the property of orphans; and do not deceive in weighing and measuring. These came as principles of Wisdom, in return for whose violation no penalty was prescribed. However, in Madinah, where an Islamic government was established after the Companions' swearing a pledge to the Messenger, these provisions became articles of law, the violation of which brought a penalty. This shows that the Islamic Penal Law was put into effect in a system established on the basis of the Islamic creed, worldview, worship, behavior, standards of morality, and social and economic structure. Thus, the penal law should be evaluated within the entirety of Islam.
- Islam followed a gradual process in laying down the final penalty for crimes, such as adultery and the consumption of alcohol, and the penalties prescribed before the final one were not removed from the Qur'an, despite their being abrogated. This means that an Islamic community is one that is gradually perfected along with the implementation of Islamic rules. It resembles a healthy body. Every crime committed in such a community is like a disease threatening the body, according to its nature and degree. Rebellious apostasy, killing, anarchy, terror, adultery, consuming intoxicating substances, slander, theft and usurpation are the most deadly of diseases. Just as some diseases require medicine for recovery, while others need radiotherapy, and still others require an operation, so too, the diseases that threaten a healthy social body require the same kind of therapies, each according to its nature and degree of intensity.
- With its principles of creed, worship, good conduct or behavior, morality, and social and economic structure, Islam prevents people from committing crimes. It can be

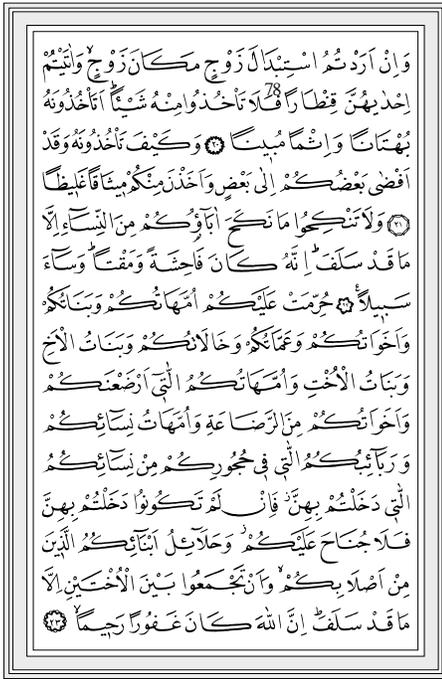
said that Islam makes it 95% more difficult to commit deadly sins or crimes, and leaves the remaining 5% to human free will. Therefore, it is clear that those who commit the grave crimes mentioned in the previous note are diseased elements in a truly Islamic society.

- Islam has made it considerably difficult to establish and prove adultery and to implement the prescribed penalty. The number of those who have been proven to be guilty of adultery or theft and who have been punished during the thirteen centuries of Islam until the 14<sup>th</sup> century after the *Hijrah*, was extremely small. The incidents of adultery and theft that occur in a single year in one so-called modern, civilized country, and the complications, such as divorce, the collapse of families, suicide, murder, and depression, all caused by such events, far exceed the number of such incidents during the thirteen centuries of Islamic history throughout all the Muslim lands. Should not those who criticize Islam for the penalties it prescribes for grievous crimes view the matter from this perspective, at least, if they are not ignorant of the truth of the matter nor prejudiced opponents of Islam?
- In the Bible, there are many examples of adultery, all of which were punished either by stoning or burning, or in some other way. Furthermore, these kinds of punishment were not restricted only to adultery; if a man married a woman and her daughter at the same time, all three were killed by burning (*Leviticus*, 20: 10–21). There is no commandment in the Gospels that abrogates these laws. We can only find an episode in *John* (8: 3–11), where Jesus, upon him be peace, refused to judge on the stoning of an adulterous woman brought before him. The reason why he did this is quite clear: The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this

woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. If Jesus had ordered her to be stoned, they would have objected: “Did you not order mercy?” If he had not, they would have protested: “Did you not declare that you accepted Moses’ Law?” Jesus, upon him be peace, started to write on the ground with his finger, and said: “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” By so doing, he taught a lesson. At his time, the Jewish community was highly contaminated by sins. Those who wanted to make him exercise a commandment were the same persons who were foremost in disobedience to the Law, yet it was they who had to preserve it and judge by it. There was no ground propitious for implementing the Law, nor was Jesus in the position to implement it. So, this event is not one that shows there was no penalty for adultery in the Gospels, but rather one which demonstrates the spirit of the religious – Islamic – Penal Law.

Furthermore, the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, brought more strict moral and spiritual sanctions against adultery: “You have heard that it was said to those of old: ‘*You shall not commit adultery.*’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (*Matthew*, 5: 27–29).

- Islam is not aimed at the satisfaction of animal appetites at any cost, as are secular, materialist civilizations; but rather, it urges the spirit to true human perfection and the bringing up of virtuous generations, whose minds are enlightened with scientific knowledge and whose hearts are illuminated with pure spiritual values.



20. But if you still decide to dispense with a wife and marry another, and you have given the former (even so much as amounts to) a treasure, do not take back anything thereof. Would you take it back by slandering (for the purpose of contriving the kind of divorce that allows you to take it back), and so committing a flagrant sin?

21. Then, how could you take it back when you have gone in to each other, and they (the married women) have taken from you a most solemn pledge (of honoring their rights)?

22. And do not marry the women whom your fathers married – except what has happened (of that sort) in the past (before your conversion; such occurrences are forgivable provided you rectify your conduct and terminate any such contract of marriage). This was indeed a shameful deed and hateful thing, and how evil a way!

23. Forbidden to you (O believing men) are your mothers (including stepmothers and grandmothers) and daughters (including granddaughters), your sisters (including full sisters and half-sisters), your aunts paternal and maternal, your brothers' daughters, your sisters' daughters, your mothers who have given suck to you, your milk-sisters (all those as closely related to you through milk as through descent<sup>7</sup>), your wives' mothers, your stepdaughters – who are your foster-children, born of your wives with whom you have consummated marriage; but if you have not consummated marriage with them, there will be no blame on you (should you marry their daughters) – and the spouses of your sons who are of your loins, and to take two sisters together in marriage (including a niece and her aunt, maternal or paternal)<sup>8</sup> – except what has happened (of that sort) in the past. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

7/8. Marrying not only milk-mothers and milk-sisters, but all of those who have as close a relationship through milk as through descent (i.e. nieces or nephews from milk), and marry-

ing a niece and her aunt together, were prohibited by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, based either on the Revelation or by inference from this verse.

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ  
 كَتَابَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَإِطْعَامُهُمْ زَوْجًا  
 تَبَتَّعُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مَحْصِنِينَ غَيْرِ مُسْلِفِينَ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ  
 بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ قَرِيبَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا  
 تَرَاصَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الرِّبْضَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا  
 ﴿٥٠﴾ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ  
 الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنْ قَتِيَانِكُمُ  
 الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ  
 بَعْضٍ فَانكِحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ وَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ  
 بِالْمَعْرُوفِ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ غَيْرِ مُسْلِفَاتٍ وَلَا مُتَّفِدَاتٍ  
 أَخْدَانٍ فَإِذَا أَحْصَيْتُمْ فَإِنَّ أَيْتَانَ بِقَابِحَنَّهُ فَكُلَّيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ  
 مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَدَاةِ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ تَشَى الْعَتَى مِنْكُمْ  
 وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ  
 ﴿٥١﴾ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ الَّذِي  
 مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾

24. And (also forbidden to you are) all married women, save those (captive) whom your right hands possess (and whose ties with their husbands have practically been cut off). This is God's decree, binding upon you. Lawful for you are all beyond those mentioned, that you may seek, offering them of your wealth, taking them in sound chastity (i.e. in marriage), and not in licentiousness. And whomever of them you seek to enjoy in marriage (under these conditions), give them their bridal-due as a duty. But there is no blame on you for what you do by mutual agreement after the duty (has been done). Surely God is All-Knowing (of what you do and why), and All-Wise.

25. If any of you cannot afford to marry free, believing women, (let them marry) believing maidens from among those whom your right hands possess. (Do not regard marriage to such believing maidens as a degradation. Rather, degradation is deviating into licentiousness without marrying.) God knows well all about your faith (and measures you by it); and (whether you be free or slaves) you are one from another (belonging, as believers, to the same faith and community). Marry them, then, with the leave of their guardians, and give them their bridal-due according to religiously lawful and custom-

ary good practice, they being women who give themselves in honest chastity, not in licentiousness, nor having secret love-companions.<sup>9</sup> Then if they commit indecency after they have entered into wedlock, they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free (unmarried) women are liable. That (permission to marry bondmaids) is for those of you who fear to fall into sin (by remaining unmarried). But if you persevere (in self-restraint with no fear of falling into sin), that is better for you. And God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

26. God wills to explain to you (His commandments in which your happiness lie), and to guide you to the (righteous) ways of life of those who preceded you, and to turn to you (with mercy and favor). God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

9. In these last two verses, the Qur'ān indicates an important social reality and clarifies an aspect of female slavery. While the previous verse warns men who will marry believing, free women not to stray into ways of indecency, like adultery, this verse admonishes that female slaves should also refrain from such deviations. It also mentions the matter of marrying female slaves in the case of men who fear deviation into unlawful ways if they were to remain unmarried. What we can understand from this is that men are more susceptible to deviation than women. A free Muslim woman is so far from falling that it is not even contemplated; such a woman is extremely careful about her chastity. A believing female slave may be susceptible.

We conclude from this that in the view of Islam a free, Muslim, chaste woman is the ideal of respectable womanhood; others, though be-

lievers, may not be careful about their chastity and, therefore, do not enjoy the same status or respect. A woman loses her right to respect when she indulges in indecency or she presents herself as a sexual object, using her physical charms to allure; this means that she has fallen from the rank of true, perfect humanity. Similarly, respected members of a pure, Islamic society cannot perceive of women as sexual objects. Islam regards indecencies such as fornication, adultery, and prostitution as the most abominable things, and sees these as the cause of people falling lower than animals. The sexual drive in animals is directed at reproduction; it is not just a desire to be satisfied in any way at any means. For example, bull-camels smell the urine of a she-camel in order to learn whether the camel has been inseminated or not. They will not mate otherwise.

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ  
 يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهْوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ۝ يُرِيدُ  
 اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وِجْيَارَ الْإِنْسَانِ ۖ ضَعِيفًا ۝  
 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم  
 بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ بِيَعَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا  
 أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ۝ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ  
 ذَلِكَ عُدُوًّا وَأَكْرَاهًا فَسَوْفَ نَضِلُّهُ نَارًا ۖ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى  
 اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ۝ إِنْ تَجَدَّبُوا كَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْهُنَّ أَشْيَاءٌ مَكْرُومَةٌ  
 عَنْكُمْ سَيَأْتِيَكُمْ وَنُدْخِلَكُمْ مُدْخِلَ كَرِيمًا ۝ وَلَا  
 تَتَّبِعُوا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِيُجَالِسَ  
 نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبْنَ وَسَأَلُوا  
 اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ عَلِيمًا ۝  
 وَلِكُلِّ جَمْعٍ مِمَّا تَرَكُوا مِنَ الْأَوْلَادِ  
 وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدْتُمْ مِيثَاقَكُمْ فَاؤْتَوْهُمْ  
 نَصِيبَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ۝

27. God wills to turn to you (with mercy and favor, by explaining to you His commandments and guiding you to the Straight Path), whereas those who follow (their) lusts (for women, offspring, wealth, fame, status, and position) desire you to deviate greatly (from the Straight Path).

28. God wills to lighten for you (your burdens), for human has been created weak (liable to err).<sup>10</sup>

29. O you who believe! Do not consume one another's wealth in wrongful ways (such as theft, extortion, bribery, usury, and gambling), except it be dealing by mutual agreement; and do not destroy yourselves (individually or collectively, by following wrongful ways like extreme asceticism and idleness. Be ever mindful that) God has surely been All-Compassionate towards you (particularly as believers).

30. Whoever acts wrongfully through enmity (towards others) and by way of deliberate transgression and wronging (both himself and others), We will surely land him in a Fire to roast therein (the like of which you have never seen, and the degree of whose intensity none knows except God); that indeed is easy for God.

31. If you avoid the major sins<sup>11</sup> which you have been forbidden, We will blot out from you your minor evil deeds and make you enter by a noble entrance (to an abode of glory).

32. (People differ from each other in capacity and means of livelihood, and it is not in your hands to be born male or female. Therefore) do not covet that in which God has made some of you excel others (thus envying others in such things

as status or wealth or physical charms, and so objecting to God's distribution). Men shall have a share according to what they have earned (in both material and spiritual terms), and women shall have a share according to what they have earned. (On the other hand, do not refuse effort and aspiration; instead of envying others,) ask God (to give you more) of His bounty (through lawful labor and through prayer). Assuredly, God has full knowledge of everything.

33. And to everyone, We have appointed heirs to what the parents and near kindred might leave behind. (As those heirs have defined portions in the inheritance that must be given them,) so to those with whom you have made a solemn covenant, give them their due share. God is indeed a witness over everything.

10. Humanity is, so to speak, riddled with many weak spots. So we must be educated and liberated from our weak points. An important dimension of education is to keep the sphere of permission so wide as to satisfy the vital needs and lawful human desires, and lay down such prohibitions that will prevent people from going to extremes. Religious prohibitions and other responsibilities are not a burden on humanity; rather, they serve to lighten a burden which would otherwise crush us. The sphere of permission in Islam is wide enough for humanity to lead a perfect, human life, and to remove all possibility of conflict between the human spirit and bodily desires. So any kind of satisfaction sought outside that sphere is a great burden for the human heart and spirit to bear, and a torment upon torment, and a means of suffering and disasters for the family and social life.

11. The major sins are those in return for committing which God or His Messenger threatens a severe punishment in the Hereafter, and for some of which there is (also) a prescribed punishment in the world. Disbelieving in God and/

or associating partners with Him are the greatest of the major sins. The others are: despairing of God's mercy; regarding oneself as secure from His punishment; disrespecting one's parents and unobserving their rights; unjust killing; fornication and adultery; consuming the property of others, especially that of orphans; theft; engaging in usury; turning back (as a soldier) when the army advances or fleeing from battle-front; slandering the reputation of chaste women; sorcery; drinking alcohol; gambling; exchanging God's covenant and the oaths taken in His Name for worldly advantages; betraying public trusts; giving false evidence in a court; not carrying out any of the obligatory religious duties (such as abandoning the Prescribed Prayer, not paying the *Zakāh* (Prescribed Purifying Alms), not fasting the Ramaḍān, not going to the Major Pilgrimage); and barring people from God's way.

It is said that no sin for which one has sincerely repented and asked for God's forgiveness is great, and no sin that has been committed continuously and without repentance is considered to be minor.

الرِّجَالُ هُوَ أَمْرٌ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى  
 بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ قَالِ الصَّالِحَاتُ  
 قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّي خَافُونَ  
 نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَيُعْطَوْنَ وَهِنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصِرَاتٌ  
 قَانَ أَطْعَمَهُمْ فَلَا تُبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلاً إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ۝ وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا  
 فَابْعَثُوا حَكَامًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِمْ وَحَكَامًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا  
 إِنَّ رَبِّدَا إِصْلَاحًا يَوْفَى اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ۝ وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ  
 شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ  
 وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ  
 بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 لَأَجِبٌ مِّنْ كَانَ حُجَّتَ لَكُمْ أَهْلًا ۝ الَّذِينَ يَخْسِرُونَ  
 وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ  
 مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِمًّا ۝

34. Men (those who are able to carry out their responsibilities) are the protectors and maintainers of women inasmuch as God has endowed some of humankind (in some respects) with greater capacity than others, and inasmuch as they (the men) spend of their wealth (for the family's maintenance). Good, righteous women are the devoted ones (to God) and observant (of their husbands' rights), who guard the secrets (family honor and property, their chastity, and their husband's rights, especially where there is none to see them and in the absence of men,) as God guards and keeps undisclosed (what should be guarded and private). As for those women from whose determined disobedience and breach of their marital obligations you have reason to fear, admonish them (to do what is right); then, (if that proves to be of no avail), remain apart from them in beds; then (if that too proves to be of no avail), beat them lightly (without hitting them in their faces). Then, if they obey you (in your directing them to observe God's rights and their marital obligations), do not seek ways against them (to harm them). (Be ever mindful that) God is indeed All-Exalted, All-Great.<sup>12</sup>

35. And if you fear that a breach might occur between a couple, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from among her people. If they both want to set things aright, God will bring about reconciliation between them. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

36. And (as the essential basis of contentment in individual, family and social life,) worship God and do not associate anything

as a partner with Him; and do good to your parents in the best way possible, and to the relatives, orphans, the destitute, the neighbor who is near (in kinship, location, faith), the neighbor who is distant (in kinship and faith), the companion by your side (on the way, in the family, in the workplace, etc.), the wayfarer, and those who are in your service. (Treat them well and bring yourself up to this end, for) God does not love those who are conceited and boastful;

37. Those who act meanly (in spending out of what God has granted them) and urge others to be mean, and conceal the things God has granted them out of His bounty (such as wealth or knowledge, and certain truths in their Book). We have prepared for (such) unbelievers a shameful, humiliating punishment.

12. This verse is highly significant for male–female relationships and family law. It draws attention to the following cardinal points:

- God has not created all people exactly the same in all respects, but rather has given each person a form of superiority in some respect to others; this is a requirement of social life and is the origin of the division of labor and the need for variety of occupation. Although it is not true to the same degree with all men and women, He has created men, in some respects, superior to women, while He has also given women superiority over men in other respects.
- As a general rule, God has given men greater physical strength than women and endowed them with a greater capacity for management, as the fact that even in the modern world, administrators are usually men proves. God has also charged men with the financial responsibility of the family. Again, this is not true to the same degree for all men and women; there will, of course, be some women who are better managers than some men. This is why He has made men the head of the family. However, this does not mean that men have absolute authority in the family; rather, this authority must be exercised according to the Prophetic principle: *The master of a people is he who serves them*. But responsibility is proportionate to authority, and authority is proportionate to responsibility.
- Men are generally responsible for the well-being and prosperity of the family members, and for the management of the family. So while the verse directs men as to how they should treat rebellious women who are of bad conduct, it guides them to a gradual means of education: admonish them (to do what is right); then, (if that proves to be of no avail), remain apart from them in beds; then (if that too proves to be of no avail) beat them lightly (without hitting them in their faces). All the Qur'ānic commentators of the early period, whose opinions Ibn Jarīr at-Ṭabarī mentioned in

his *Tafsīr*, interpreted the word *darb* in the verse to mean beating or striking lightly.

It should be noted that these measures are aimed at education and saving the marriage from collapse in case of a wife's rebelliousness. It is not a matter of *women* being beaten only because they are women, but rather this punishment is only applicable to a truly rebellious person who is of evil conduct, a person who displays obstinacy, not only not doing her duty in the home but also one who does not care about good moral conduct; in short, such a woman is not only wronging her family, she is also wronging herself.

God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, interpreted the verse to mean that the beating should be light and only employed as a last resort in extreme cases such as lewdness committed by the wife; he warned men to refrain from beating as much as possible, and slapping in the faces (at-Tirmidhī, "Kitāb at-Tafsīr, Tawbah," 1; Abū Dāwūd, "Nikāh," 42). The last part of the verse is also of the same import. Furthermore, the Messenger condemned any unjustifiable beating. He exhorted men to be good to their families, saying: "The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family" (Ibn Mājah, "Nikāh" 50). He advised a Muslim woman, Fāṭimah bint Qays, not to marry a man known for beating women (Muslim, "Talaq," 36).

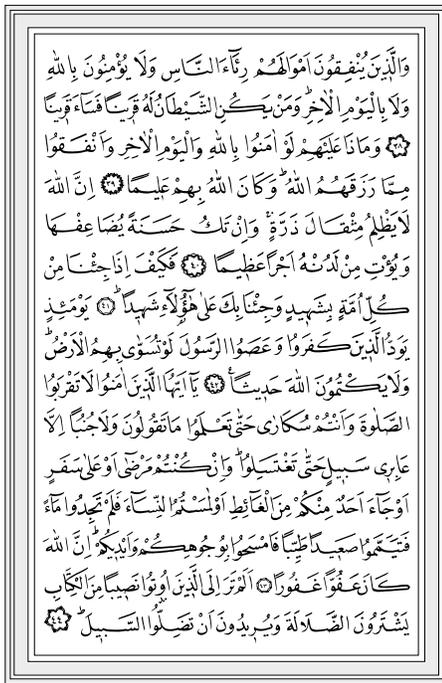
On the other hand, Islam never leaves women unprotected in the face of men's harsh treatment and negligence of their family duties. First, it advises reconciliation: *If a woman fears from her husband ill-treatment or (such breach of marital obligations as) his turning away in aversion, then there will be no blame on them to set things right peacefully between them; peaceful settlement is better.... (O husbands) if you do good in consciousness of God and act in reverence for Him and piety (in observing the rights of women), then surely God is fully aware of*

*what you do* (4: 128). However, it does not advise women to resort to the two measures of leaving their husbands in bed and beating. This must be because it seeks to protect the wife from a violent physical reaction by her already misbehaving husband. But it recognizes the women's right to resort to the court and even demand divorce. Muslim scholars suggest that the court can apply the same three measures in question against the husband on the wife's behalf.

- No system or religion has a right to ask Islam to apologize for any of its commandments, including this one concerning women. On the contrary, all surveys conducted show that women have been subjected to abuse in almost all other "religions" and systems, and this still continues in the modern, "civilized" world. In contrast, the periods when Islam was being practiced

consciously were a golden age for women. To cite a single example, what foreign travelers and observers wrote during the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – a time when all the Muslim world, including the Ottoman State, was in decline – is enough to clarify this point:

No one locks their house in the city where about one million people live because no theft has ever been reported. You do not see a vagabond, nor a beggar, nor one who shouts loudly in the streets. Women receive the greatest respect at home and enjoy certain authority. There is nothing more abominable to stare at a woman walking in the street, and especially raising a hand to beat them. It is impossible to describe the beauty of the Turkish women (Djevad, 35-36 [Quoted from Mr. Porter, British Ambassador to Turkey]).



38. And (likewise) those who spend their wealth (in charity or other good cause) to make a show of it to people (so as to be praised by them) when they believe neither in God nor in the Last Day: whoever has Satan for a comrade, how evil a comrade he is!

39. Why, what (harm) would fall upon them, if they believed in God and the Last Day and spent out of what God has provided for them (purely for the pleasure of God), and God has full knowledge of them (of what they believe in and what they spend)?

40. Assuredly, God wrongs (no-one) not even so much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it (with respect to its outcomes and the reward it will bring), and grants (its doer) a tremen-

dous reward purely from His Presence (beyond what it may have merited).

41. How, then, will it be (with people on the Day of Judgment) when We bring forward a witness from every community (to testify against them and that God's Religion was communicated to them), and bring you (O Messenger) as a witness against all those (whom your Message may have reached)?

42. On that Day, those who disbelieved (in this life and died in unbelief) and disobeyed the Messenger wish that the earth might be leveled with them (so as to leave no trace or record of them); but they will not be able to conceal from God any telling (of what they said or did).

43. O you who believe! Do not come forward to (stand in) the Prayer while you are in (any sort of) state of drunkenness until you know what you are saying, nor while you are in the state of ritual impurity (requiring the total ablution) – save when you are on a journey (and then unable to bathe) – until you have bathed (done the total ablution). But if you are ill, or on a journey, or if any of you has just satisfied a call of nature, or you have had contact with women, and can find no water, then betake yourselves to pure earth, passing with it lightly over your face and hands (and forearms up to and including the elbows). Surely God is One Who grants remission, All-Forgiving.

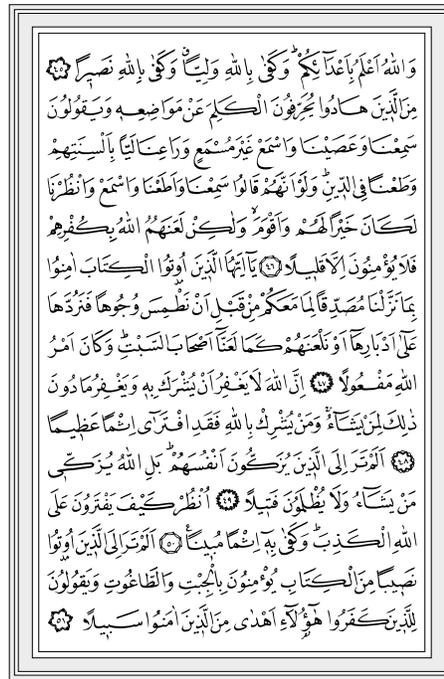
44. Do you not see and reflect upon those who were given a portion from the Book? They are occupied with buying straying and desire that you, too, should stray from the (right) way.

45. (O believers!) God knows best who your enemies are; and God suffices as Guardian and Protecting Friend, and God suffices as Helper.

46. Among those who have become Jews (Judaized) are some who alter the words from their context to distort their meanings, and say: "We have heard and we disobey," and, "Do hear us, may you turn dumb," (while pretending to say, "Will you hearken to us, O respected one!"), and "Listen to us! May you become deaf, O Shepherd!" (while pretending to say, "Attend to us!") – thus making a malicious play with their tongues and seeking to revile the (True) Religion. Had they but said, "We have heard and we obey," and "Listen to us," and "Favor us with your attention!", it would indeed have been for their own good, and more upright. But God has cursed them (excluded them from His mercy) because of their (willful, persistent) unbelief, and, but for a few, scarcely do they believe.

47. O you who were given the Book (before)! Believe (sincerely) in (the whole of) what We have been sending down (on Muḥammad), confirming what (of the truth) you already possess, before We obliterate faces so as to deprive them of seeing, hearing, speaking and smelling, or exclude them from Our mercy as We excluded the Sabbath-breakers. (Bear in mind that) God's command is always executed.

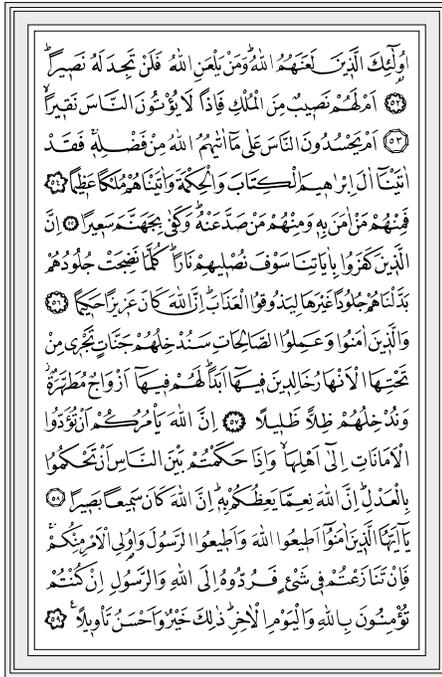
48. Assuredly, God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him; less than that, He forgives to whomever He wills (whomever He has guided to repentance and righteousness, either out of His pure grace or as a result of the person's choosing repentance and righteousness by his free will). Whoever associates any partner with God has indeed fabricated a most heinous sin.



49. Do you (O Messenger) not consider those who regard themselves pure and sanctified? No! Rather, it is God Who makes pure and sanctifies whomever He wills (considering the free will of each), and none is wronged even by as much as a tiny hair.

50. Look! how they fabricate falsehood in attribution to God; and that suffices for a flagrant sin (to lead them to their perdition).

51. Do you not consider those who were given a portion of the Book, how they believe in any false deity and all manner of powers of evil (that institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God), and say about those (idolaters) who disbelieve that they are more rightly guided (in the way they follow) than those who believe?



52. Such are the ones whom God has cursed (excluded from His mercy), and he whom God excludes from His mercy, you shall never find one to help and save him.

53. Or do they have a share in the sovereignty (ownership and dominion of the heavens and the earth, so that they claim some privileged position in God's sight and a right to guidance, Prophethood, and rule on the earth)? If that were so, they would not give people even as much as (would fill) the groove of a date-stone.

54. Or do they envy others for what God granted them out of His grace and bounty? Yet We did grant the Family of Abraham (including the progeny of Ishmael proceeding from him, as well as that of Isaac) the Book and the Wisdom, and We granted them a mighty kingdom (in both the material and spiritual realm).

55. Among them (those belonging to Abraham's progeny) have been and are such as truly believe in him (and, therefore, they believe in Muḥammad, who has the best claim to a relationship with Abraham, and believe in the Qur'an revealed to him), and among them are such as bar people from him (like some from among those who were given the Book before). (For the latter,) Hell suffices for a blaze.

56. Those who (knowingly) conceal and reject Our Revelations, We will land them in a Fire to roast there. Every time their skins are burnt off, We will replace them with other skins, that they may taste the punishment. Surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

57. But those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, We will admit them into Gardens through which rivers flow, therein abiding forever. Therein for them will be spouses purified, and We will admit them to an all-protecting shade (ease and contentment).

58. God commands you to deliver trusts (including public and professional duties of service) to those entitled to them, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what God exhorts you to do. Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

59. O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and if you are to dispute among yourselves about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if indeed you believe in God and the Last Day. This is the best (for you) and fairest in the end.<sup>13</sup>

13. These last two verses lay down the fundamental principles for a sound Islamic social system:

- The entrusting of all public duties and positions to those qualified for them; Ensuring justice in public affairs and judgment,
- Having absolute obedience to God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.
- Ensuring that the critical posts and positions, especially, are assigned to the believers qualified for them, and ensuring that their commands are obeyed, provided they are in conformity with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Messenger;
- Referring controversial matters and differences to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah;
- And, as the most influential sanction for the maintenance of the system, having real belief in God and the Last Day.

The command of *obeying* being mentioned twice, once for God and once for the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, indicates that the Messenger is infallible and has the right to legislate alongside the Qur'ān. He

must be obeyed in his orders, both as a President and a Prophet; his orders or prohibitions and way of life comprise his Sunnah, which is to be strictly followed until the Last Day, while his presidency ended with his death. The command of obeying is not mentioned for administrators specifically. This means that obedience to them is conditional. The Messenger clarified this point by saying that there is no obedience in sin or rebellion against God (al-Bukhārī, "Aḥkām," 4; Muslim, "Imārah," 46). They must be obeyed in their orders as long as these are not contrary to the Sharī'ah. However, disobedience does not mean revolt. It is laid out in relevant books of Islamic law what Muslim people can do to protest against their administrators.

Another point to note here is that Islam refers all the functions fulfilled by modern democratic or undemocratic systems of government to the Muslim community itself. This means that these functions are duties that are to be shared and fulfilled by the community as a whole. The institution of swearing allegiance in Islam also demonstrates this. The system of government is a kind of social contract and division of labor.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَ  
 إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَحَكَّمُوا  
 إِلَى الظَّالِمِينَ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ  
 أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِن قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى  
 مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ  
 عَنْكَ صُدُوكَ اللَّهُ فَكَفَىٰ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ  
 بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ شَرَّ بَآئِكُمْ تَخْلُفُوكَ يَا اللَّهُ  
 إِن أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحِسَابَ وَأَتُوفِينَاكَ ﴿٦١﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ  
 مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ  
 فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا ﴿٦٢﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ  
 إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ  
 جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ  
 لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَجِيمًا ﴿٦٣﴾ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ  
 حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا  
 فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّوْا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

say: “We intended only goodwill and conciliation!”

63. Such are the ones – God knows what is in their hearts; so withdraw from them (do not care what they say and do), and (continue to) admonish them, and say to them profound words touching their very souls.

64. (Everyone should know well that) We have never sent a Messenger but that he should be obeyed by God’s leave. If, when they wronged themselves (by committing a sin), they but came to you and implored God to forgive them – with the Messenger praying to God for their forgiveness – they would find that God is One Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, and All-Compassionate.

65. But no! By your Lord, they do not (truly) believe unless they make you the judge regarding any dispute between them, and then find not the least vexation within themselves over what you have decided, and surrender in full submission.<sup>15</sup>

60. Do you not consider those who assert that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent before you, and yet desire to go for judgment in their disputes to (the rule of) the powers of evil (that institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God), when they were expressly commanded to reject it.<sup>14</sup> Truly, Satan desires to lead them far astray.

61. When they were told: “Come to that which God has sent down and to the Messenger (and submit to God’s judgment),” you see the hypocrites turn away from you with disgust.

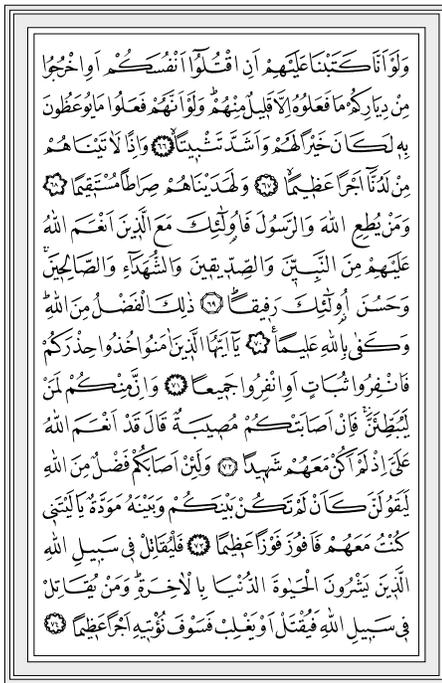
62. But how then, when a disaster befalls them because of what they have forwarded with their own hands (to their future), they come to you, swearing by God and

14. The Qur'ān is a miracle of eloquence and conciseness from beginning to the end. One of the aspects of its eloquence is that while reporting an incident, it uses the incident as a reason to promulgate a new rule or declare a universal truth, without drifting away from the incident.

The word *tāghūt* (powers of evil that institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God) is used both in singular and plural. In this verse, in the clause *when they were expressly commanded to reject him*, the Qur'ān refers to a particular person included in the meaning of *tāghūt*, and who was known to its first addressees during the time of the Messenger. By mentioning an incident, it presents an important aspect of hypocrisy, which is that although hypocrites claim to believe in God's Book and, therefore, must practice it in their daily lives, they also continue to ignore justice and what is right, seeking other authorities whose judgment they hope will be to their advantage. By presenting an incident which took place during the Messenger's time, the Qur'ān draws attention to this aspect of hypocrisy and declares a very important truth or requirement of faith: If you believe in God's Book, you must refer to its judgment in the disputes among you and submit to it wholeheartedly. You cannot seek another authority in the settlement of the issues among you.

15. The facts expressed in the verses above are very important for both the health of a person's faith and for an Islamic society. First of all, it should be known that the Messenger of God legislates just as the Qur'ān does. Moreover, his way of living or practicing Islam is the principal standard for believers to follow. Secondly, the Qur'ān and the way of the Messenger – the Sunnah – are the unquestionable and absolutely authorized sources of Islam which must be obeyed. All other ways that are not authorized by them will lead to heresy.

The Qur'ān frequently calls God's Messenger *The Prophet* or *The Messenger*. Naming him thus means that the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be God's blessings and peace, is the greatest of the Prophets and Messengers. When we mention someone with their title without mentioning their name, and with the definite article attached, then we are saying that they are the most distinguished among those sharing that title, and that they are the greatest representative of the mission or institution whose members bear that title. So when we hear or say *The Prophet* or *The Messenger*, we refer to the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings; it is he who represents the Prophethood and the Messengership in the best way as the greatest of the Prophets and Messengers.



66. If We were to ordain for them, “Lay down your lives (in God’s cause so that you may be purified of your sins)” or “Leave your habitations (that you have contaminated with your sins, and emigrate to another land in God’s cause),” they would not do that save a few of them. But if they had done what was urged upon them (before things had come to this point) – if only they would do it from now on – it would indeed have been (and would be) for their own good and (more apt for them) to be more securely established (in the land).<sup>16</sup>

67. And then, We would surely have granted them from Our Presence a tremendous reward;

68. And indeed guided them to a straight path (in belief, thought, feeling, and action).

69. Whoever obeys God and the Messenger (as they must be obeyed), then those are (and in the Hereafter will be, in Paradise) in the company of those whom God has favored (with the perfect guidance) – the Prophets, and the truthful ones (loyal to God’s cause and truthful in whatever they do and say), and the witnesses (those who see the hidden Divine truths and testify thereto with their lives), and the righteous ones (in all their deeds and sayings, and dedicated to setting everything right). How excellent they are for companions!<sup>17</sup>

70. Such is the grace that is from God, and God suffices as One All-Knowing (of how great that grace is, who deserves it, and the rank of those favored with it).

71. O you who believe! (While such great grace is there) be fully prepared, then (as circumstance demands) either go forward in (small) consolidated groups (on military expeditions), or go forward all together.

72. There are indeed among you such as him who lags behind. Then, if a disaster befalls you, he says: “Indeed God bestowed His favor upon me that I was not present with them.”

73. But if some bounty from God comes to you, he is sure to say – just as if there had never been any tie of affection between you and him (and, therefore, as if there had been an obstacle to his going forth with you), – “Oh, if only I had been with them, I would have come by a great gain.”

74. So let those who trade the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in God’s cause. Whoever fights in God’s cause, whether he is killed or victorious, We will grant him a tremendous reward.

16. The words and style adopted by this verse lead us to understand that it is connected with what verse *sūrah* 2: 54 and similar verses teach.

17. This verse refers to four classes of people who act as guides for others throughout the

history of humankind. It has a direct connection with, and explains, verses *sūrah* 1: 6-7. What is meant by *favor* is perfect guidance; each class of people mentioned here is favored with this.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ  
وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ  
الظَّالِمُونَ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مَوْلًى وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مَوْلًى كَمَا جَعَلْتَ لَنَا  
مَوْلًى ﴿١٧٧﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ  
فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ  
كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿١٧٨﴾ أَلَمْ نَرِ الْآلِدِينَ قَبْلَ هَذَا كَفَرُوا بِسَيِّدِهِمْ  
وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ  
مِنْهُمْ يُجَاهِدُونَ النَّاسَ كَهَيْئَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ حَسْبِيَّةً وَقَالُوا  
رَبَّنَا اجْعَلْ لَنَا قِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا  
قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿١٧٩﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ  
يُرِيدُ كَمَا مَاتُوا وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رُوحٍ مُّسْتَبِدَّةٍ وَان تُصِيبَهُمْ  
حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ مُّسِيئَةٌ يَقُولُوا  
هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَالَّذِينَ هَرَسُوا قَوْلًا لَّا يَكَادُونَ  
بِغَضَبِهِمْ حَدِيثًا ﴿١٨٠﴾ مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ  
مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِاللَّسَانِ رَسُولًا وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّهُ لَكَ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٨١﴾

75. Why, then, should you not fight in the cause of God and of the oppressed, helpless men, women, and children, who cry out: “O Lord! Bring us out of this land whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us from Your Presence a protector, and appoint for us from Your Presence a helper!”

76. Those who (truly) believe fight in God’s cause, while those who disbelieve fight in the cause of *tāghūt* (powers of evil who institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God). So (O believers), fight against the friends and allies of Satan. Assuredly, Satan’s guile is ever feeble.

77. Do you not consider those who were told, “Restrain your hands (from war and similar endeavor), and do the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms!” (at which

time they insistently asked you when they would be allowed to fight)? But as the time has come and fighting has been ordained for them, a party among them fear people as one should fear God, or with even greater fear, and say: “O Lord! Why have You ordained fighting for us? If only You had granted us a little more respite!” Say (to them, O Messenger): “The enjoyment of the world is short-lived, whereas the Hereafter is the best for him who keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and you will not be wronged by so much as a tiny hair.”

78. Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even though you be in towers built up strong and high. Yet, when some good happens to them, they say: “This is from God;” and when an evil befalls them, they say: “This is because of you.” Say: “All is from God.” But how is it with these people that they do not grasp the truth of anything said (or anything that has happened)!

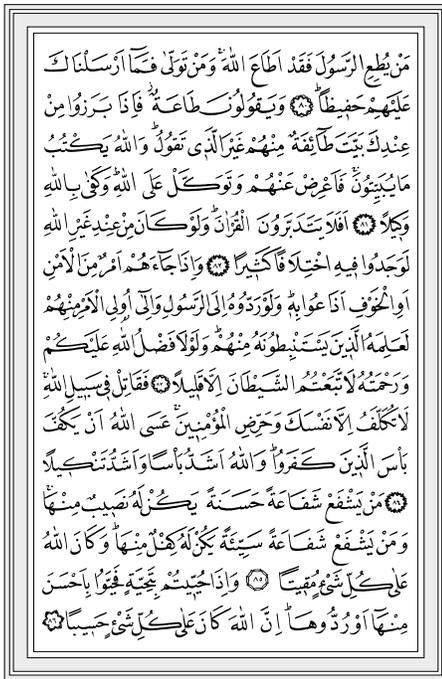
79. (O human being!) Whatever good happens to you, it is from God; and whatever evil befalls you, it is from yourself. We have sent you (O Messenger) to mankind as a Messenger, and God suffices for a witness.<sup>18</sup>

18. The last two verses explain some important things concerning Divine Destiny and human free will, such as the following:

- Be it good or bad, whatever happens to a person has been determined by the Divine Eternal Will, Which considers human free will in all Its determinations.
- It is God Who established what cause (thought, belief, and action) brings about what result, and humanity cannot escape this framework. It is also in this sense that it is said that whatever happens to humanity is from God.
- As a requirement of the free will He has granted to humanity, God creates whatever His servants will. So, it is God Who creates whatever happens to them, whether it be good or bad, and it is in this meaning that whatever happens to a person is from God.
- God never wills evil for His servants. He always wills good for them and directs them to it. So, whatever good thing happens to a person, it is because God has willed it for them and directs their free will towards it.

This means that since God has willed it, He has directed a person's free will towards this action, enabling them to do it, and creating it; therefore, any good that happens to a person is solely from God.

- A person becomes the source and doer of whatever evil befalls them by preferring evil and doing it despite God's orienting their free will towards good. So, whatever evil befalls a person is from themselves.
- In addition to the fact that whatever good happens to a person is from God, God rewards that good and admits His good servants into Paradise. So, God's rewarding a person and admitting him or her into Paradise is purely out of His bounty and grace. However, misfortune will befall a person in the world, and they will earn Hellfire in the Hereafter because of their obstinacy in unbelief or polytheism or their transgressions, despite God's infinite compassion, forgiveness, and His exhorting people to good. So, the placing of a person in Hell is merely justice that is embedded in the compassion of God.



80. He who obeys the Messenger (thereby) obeys God, and he who turns away from him (and his way), (do not be grieved, O Messenger, for) We have not sent you as a keeper and watcher over them (to prevent their misdeeds and be accountable for them).

81. They say (when in your presence, to every command of yours), “By all means!” But when they leave your presence, a party of them make secret plans against what you say. God records whatever secret plans they make. So withdraw from them, and put your trust in God. God suffices as the One to be relied on, to Whom affairs should be referred.

82. Do they not contemplate the Qur’an (so that they may be convinced that it is from God)? Had it been from any other than God, they would surely have found in it much inconsistency.<sup>19</sup>

83. Whenever any news comes to them, related to (public) security or alarm, they go about spreading it (without ascertaining if the news is true or not, and without thinking about whether it is beneficial or harmful to spread it). Whereas if they would but refer it to the Messenger and to those among them (in the community) who are entrusted with authority, those from among them who are competent to investigate it would bring to light what it is really about. (O believers!) And but for God’s grace and favor upon you (in illuminating your way and guiding you with Revelation and His Messenger, and protecting you against your enemies and wrong ways), all but a few (of you) would have been (deceived by the hypocrites and) following Satan.

84. Fight (therefore, O Messenger) in God’s cause – for (in the same way that every individual is responsible for himself) you are (first of all) responsible for none except yourself. (Even left by yourself alone, fulfill your responsibility) – and urge on the believers (to take their responsibility). It may be that God will (thereby) restrain the force of those who disbelieve. Indeed God is Strongest in might, and Strongest in repressing and punishing.<sup>20</sup>

85. Whoever intercedes, mediates or helps for a good cause will have a share in its blessings, and whoever intercedes, mediates or helps for an evil cause shares in its burden. God has full watch over all things.

86. When (whether traveling or at home, or in war or at peace) you are greeted with a greeting (of peace and goodwill), answer with one better, or (at least) with the same. Surely God keeps account of all things.

19. Consider the following facts:

- Although the Qur'ān was revealed in parts over 20 years, to fulfill different needs and purposes, it has perfect harmony, as if it had all been revealed at the same time.
- Although the Qur'ān was revealed over 20 years on different occasions, its parts are so mutually supportive that it is as if it had been revealed on only one occasion.
- Although the Qur'ān came in answer to different, repeated questions, its parts are so united and harmonious with one another that it is as if it had been in answer to a single question.
- Although the Qur'ān came to judge diverse cases and events, it displays such a perfect order that it is as if it were a judgment delivered on a single case or event.
- Although the Qur'ān was revealed by Divine courtesy in styles varied to suit innumerable people who had or have different levels of understanding, moods, and temperament, its parts exhibit so beautiful a similarity, correspondence, and fluency that it is as if it were addressing only one level of understanding and temperament.
- Although the Qur'ān speaks to an infinite variety of people, all distant from one another in time, space, and character, it has such a fluent way of explanation, such a pure style, and a clear way of description, that it is as if it were addressing only one homogenous group, each different group thinking that it is being addressed uniquely and specifically.
- Although the Qur'ān was revealed to enable the gradual guidance of different peoples with various purposes, it has such a perfect straightforwardness, sensitive balance, and beautiful order that it is as if it were pursuing only one purpose.
- Rather than being reasons for confusion, these factors add to the miraculousness of the Qur'ān's explanations and to its fluency of style and harmony. Anyone with a sound heart, conscience, and good taste can see the graceful fluency, exquisite proportion, pleasant harmony, and matchless eloquence in its explanations. And anyone with a sound power of sight and insight can see that the Qur'ān presents an eye with which to see the whole universe, with all its inner and outer dimensions, like a single page on which all the meanings contained can be read (*The Words*, "The 25<sup>th</sup> Word," 433).

20. For the Qur'ān's attitude towards war and the rules it established concerning war, see *sūrah* 2: 190, 191, 194, 216, and notes 137 (Appendix 2), 138, 140, and 147.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُجَمِّعُكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَيْعَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَمَنْ  
 أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا ۗ فَسَاكِرًا فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فَتَتَبِنِ  
 وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا أَسْرِدُونَ أَنْ تَهَدُوا مِنْ أَسْوَاقِ اللَّهِ  
 وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ سَبِيلًا ۗ وَذُوا لَوْ كَفَرُوا  
 كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ سَحَتِ  
 بِهَا جِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا حُدُّوهُمْ وَأَقْبُلُوهُمْ سَحَتِ  
 وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وَرِثَةً وَلَا نَصِيرًا ۗ إِلَّا  
 الَّذِينَ نَصَلُوا إِلَى قَوْمِ بَنِيكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ بَيْتَاقٌ أَوْ حَاكِمٌ  
 حَصْرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
 لَسَطَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَمَّا تَلَوْكُمْ فَمَنْ اعْتَزَلْتُمْ فَزَيْتَابُكُمْ وَالْقَوَا  
 إِلَيْكُمْ أَلَسَلْتُمْ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ۗ سَجِدُونَ  
 أَعْرَبِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمُرُوكُمْ وَيَأْمُرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كَمَا رَدُّوا  
 إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا فَإِنْ لَمْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ وَبِالْمَعْرَا  
 إِلَيْكُمْ أَلَسَلْتُمْ وَيَكْفُرُوا بِدِينِهِمْ حُدُّوهُمْ وَأَقْبُلُوهُمْ سَحَتِ  
 تَقْتُلُوهُمْ ۗ وَأُولَئِكَ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا نَبِيًّا ۗ

might be all alike. Do not, therefore, take from among them confidants and allies until they emigrate (to Madīnah and join you) in God's cause. But if they turn away (from this call and continue their hostility against you), seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and do not take to yourselves any of them as confidant, nor as helper.<sup>21</sup>

90. Except those who seek refuge in a people between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace or alliance), or (those who) come to you with hearts shrinking from fighting against you, as well as fighting against their own people. Had God willed, He would certainly have given them power over you and they would have fought against you. If they withdraw from you and do not fight against you, and offer you peace, then God allows you no way (to war) against them.

91. You will find others who wish to be secure from you (by signing a treaty with you) and to be secure from their people (by breaking their treaty with you and joining them): every time they are called back to conspiracy and hostility against you, they plunge into it headlong. Hence, if they do not withdraw from you, nor offer you peace, nor restrain their hands (from hurting you), then seize them and kill them wherever you come upon them. It is against such that We have given you a clear sanction.

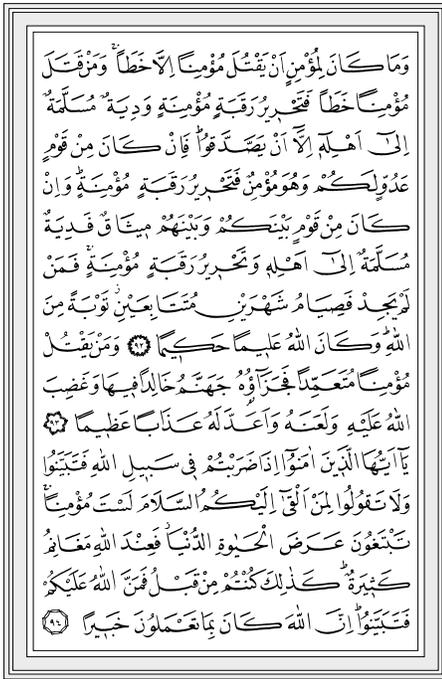
87. God, there is no deity but He. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, about (the coming of) which there is no doubt. Who can be truer in statement than God?

88. (O believers!) How is it with you that you are in two groups regarding the hypocrites (from Makkah, and other tribes who claim to be Muslims yet take part in the hostile machinations of their people against you), seeing that God has thrown them back (to unbelief) on account of what they have earned (by their sins)? Do you seek to guide him whom God has led astray? Whoever God has led astray, for him you cannot find a (safe) way (to follow).

89. They yearn that you should disbelieve just as they disbelieved, so that you

21. As recorded in the sources, the last two verses refer to those people who belonged to the tribes of Ghatfan and Asad; they professed faith in Madīnah, but returned to unbelief and cooperated with the Makkan polytheists against the Muslims when they returned to their lands. However, since a verse being revealed with respect to a specific event does not mean that it is restricted to that event, the Qur'ān is here presenting a typical hypocrisy. Hypocrites, who were constantly worried whether time would progress in their favor or disfavor, pro-

fessed faith when they came to Madīnah in order to secure the Muslims' confidence in them, but when they returned home they displayed the unbelief in their hearts and took part in all the hostile machinations against Islam and the Muslims. Emigration to Madīnah was of crucial importance and a sign of true belief in that period when the Muslims suffered from the pressures and constraints imposed on them by the unbelievers. So, by revealing the hypocrisy in the hearts and attitudes of such people, the Qur'ān warns the believers against them.



there is no treaty), then (the expiation is to) set free a believing slave. If he (the victim) belonged to a (non-Muslim) people between whom and you there is a treaty, then (the expiation is to) pay blood-money to his heirs, and to set free a believing slave. But he who has no means (to make such expiation), must fast for two consecutive months – a penance from God (a way of repentance).<sup>22</sup> God is All-Knowing (of everything, including what is in your bosoms), All-Wise.

93. Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense (in the Hereafter) is Hell, therein to abide; and God has utterly condemned him, excluded him from His mercy, and prepared for him a tremendous punishment.

94. O you who believe! When you go forth (to war) in God's cause, investigate with care until the situation becomes fully clear to you, and do not say to anyone who offers you (the greeting of) peace (thereby indicating his being a Muslim), "You are not a believer," seeking the fleeting gains of the present, worldly life; for with God are gains abundant. Even thus (as he now is) were you before (ignorant of faith and what being a Muslim is, and you, too, entered Islam with a similar word); but God has since then been gracious to you. So investigate with care until the situation becomes fully clear to you. Surely God is fully aware of all that you do.

92. Yet (be circumspect), it is not for a believer to kill another believer unless it be by mistake. He who has killed a believer by mistake must set free a believing slave, and pay blood-money to his family (legal heirs), unless they forgo it as a freewill offering. If he (the victim), while himself a believer, belonged to a people hostile to you (between whom and you

22. Setting free a believing slave is a duty to God and the Muslim community, while paying blood-money is a duty to the heirs of the victim. Emancipating a believing slave means, in one respect, granting the slave a (free) life in atonement for one's killing a believer by mistake. This explicitly shows the great value Islam attaches to freedom. The Messenger, up-

on him be peace and blessings, fixed the blood-money at 100 camels or at the market value of the same. However, the heirs of the victim are allowed to forgo the blood-money or to reduce it. The killer should also turn to God in remorse and repentance, so that his sin may be pardoned and his soul secured against the recurrence of similar mistakes.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرًا أُولِي الْقَصْرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ  
 عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً ۖ وَكَأَنَّ لِلَّهِ الْخُسْفَىٰ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ  
 عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ دَرَجَاتٍ مِنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ وَكَانَ  
 اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٩٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّيْتُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ طَالِمًا أَنفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا  
 فِيكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كَمَا مَسَّ ضَعْفَيْنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضَ  
 اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ  
 مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ضَعُفُوا مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ  
 لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ جِهْلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَأُولَٰئِكَ عَسَى  
 اللَّهُ أَن يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَنْ هَاجَرَ فِي سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَاغًا كَثِيرًا وَسِعَةً ۗ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجْ مِنْ دِينِهِ مَهَاجِرًا إِلَى  
 اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِرْهُ اللَّهُ الثَّوْتَ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ  
 اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ  
 جُنَاحٌ أَن تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِذْ خِفْتُمْ أَن يَفْتِنَكُمُ  
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۗ إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾

95. Not equal are those of the believers who (when not all believers are required to mobilize for God's cause) sit still without justifiable excuse (and without doing any harm to God's cause), and those who strive (and fight) in God's cause with their wealth and their persons. God has exalted in rank those who strive with their wealth and their persons over those who sit still. To each, God has promised the best reward (Paradise), and yet God has exalted those who strive above those who sit still by a tremendous reward.

96. For them are ranks from Him (differing according to the degree of the sincerity and striving of each), and forgiveness, and mercy (to bring unforeseen blessings). God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

97. As to those whose souls the angels (charged with taking the souls of people) take in the state of wronging themselves (by continuing to live in unbelief, without suffering to emigrate to a land where they would be able to attain faith): They (the angels) ask them: "What situation were you in (so that you were not with the believers)?" They say: "We were under such oppression in this land that we could not find a way to faith." They (the angels) say: "Was God's earth not wide enough for you to emigrate in it?" Such are those whose refuge is Hell: how evil a destination to arrive at!

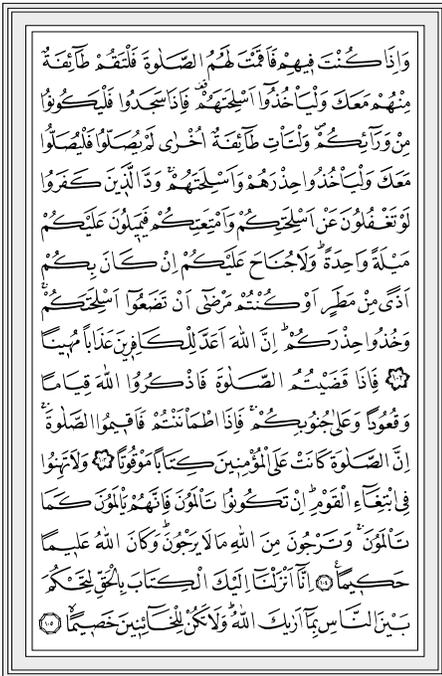
98. Except those truly oppressed among the men, and the women, and the children altogether without means and not guided to a way (to emigrate, and including those who, in their lifetime, have not had a means to be guided to faith).

99. For those (while their circumstanc-

es are unchanged, it is expected that) God will not hold them accountable and will excuse them. Assuredly God is One Who excuses much, All-Forgiving.

100. Whoever emigrates in God's cause will find on the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. He who leaves his home as an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes (while still on the way), his reward is due and sure with God. God is indeed All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

101. (O believers!) When you go forth on the earth, there is no blame on you that you shorten the (Prescribed) Prayers, if you fear that those who disbelieve might cause you harm (by attacking you). Assuredly the unbelievers are a manifest enemy to you.



102. When you (O Messenger) are among the believers (who are on an expedition and in fear that the unbelievers might harm them) and stand (to lead) the Prayer for them, let a party of them stand in the Prayer with you and retain their arms with them (while the other party maintain their positions against the enemy). When the first party have done the prostrations (finished the *rak'ah*), let them go to the rear of your company (and there, hold positions against the enemy), and let the other party who have not prayed come forward and pray with you, being fully prepared against danger and retaining their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your equipment, so that they might swoop upon you in a single (surprise) attack. But there will be no blame on

you if you lay aside your arms (during the Prayer) if you are troubled by rain (and the ground impedes your movement), or if you are ill; however, be fully prepared against danger. Surely God has prepared for the unbelievers a shameful, humiliating punishment.

103. When you have finished the Prayer (especially considering you have shortened your Prayers when journeying and in the state of fear), remember and mention God (with your tongues and hearts), standing and sitting and lying down on your sides (and even while at war). Then, when you are once again secure, do the Prayer in conformity with all its conditions (and do the Prayers you had to omit just at the time of actual fighting).<sup>23</sup>

(Know that) the Prayer (being the most important kind of worship) is prescribed for the believers at fixed times.<sup>24</sup>

104. Do not be faint of purpose in pursuing these people (who fight with you, and keep them under pressure as long as the state of war continues between you and them). If you are suffering (having to endure hardships), they, too, are suffering just as you are, but you hope (to receive) from God what they cannot hope for. God is indeed All-Knowing (of the states and conditions of all things), All-Wise.

105. Surely We have sent down to you the Book with the truth (embodying it, with nothing false in it), so that you should judge between people according to how God has shown you. So do not be a pleader on behalf of those who betray their trust.

23. With its miraculous eloquence, the Qur'ān exhorts the believers to emigrate and strive in God's way, implying that the most valuable journeying in God's sight is that which is made for God's cause, such as emigration and going forth to serve God's cause. By mentioning the Prescribed Prayer between the verses in which it stresses the significance of emigration (*hijrah*) and striving in God's cause (*jihād*), including fighting the enemy, it both legislates how Prayer should be performed during the journey and in a state of war and draws attention to the fundamental relation between success in striving for God's cause and the Prayer, including the recitations of God's glorification, praise, and exaltation after the Prayer, which are the seeds of faith.

The Prescribed Prayers are shortened during a journey or when in a state of fear or insecurity, including times of war or disaster, such as fire and flood. Those Prayers performed in a state of fear are called Prayers of Fear (*aṣ-Ṣalāt al-Khawf*), while those prayed during a journey are known as the Prayers of Journey. For the Prayers that consist of four *rak'ahs*, the Prayer of Journey is performed with two *rak'ahs*, while the others – those of morning and evening – remain the same. Although there are differences of opinion among jurists on how many *rak'ahs* for the Prayers that normally consist of four *rak'ahs* should be prayed for a Prayer of Fear, by mentioning them together with those of the journey, the Qur'ān seems to imply that both are the same. However, the forms of their praying are different. The Prayers of Journey that consist of two *rak'ahs* are prayed like the Morning Prayer, while those of Fear are prayed as described in the verse 102: A group of soldiers prays one

*rak'ah* while the other group takes its position against the enemy, and then this other group also prays one *rak'ah*, each behind the Prayer-leader. Subsequently, each of the two groups comes, in turn, to complete the Prayer by performing one more *rak'ah* individually. This is the view of the Ḥanafī School.

24. Although the five times of the Prescribed Prayer were fixed by the Messenger upon the instruction of Archangel Gabriel, they can be deduced from the relevant verses of the Qur'ān: *Establish the Prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and (be ever observant of) the recitation of the Qur'ān at dawn (sūrah 17: 78); Establish the Prayer at the beginning and the end of the day, and in the watches of the night near to the day (sūrah 11: 114); Glorify your Lord with praise before sunrise and before sunset, and glorify Him during some hours of the night – as well as glorifying (Him) at the ends of the day (sūrah 20: 130); So glorify God when you enter the evening and when you enter the morning; and (proclaim that) all praise and gratitude in the heavens and on the earth are for Him – and in the afternoon and when you enter the noon time (sūrah 30: 17–18)*. It is possible also to see the time of the late night Prayers (*Ṭahajjud* and *Witr*) in both the verses mentioned and in *sūrah 73: 2–4; sūrah 17: 79; sūrah 51: 17; sūrah 76: 26*. Both these verses and that which has just been interpreted above (103) emphasize, in particular, the importance of the recitations of God's glory, praise, and exaltation after each Prayer. This last verse also stresses the importance of observing the prescribed times for the Prayer and performing it on time.

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تَجَادِلْ  
عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَفُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ خَوَاتِمًا  
أَيْمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَخْتَفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَخْتَفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذ يُسْتَنَوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُجِيبًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ هَآؤُنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ  
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَنِجَادِلْكَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
أَمْ مَن يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِكِيلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ  
يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَن يَكْسِبِ إِثْمًا  
فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١١﴾  
وَمَن يَكْسِبِ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ سَرِيحًا  
فَمَثَدٍ حَتَّىٰ يَمُوتَ أَوْ إِثْمًا مَّيِّتًا ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَا تَقْضُ اللَّهُ  
عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتَهُ هَمَّتْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ أَن يُضِلُّوكَ  
وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوكَ مِن شَيْءٍ  
وَأَنزَلْنَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ  
مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

106. Pray God for forgiveness. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

107. And do not plead on behalf of those who betray themselves (by lying to conceal the truth of the matter brought before you). Surely God does not love whoever betrays trust and persists in sin.

108. They strive to hide (their evil deeds) from people, but they do not strive to hide from God, whereas He is always with

them whenever they hold night counsels (and secretly spread false rumor and slanders) displeasing to Him. God indeed encompasses (with His Knowledge, Seeing, Hearing and Power) all that they do.

109. Ah! You (O believers) might well plead on their behalf in the life of this world, but who will plead with God on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will then be their defender and guardian?

110. Yet, whoever does an evil or wrongs himself (by committing sins to harm himself spiritually), and then implores God for forgiveness will find God All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

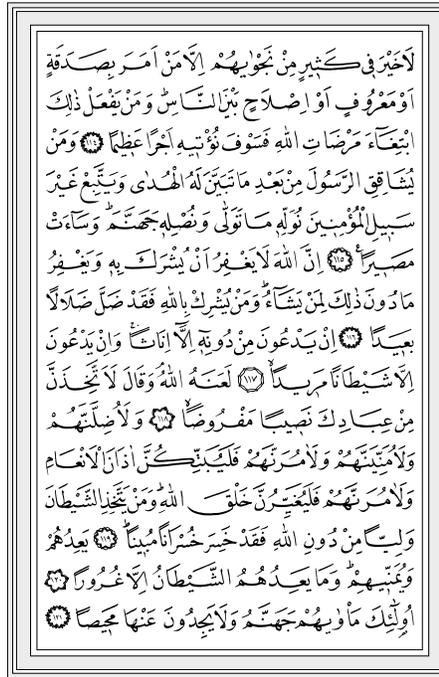
111. Whereas whoever earns a sin (failing to seek forgiveness for it), earns it only against himself (to his own loss only). And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

112. And he who earns a wrong or sin, and then throws the blame on an innocent person, has thereby laid upon himself (the additional burden of) a calumny and a flagrant sin.

113. But for God's grace and favor upon you and His mercy, one party of them determined to mislead you, yet they mislead none but themselves, and cannot harm you in any way. (How could they do so, seeing that) God has sent down on you the Book and the Wisdom, and taught you what you did not know. God's grace and favor upon you is tremendous indeed.<sup>25</sup>

25. "There are good lessons to be learned from the incidents in connection with which the four verses above were revealed. A Muslim named Ta'imah ibn Ubayraq from the tribe of Zafar was suspected of having stolen a suit of armor. When he feared detection, he planted the stolen property in the house of a Jew, where it was found. The

Jews denied the charge and accused Ta'imah, but some among the Muslims sympathized with Ta'imah because of his nominal profession of Islam. When the case came for trial, Islamic justice prevailed and the case turned against Ta'imah. Realizing that his punishment was imminent, he fled and left Islam" (Özek et al., 95).



114. No good is there in most of their secret counsels except for him who exhorts to a deed of charity, or kind equitable dealings and honest affairs, or setting things right between people. Whoever does that seeking God's good pleasure, We will grant to him a tremendous reward.

115. While whoever cuts himself off from the Messenger after the guidance (to what is truest and best in thought, belief, and conduct) has become clear to him, and follows a way other than that of the believers (for whom it is impossible to agree unanimously on a way that leads to error), We leave him (to himself) on the way he has turned to, and land him in Hell to roast there: how evil a destination to arrive at!

116. Indeed God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him; less than that He forgives to whomever He wills (whomever He has guided to repentance and righteousness as a result of his choosing repentance and righteousness by his free will). Whoever associates partners with God has indeed strayed far away (from the Straight Path).

117. In His stead, they invoke female deities – (in so doing) they, in fact, invoke none but a haughty, rebellious Satan,<sup>26</sup>

118. One who is accursed by God (excluded from His mercy). Once he said: "Of Your servants I will surely take a share to be assigned to me (by their following me).

119. "I will surely lead them astray and surely engross them in vain desires (superstitious fancies and false conceptions); and I will surely command them, and they

will surely slit the ears of cattle (to mark them out as meant for their idols and as forbidden to themselves to eat, thus making a lawful thing unlawful); and also, I will surely command them and they will surely alter God's creation."<sup>27</sup> Whoever takes Satan for a confidant and guardian instead of God has indeed suffered a manifest loss.

120. (In reality, however, Satan has no authority over people against God.) He makes promises to them and fills them with vain desires (superstitious fancies and false conceptions), and what he promises them is nothing but delusion.

121. Such (as those deluded by Satan): their shelter is Hell, and they will find no way to escape from it.

26. Many among those who reject belief in One God often adopt male and female deities. While they often choose a masculine one as their supreme deity, their other deities are feminine. This is because they adore their own selves and consider, first of all, the satisfaction of their interests and animal desires. Since men's primary appetite is for women, and since they tend to exploit these deities to satisfy their needs, they choose many of their deities from among women. They desire to see a physically handsome woman wherever they look, and tend to eternalize them by making them into statutes and pictures. This is the most abominable way of degrading the standing of women, and it amounts to nothing more than viewing women as only physical objects. For them, women are no more than simple objects involved in the gratification of their desires and interests. Women are no longer given the respect or affection when they need them most.

Humankind also suffer from many dif-

ferent fears. They feel awe before the things they fear. This is why they generally conceive of their supreme deity, before whom they feel awe, as being masculine, and they fawn on him. Even if such people may be Pharaoh-like tyrants, it makes no difference; such people degrade themselves to kiss the feet of any power above themselves and in whose hands they see the satisfaction of their needs and desires.

The verse clarifies that those who invent deities other than God, in fact, call upon Satan as a deity, as it is Satan who drives them to do so.

27. The alteration of God's creation means changing an original or natural form by artificial means and using a thing outside of the purpose for which it was created by God. All acts done in violation of a thing's true or intrinsic nature are included in this. For example: the sterilization of men or women, turning males into eunuchs, surgically altering one's physical appearance, sodomy and other kinds of illicit relations, making lawful what God has made unlawful and vice versa, etc.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ  
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ  
حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِأَمَانَتِكُمْ  
وَلَا أَمَانِ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا مُجْرِمًا  
وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ  
يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ  
يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظَلَّوْنَ تَبَرُّجًا ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ  
دِينًا مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ  
ابْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَاللَّهُ  
مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
مُحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّالِحِينَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ  
وَمَا يُنَالِي عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي نِسَاءِ النَّبِيِّ  
لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَرَغَبُونَ أَنْ يُنكِحُوهُنَّ  
وَالْمُسْتَضْعِفِينَ مِنَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلنَّكَاحِ بِالْقِسْطِ  
وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾

122. As for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, We will admit them into Gardens through which rivers flow, there-in abiding forever. This is God's promise in truth. Who can be truer than God in speech?

123. It is not according to your fancies, nor according to the fancies of the People of the Book. (No one has a privilege in God's sight by virtue of being nominally a Muslim or Jew or Christian. Rather, the truth is this:) Whoever does an evil will be recompensed for it, and he will not find for himself, apart from God, a guardian or a helper (to guard or help him against the consequence of that evil).

124. And whoever does deeds of righteousness, whether male or female, and is a (true) believer – such will enter Paradise, and they will not be wronged by even so little as (would fill) the groove of a date-stone.

125. Who is better in religion than he who has submitted his whole being to God (seeking only His good pleasure, as one devoted to) doing good, aware that God is seeing him, and who follows the way (*millah*) of Abraham being of pure faith (free of unbelief, of associating partners with God, and of hypocrisy). God accepted Abraham as a friend (one close and trusted).

126. To God belongs whatever is in the

heavens and whatever is on the earth, and God encompasses everything (with His Knowledge and Power).

127. (O Messenger!) They ask you to pronounce laws concerning women. Answer them: "God pronounces to you the laws concerning them, and it is recited to you in this Book concerning female orphans, to whom you do not give what has been ordained for them (as bridal-due or for their maintenance), and yet desire to marry them (out of greed to get their charms or wealth for yourselves, or by refusing to let them marry to continue benefiting from their wealth); and also concerning the weak, helpless children (whose rights should be protected), and that you must be assiduous in observing the rights of orphans." Whatever good you do – surely God has full knowledge of it.

وَأِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا  
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصِلَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ  
وَأَحْضَرْتَ الْأَنْفُسَ الشُّعْرَ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ أَتَيْتُمْ  
كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ حَبِيرًا ۗ وَإِنْ تَسْتَجِيبُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا  
بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَبْهَلُوا كُلَّ الْمَسْئَلِ  
فَتَذَرُوهُنَّ كَالْعَلْفَةِ وَإِنْ تَصِلُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
كَانَ عَافِيًا رَحِيمًا ۗ وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ  
كَلَّامِن سَعْتِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ  
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ  
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا حَكِيمًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ  
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكُنِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَكَيْلًا ۗ أَنْ يَتَسَاءَلُوا  
يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِالْحَرِينِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَدِيرًا ۗ مَنْ كَانَ يُدِيبُ قَوْمًا الَّذِينَ قَبِلْتُمْ اللَّهَ  
قَوْمًا النَّسِيَا وَالْأَخْرَجُوا ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ۗ

128. If a woman fears from her husband ill-treatment or (such breach of marital obligations as) his turning away in aversion, then there will be no blame on them to set things right peacefully between them; peaceful settlement is better. (Bear in mind that) human souls are prone to selfish avarice, so (O husbands) if you do good in consciousness of God and act in reverence for Him and piety (in observing the rights of women), then surely God is fully aware of what you do.

129. You will never be able to deal between your wives with absolute equality (in respect of love and emotional attachment), however much you may desire to do so. But do not turn away altogether (from any one of them), so as to leave her in a dangling state (uncertain if she has or does not have a husband). If you act righ-

teously (between them) and act in piety (fearful of doing any deliberate wrong to any of them), then surely God is All-For-giving, All-Compassionate.

130. If (despite every effort to reconcile them, it is no longer possible to sustain marriage, and) the couple do separate, (let neither fear to become poor and helpless, for) God suffices all by His abundance. God is All-Embracing (in His bounty), All-Wise.

131. And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And assuredly, We commanded those who were given the Book before you, and (We command) you (O Muslims) to act in piety and reverence for God, fearful of disobedience to Him (in all matters, including especially observing your mutual rights). Yet if you disbelieve (and despite this admonishment, act with ingratitude to Him, then bear in mind that) to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth: (if you believe in Him and thank Him, this adds nothing to Him, or if you disbelieve in Him and become ungrateful to Him, this does not diminish anything from Him. For) God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (absolutely independent of all His creatures), All-Praiseworthy (as your Lord, Who provides for you and all other beings and meets all your needs).

132. (Again, know that) to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; and God suffices as One on Whom to rely and to Whom all affairs should be referred.

133. If He wills, He can remove you, O humankind, and bring in others in your place. God is entirely able to do that.

134. If one desires the reward of this world, (let him know that) with God is the reward of this world and the Hereafter. God is indeed All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ  
وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوَالِيَ الَّذِينَ وَالَىٰ فَإِنَّ كَيْفَ تَكُونُونَ  
فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَصْدَلُوا وَإِنْ سَأَلْتُمُوهُ  
أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا يَا أَيُّهَا  
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ  
رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِن قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ  
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعيدًا  
﴿٩٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ  
آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا  
كُفْرًا لَوْ يَكْفُرُ اللَّهُ لَيَغْفِرَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَا يَهْدِي لَهُمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٠٠﴾  
بَشِيرًا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْكُفْرُ  
الْكَاذِبُ وَالشِّرْكُ وَالشِّرْكُ أَوْلِيَاءُ مِنَ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَتَبْتَعُونَ عِبَادَهُمْ  
الْعِبْرَةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِبْرَةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٠١﴾ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ  
أَنَّ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمُ آيَاتَ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُ بِهَا وَيَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا  
مَعَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجُوا فِي حَدِيثِ غَيْرِهِمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا يَمْشُونَ  
اللَّهُ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

**135.** O you who believe! Be upholders and standard-bearers of justice, bearing witness to the truth for God's sake, even though it be against your own selves, or parents or kindred. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, (bear in mind that) God is nearer to them (than you are and more concerned with their well-being). So do not (in expectation of some gain from the rich or out of misplaced compassion for the poor) follow your own desires lest you swerve from justice. If you distort (the truth) or decline (to bear truthful witness), then know that God is fully aware of all that you do.

**136.** O you who believe! Believe in God and His Messenger (Muhammad) and the Book He has been sending down on His Messenger in parts, and the (Divine) Books He sent down before. Whoever disbelieves in God, and His angels, and His Books, and His Messengers, and the Last Day, has indeed gone far astray.<sup>28</sup>

**137.** Those who have believed and then disbelieved, then believed, and again disbelieved, and thereafter grown more intense in unbelief, God will never forgive them,

nor will He guide them to a way (leading to the ultimate triumph and salvation).

**138.** To the hypocrites (who are as just described) give glad tidings that for them is a painful punishment.

**139.** (The hypocrites are) those who take unbelievers for confidants, guardians and allies in preference to the believers: do they seek might and glory in being together with them? (If so, let them know that) might and glory belong altogether to God.

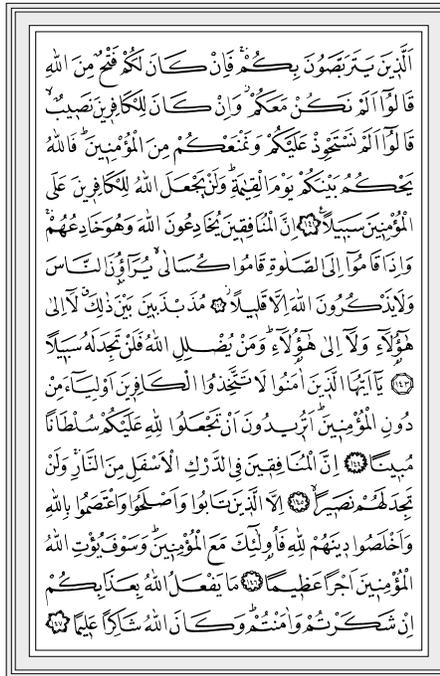
**140.** He has already revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the Revelations of God being rejected and mocked, no longer sit with them (show your disagreement) until they engage in some other talk, or else you will surely become like them. Surely God will gather the hypocrites and the unbelievers all together in Hell.

28. By using the phrase “O you who believe,” which includes a verb, instead of “O believers,” the Qur’ān is addressing all who have verbally confessed belief and entered the sphere of faith and Islam. The hypocrites are included in this address. By commanding to believe after this address, it stresses that true faith does not consist in a verbal confession alone.

Truly, faith does not consist in a simple acceptance or confession. Just as there are many stages or degrees in the growth of a tree (for example, the date tree) from its seed until its fully-grown, fruit-bearing state, and just as there are countless degrees and ranks in the manifestations of the sun from its manifestations of light and heat in all things on the earth up to its reflection on the moon and then back to itself, so, too, does faith have almost uncountable degrees and ranks, from a simple acknowledgment of reason and confirmation of

the heart, up to degrees of penetration in all the parts and faculties of the body that control and direct the entire life of a person – from the faith of a common person to that of the greatest of the Messengers. The first degree or rank of faith is simply believing in the essentials mentioned in this verse, and then comes the deepening of and being steadfast in faith. This is why the Qur’ān usually commands or prohibits some things after the address “O you who believe!”; i.e., confession of belief requires obeying these commandments, which in turn causes them to be stronger and deeper.

The essentials of faith require and corroborate one another. The verse does not mention Divine Destiny as an article or essential of faith. This is because it is included in recognizing and believing in God with all His Qualities essential to Him as God, and His Attributes, Names and acts.



141. (The hypocrites are) those who wait to see what befalls you: thus, if a victory comes to you from God, they say, “Were we not with you?” But if the unbelievers meet with a success, they say (to them): “Did we not gain leverage over you (by not joining the believers, and weakening them from within) and did we not defend you from the believers?” God will judge between you (and them) on the Day of Resurrection, and never will God allow the unbelievers to find a way (to triumph) over the (true) believers.<sup>29</sup>

142. The hypocrites would trick God, whereas it is God who “tricks” them (by causing them to fall into their own traps). When they rise to do the Prayer, they rise lazily, and to be seen by people (to show them that they are Muslims); and they do not remember God (within or outside the Prayer) save a little.

143. Vacillating between (the believers) and (the unbelievers), neither with these, nor with those. Whoever God leads astray, for him you can never find a sound way (to follow).

144. O you who believe! Do not take the unbelievers for guardians and confidants

in preference to the believers; or do you want to offer God a manifest proof against yourselves (of being hypocrites, and so incur His punishment)?

145. Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of the Fire; and you will never find for them any helper (against the Fire).

146. Except those who repent and mend their ways and hold fast to God and practice their Religion purely and sincerely for God’s sake: those (who repent) are counted with the believers and, in time, God will grant to the believers a tremendous reward.

147. What should God punish you if you are grateful (to Him) and believe (in Him)?<sup>30</sup> God is Ever-Responsive to gratitude, All-Knowing.

29. This last sentence, “and never will God allow the unbelievers to find a way (to triumph) over the (true) believers,” has several meanings and implications:

- In the Hereafter, the believers will be on the winning side, while the unbelievers will be complete losers.
- Islam has two wings on which the believers fly: one is God’s laws and decrees that we call “Religion,” and the other is His laws of life and the creation and operation of the universe, which are the subject matter of (physical) sciences. As long as the believers obey these two kinds of God’s laws, victory will always be on their side. But if they fall behind the unbelievers in obeying the second kind of God’s laws and show neglect in obeying the former, the unbelievers can gain the upper hand over them.
- The unbelievers may at times gain the upper hand, but the final victory always belongs to the believers.
- Although the believers may sometimes be on the losing side, they are always, with respect to the truth of their beliefs, ideas, and spiritually, on the winning side. It is enough to see and prove this fact to look at a clear phenomenon during the past few hundred years: while unbelievers have enjoyed supremacy in political, economic,

and military fields throughout the world, few individuals have left Islam to enter another religion, yet many from other religions have embraced it.

- This statement indicates a very important goal for the believers: They must never allow the unbelievers to gain advantage or find a way to triumph over them. If they fail, they will be accountable before God and have to bear the consequences of such a failure, both in this world and in the world to come.

30. While being ungrateful is a door to unbelief and even may be identical with it (in Arabic, both are derived from the same root), being thankful or grateful (*shukr*) is a door to faith and identical with it because of what follows:

The attitude of gratefulness to God consists of acknowledging that whatever good a person has and whatever achievement they have realized is purely from God. It also consists in acknowledging God’s benediction and blessings in their heart, confessing it in their speech, and manifesting it in their deeds. Their hearts should be overflowing with love for, and loyalty to, the Benefactor, and they should not attribute real creative effect to apparent causes in His benedictions reaching them. They should also use whatever God has granted to them in His way and according to His directives.

لَأُحِبُّ اللَّهُ أَحْمَرًا بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلِمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
 سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾ إِنَّ شِدْوَ خَيْرًا أَوْ تَخَفُوهُ أَوْ تَعَفُّوا عَنْ سُوِّهِ  
 فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوقًا قَدِيرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ  
 وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُتْرَقُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ  
 نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ ذَلِكَ  
 سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ  
 عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يَفْرِقُوا  
 بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ أُولَئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
 عَفُوقًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾ يَسْتَأْذِنُ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا  
 مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَى أَكْبَرًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ  
 جَاءَهُمْ قَاعٌ مَخَضٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ يَصْرِفُهُمْ فَتَاجِرَتُهُمْ بِالْحِجْلِ  
 مِنْ بَيْنِ عَدَمَاتِهَا ثُمَّ أَتَيْتَاكَ فَتَعَفُّونَا عَنْ ذَلِكَ وَإِن يَسْتَأْذِنُ  
 مُوسَى سُلْطَانًا مُهِينًا ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ  
 بِبَيْتِاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ مُغْتَدِبًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ  
 لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

148. God does not like any harsh speech to be uttered save by one who has been wronged (and, therefore, has the right to express that in appropriate language). God is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

149. Whether you do some good openly or do it in secret, or pardon an evil (done to you, even though you have the right to legal retaliation, know that) God is All-Pardoning, Ever-Able (to punish or forgive).

150. Those (deserving punishment) are they who disbelieve in God (not recognizing Him at all or not as He should be), and His Messengers (denying Messengership altogether or denying some of the Messengers), and who seek to make distinction between God and His Messengers (by claiming belief in God but denying Messengership or denying some of the Messengers), and say, "We believe in some and deny others," seeking to take a way in between.

151. Such are in truth unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a shameful, humiliating punishment.

152. But as for those who believe in God and His Messengers and make no distinction between them (between God and His Messengers or between the Messengers themselves), to them God will grant their rewards (in full). God is indeed All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

153. The People of the Book ask you to cause a Book to be sent down on them from heaven. (O Messenger, let this not shock you, for) they asked an even greater thing than this of Moses, when they said, "Show God to us openly," and the thun-

derbolt seized them for their wrong-doing. Then they adopted the (golden) calf as deity - and this after the (miracles and other) clear proofs of the truth had come to them. Yet We (accepted their atonement and) pardoned them that; and We granted Moses (the Book and the Criterion, and thereby) a clear proof and authority.

154. (Moreover) We raised the Mount to tower above them to secure their promise (to hold firmly to the Book), and (on another occasion when We guided them to a town) We commanded them, "Go into it through its gate prostrating (humbly in utmost submission to God)"; and again, We once commanded them, "Do not exceed the bounds with respect to the Sabbath," and We took from them a most solemn pledge.

فَمَا نَقِصَهُمْ مِنْهَا قَاهُمْ وَكَرِهَهُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَالَهُمُ الَّذِينَ  
 يَدْعُونَ بِحَقِّ قَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبَنَا غَلَّتْ بِرَأْيِنَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لِيُخْزِيَهُمْ  
 فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝ وَكَرِهَهُمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ فَرَسٍ مُمْتَلَأًا  
 عَظِيمًا ۝ وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَاتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ  
 اللَّهِ وَمَا قَاتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَّوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
 اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ  
 الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَاتَلُوهُ يُقِيسُ ۝ بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ  
 اللَّهُ جَزِيرًا جَدًّا ۝ وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ قَدْ  
 مَوَّاهُ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهَادًا ۝ فَيُظَلِّمُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ  
 هَادُوا وَخَرَجَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ  
 اللَّهُ كَثِيرًا ۝ وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلَهُمْ آثَمًا  
 النَّاسِ بِالسَّاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝ لَكِنِ  
 الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا  
 أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
 بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَٰئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ۝

155. And so, because of their breaking their pledge, and their intentional ignoring of God's signs (in the universe, and in themselves), and their rejection of His Revelations, and their killing certain Prophets against all right, and their saying, "Our hearts have become callous (no longer having any ability to believe)." No! Rather, God has set a seal on their hearts because of their persistent unbelief, so that, with the exception of few, scarcely do they believe.<sup>31</sup>

156. And because of their (persistence in) unbelief, and speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny;

157. And their saying "We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" - whereas they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but the matter was made dubious to them. Those who

differ about this matter and about Jesus are indeed confused; they have no definite knowledge thereof, following mere conjecture; and of a certainty, they did not kill him.

158. But God raised him to Himself. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

159. Yet there is none of the People of the Book but will, before the moment of his death, (grasp the truth about Jesus and) believe in him (though that belief will be of no benefit to them then); and on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.<sup>32</sup>

160. So, because of the wrong committed by the Jews, We made unlawful for them many pure, wholesome things which had (hitherto) been lawful for them, and because of their barring many from God's way;

161. And because of their taking interest although it had been forbidden to them, and consuming the wealth of people in wrongful ways (such as usury, theft, usurpation, bribery, gambling, and selling God's Revelations); and We have prepared for the unbelievers among them (those who persisted in unbelief despite all the many warnings) a painful punishment.

162. But those of them firmly rooted in Knowledge, and the (true) believers, believe in what has been sent down to you (O Messenger), and what was sent down before you; and especially those who do the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and those who pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and the believers in God and the Last Day (as both must be believed in): to them will We grant a tremendous reward.

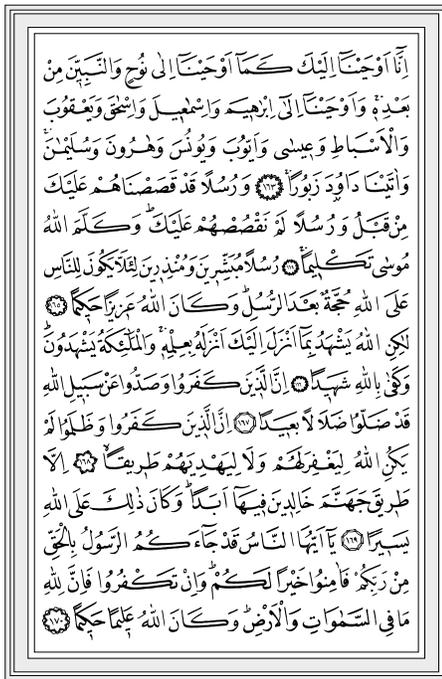
31. For the events mentioned here, see *sūrah* 2: 51–55, 58, 61, 63–66, 79, 83, 84–88, 92–93.

32. There are various views on Jesus' departure from the world and the Prophetic Traditions about his return to the world before the Day of Resurrection. The following points may be closer to the truth in these two matters:

- Neither the Jews nor the Romans were able to kill or crucify Jesus, upon him be peace. According to some interpreters of the Qur'ān, one of his disciples, Judas, was likened to Jesus and substituted for him by God because of his betrayal. However, the late Muḥammad Asad, a renowned Muslim convert from Judaism, regards the entire crucifixion as only a legend. According to him, "in the course of time, long after the time of Jesus, a legend somehow grew up (possibly under the then-powerful influence of Mithraistic beliefs) to the effect that Jesus had died on the cross in order to atone for the 'original sin' with which mankind is allegedly burdened; and this legend became so firmly established among the latter-day followers of Jesus that even his enemies, the Jews, began to believe it – albeit in a derogatory sense (for crucifixion was, in those times, a heinous form of the death-penalty, reserved for the lowest of criminals) (*The Message of the Qur'ān*, 134). Whether Asad is right or not, many of the doctrines found in modern Christianity, such as original sin, blood atonement and the Trinity, were essential to Mithraism, which was very widespread in Asia Minor in the years when Christianity began to spread there, and entered Rome long before Christianity did. What is a fact in this matter is that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified, but the matter became ambiguous to those who put forth such assertions.
- If we deal with verse 158 along with 3: 55, and as pointed out in footnote 10 regarding verse 3: 55, and mentioned by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (*The Letters* "the 1<sup>st</sup> Letter"), we can say on this matter of God's raising Jesus

to himself: Just as he came into the world in an unusual manner, so too did Jesus depart from the world in an unusual manner. He did not die as other people do, but God took him back with his spirit and body, which took on the form or changed into an "astral" body or energetic envelope. This can be analogous with the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be God's blessings and peace. However, while the Prophet Muḥammad returned to the world again to complete his mission, Jesus remained where he was taken.

- Among the greatest Messengers – Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad, upon them be peace – Noah resembled Moses in nature and character, and Abraham resembled Jesus. While God's Attributes of Majesty were more manifest than those of Grace in the former two due to their mission, with Abraham and Jesus it is the other way around. Noah and Moses were distinguished with their great sternness towards unbelievers, Abraham and Jesus were better known for their affection and compassion. The Prophet Muḥammad, due to the universality of his mission, combined both in a balanced degree, but according to time and conditions, sometimes majesty and sternness, and sometimes affection and compassion had priority. The circumstances before the end of time will make it imperative that Muslims be equipped more with affection, compassion, love, and inviting dialogue. Christianity will be purified of the doctrines that have filtered into it over time, and there will be a coming together between the Muslims and Christians against the onslaught of the trends of materialism and similar ideologies. This will enable God's Religion to triumph over atheism and materialism throughout the world. This is what several modern Muslim scholars understand from the Prophetic Traditions saying that Jesus will return to the world before the end of time and practice Islamic Law.



bears witness to (the truth of) what He has sent down to you. And He has sent it down from, based on and together with, His Knowledge. And the angels also bear witness (to it), though God suffices for a witness.

167. Surely those who (in defiance of that testimony) disbelieve, and bar (people) from God's way, have indeed gone far astray.

168. Surely those who disbelieve and do wrong (to people by barring them from God's way, and to God and His Messengers and angels, and to all believers and all creatures bearing witness to the truth, and to their own conscience, by accusing them of lying and deception) – God will indeed not forgive them, nor will He guide them to a road

169. Except the road of Hell, to abide therein forever; and that is easy for God.

170. O humankind! The (most illustrious) Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord: believe, then, for your own good. And if you disbelieve, then (know that your unbelief will in no way harm Him, for) to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and on the earth. And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

163. We have revealed to you (O Messenger), as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him; and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Prophets who were raised in the tribes, and Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon; and We gave David the Psalms.<sup>33</sup>

164. And Messengers We have already told you of (with respect to their mission) before, and Messengers We have not told you of; and God spoke to Moses in a particular way.<sup>34</sup>

165. Messengers (have been sent as) bearers of glad tidings and warners, so that people might have no argument against God after the Messengers (had come to them). And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

166. (Whether people believe or not) God

33. Abu'l-A'lā al-Mawdūdī has the following note on this verse:

The 'Psalms' embodied in the Bible are not the Psalms of David. The Biblical version contains many 'psalms' by others and they are ascribed to their actual authors. The 'psalms' which the Bible does ascribe to David do indeed contain the characteristic luster of truth. The book called 'Proverbs,' attributed to Solomon, contains many assertions, and the last two chapters, in particular, are undoubtedly spurious. A great many of these proverbs, however, do have a ring of truth and authenticity. Another book of the Bible is ascribed to Job. Even though it contains many gems of wisdom, it is difficult to believe that the book attributed to Job could in fact be his. For the portrayal of Job's character in that book is quite contrary to the wonderful patience for which he is applauded in the Qur'ān and for which he is praised in the beginning of the Book of Job itself. The Book of Job, quite contrary to the Qur'ānic portrayal of him, presents him as one who was so full of grievance and annoyance with God throughout the entire period of his tribulation that his companions had to try hard to convince him that God was not unjust.

In addition to these, the Bible contains seventeen other books of the Israelite Prophets. The greater part of these seem to be authentic. In Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and certain other books, in particular, one often encounters whole sections which stir and move one's soul. These sections, without doubt, have the luster of Divine Revelation. While going through them one is struck by the vehemence of moral admonition, the powerful opposition to polytheism, the forceful exposition of monotheism, and the

strong denunciation of the moral corruption of the Israelites which characterize them. One inevitably senses that these books, the orations of Jesus embodied in the Gospels, and the glorious Qur'ān are like springs which have arisen from one and the same Divine source (al-Mawdūdī, 2: 113-114, note 205).

34. As mentioned in 42: 51, Revelation occurs in three ways:

1. God puts the meaning in the Prophet's heart in a way that the Prophet knows with certainty that it is from God.
2. God speaks to the Prophet without mediation, but without being seen and from behind a veil, as God spoke to Moses from a tree.
3. God sends an angel who communicates God's message to the Prophet. He always sent Gabriel to communicate His messages contained in His Books (aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, 22).

As mentioned in 2: 253, God exalted and distinguished some Prophets in some respects due to the mission of each, meaning that, with the exception of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who represented all aspects of Prophethood in the most perfect manner because of the universality of his mission, every Prophet is superior to others in one or more respects. The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was distinguished by being addressed by God in a particular way. But although being addressed by God in a particular way was a special favor, it is not the most superior way of Revelation. God sent His messages forming His Book through the angel Gabriel; therefore, the most superior way of Revelation is via Gabriel. It is for this reason that the Torah is not formed of God's direct Revelations to Moses.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّمَتْهُ الْفَلَقُ إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ إِنَّهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكُنِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾ لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْضُرُهُمْ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ﴿١٧٢﴾ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ نُورٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَقَضِيلٍ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٧٥﴾

servant to God, nor do the angels near-stationed to Him. Whoever disdains to worship God as a servant and feels his pride (puffed up by arrogance, should know that) God will gather them all to Himself (and call them to account).

171. O People of the Book! Do not go beyond the bounds in your religion, and do not say anything of God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was but a Messenger of God, and a Word of His (Power) which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him.<sup>35</sup> So believe in God (as the One, Unique God), and His Messengers (including Jesus, as Messenger); and do not say: (God is one of) a trinity. Give up (this assertion) – (it is) for your own good (to do so). God is but One God; All-Glorified is He in that He is absolutely above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And God suffices as the One to be relied on, to Whom affairs should be referred.

172. The Messiah never disdains to be a

173. To those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, He will grant their rewards in full, and will give them yet more out of His bounty; but as to those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish them with a painful punishment, and they will not find for them, against God, a guardian and protector, nor a helper.

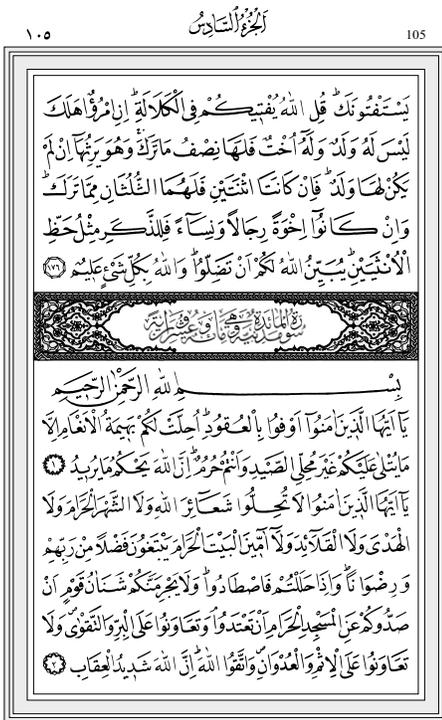
174. O humankind! Now a Proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear Light (to illuminate your way and show you everything clearly).

175. So those who believe in God (as taught by this Proof and Light), and hold fast to Him – He will admit them into a (great) mercy from His Presence, and a bounty, and guide them direct to Him on a straight path.

35. God has two kinds of words, one issuing from His Attribute of Speech, the other from His Power. His words that issue from His Attribute of Speech are His Books and Scrolls that He sent to some of His Messengers. His words that issue from His Attribute of Power are all of His works – His creatures and all events in the universe. Why then does God mention Jesus, upon him be peace, especially as one of His Words (of His Power) is that God, due to His Grandeur and Honor, acts in this world from behind cause and effect. He does so because this world is the world of Wisdom, and some people, unable to discern the good behind every act of God, would otherwise ascribe to God the things displeasing to them, which could lead them to perish. God acts from behind the veil of cause and effect so that people can ascribe displeasing things, such as illnesses, death, and misfortunes, to their “natural” causes and not complain of God. But since the other world is the world of Power, God will act there without any veils; everything will happen there instantly. The creation of Jesus, upon him be peace, was different from that of other people, and God created him without a father. So in Jesus, His law of Power was manifested, rather than His law of Wisdom. The Prophet Adam, upon him be peace, was also created without parents, but

God did not call him His Word. Adam was the first to be created as a human being; but Jesus’ creation was completely unusual after so many centuries during which all people came to the world with a father and mother.

The idea of Jesus being a spirit from God should also be considered from this viewpoint. Since he was a Word of God’s Power, in the meaning of being created not based on cause and effect, as all other people are, but rather by being breathed into Virgin Mary by or through an angel who is purely a spiritual being, the spiritual dimension weighs more in his creation. Why this was so for Jesus is that he came to spiritually revive the Children of Israel who had been drowned in materialism and who were selling God’s Revelations for trifling prices. So Jesus’ mission gave priority to the spiritual dimension of the Divine Religion. Unfortunately, most of his followers overstepped the bounds of truth in their religion in later years and in their hands “the spirit *from* God” became “the spirit *of* God,” and “the spirit of holiness” with which he was confirmed (2: 87) was interpreted to mean God’s own Spirit which became incarnate in Jesus. Thus, along with God Almighty and Jesus, upon him be peace, there developed the third person of God – the Holy Ghost. The Qur’ān categorically refutes all such assertions.



## SŪRAH 5

## AL-MĀ'EDAH (THE TABLE)

Madīnah Period

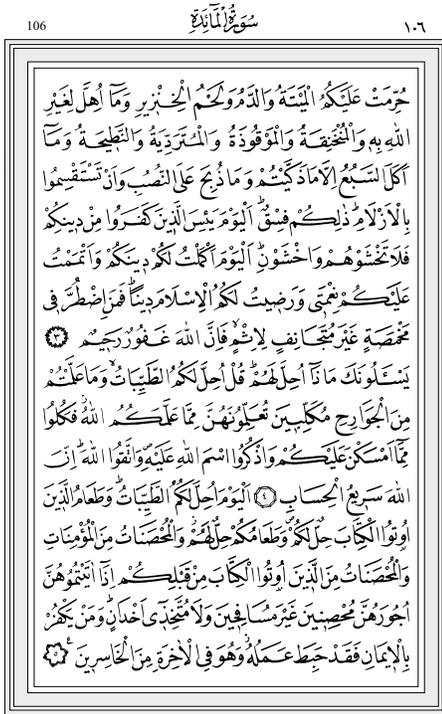
176. They ask you (O Messenger) to pronounce a ruling. Say (to them): God pronounces to you the ruling concerning inheritance from those who have left behind no lineal heirs (*kalālah*): should a man die childless but have a sister, for her is the half of what he has left behind; and the brother will inherit from her if the sister dies childless. If the heirs are two sisters, for them is two-thirds of what he has left behind. And if the heirs are brothers and sisters, then for the male is the equivalent of the portion of two females. God makes (His commandments) clear to you lest you go astray. God has full knowledge of everything.

This *sūrah* was one of the last chapters of the Qur'an to be revealed. It consists of 120 verses, and takes its name from the table (verse 112) which Jesus' disciples asked God to send them from heaven. In addition to several other topics, it contains rulings concerning daily life.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

1. O you who believe! Fulfill the bonds (you have entered into with God and with people). Lawful for you is the flesh of cattle (grazing beasts of the flock), save what is mentioned to you (herewith), and unlawful (for you is) hunted game when you are in the state of pilgrim sanctity. Surely God decrees as He wills.

2. O you who believe! Do not violate the sanctity of the public symbols (of Islam) set up by God (such as *Jumu'ah* and *Īd* Prayers, the call to the Prayer, the Sacrifice, and attendant rites of the Pilgrimage), nor of the Sacred Months (during which fighting is forbidden except when you are attacked), nor of the animals (brought to the Sacred House for sacrifice), nor of the collars (put on the animals marked for sacrifice), nor of those who have set out for the Sacred House, seeking from their Lord bounty and His good pleasure. But once you leave your pilgrim sanctity (and the sacred precincts of Makkah), you are free to hunt. And never let your detestation for a people because they barred you from the Sacred Mosque, move you to commit violations (acts of aggression or injustice). Rather, help one another in virtue and goodness, and righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sinful, iniquitous acts and hostility. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, seeking His protection. Surely God is severe in retribution.



3. Unlawful to you (for food) are carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that (the animal) offered in the name of any other than God, and the animal strangled, and the animal beaten down, and the animal fallen to death, and the animal gored, and that devoured by wild beasts – save that which you make lawful (by slaughtering properly while it was still alive) – and that which has been sacrificed to anything serving the function of idols and at the places consecrated for offerings to other than God. And (also unlawful is) that divided and obtained through divining arrows (and the like, such as lotteries and throwing dice). (Eating of any of) that (just mentioned) is transgression. – This day, those who disbelieve have lost all hope of (preventing the establishment of) your Religion, so do not hold them in awe, but stand in awe of Me. This day I have perfected for you your

Religion (with all its rules, commandments and universality), completed My favor upon you,<sup>1</sup> and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as Religion. – Then, whoever is constrained by dire necessity (and driven to what is forbidden), without purposely inclining to sin – surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

4. They ask you (O Messenger) what is lawful for them (including, in particular, the game caught by trained hunting animals). Say: “Lawful for you are all pure, wholesome things;” and as for such hunting animals as you have trained as hounds teaching them from what God has taught you, you may eat of what they have caught for you (and brought to you dead or alive without themselves having eaten thereof). And pronounce God’s Name (while dispatching them to hunt for you). Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is swift at reckoning.

5. This day all pure, wholesome things have been made lawful for you. And the food of those who were given the Book before (including the animals they slaughter unless, of course, they invoke the name of any other than God) is lawful for you, just as your food (including the animals you slaughter) is lawful for them. And (lawful for you in marriage) are chaste women from among the believers, and chaste women from among those who were given the Book before, provided that you give them their bridal-due, taking them in honest wedlock, and not in debauchery, nor as secret love-companions. (That is the ordinance regarding your relations with the People of the Book in this world. But know this:) Whoever rejects (the true) faith (and rejects following God’s way as required by faith), all his works are in vain, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.

1. During the Caliphate of ‘Umar, a Jew said: “There is a verse in your Book that if it had been revealed to us, we would have celebrated the day it was revealed as a religious festival,” and recited: *This day I have perfected for you your Religion (with all its rules, commandments and universality), completed My favor upon you...* This section of the verse, which seems to have no direct relation with the other parts, declares the dominion of Islam and secures its future. So its importance should be sought in the Prophetic declaration: “This day, I leave to you two precious things: as long as you hold fast to them, you will never go astray. They are God’s Book and the Family of His Messenger.” This *hadith*, which exists in the books of authentic Traditions such as *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan at-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan an-Nasāī*, and *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, reads in *al-Muwatta* by Imām

Mālik: .... “God’s Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger.” However, these two versions do not contradict each other; rather, they interpret each other. For, as pointed out by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, what is meant by the Messenger’s Family is His Sunnah. That is, the progeny of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, are, first and foremost, responsible for the maintenance and practice of the Sunnah. Moreover, during the history of Islam, the overwhelming majority of the greatest Muslim scholars, spiritual masters, and revivers (those who have come to revive Islam) have all descended from the Prophet’s Family. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, encouraged his *Ummah* to gather around his family and declared that the Qur’ān and his Family, which retains and represents his Sunnah, his way, would never be separated from one another.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا  
 وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ  
 وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا  
 وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ  
 مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا  
 صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ  
 مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ  
 لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رِجْسَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
 تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَأذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ  
 وَمِثْقَالَ الذَّرَّةِ وَالَّذِي وَاتَّقُوا إِيَّاهُ أَطْفَعُوا أَبْصَارَهُمْ  
 اللَّهُ إِنْ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ يَدَاتِ الضُّمُورِ ﴿٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا  
 قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ مُهَيَّبِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوَّامٍ  
 عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعَدَّلُوا إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا  
 اللَّهُ إِنْ اللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾

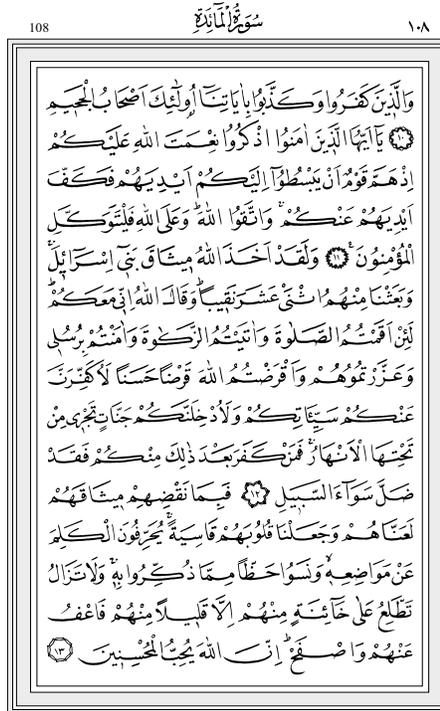
to complete His favor upon you, so that you may give thanks (from the heart, and in speech, and in action by fulfilling His commandments).

7. And remember God's favor upon you, and the pledge by which He bound you when you said: "We have heard and we obey." Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God has full knowledge of what lies hidden in the bosoms.

8. O you who believe! Be upholders and standard-bearers of right for God's sake, being witnesses for (the establishment of) absolute justice. And by no means let your detestation for a people (or their detestation for you) move you to (commit the sin of) deviating from justice. Be just: this is nearer and more suited to righteousness and piety. Seek righteousness and piety, and always act in reverence for God. Surely God is fully aware of all that you do.

9. God has promised those who believe and do good, righteous deeds that for them is forgiveness and a tremendous reward.

6. O you who believe! When you rise up for the Prayer, (if you have no ablution) wash your faces and your hands up to (and including) the elbows, and lightly rub your heads (with water), and (wash) your feet up to (and including) the ankles. And if you are in the state of major ritual impurity (requiring total ablution), purify yourselves (by taking a bath). But if you are ill, or on a journey, or if any of you has just satisfied a want of nature, or if you have had contact with women, and can find no water, then betake yourselves to pure earth, passing with it lightly over your face and your hands (and fore-arms up to and including the elbows). God does not will to impose any hardship upon you, but wills to purify you (of any kind of material and spiritual filth), and



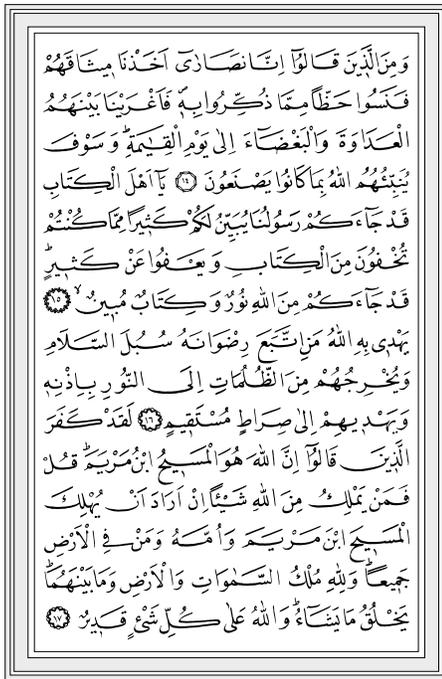
10. Whereas those who deny Our Revelations (coming as verses of the Book), as well as Our signs (both in their inner world and in the outer world) – such are companions of the Blazing Flame.

11. O you who believe! Remember God's favor upon you: when a people were minded to stretch out their hands against you but He restrained their hands from you. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety so as to always deserve His protection. And in God should the believers put their trust.

12. And, indeed, God took a solemn pledge from the Children of Israel and raised up from among them twelve leaders and representatives (one from each tribe, to look after their affairs and as spiritual mentors). God said: "Surely I am with you: if indeed you establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and believe in all of My Messengers, and honor and support them, and lend God a good loan (by spending out of your wealth in

God's cause), I will surely blot out from you your evil deeds and will certainly admit you into Gardens through which rivers flow. But whoever among you disbelieves after this and is ungrateful has surely strayed from the right, even way.

13. Then, because of their breaking their pledge, We cursed them (excluded them from Our mercy and exposed them to many disasters), and caused their hearts to harden. They alter the words (in their Book) from their context (in order to distort their meanings), and they have forgotten a (most important) portion of what they were admonished about. You will not cease to light upon some act of treachery from them, except a few of them. Yet pardon them, and overlook (their misdeeds). Surely God loves those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.



14. And from those who said, “We are *Naṣārā* (Helpers),”<sup>2</sup> We also took a solemn pledge, but they have forgotten a (most important) portion of what they were admonished about. So We have stirred up among them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection; then God will cause them to understand what they have been contriving.

15. O People of the Book! Now there has indeed come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book (the Bible),

and passing over many things (in order not to put you to further shame). Surely there has come to you from God a light (which enlightens your minds and hearts, and illuminates your way), and a Book clear in itself and clearly showing the truth,

16. Whereby God guides whoever strives after His good pleasure (by acting in the way He approves) to the ways of peace, salvation, and safety. And He leads them by His leave out of all kinds of (intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) darkness into light, and guides them to a straight path (in belief, thought, and action).

17. They have indeed disbelieved who declare: God is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: “Who then has the least power against God, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and all those who are on the earth?” To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He creates whatever He wills. God has full power over everything.

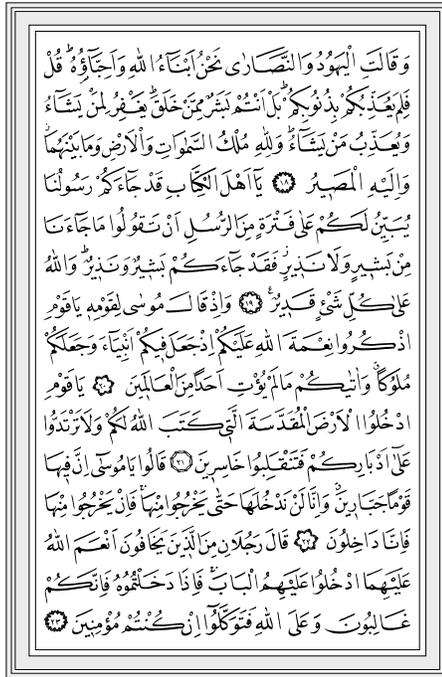
2. Some assert that the word *Naṣārā* (Helpers) is derived from the word *Nāṣirah* (Nazareth), which is the home town of the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace. On the contrary, this word is derived from the word *nusrah* (help); this

derivation is based on the question posed by Jesus, upon him be peace, to his disciples: “Who will my helpers (*anṣār*) on this way to God?” The disciples answered: “We are the helpers of God’s cause” (*sūrah* 3: 52). The Qur’an uses

this word here either to refer to this incident and, thereby, to remind the Christians of their original creed and basic responsibilities, warning them, or only to remind them of their assertion that they are the helpers.

The Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, never claimed that he had introduced a new religion under the name of Christianity, nor did he call his followers “Christians.” He came to revive the Prophet Moses’ religion and to follow his Law (*Matthew*, 5: 17). He also gave the glad tidings of the advent of the Last Prophet (*Qur’ān*, 61: 6; *John*, 14: 25–27, 30; 15: 26; 16: 7–8, 12–15). Likewise, his early followers neither regarded themselves as being a separate community from the Israelites nor did they adopt any distinctive name or symbol. They wor-

shipped in the temple along with other Jews and considered themselves to be followers of the Mosaic Law (*Acts*, 3: 1–10; 21: 14–15). Later on, Paul asserted that observing the Law was not required and faith in Christ was all that one needed for salvation (*Romans*, 3: 21–24, 27; 5: 1; 6: 14...). Even in those days, Jesus’ followers called themselves “those who believed,” “disciples,” and “brethren” (*Acts*, 2: 44; 4: 32; 9: 26; 11: 29; 13: 52; 15: 1, 4; 23: 1). The Jews sometimes designated them as “Galileans” or as “the sect of Nazarenes” (*Luke*, 13: 2; *Acts*, 24 :5). The label “Christians” was flung at them by their opponents in Antioch in 43 or 44 CE only to taunt and mock them (*Acts*, 11: 26), and this appellation gradually became established (al-Mawdūdī, 2, note 36).



20. And (remember) when Moses warned his people, saying: “O my people! Remember God’s favor upon you,<sup>3</sup> for He appointed among you Prophets, and appointed (among you) rulers (while in Egypt; and made you free to manage your own affairs), and He granted to you favors such as He had not granted to anyone else in the worlds.

18. The Jews and Christians assert, “We are God’s children and His beloved ones.” Say: “Why, then, does He punish you for your sins? No. You are but mortals that (just like others) He has created. He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and to Him is the homecoming.”

19. O People of the Book! Now, after a long interlude during which no Messengers have appeared, there has indeed come to you Our Messenger, making the whole truth clear to you, lest you should say, “There has not come to us any bearer of good tidings, nor any warner.” Indeed, there has come to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And God has full power over everything.

21. “O my people! Enter the holy land which God has prescribed for you and commanded you to enter;<sup>4</sup> and do not turn back (from faith to your previous state), for then you will turn about as losers (in both this world and the Hereafter).”

22. They said: “Moses, therein live a people of exceeding strength: we cannot enter it unless they depart from it; so if they depart from it, then we will surely enter it.”

23. Said two men from among those who feared (God’s punishment for disobedience to Him), and whom God had favored (with faith, sagacity, and devotion): “Enter upon them through the gate (by frontal attack). For once you have entered it, you will surely be the victors. And in God you must put your trust if you are truly believers.”

3. It can be said that true humanity lies in two important virtues, which may serve as the means for a person's guidance. One of them is that people acknowledge their innate weakness and poverty, and the errors they have committed, and pray for forgiveness. The other is that they feel gratitude for any good they receive from others. Haughtiness and ingratitude are usually reasons for unbelief. One who never feels remorse or asks forgiveness for their errors and is unaware of gratitude or being thankful cannot be regarded as being truly human. A person whose conscience has not been fully darkened does not refrain from acknowledging their errors, and is appreciative of any good they receive. This is why the Qur'ān, on the one hand, reminds people of God's favors upon them, thereby arousing in them a feeling of gratitude and thankfulness, while on the other hand, it calls on them to acknowledge their errors and sins and to ask for for-

giveness. This is very important, both in being truly human and in making people accept Divine truths and guidance.

4. This verse refers to Palestine, where the Prophet Abraham emigrated and settled, and which was the homeland of the Prophets Isaac, and Jacob, upon them all be peace. At that time, the Divine trust – the representation and promotion of God's Religion, which has always been called "Islam" – rested on the shoulders of the Children of Israel. It is for this reason that God Almighty prescribed that land for them and commanded them to enter it and make the primordial Religion of Islam prevalent there. So this prescription is not for the Children of Israel as a race, nor as the followers of the Jewish religion or Judaism. It is for those who represent Islam, the complete submission to God, in every age, and shoulder its promotion and exaltation at all times.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِنَّا لَنَدْخُلُهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ أَنْتَ  
 وَرَبُّكَ فَفَصَلِّ إِلَيْنَا هَهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ ﴿۲۴﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ  
 إِنِّي لَأَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَأَخِي فَافْرِقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ  
 الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿۲۵﴾ قَالَ فَاتَّخَذُوا مِحْرَمَةً عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سِتْرَةٍ  
 يَبْسُطُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَأَنْزَلَ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ نَسِيبًا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِذْ قَرَّبْنَا قُلُوبَنَا فَتَقَبَّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا  
 وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ  
 مِنَ التَّقِيينَ ﴿۲۷﴾ لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَى سِدِّكَ لِيَتَّقِيَكَ مَنَ  
 أَنْ تَبْسُطَ يَدِي إِلَيْكَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ  
 رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿۲۸﴾ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ سَأَلَ بِي أَيْمِي وَإِيَّاكَ فَتَكُونَ  
 مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ  
 نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْحَبَ مِنَ النَّاسِ بَرِينَ ﴿۳۰﴾ فَجَعَلَ اللَّهُ  
 غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُورِثُ سَوْأَةَ أَخِيهِ  
 قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَى أَعْمَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْكُرَابِ  
 فَأَوَارِي سَوْأَةَ أَخِي فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النََّادِمِينَ ﴿۳۱﴾

sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of them, and not accepted from the other. “I will surely kill you,” said (he whose sacrifice was not accepted). “God accepts only from the sincere and truly pious,” said the other.

28. “Yet if you stretch out your hand against me to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand against you to kill you. Surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.

29. “(In refusing to fight you, and in remembering to fear God) I desire indeed (to warn you) that you will bear the burden of my sin (were I to take part in fighting you) and your own sin (for seeking to kill me), and so you will be among the companions of the Fire.<sup>5</sup> For that is the recompense of wrongdoers.”

30. (This warning served only to fuel the other’s passion:) His carnal, evil-commanding soul prompted him to kill his brother, and he killed him, thus becoming among the losers.

31. (He did not know what to do with the dead body of his brother.) Then God sent forth a raven, scratching in the earth, to show him how he might cover the corpse of his brother. (So seeing) he cried: “Oh, alas for me! Am I then unable even to be like this raven, and so find a way to cover the corpse of my brother?” And he became distraught with remorse.<sup>6</sup>

24. They said: “O Moses! By no means will we enter it as long as they are there. Go forth, then, you and your Lord, and fight, both of you. (As for ourselves) we will be sitting just here!”

25. He (Moses) said (turning to His Lord with entreaty): “O my Lord! I have power over none except my own self and my brother (Aaron) only; so You judge and separate between us and these transgressing people!”

26. He (God) said (passing this judgment): “Then, this (land) shall now be forbidden to them for forty years, while they shall wander about on the earth, bewildered. Do not grieve over that transgressing people.”

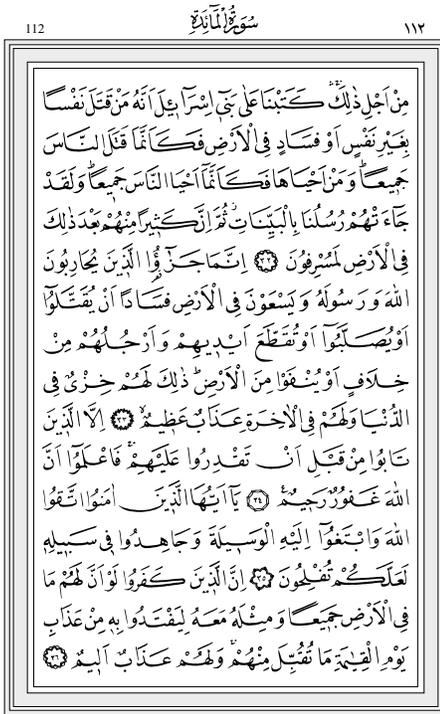
27. Narrate to them (O Messenger) in truth the exemplary experience of the two sons of Adam, when they each offered a

5. This part of the verse literally means: “I desire that you should be laden with both my sin and yours, and so will be among the companions of the Fire.” However, this is not the expression of a desire, but rather a reality and a serious warning. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declares: “When two Muslims attempt to kill each other, both the killer and the killed will go to Hell because the one killed would have killed the other if he had been able to.” (Muslim, “Kitāb al-Fitan,” 14; Ibn Mā’jah, “Kitāb al-Farāid,” 8) He also declares: “When two people set out to slander one another, the one who starts the slander shall bear the burden of the sin of both because he has caused mutual slandering, as long as the other does not exceed him in slander” (Muslim, “Kitāb al-Birr wa’s-Silah,” 68; at-Tirmidhi, “Kitāb al-Birr,” 51). This is what the answer of Adam’s wronged son is based on. What is meant is: “I do not desire to bear the burden of both my own and your sin, which will happen if I attempt to kill you.” This brother, known as Abel in the Bible also warns his brother: “Be careful not to bear the burden of the sins of two people and thus become among the companions of Hell.” He (Abel) never desired that his sibling should kill him and thus, laden with the sin of two men, go to Hell.

6. Some events, even though seemingly minor and isolated, reveal universal realities and laws. For example, once the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, left his house, thinking about which day the Night of Power might fall on. When he saw some Muslims fiercely disputing, he forgot what he had been thinking about. This particular event indicated an important re-

ality: dispute and discord, to which Muslims are inclined, are perilous to the Muslim community. Similarly, the event which took place between the two sons of Adam, upon him be peace, whose names are mentioned as Cain and Abel in the Bible (*Genesis*: 4), discloses an important aspect of human nature. As narrated in the Bible, Abel kept sheep, while Cain worked the soil. (In order to get near to God,) Cain offered some of the fruits of the soil, while Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. Offering a sacrifice means getting near (to God), and it is done to be near to God. Even though it was established and is practiced in Islam as the sacrifice of a sheep or of a cow, the main purpose for such an action is to become nearer to God and to attain true piety. The Qur’an declares: *Bear in mind that neither their flesh nor their blood reaches God, but only piety and consciousness of God reach Him from you (sūrah 22: 37)*. Since Cain was devoid of true piety and most probably made the offering with ulterior motives, God did not accept this sacrifice from him. This aroused jealousy in him, a trait that is common to humankind, and eventually it caused the first blood-shed in human history.

Life is extremely important and valuable in God’s sight. This is why Islam has established this principle: right is to be esteemed and observed because it is right, even if it is small. The right of an individual cannot be sacrificed for the society. Taking the life of a human being is the same as if one were to take the lives of all humankind, and sparing or restoring the life of one person is the same as sparing and restoring the life of all. Rights and inviolate values are of equal worth and demand retaliation.



**32.** It is because of this that We ordained for (all humankind, but particularly for) the Children of Israel: He who kills a soul unless it be (in legal punishment) for murder or for causing disorder and corruption on the earth will be as if he had killed all humankind; and he who saves a life will be as if he had saved the lives of all humankind. Assuredly, there came to them Our Messengers (one after the other) with clear proofs of the truth (so that they might be revived both individually and as a people). Then (in spite of all this), many of them go on committing excesses on the earth.

**33.** The recompense of those who fight against God and His Messenger, and hasten about the earth causing disorder and corruption: they shall (according to the nature of their crime) either be execut-

ed, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off alternately, or be banished from the land. Such is their disgrace in the world, and for them is a mighty punishment in the Hereafter.

**34.** Except for those who repent (and desist from their crimes against order) before you have overpowered them, (although the judgment as to specific crimes against individuals is left to those individuals or to their heirs). Know that God surely is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially towards His servants who turn to Him in repentance).

**35.** O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and seek the means to come closer to Him, and strive in His cause, so that you may prosper (in both worlds).

**36.** As to those who persist in unbelief: even if they owned the whole of what is on the earth, and the like with it, to offer as ransom from the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them. For them is a painful punishment.

## الْحُجُورِ السَّائِرِينَ

١١٣

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يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُخْرَجُوا مِنَ السَّيْرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ  
مِنْهَا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ  
فَقُطِعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِنَ اللَّهِ  
وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ  
وَأَسْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾  
أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَعْفُو مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا  
الرَّسُولُ لَا تُخِزْنِكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ  
مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمَرْ  
مِنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا سَمَاعُونَ  
لِلْكَذِبِ سَمَاعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخِرِينَ  
لَوْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَحْسَبُنَّ الْكَلِمَةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَوَاضِعِهِمْ سَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوْبَيْتُمْ  
هَذَا فَخُذُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْمَرُوا  
فَاخْذُوا وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ  
فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا  
وَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ  
أَنْ يَهْتَدُوا قُلُوبُهُمْ  
مَنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسْرَتُهُ  
وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

37. They will wish to come out of the Fire, but they shall not come out of it; theirs is a punishment enduring.

38. And for the thief, male or female: cut off their hands as a recompense for what they have earned (of evil), and an exemplary deterrent punishment from God. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

39. But he who repents after having done wrong, and mends his ways, surely God accepts His repentance. For God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.<sup>7</sup>

40. Do you not know that surely to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He wills and forgives whom He wills. He has full power over everything.<sup>8</sup>

41. O Messenger! Let them not grieve you who would rush in unbelief, as if competing with one another in a race, such of them as say with their mouths, "We believe," but their hearts do not believe, and those of them who are Jews. They are eagerly lis-

tening out for falsehoods (especially about you), and eagerly listening out (spying) on behalf of other people who have never come to you (even to learn the essence of your Message), altering any words (whether pertaining to God or not) from their contexts to distort their meanings. They say (about matters referred to you for judgment): "If such and such judgment is given to you, accept it; but if it is not given to you, then beware!" Whoever God has willed to put to a trial (to prove his nature, and has failed in this trial), you have no power in anything on his behalf against God. Such are those whose hearts (because of their rushing in unbelief) God does not will to purify. For them is disgrace in the world, and in the Hereafter a mighty punishment.

7. As has been pointed out where the occasion required it, the penal law is not the fundamental law upon which a complete system of life has been founded. Rather, it is a collection of sanctions and cautions that help to maintain a healthy system. For this reason, it is very important for a penal law to act as a deterrent. So, in evaluating any penal law, we should consider to what extent it deters people from committing crimes and how often and widely such crimes are committed in the community where the law is to be enforced. Another important point to note is that the severity or lightness of penalties demonstrates the degree of importance attached to the values that have been brought under protection by the means of such laws. The penalties Islam legislated for the crimes committed against basic human rights and freedoms, such as the right to life, personal property, belief, reproduction, and individual and public security, and basic values like chastity and innocence, and those verses that legislate for crimes against mental and physical health show the importance Islam attaches to these values and their protection. In addition, any penal law should be considered within the whole body of the system, with all its social, economic, and political dimensions, and its principles of creed, worship, morality, and law. Also, by stressing and giving particular importance to repentance and reformation, Islam approaches the matter as one of education and upbringing, showing that it aims to enable individuals to attain human perfection. For this reason, without limiting itself to legal sanctions, Islam brings piety, reverence for God, and life to the forefront.

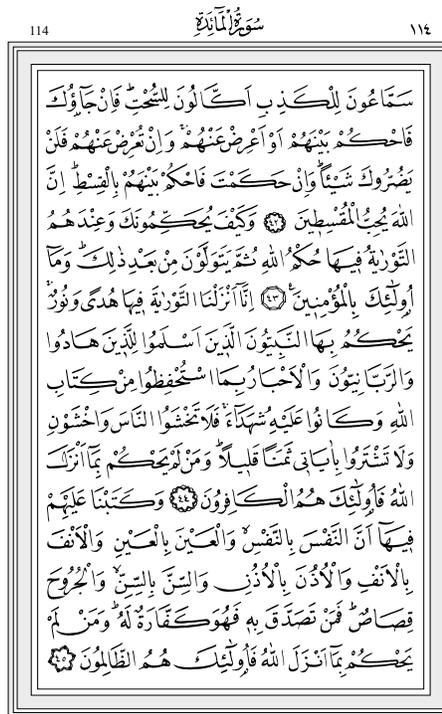
As a legal term in the Penal Law of Islam, the punishment of cutting off a hand for theft should have the following elements:

The thief should possess legal discretion; i.e., they must have committed the crime purely with their own free will, without any compulsion; they must have taken possession of the thing stolen, thereby depriving its rightful owner of it; they must have stolen it from the place where it was kept, not in an open place where

they could enter freely; they must not have had any rights to it; the stolen thing should be of the kind of thing that Islam regards as goods; the value of the goods should be above a certain amount; and it should not be fruit, vegetables, or grain that are not stored in a barn. There is another condition: the person who steals should not be constrained to steal out of dire necessity. Caliph ‘Umar, may God be pleased with him, did not enforce this punishment at times of famine. However, such exemptions do not mean that the person who steals will not be punished. Under these circumstances, the judge can determine a punishment for the thief, but cannot opt to have the hand cut off.

8. Such statements in the Qur’ān are of extreme importance. What they mean can be summarized as follows:

- Being the sole Creator of everything, God has absolute sovereignty over everything; He decrees whatever He wills.
- God is also absolutely Merciful, Forgiving, and Wise. Whatever He does and decrees has many instances of wisdom. Nothing he does is in vain. What we must do, after acknowledging that He has absolute sovereignty over everything and absolute power to do whatever He wills, is to try to find the instances of wisdom in His decrees and acts.
- God’s absolute Will is, in one respect, identical with His Knowledge. This means that He “knows” with His Eternal Knowledge whatever will happen in the future, and has “pre-recorded” it. Whatever He knows and pre-records takes place when its time is due. But He records an event with its causes and results all together, and also takes into consideration the partial will that He granted to us in His “pre-determinations” that concern us.
- We are confronted by the results of our intentions and deeds, whether they are good or bad. However, since He always wills good for us, guides us to it, and enables us to do it, whatever good we meet is from Him. But whatever misfortune happens to us, it is from our selves (see 4, note 18).



42. Listening out for lies and falsehood eagerly, and consuming unlawful earnings greedily! If they come to you (for judgment), you may either judge between them or turn away from them (and decline to give judgment). If you turn away from them, they cannot harm you in any way. But if you judge, judge between them with equity and justice. Surely God loves the scrupulously equitable.

43. But how is it that they ask you for judgment when they have the Torah, in which there is God's judgment (concerning murder), and still thereafter turn away (from that and from your judgment)? The fact is: those are not believers.

44. Surely We did send down the Torah, in which there was guidance and a light (to illuminate people's minds, hearts, and ways of life). Thereby did the Prophets, who were fully submitted to God, judge for the Jews; and so did the masters (self-dedicated to God and educating people) and the rabbis (teachers of law), as they had been entrusted to keep and observe the part of God's Book (revealed up to

their time);<sup>9</sup> and they were all witnesses to its truth. (Concerning judging by God's Book and observing It, We warned them saying): Do not hold people in awe, but stand in awe of Me; and do not sell My Revelations for a trifling price. Whoever (declines to confirm and) does not judge by what God has sent down, those are indeed unbelievers.

45. And We prescribed for them in it (concerning murder): A life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and a (like) retaliation for all wounds (the exact retaliation of which is possible). But whoever remits (the retaliation), it will be an act of expiation for him. Whoever does not judge by what God has sent down, those are indeed wrongdoers.<sup>10</sup>

9. By the expression “*the part of God’s Book*” it is implied that the Torah did not encompass the whole of God’s Revelation, and that more was yet to be revealed. There are several other books in the Old Testament, and it is natural that every Rabbi and jurist was responsible for judging by, and observing the part of, the Revelation which had been revealed up to his time.

10. Retaliation is based on absolute equality of rights – whether the rights are those of the president or a common citizen, the richest or the poorest, and the noblest of people or the most common of them – and, therefore, is absolutely just. This is why the Qur’an declares that there is life for people in retaliation (*sūrah* 2: 179). As retaliation is based on justice and absolute equality, only the injuries for which an exact retaliation is possible can fall under the system of retaliation. For this reason, as it would be risky to retaliate for a broken bone or injury to the skin, such injuries are punishable by indemnification.

Although retaliation means absolute justice and equality, it is not good in itself and is aimed only at securing basic individual rights and providing compensation for the violation of the same. So one whose rights have been violated can either demand retaliation as a legal right or

forgo that right. The Qur’an encourages people to forgo retaliation and gives the glad tiding that a person who forgoes their right of retaliation has done a good deed which will atone for their sins, in accordance with the greatness of the right that has been forgone. For example, a person who saves the life of another shall be considered as having saved the lives of all humankind; in the same way, if a person has the right to demand retaliation for a murder but forgoes it, they will gain as great reward as if they had forgiven the whole of humankind, or they will have their sins forgiven to that extent.

In addition to being based on absolute justice and equality, the Divine Commandments also consider and attach great merit to forgiveness and mutual sacrifice in society; God knows best His servants (human beings) and what is good or bad for them. For this reason, no one person or system can be better or equal to God in establishing commandments or making laws. Those who do not accept and judge by His Commandments are unbelievers, wrongdoers, and transgressors. If they accept these laws, but do not judge by them while they are able to do so, they are both wrongdoers and transgressors.

For retaliation in the Bible, see *Exodus*, 21: 23–25; *Leviticus*, 25: 17–22.

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ  
 مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا  
 بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْقَائِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَيُحْكُمُهُ  
 أَهْلَ الْإِنجِيلِ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يُحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ  
 فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ  
 بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّجًا عَلَيْهِ  
 فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَا جَاءَكَ  
 مِنَ الْحَيِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَا جَا وِلَوْ سَاءَ اللَّهُ  
 لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَلْزَمُوا فِي مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ  
 فَاسْتَقِيمُوا الصِّرَاطَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعًا جَمِيعًا فَيُنزِلُكُمْ  
 بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَإِلَّا حَكَمُوا بِتَنَاهِيمِ اللَّهِ  
 وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحِدًا ذَهَبَ أَنْ يَضْرِبَكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ  
 إِلَيْكَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا يُدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُصِيبَهُمْ رِبَقًا ذُو بُوَيْمٍ  
 وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَخُذْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ  
 يَبْعُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَكْمًا لِّعَوْنِ يَوْمِئِذٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

46. And in the footsteps of those (earlier Prophets) We sent Jesus son of Mary, confirming (the truth of) the Torah revealed before him, and We granted to him the Gospel, in which there was guidance and a light (to illuminate people's minds, hearts and ways of life), confirming what was revealed before it in the Torah (except for a few unlawful things that it made lawful), (and serving as) a guidance and an instruction for the God-revering, pious.

47. (And We commanded:) Let the People of the Gospel judge by what God sent down therein; and whoever does not judge by what God has sent down, those are indeed the transgressors.

48. We have sent down to you (O Messenger) the Book with the truth (embodying it, and with nothing false in it), confirming (the Divine authorship of, and the truths that are still contained in,) whatever of the Book was revealed before it, and guarding over (all the true teachings in) it. Judge, then, between them by what God has sent down (to you), and do not follow their lusts and fancies away from the truth that has come to you. For each (community to which a Messenger was sent with a Book), have We appointed a clear way of life and a comprehensive system (containing the principles of that way and how to follow it). And if God had so willed, He would surely have made you a single community (following the same way of life and system surrounded by the same conditions throughout all history); but (He willed it otherwise) in order to test you by what He granted to you (and thereby made you subject to a law of

progress). Strive, then, together as if competing in good works. To God is the return of all of you, and He will then make you understand (the truth) about what you have differed on.<sup>11</sup>

49. (Thus did We command you:) Judge between them with what God has sent down, and do not follow their lusts and fancies, and beware of them lest they tempt you away from any part of what God has sent down to you. If they turn away, then know that God wills only to afflict them for some of their sins. And many among human beings are indeed transgressors.

50. Or is it the law of the (pagan) Ignorance that they seek (to be judged and ruled by)? Who is better than God as law-giver and judge for a people seeking certainty (and authoritative knowledge)?

11. Similar to *sūrah* 2: 213, these last verses draw attention to some historical and sociological principles and realities. There are two kinds of differences between people: one is the “natural” difference in intelligence, ability, ambition and desire in life, and character. These are the differences that lead people to take up different occupations and which lead to scientific and technological progress. The other kind of difference comes from conflicts of interest and the parceling out of the world’s riches. Although these changes too may incite progress, they also cause unrest, clashes and corruption on the earth. The changing conditions of life caused by scientific and technological progress were one of the basic reasons why different Messengers were sent with different Books, although all agreed on the essentials of faith, worship, morality, and the fundamental rules of what is lawful or unlawful.

Since humanity was living what was, in many respects, an age of childhood until the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, every Messenger to come before that time had been sent to a certain people and for a certain period. In the Abrahamic line, Moses, upon him be peace, came to the Children of Israel with the Torah, and Jesus, upon him be peace, with the Gospel, which confirmed the Torah in the essentials of faith, worship, morality, and the fundamental rules of the lawful and unlawful, but which made some unlawful things lawful. So, when Jesus came, the Children of Israel, who had followed the Torah until then, should have believed in him and all the previous Prophets and Books, and taken into account the changes which the Gospel introduced in the commandments of the Torah. Many of them, however, did not. When the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, came with the Qur’ān at a time when there was no longer any need for another Prophet after him or for another Book to be sent, both the Jews and Christians should have believed in him and all the previous

Prophets and Books, and followed the Qur’ān. Unfortunately, many of them did not, and thus there came to be three different religions and ways where there should have been only one. The conclusion of verse 48, *To God is the return of all of you, and He will then make you understand (the truth) about what you have differed on*, is extremely important and contains a threat that is directly linked to the existence of these three major religions or ways.

The verses above mention the Books prior to the Qur’ān, giving the name of each. In verse 48 the expression *whatever of the Book* is used, and the Qur’ān is mentioned as the Book. This means that, although there are some differences in the laws, the Qur’ān encompasses all the truths contained in the previous Books. Concerning the Law, the Qur’ān retained the commandments contained in other Books which it did not abrogate. This caused the Muslim jurists to establish the rule, “The unabrogated laws of the previous communities to which a Divine Book was sent are also ours.” Although all people must follow the Qur’ān, the People of the Book may live as autonomous communities and follow their own books under the rule of Islam.

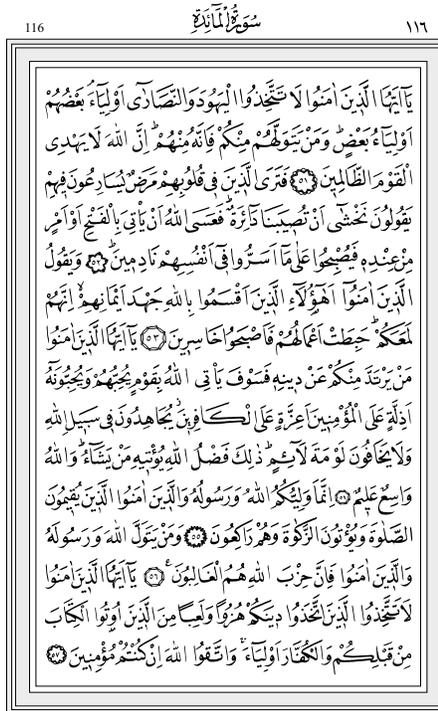
Islam has a very comprehensive, dynamic methodology of law that is unparalleled in human history. This law originates in the Qur’ān and Sunnah, and Muslim jurists have developed several other legal procedures that are based on them, such as Analogy (*qiyās*); the principle of deducing new laws through reasoning based on the Qur’ān and Sunnah (*ijtihād*); adoption of what is good and beneficial (*istiḥṣān*); maintaining something approvable without changing it (*istiḥāb*); taking what is suited to the public benefit and discarding what is harmful (*maṣāliḥ al-mursalah*); barring the road that leads to corruption and what is unlawful (*sadd al-zarā’i*); and customary law and tradition acceptable to Islam’s basic essentials (*urf*). (See also notes 2 and 95 on this *sūrah*.)

51. O you who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for friends and allies (in their Judaism and Christianity, and against the believers). Some among them are friends and allies to some others. Whoever among you takes them for friends and allies (in their Judaism and Christianity, and against the believers) will eventually become one of them (and be counted among them in the Hereafter). Surely God does not guide such wrongdoers.

52. Yet you (O Messenger) see those, in whose hearts there is a disease (that dries up the source of their spiritual life, extinguishes their power of understanding, and corrupts their character), hastening towards them (to get their friendship and patronage) as if competing with one another, saying, "We fear lest a turn of fortune should befall us." But it may be that God will bring about (for the believers) victory or some other outcome of His own will (to punish those hypocrites or the wrongdoers whose friendship and patronage they seek). And then they will find themselves utterly regretful for the secrets they (as hypocrites) sought to keep hidden in their selves.

53. And those who believe will say (to each other): "Are those the self-same people who swore by God their most solemn oaths that they were indeed with you?" Their works have gone to waste and they have become losers.

54. O you who believe! Whoever of you turns away from his Religion, (know that) in time, God will raise up a people whom He loves, and who love Him, most humble towards the believers, dignified and commanding in the face of the unbelievers, striving (continuously and in solidarity) in God's cause, and fearing not the censure of any who censure. That is God's grace and bounty, which He grants to whom He wills. God is All-Embracing (with His profound grace), All-Knowing.<sup>12</sup>



55. Your guardian and confidant is none but God, and His Messenger, and those who, having believed, establish the Prayer in conformity with all its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the *Zakāh*), and they bow (in humility and submission to Him).

56. Whoever takes God and His Messenger and those who believe for guardian and confidant, then surely the party of God (that they constitute), they are the victors.

57. O you who believe! Do not take for guardians and confidants such of those who were given the Book before you as make a mockery and sport of your Religion, and the unbelievers (who reject the Messenger, Divine Revelation, and the Last Day). Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, if you are truly believers.

12. This verse, which contains a great promise for the distant future of Islam, is of great importance because of the following points:

- No one can detract from Islam by renouncing it. It is God Himself Who preserves it, and He will make it prevail over all other faiths and systems.
- God acts behind the veil of cause and effect in the world; the world is the realm of wisdom. So, if the nation or community which God has favored with the responsibility of shouldering Islam fails to maintain it, God will raise up another people whom He keeps concealed in His treasury of the Unseen. Such are those whom God chose in pre-eternity because of the performance they will exhibit in the future. He loves them, and because of this love, they love Him.
- In praising the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, God presents the following four virtues for us to consider (48: 29):
  1. continuously being in the Messenger's company to support him and share his sufferings;
  2. being stern and implacable against the unbelievers; (In that period of ignorance and savagery, triumphing over these people was possible by being strong and unyielding.)

3. being merciful among themselves;
4. being sincere and devoted to gaining God's good pleasure and approval.

Since Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Ali were, in turn, at the forefront in having these four virtues respectively, they were the greatest among the Companions.

However, a time comes when humanity progresses from ignorance and savagery to science and some sort of civilization, and in that era, when unbelief arises from science and philosophy, the following four virtues, in degree of importance, become prominent and the most desired in the community which God favors with the responsibility of shouldering Islam:

1. being most humble towards the believers;
2. being able to give orders, command respect, and being dignified (not the same as being "stern" as described above) in the face of the unbelievers, aware that honor and dignity lie in following Islam.
3. constantly striving in utmost solidarity in God's way to make Him known by people, and to be a means for their guidance;
4. not fearing the censure of any who will censure them for their struggle to make God known by people.

وَإِنَّا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَانْتَهَوْا هُنَا هُنَا وَلَعِبًا ذَلِكُمْ بَأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ هَلْ تَتَّقُونَ يَا آلَ آدَمَ إِنَّ أُمَّتَكُمْ أُمَّتُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّا بُرِّئْنَا مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قُلْ هَلْ أُنبِئُكُمْ بِشَرِّ مِمَّنْ ذَلِكُمْ مَثْوً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ لَعْنَتِهِ اللَّهُ وَعَضْبِ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ الْفِرْدَوْسَ وَالْحَسَنَ ذِيرًا وَعَسَاكَ الطَّاغُوتُ أُولَئِكَ شَرٌّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا جَائِدُونَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَخَلْنَا بِالْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِالْغَيْبِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَرَبِّ كَيْفَ يُنْفِخُ مِنْ بَنَاتِنَا عِوَانًا فِي الْأَفْئِدَةِ الْعُدْوَانَ وَالْأَكْبَامِ الشُّعْبَةَ لِيُمْسِكَ مَا كَانُوا يَمْتَنُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ لَوْلَا يُنْفِخُهُمُ الزَّبَّارُونَ وَالْأَخْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْمِهِمُ الْإِثْمَ وَأَكَلِهِمُ الشُّعْبَةَ لَكُنْ مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ سِئِدَ اللَّهُ مَفْلُوحَةً غَلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلِئْسُوا بِمَاءٍ قَالُوا بَلْ سِدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَةٌ يُفِيخُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْبِدَنَ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُفْسًا نَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَالْقَيْنَاتُ بَيْنَهُمْ أَعْدَاؤُهُ وَالْبَغِضَاءُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلرِّيبِ أَظْفَقَهَا اللَّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

58. When you recite the call to the Prayer, they take it for a mockery and sport – that is because they are a people who do not reason and understand.

59. Say: “O People of the Book! Is it not that you begrudge us only because we believe in God and what has been sent down to us and what was sent down before, and because most of you are transgressors?”

60. Say: “Shall I tell you of a case the worst of all for recompense with God? Those whom God has cursed (excluded from His mercy), and whom He has utterly condemned, and some of whom He turned into apes, and swine, and servants of powers of evil (that institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God) – they are worse situated and further astray from the right, even way.”

61. Whenever those (of the same character and life-pattern, and the hypocrites following in their footsteps) come to you, they declare (hypocritically), “We believe,” whereas in fact they enter with unbelief (in their hearts), and so they depart with it. God knows very well what (unbelief and hypocrisy) they have been concealing.

62. You see many among them rushing as if competing in sinful, iniquitous acts, and enmity, and consuming unlawful earnings. How evil indeed is what they have been doing!

63. Why is it that the masters (self-dedicated to God and educating people), and the rabbis (teachers of law) do not forbid them from sinful utterances and consuming unlawful earnings? How evil indeed is what they have been contriving!

64. The Jews say: “God’s Hand is fettered”

(thus attributing their humiliation and misery to Him). Be their hands fettered and be they excluded from His mercy for saying so! No indeed! Both His Hands are spread out wide in bounty, bestowing as He wills. And (the Revelation and bounties) that are sent down to you from your Lord indeed increase many of them in rebellion and unbelief. However (according to the laws We established for human life in the world), We have cast enmity and hateful rancor among them to last until the Day of Resurrection: as often as they kindle a fire of war (against Islam to overcome and put it off), God extinguishes it (without allowing them to attain to their goal). They hasten about the earth causing disorder and corruption, and God does not love those who cause disorder and corruption.



13. The following verses of the Old Testament are of the same import as this verse:

If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, you dwell in your land safely (*Leviticus*, 26: 3-5).

The same meaning is explained in Moses' sermon in *Deuteronomy*, chapter 28.

These two last verses of the *sūrah* point to an important truth related to the conception of *taqwā* (keeping from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety in order to deserve His protection). As mentioned before, God has two sets of laws, one which we call Religion, and the other being that which God has established for the life and operation of the universe, and which is the subject matter of sciences. While one gets a return for obeying or disobeying the former, usually in the Hereafter, the return for obeying or disobeying the latter usually comes in this world. *Taqwā* requires obeying both.

14. This verse explains one of the numerous miracles of the Qur'ān. It openly declares and predicts that God will protect His Messenger, Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, from all his enemies, allowing him to convey His Message to the end and not allowing others to harm him. Although surrounded by fierce enemies from among the polytheists of Makkah and the desert, and from among the Jews, hypocrites, Christians, and many others, the Messenger, upon him be peace and bless-

ings, fulfilled his mission without any fear and died in his bed after having carried his mission to victory.

This promise of God is also true for the heirs to the mission of the Messenger in subsequent centuries, especially towards the end of time, when it is predicted that conditions to live Islam and convey it will be as difficult as they were in Makkah during the early years of Islam. God will also protect these Muslims from their enemies, who will be unable to prevent the Muslims from fulfilling their mission. Also see *sūrah* 33: 39.

15. This verse signifies three important things:

- The Jews and Christians meant nothing and did not stand for anything valid in the sight of God or in the name of the Religion unless, for the Jews, they had been observing the Torah and other books sent to them, including the Gospel, and for the Christians, unless they had been observing the Gospel. They should have believed in and followed the Qur'ān when it began to be revealed.
- Even though the Jews and Christians do not believe in the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, Islam regards them as the People of the Book and they are expected to observe the Torah and the Gospel (in their true commandments). If they do not, they will have no right to claim to have been given anything by God.
- Although the Qur'ān clearly explained to them the way of guidance and ultimate salvation, since it revealed how they ill-treated their books, they grew more stubborn in their rejection of it and Muḥammad's Messengership.

وَحَسِبُوا أَلَّا يَكُونُ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوا وَخَمُوا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللَّهُ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوا وَخَمُوا كَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ  
 بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ط وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
 رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ  
 عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾  
 لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمِمَّا  
 إِلَهُ إِلَّا إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَحْتَسِبْهُوَ عَبَسًا يَعْبُودُونَ بَيْتَتَنَا  
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ  
 إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جِئْتُمْ بِهِ الرُّسُلُ  
 وَأُمُّهُ صِدْقَةٌ كَمَا نَايَاكُمُ لَأَنْ تَنْظُرُوا أَنظُرْ  
 كَيْفَ يُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ لِيُنظُرُوا إِنِّي يُؤْفِكُونَ  
 ﴿٧٤﴾ قُلْ أَعْبُدُونِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ لَكُمْ  
 حَسْرًا وَلَا تَضُرُّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٥﴾

71. They calculated that there would be no trial (of them as a result of what they did), and so became as if blind and deaf (to truth and all Divine admonitions). Then God (having guided them to waken their consciences, and turn to Him in repentance so that they could reform themselves) relented towards them (in gracious forgiveness). Then (again, in spite of that) many of them became as if blind and deaf. And God sees well all that they do.

72. Assuredly they have disbelieved who say, "God is the Messiah, son of Mary," whereas the Messiah himself proclaimed: "O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever associates partners with God, God has surely made Paradise forbidden to him, and his refuge is the Fire. And the wrongdoers will have no helpers.

73. Assuredly they also have disbelieved who say, "God is the third of the Three," whereas there is no deity save the One God. If they desist not from their saying so, there shall touch those of them who persist in unbelief (and die unbelievers) a painful punishment.

74. Will they not turn to God in repentance and (being resolved never again to commit the same wrong) ask Him for forgiveness? God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

75. The Messiah, son of Mary, was but a Messenger; Messengers had passed away before him; and his mother was an upright one wholly devoted to God; both of them ate food (as do all mortals). Look, how We make the truths clear to them, then look how they are turned away from the truth and make false claims!

76. Say (to them, O Messenger): "Do you worship, apart from God, that which (in and of itself) has no power to harm or to benefit you – when God is He Who is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing?"



In the article titled 'Christianity' in the Encyclopedia Britannica (14<sup>th</sup> edition), a Christian theologian Reverend George William Knox touches on the same fact while writing about the essential beliefs of the Church:

Its moulds of thought are those of Greek philosophy, and into these were run the Jewish teachings. We have thus a peculiar combination – the religious doctrines of the Bible, as culminating in the person of Jesus, run through the forms of an alien philosophy.

In the same work, Charles Anderson Scott writes under the title of "Jesus Christ:"

There is nothing in these three Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke*) to suggest that their writers thought of Jesus as other than human, a human being especially endowed with the Spirit of God and standing in an unbroken relation to God which justified his being spoken of as the 'Son of God.' Even *Matthew* refers to him as the carpenter's son – It is worth noting that according to *Matthew*, the carpenter Joseph was the step-father of Jesus. Jesus came to the world without a father – and records that after Peter had acknowledged him as Messiah he 'took him aside and began to rebuke him' (*Matthew*, 16: 22). And in *Luke*, the two disciples on the way to Emmaus can still speak of him as 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' (*Luke*, 24: 19)... It is very singular, that in spite of the fact that before *Mark* was composed, 'the Lord' had become the description of Jesus common among Christians; he is never thus described in the second Gospel (nor yet in the first, though the word is freely used to refer to God). All three relate the Passion of Jesus with a fullness and an emphasis on its great significance; but except the 'ransom' passage (*Mark*, 10: 45) and certain words at the Last Supper there is no indication of the meaning which was afterwards attached to it. It is not even suggested that the death of Jesus had any relation to sin or forgiveness.

He (Jesus) frequently referred to himself as the Son of Man.... Certain words of

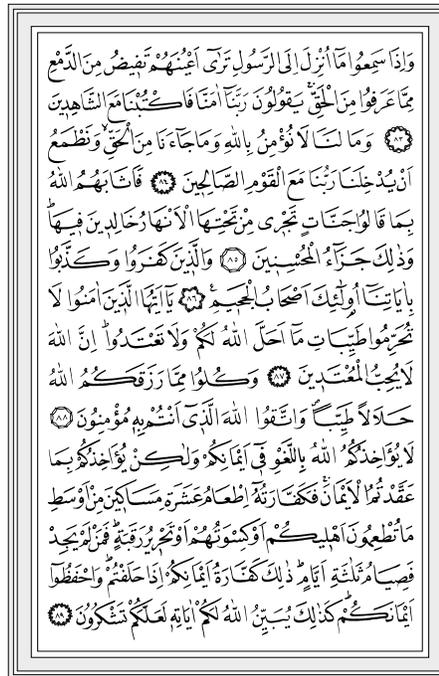
Peter spoken at the time of Pentecost, 'A man approved of God', described Jesus as he was known and regarded by his contemporaries... From them (the Gospels) we learn that Jesus passed through the stages of development, physical and mental, that he hungered, thirsted, was weary and slept, that he could be surprised and require information, and that he suffered pain and died. He not only made no claim to omniscience, but he distinctly waived it... There is still less reason to predicate omnipotence to Jesus. There is no indication that he ever acted independently of God, or as an independent God. Rather does he acknowledge dependence upon God, by his habit of prayer... He even repudiates the ascription to himself of goodness in the absolute sense in which it belongs to God alone.

William Knox, quoted above, writes about ascribing divinity to Jesus, upon him be peace:

... before the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, his deity was still widely denied... At the Council of Nicaea in 325, the deity of Christ received official sanction... but controversy continued for some time (more). (For the quotations see al-Mawdūdī, 2, note 101.)

17. This verse points to many facts, such as follows:

- Arrogance and transgression (committing sins openly, without feeling any shame) are obstacles to belief, while modesty and self-criticism are doors opened to it.
- Because of the nature of his mission, the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, attached more importance to the spiritual aspect of the Divine Religion than to its other aspects, and this gave rise to many hermits and monks appearing in his community.
- Islam is a middle way; but since modesty, humility, worship, and struggling against the carnal soul are also essential to Islam, there must be a natural closeness between Muslims and the followers of Jesus.
- The mildness and humility of some hermits and monks caused their accepting Islam and the Qur'ān when they heard God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.



83. When they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes brimming over with tears because of what they know of the truth (from their own Books); and they say: "Our Lord! We do believe (in Muhammad and the Qur'an); so inscribe us among the witnesses (of the truth in the company of his community).

84. "Why should we not believe in God and what has come to us of the truth? And we fervently desire that our Lord admit us among the righteous people."

85. So God (judged that He would) reward them for their saying so with Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide. Such is the reward of those who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

86. As to those who disbelieve and deny Our signs and Revelations, those are companions of the Blazing Flame.

87. O you who believe! Do not hold as unlawful the pure, wholesome things that God has made lawful to you, and do not exceed the bounds (either by making forbidden what is lawful, or by over-indulgence in the lawful). God does not love those who exceed the bounds.

88. Eat as lawful, pure and wholesome from that which God has provided for you; and in due reverence for Him, keep from disobedience to God, in Whom you have faith.

89. God does not take you to task for a slip (or blunder of speech) in your oaths, but He takes you to task for what you have concluded by solemn, deliberate oaths. The expiation (for breaking such oaths) is to feed ten destitute persons (or one person for ten days) with the average of the food you serve to your families, or to clothe them, or to set free a slave. If anyone does not find (the means to do that), let him fast for three days. That is the expiation for your oaths when you have sworn (and broken them). But be mindful of your oaths (do not make them lightly, and when you have sworn them, fulfill them). Thus God makes clear to you His Revelations (the lights of His way), that you may give thanks (from the heart and in speech, and in action by fulfilling His commandments).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْيَيْسُورُ وَالْأَصْنَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ  
 رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ إِنَّمَا  
 يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ  
 وَالْيَيْسُورِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنتُم  
 مُّنتَهُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ  
 فَأَعْلَوْا إِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَيِّنَاتُ لِكَيْ تُسَرَّحَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَعْلَمُوا  
 الصَّلَاحَاتِ مَخْرَجَ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِكَامًا فَاتَّقُوا وَآمَنُوا وَكَلِمَاتِ الصَّالِحِينَ  
 تُحَرِّمُ أَشْقَىٰ وَآمَنُوا حَسْبُكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا وَاحْسَبُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مُّجِيبُ الْخَافِيَّاتِ  
 إِنَّهُ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَسْأَلُكُمْ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَمَّ اللَّهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ  
 وَرِمَاكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن كَانَ مِنَ الْغَيْبِ قَبْلُ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ  
 فَكَهْ عَذَابُ الْيَسِيرِ ﴿٩٢﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنتُمْ  
 حُرٌّ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِّمَّا قُتِلَ مِنَ النِّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ  
 ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ  
 أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَلِكَ صِيَامًا لِيَذُوقُوا وَبِالْأَمْرِ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا سَأَلْتُ  
 وَمَنْ عَادَ فَسْتَنْعِمْ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ عَسِيرٌ ذُو نِقَامٍ ﴿٩٣﴾

rests with Our Messenger is only to convey the Message fully and clearly.

93. There is no sin on those who believe and do good, righteous deeds for what they might have partaken (in their pre-Islamic past), provided (henceforth) they fear (the end of their previous creeds and misdeeds) and come to faith and do good, righteous deeds, then keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety and believe (more profoundly), then be more meticulous in obeying God in greater reverence for Him and piety and be devoted to doing good: God loves those who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

94. O you who believe! God will certainly try you with something of the game that you can take with your hands or your lances (while you are on the Pilgrimage), so that He may prove those who fear Him (though) unseen. Whoever, after that, exceeds the bounds, for him is a painful punishment.

95. O you who believe! Do not kill game while you are in the state of pilgrim sanctity or in the sacred precincts of Makkah. Whoever of you kills it, then its recompense is the like of what he has killed, from livestock, to be judged by two men among you of equity and probity, and to be brought to the Ka'bah as an offering; or (there shall be) an expiation by way of giving (as much) food to the destitute (as the value of the game killed), or fasting (a number of days) equivalent (to the number of the persons to be fed or the shares assigned for them). (That is ordained) so that he may taste the evil consequences of his deed. God has pardoned what is past; but for one who re-offends, God will take retribution from him. And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, Ever-Able to requite (wrong).

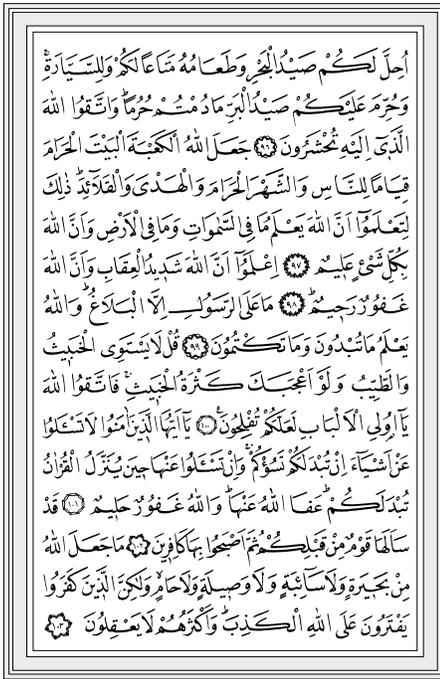
90. O you who believe! Intoxicants, games of chance, sacrifices to (anything serving the function of) idols (and at places consecrated for offerings to any other than God), and (the pagan practice of) divination by arrows (and similar practices) are a loathsome evil of Satan's doing; so turn wholly away from it so that you may prosper (in both worlds).

91. Satan only seeks to provoke enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to bar you from the remembrance of God and from the Prayer. So, then, will you abstain?<sup>18</sup>

92. Obey God and obey the Messenger, (whose commands are based on Divine Revelation), and be on the alert (against opposing them). If you turn away (from obedience to them), then know that what

18. These two last verses, which contain significant principles for human life in this world and the next, draw attention to dangers, such as alcohol, drugs, gambling and all other kinds of games of chance, and a predilection for erecting monuments and statutes of an idolatrous nature, which are an embodiment of ostentation, pride, worldliness, and the vain desires of immortality. They also present to us enmity, hatred, and the crimes caused by these. When we consider that “mafia” types of organizations

are the breeding grounds of such and many other kinds of sins, and illicit relationships, such as prostitution, uncontrollable black marketing, drug addiction and smuggling, and that these are loathsome evils of Satan’s doing, the warning of the verses becomes even more significant. Also, it is extremely important to understand what losses can be incurred by ignoring even one verse of the Qur’ān; for example many traffic accidents that take lives and property arise from alcohol.



96. (To hunt and eat) the game in the sea, and its (fish and other) edibles are lawful for you, a provision for you and for travelers (whom you want to feed). However, while you are in the state of pilgrim sanctity, you are forbidden to hunt on land (or slaughter and eat of the animals that you get others to hunt for you). Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, to Whom you will be gathered.
97. God has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a standard and maintenance for the people, and also the Sacred Months (during which fighting is forbidden), and the animals for sacrificial offering, and the (camels wearing the sacrificial) collars. That is so that you may know that God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and that God has full knowledge of everything.
98. Know (also) that God is severe in pun-

ishment, and that God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

99. Nothing rests with the Messenger but to convey the Message fully and clearly. (It is your responsibility to act in accordance therewith and) God knows whatever you reveal and do openly and whatever you conceal and do secretly.

100. Say: "The bad and the good are not alike," even though the abundance of the bad (the sheer quantity of the corrupt) amazes you. So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, O people of discernment (so that you may rightly distinguish quality and quantity and so) that you may prosper (in both worlds).<sup>19</sup>

101. O you who believe! (Practice as you are admonished to practice, and) do not ask about things which, if made manifest to you, would give you trouble (and make the practice of the Religion difficult for you). Even so, if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down, they (what is necessary to be made manifest) will be made manifest to you (to the extent that God wills). (Many things that you have either asked or want to ask about, but which God has left unspoken) God has absolved you thereof: God is All-Forgiving, All-Clement.

102. Indeed a people before you used to ask such questions (and demanded from their Prophet such things as particular miracles), and thereafter they fell into unbelief (through not carrying out the commandments given in answer to their questions or through willfully disbelieving in their Prophet despite the miracles worked).

103. God has not ordained anything (in the nature) of a *bahirah*, nor a *sā'ibah*, nor a *wasilah*, nor *hām*. But those who disbelieve fabricate falsehoods against God – most of them do not reason and indeed are devoid of sense.<sup>20</sup>

19. This verse enunciates a very important standard of evaluation and judgment. Since the world and the things that are in it are not capable of receiving and reflecting what is perfect, and due to their innate deficiencies that are essential to their nature, they can only reflect many absolute truths in relative ways, degrees, or colors. That is why, both from a perspective of relativity and in actual fact, the ugly, bad, and corrupt (unbelievers, hypocrites, transgressors, unlawful earnings, wrong thoughts, false beliefs, etc.) exist in the world more abundantly than the beautiful, good, and pure (believers, sincere and just persons, lawful earnings, right thoughts, and sound beliefs). For this reason, it is wrong to judge by quantity; what is important is nature and quality. It sometimes occurs that a single person may represent right and truth in a community. So, except for things which are open to question and which are true relative to circumstances, what is right and true cannot be judged by quantity. The source of absolute truths is God. Whatever He judges to be true and right is true and right. Thinking and acting otherwise brings failure, not success and salvation. Both history and the present world bear witness to this.

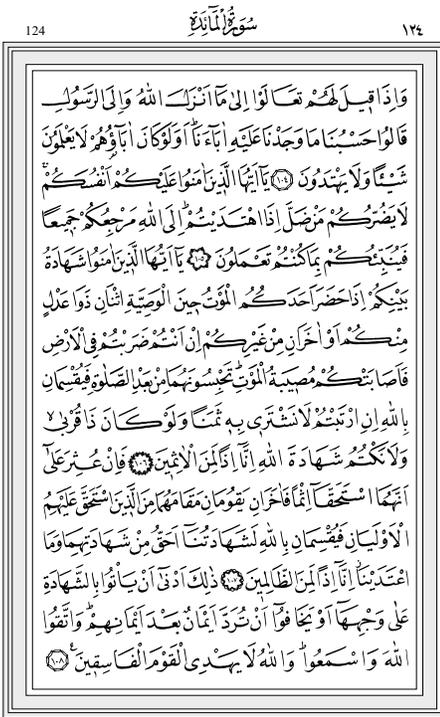
20. *Bahīrah*: a she-camel, whose milk the pagans dedicated to idols after she gave birth to five young, the fifth being a male; *sā'ibah*: a camel let loose, whose milk the pagans forbade themselves, consecrating it to express gratitude for successful fulfillment of a vow; *waṣīlah*: a sheep or a camel which gave birth to twins, one male, the other female, and whose male young was let loose and dedicated to idols; *ḥām*: a

male camel which the pagans forbade themselves after it had inseminated ten females.

The conclusion of the verse points to a very important truth: God never does anything in vain or anything that is useless, and anyone who can use their reason, anyone who has sufficient intellect, can grasp at least some of the wisdom in every command of God.

Islam makes reason or intellect bear witness to the fact that every one of its commands is reasonable, but this does not mean that reason or intellect can discover or establish these commands. The discovery or establishment of these commands in their proper place requires an "intellect" which, as stated in verse 97 above, knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and which has full knowledge of everything – an intellect which knows the structure of the whole universe, along with its relationships with all the parts and everything and every event, with all of time and space, and which knows humanity with all its needs and nature, and which understands the web of relationships. There is only one such "intellect:" God. So, the duty of humanity is to discover the wisdom in God's commands and to use our reason or intellect to deduce the secondary principles and commandments that are mutable according to time and circumstances.

Another point to mention here is that those who disregard any Islamic commandment because they consider it to be incompatible with reason and, therefore, prefer other commandments to them are either devoid of sufficient knowledge, intellectual capacity and reasoning, or they have some other purposes.



104. When it is said to them, “Come (in obedience) to what God has sent down and to the Messenger (to whom the Qur’an is being revealed), they (refuse to think, and instead) say: “Enough for us (are the ways) that we found our forefathers on.” What! even if their forefathers knew nothing and were not guided (and so did not follow a right way)?

105. O you who believe! (Do not busy yourselves with those who follow different ways!) Your responsibility is your selves (so consider how you are faring along your own way). Those who go astray can do you no harm if you yourselves are rightly guided (and so follow your right way without deviation). To God is the return of all of you, and He will make you understand all that you used to do (and call you to account for it).

106. O you who believe! Let there be witnesses among you when death approaches you, at the time of making bequests – two straightforward and trustworthy persons from among your own people (the Muslim community), or two other persons from among people other than your own (from among the People of the Book) if you are on a journey (and there are no Muslims) when the affliction of death befalls you. Then, if any doubt arises (concerning their testimony), have the two of them stay (in the mosque) after the Prayer, and they shall swear by God: “We will not sell our testimony for any price, even if it concerns one near of kin, nor will we conceal the testimony of God (namely, the truth), for then we would surely be among the sinful.”

107. Then if it is discovered later that the two (witnesses) have been guilty of (that very) sin (of not giving true testimony), then have two others stand in their place from among those (rightful heirs of the deceased) whom the first two have deprived of their right, and these shall swear by God: “Our testimony is truer than the testimony of the other two, and we have not exceeded the bounds (of what is right, nor violated the rights of any others), for then we would indeed be among the wrongdoers.”

108. That (way) it is more likely that people will offer correct testimony or else they will (at least) fear that their oaths will be rebutted by other oaths. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and pay heed (to His commandments). God does not guide transgressing people.<sup>21</sup>

21. These last verses contain important principles concerning Islamic jurisprudence, good morals and social order. They are:

- (Although we should always hold a good opinion of believers,) the transactions in society must be based on legal procedures.
- Bearing true witness is extremely important. Refraining from this and bearing false testimony are among the major, cardinal sins.
- The testimony of non-Muslims, especially that of the People of the Book, can be acceptable in cases of necessity.
- If contradictory evidence is discovered after a court has passed judgment, a new trial must begin.
- If it is discovered that the executors did not tell the truth, they are dismissed and in their place two people are appointed from among the rightful heirs of the deceased person.
- Both the executors and the heirs are asked to swear an oath.
- Those whom people regard as trustworthy and straightforward may not always be so. We should regard everybody as trustworthy until contradictory evidence emerges, and we can only decide if another person is untrustworthy on concrete evidence.
- The law has principles of its own, but in order for them to prevail and become operative as we expect, belief in and respect for God, Who sees everybody and what everybody does, and Who will call them to account in another world, and belief in the Hereafter, where people will see the return of what they did in this world, are paramount. Belief in, respect for, and fear of God are the primary conditions to ensure a happy social life.



يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا  
 بِأَنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ۝ إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ  
 اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيْكَ إِذْ آتَيْتُكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ  
 نُكِّلَ بِالنَّاسِ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ  
 وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ  
 كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا  
 بِإِذْنِي وَتُشْرِي الْأَكْشَمَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ  
 الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ  
 بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْحَابُ  
 مُبِينٍ ۝ وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي  
 قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ۝ إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ  
 يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ نَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا  
 مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ  
 ۝ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ  
 أَنَّ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ وَنَكُونُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ۝

109. The day when God will gather the Messengers and ask them: “What was the response you received (from the people to whom you were appointed to convey My Message)?” They say: “We have no (exact) knowledge (of the truth of their response); You and You alone have knowledge of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception).”

110. When God says: “O Jesus son of Mary! Remember My favor upon you and upon your mother, when I confirmed you with the Spirit of Holiness so that you talked to people in the cradle and in manhood; and when I taught you of the Book<sup>22</sup> and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you fashioned out of clay something in the shape of a bird by My leave, then you breathed into it,

and it became a bird by My leave, and you healed the blind from birth and the leper by My leave; and when you raised the dead by My leave; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from you when you came to them with clear proofs (of the truth and miracles demonstrating Your Messengership), and those of them who disbelieved said: ‘This is clearly nothing but sorcery.’

111. “And when I revealed to the disciples (through you, and inspired in their hearts), ‘Believe in Me and My Messenger!’, they said: ‘We believe, and bear witness that we are (Muslims) submitted exclusively to Him.’ ”

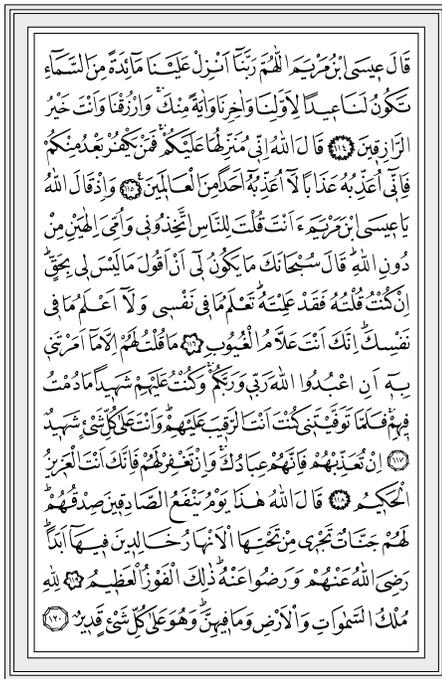
112. And once the disciples said: “Jesus son of Mary, is your Lord able to send down on us a table (of food) from heaven?”<sup>23</sup> (Jesus) answered: “Fear God (as He should be feared, and so desist from making such demands lest He punish you) if you are (truly) believers.”

113. They said: “We desire to eat thereof and that our hearts might be set at rest (with certainty of God’s being our Lord and of your being His Messenger), and so that we might know that you speak the truth to us, and so that we might be among the witnesses (to the meaning and truth of what is demonstrated to us).”

22. The verse mentioning the Torah and the Gospel in addition to the Book, as in *sūrah* 3: 48, has led some to interpret the Book (*al-kitāb*) as meaning “writing.” However, when we consider another fact, namely that the Torah and the Gospel contain or even are embodiments of the wisdom as Divine Books, we can conclude that by the Book and the wisdom the verse refers to the Divine Book and the wisdom generally, and particularizes or specifies them to be the Torah and the Gospel.

23. Jesus’ disciples, whom the Qur’an highly praised in some other verses (i.e., *sūrah* 3: 52; *sūrah* 5: 111), may have made this demand in the early phase of their conversion, and before they had responded to Jesus’ calling, “*Who will be my helpers (on this way) to God?*” by saying: “*We are the helpers of God(s cause). We believe in God, and bear witness that we are (Muslims), submitted exclusively to Him.*” (*sūrah* 3: 52)

It should be noted as a fact that none of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, made such a demand after they had entered into the fold of Islam. Not only did they not make any such demand, they also attached no greater importance to the miracles that God’s Messenger worked than one might have expected from within the milieu of Islam. An example of such a miracle is the time when there was no other means to obtain water or food, and the Prophet was able to make water flow from his fingers and he was able to multiply the small amount of food available so that it sufficed for hundreds of soldiers to partake of. (For a detailed explanation of the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad, see *The Letters*, “The 19<sup>th</sup> Letter.”) The Companions focused on and devoted themselves to reporting the rules of the Religion and deemed it sufficient that such miracles be reported by only a few.



114. Jesus son of Mary said (in entreaty to his Lord): “O God, our Lord! Send down on us a table (of food) from heaven, that shall be an ever-recurring (religious) festival for us – for the first and the last of us – and a sign from You; and provide us sustenance, for You are the Best to be sought as provider with the ultimate rank of providing.”

115. God said: “I send it down on you. Then if any of you should henceforth disbelieve, surely I inflict on him a punishment that I never inflict on anyone in the worlds.”<sup>24</sup>

116. And (remember) when God will say: “Jesus son of Mary, is it you who said to people: ‘Take me and my mother for deities besides God?’ ” and he will answer: “All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolute-

ly above having a partner, as having any need or deficiency whatever)! It is not for me to say what I had no right to! Had I said it, You would already have known it. You know all that is within my self, whereas I do not know what is within Your Self. Surely You, and You alone, have knowledge of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception).

117. “I did not say to them except what You commanded me to (say): ‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ I was a witness over them so long as I remained among them; and when You took me back, You were Yourself the Watcher over them. Indeed, You are Witness over everything.

118. “If You punish them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.”<sup>25</sup>

119. God will say: “This is the Day when their truthfulness (faithfulness and steadfastness) will benefit all who were true to their word (to God). For them are Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. That is the supreme triumph.”

120. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. And He has full power over everything.

24. By concluding the event without specifying whether the table was sent down or not, the Qurʾān shows that the purpose for relating these events is either to reinforce the main purposes within them or to give a lesson through them. By relating this event, the Qurʾān is showing us that what leads people to believe in the Messengers and the Message they brought is not primarily the miracles they worked. Rather, it is the persons of the Messengers themselves, their deep spirituality, the high morals they have, and the rationality and truth of their Message and its compatibility with the unblemished human conscience. This shows that both belief and unbelief are a conscious choice. So, instead of expecting miracles, people should study the universe, which is, in fact, an exhibition of “miracles” from top to bottom, and the character and lives of the Prophets, along with the Books they brought, and one’s conscience should not be allowed to be contaminated with such things as prejudices, carnal desires, sins, wrongdoing, wrong viewpoints, and arrogance, each of which is an obstacle to faith.

25. The answer that the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, will give displays his mission and character. By saying, “If You punish them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.” he exhibits his absolute respect for God, while, with the expression, “they are Your servants,” he appeals to God’s compassion. Although it seems more reasonable to refer the matter to God’s being the All-Forgiving and All-Compassionate, where forgiving is mentioned, that illustrious Prophet, who refers this matter to God’s being the All-Glorious with irresistible might and to His being the All-Wise, displays his deep submission to God’s absolute Authority and Wisdom.

On one occasion our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, mentions Abraham and Jesus, upon them be peace, together and likens them to one another. Abraham appealed to God on behalf of his people who disobeyed him, by saying, “*He who follows me is truly of me; while he who disobeys me, surely You are All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate*” (14: 36).



7. Had We sent down on you (O Messenger) a book on parchment such that they touched it with their hands, yet those who persist in their unbelief would indeed have said: “This is clearly nothing but sorcery.”
8. “Why has not an angel been sent down on him?” they say. Yet, had We sent down an angel (i.e. one they could see, as We did to some of the previous peoples such as those of Lot), then the matter would surely have long been decided and they would have been allowed no respite (since angels coming in this way heralds destruction).

1. The verse uses *creating* for the heavens and the earth, and *bringing into being* or *appointing* for darkness and light. This means that darkness and light are not things that have been created as independent entities, but are rather the result of the movement of the heavens (or certain heavenly objects) and the earth as a dimension of their existence.

The fact that darkness is mentioned before light signifies that non-existence precedes existence in the life of the universe, and that it has an existence in God’s Knowledge. For this reason, the start of the day actually begins with the fall of night.

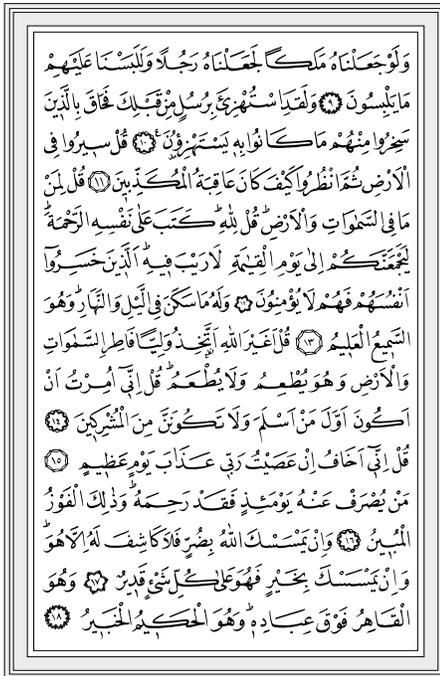
Both darkness and light are used in their spiritual connotation also. Since the sources and kinds of “spiritual” darkness (materialism, atheism, agnosticism, polytheism of all sorts, and hypocrisy) are numerous, while the “spiritual” light is one and comes from the same, single source, darkness is used in the plural, and light, in the singular. This also explains the reason why, even though philosophers and thinkers differ in their ideas greatly, as they have all based their thinking on their own reasoning, all the Prophets, numbering more than 100,000, throughout human history have agreed on the same principles.

In addition to all the shades of meaning men-

tioned, by referring to those who disbelieve, in rejecting polytheism and emphasizing that God is the Lord of unbelievers also, the verse points out that every kind of polytheism amounts to unbelief, and even if many people associate partners, rivals or equals to God, God is the Lord – the Creator, Sustainer, Raiser, the Provider – of the whole of creation, including humankind, and, therefore, polytheism has absolutely no sound, justifiable basis. Thus, this short, single verse summarizes the whole of the *sūrah*.

2. For an indirect explanation of this verse and the relevant theological terms *ajal* or *al-qadar al-muʿallaq* (the term or destiny suspended) and *ajal musammā* (the term determined) or *al-qadar al-mubram* (*the destiny decisive*), see note 13 in this *sūrah*, and *sūrah*13, note 13, and *sūrah* 10, note 19.

Some interpreters of the Qurʾān are of the opinion that the first term mentioned in the verse is the “natural” term determined by God for beings. For example, a doctor can say of a patient in view of the kind and gravity of their sickness: “He (or she) will die within ten days,” but the patient can live for many years more. The term presumed by the doctor is the “natural” term. But the final term of the patient is known to God only.



9. Had We appointed an angel (as Our Messenger), We would surely have made him (since he would have to guide humankind in all aspects of life, in the form of) a man, and thus We would have confused for them what they themselves are confusing.

10. Messengers indeed were mocked before you (O Messenger), but what they used to mock overwhelmed those who scoffed (at the Messengers to humiliate them).

11. Say: "Go about on the earth and look: how was the outcome for those who denied (God's signs and Messengers)?"<sup>3</sup>

12. Say: "To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth?", and say: "To God." He has bound Himself to mercy (so that, despite the errors and false beliefs of His servants, He sustains all that

is in the heavens and on the earth by His Mercy. He does not leave anybody to their own devices and, as a requirement of His Mercy) He will assuredly gather you together on the Day of Resurrection, about (the coming of) which there is no doubt: yet those who ruin their own selves (by misusing and corrupting their primordial nature, sound reasoning and the capacity to believe, which are their capital share in God's Mercy) – they do not believe.

13. And His is whatsoever dwells in the night and the day; and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

14. Say: "Shall I take for guardian and confidant anyone other than God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth each with particular features, and He Who feeds and Himself never needs to be fed?" Say: "Moreover, I have surely been ordered to be the foremost in submitting to Him wholly, and (I have been warned): 'Do not be among those who associate partners with Him'."

15. Say: "Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of an awesome Day."

16. Whoever has been spared punishment on that Day, surely God has had mercy on him; and that is the manifest triumph.

17. If God touches you with affliction, there is none who can remove it but He; and if He touches you with good – it is He Who has full power over everything.

18. He is the All-Omnipotent over His servants; He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.

3. Having demonstrated the truth with substantial, indisputable arguments along the way, the *sūrah* now invalidates unbelief and polytheism, establishing pure monotheism by presenting the end that awaited those who did not follow God's way. The arguments are made clear by providing historical and sociological foundations. This verse severely warns the polytheists and consoles the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. It continues with concrete and incontestable truths concerning God's Divinity and Lordship.

The Qur'ān draws attention to, and takes the human mind and heart through, all the fields and aspects of life, as a bee goes from flower to flower to collect nectar, and leaves its audience face to face with the unquestionable proofs of the truths it propounds. This style is called *taṣrīf*. Whatever subject the Qur'ān deals with, be it from individual life to the earth, from the heavens to social life, from human conscience

to human history, it extracts the water with a miraculous "staff" to quench the thirst of the human intellect, heart and all the other faculties. It is the human soul that spreads a veil of conjecture made up of arrogance, prejudices, incorrect viewpoints, and wrongdoing over the Qur'ānic truths; these truths, when apparent, are such that the human conscience, heart, and intellect cannot but concede. It is this blanket-ing attitude of the human soul that the Qur'ān calls *kufīr*, meaning 'to veil' and which is rendered in English as "unbelief." When a person disbelieves, that is, when they veil the truths, they are not able to cancel or obliterate these truths. Unbelief is the same as closing one's eyes to the sun and claiming that there is neither a sun nor sunlight, and that everywhere is dark. Those who destroy themselves by mis-using their innate, God-given faculties, such as the intellect and the potential to believe, these are, then, people who do not believe.

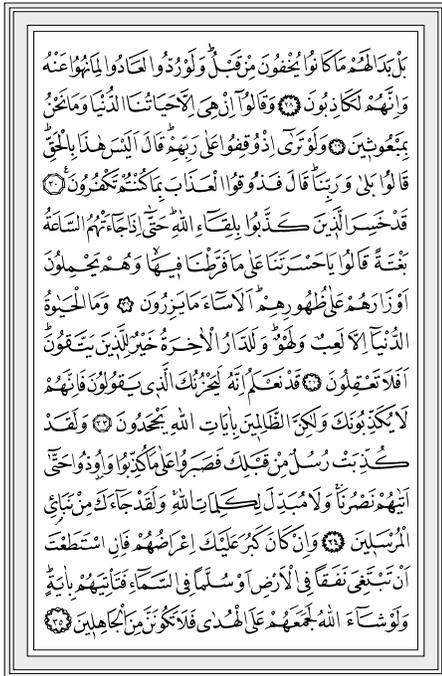
قُلْ أُمِّي شَيْءٌ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً عَلَى اللَّهِ شَهِدَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ  
 إِلَيْهِذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَتَيْكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُنَّ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ  
 إِلَهًا آخَرَ قُلْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ وَأَنَّى يُرَى مَا تَشْرِكُونَ  
 ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَمْرُقُونَ كَمَا يُبْرِفُونَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ  
 حَسِيرًا وَأَنفُسُهُمْ فَهَمُّ لَأَيُّ مَرْبُوتٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افترى على اللَّهِ  
 كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْعِلُ الْعَظِيمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَوَيْدِعُنَّ عَمَّنْهُمْ  
 جَمْعًا لِقَوْلِ الَّذِينَ اشْرَكُوا مِن شُرَكَائِكُمْ أُولَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ  
 تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ تَزْعُمُونَ فَتَنْهَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ  
 رَبَّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَنْظَرْنَا كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَصَلَّاهُمْ  
 مَا كَانُوا يَصْعُقُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَعَلْنَا عَالَمَهُمْ رِيحًا  
 أَكْهَنَةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمًا إِلَهًا لِأَيُّ مَرْبُوتٍ  
 بِهَاتِحِي إِنْ آجَأُوكَ بِمَا لَوْ نَكَتَ لِقَوْلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَإِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا  
 آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَهْتَوُونَ عَنْهُ وَيَتَّوَنُّونَ عَنْهُ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ  
 إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ وَقَعُوا عَلَىٰ الْآرَاءِ فَسَاءَ لَوْ  
 يَأْتِيَنَّكَ أَمْرٌ وَلَا تَكْذِبْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾



- 19. Say: “What is most weighty in testimony?” Say: “God: a witness between me and you; and to me is being revealed this Qur’an so that I may warn you thereby, and whomever it may reach.” (O you who associate partners with God:) Do you truly testify that there are deities besides God? Say (to them): “I give no such testimony.” Say: “He is only One God, and surely I am absolutely free from your association of partners with Him and from whatever you associate with Him as partners.”
- 20. Those who were given the Book (before) know him (the Messenger with all his distinguishing attributes) as they know their own sons; yet those who ruin their own selves (by concealing this truth, being overcome by their lusts and worldly interests) – they do not believe.
- 21. Who is more in wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God

- and denies His signs (in the universe and their own selves pointing to Him) and His Revelations? Assuredly, the wrongdoers will not prosper.
- 22. A Day will come when We raise them all from the dead and gather them together, and then ask those who (while they were in the world) associated partners with God: “Where, now, are those of yours whom you asserted to have a part in Divinity?”
- 23. Then they will have no argument except to say: “By God, our Lord, we were not of those who associated partners with God.”
- 24. Look! – How they lie against themselves, and (how) what they fabricated as partners (to worship besides God) has failed them!
- 25. There are among them such as could not help but listen to you (reciting the Qur’an), but We have laid veils over their hearts (made by their ill-intention, wrongdoing, and arrogance, which caused them to lose the capacity to believe) so that they do not comprehend it (and so cannot believe), and in their ears, heaviness: even if they see whatever manifest sign (pointing to God’s Unity and other truths of faith), they will not believe in it – so much so that when they come to you (only in order) to dispute with you, they, who have disbelieved, say: “This is nothing but fables of the ancients.”
- 26. They bar others from it (the Qur’an), as they themselves keep afar from it; and in doing so, they destroy only their own selves, though they do not perceive it.<sup>4</sup>
- 27. If you (O Messenger) could see them when they are made to stand by the Fire, and (in dread of being thrown into it, as if they forgot that they denied their associating partners with God) they say: “Oh, would that we were brought back (to the world)! Then we would not deny the signs and Revelations of our Lord and would be among the believers!”

4. The attitude of those who resist the truths of faith has never changed during human history: derision, claiming that the truths of faith are nothing but myth, falsehood, or legend, making out that the believers are a band of reactionary, regressive people with uncultivated, arid minds, preventing others from listening to them, silencing those who speak for them, and if all else fails, resorting to force – imprisonment, exile, and assassinations. Whatever the unbelievers resort to, it only indicates that they are devoid of sufficient thought and knowledge to compete with the truths of faith, and it only demonstrates their weakness, ignorance, and mental inadequacy. They lack the consciousness to perceive that what they do will ultimately cause their ruin; all this, despite the fact that there may even be sociologists, historians, and anthropologists among them who study history and events. What is important for the believers is that they should perceive this fact and, without being influenced by cultural pressure, they should always pursue the truth in Islam. It must never be forgotten that the greatest power of the unbelievers feeds upon the weakness of the believers in belief and submission.



28. No! Rather, they say this because what they used to hide (the manifest truth, and their own evil intentions and intrigues in response to it) has become obvious to them; and if they were brought back to the world, they would revert to the very thing they were forbidden: indeed, they are just liars.

29. (They always behaved so whenever they got into distress while in the world, but when relieved of it) they would say: “There is no life beyond our present life of the world, and we are not to be raised (from the dead).”

30. But if you could see when they are made to stand in their Lord’s Presence: He says: “Is not this (your being raised from the dead and gathered in My Presence) the truth?” They say: “Yes indeed, by our Lord!” He says: “Taste, then, the punishment for what you used to disbelieve.”

31. Assuredly those have lost who deny the (truth of the final) meeting with God

until, as the Hour comes upon them all of a sudden, they cry, “Alas for us! how negligent we have been in this regard,” when they have already loaded their burdens on to their backs. Evil indeed is the burden they are loading themselves with!

32. And the present, worldly life is nothing but a play and a pastime, and better is the abode of the Hereafter for those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Will you not, then, reason and understand?<sup>5</sup>

33. (O Messenger!) We know indeed that the things (lies, mockery, and slanders) that they say grieve you: yet, it is not you that they deny and give the lie to (they cannot very well call you a liar since they themselves have called you ‘the trustworthy one’); rather, it is the signs and Revelations of God that the wrongdoers obstinately reject.

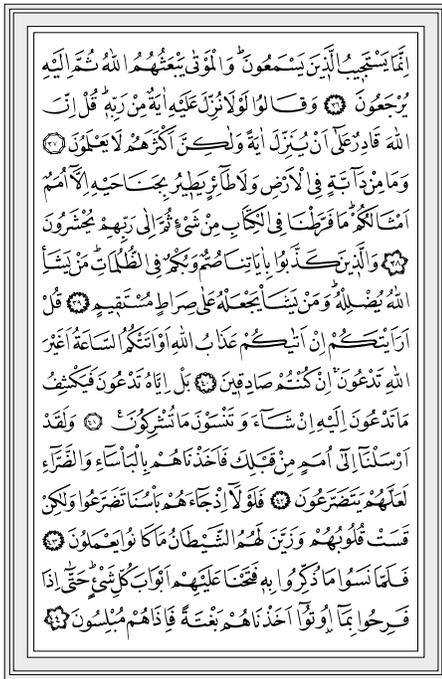
34. (Do not be grieved at what they do!) Indeed, Messengers before you were denied (regarding the Message they brought), but they endured with patience the charge of falsehood and the hurt done to them, until Our help reached them: there is none that can change God’s words (alter His decrees and His execution of them). And, indeed, some account of those Messengers has already come to you.

35. If their recalcitrance is distressful for you, then, if you are able, seek a way down into the earth or a ladder up to the heavens to bring them a sign (a miracle of the kind that they ask you to bring) – then know that had God so willed, He could surely have gathered them all to the true guidance (whether by a single miracle or by some other means. Seeing that God wills otherwise: that the truth be set before people with its supporting arguments through Messengers, and people should choose their way by exercise of their free will and judgment, then,) do not be among those who act as if ignorant (of this fact).<sup>6</sup>

5. The world has three aspects. The first aspect looks to the fact that it is the realm where God's Names are manifested, and therefore, whatever is there and whatever takes place in it is a mirror to God with His Attributes and Names. The second aspect, which looks to the Hereafter, is that the world is the tillage for the Hereafter. The building-blocks to make up one's Paradise or Hell in the Hereafter are the seeds of one's belief or unbelief and the deeds that one sows here. With these two aspects, the world is very important and is regarded as being the equal of the heavens; in fact, the Qur'ān mentions it alongside the heavens. The third aspect of the world is that which looks to our carnal desires, passions, lusts, and ambitions. It is this aspect that the Qur'ān condemns, as these consist of games, pastimes, greed (hoarding things), and

competing in having more goods – in short, the source of all vice and evil.

6. In addition to the deep desire which God's Messenger had to guide people and His endless efforts and the great success he exhibited in conveying God's Message, these verses also show the intensity of the suffering he endured, the hardships he encountered, and the obstinate resistance of the unbelievers, which all made heavy impressions on his human spirit. The following verses will interpret and elucidate these; they express the greatness of God's Messenger, along with demonstrating his profound knowledge of God, his perfect conviction of the truth of the Message he brought, and his deep concern for the guidance and salvation of people. It is these verses which consoled him and kept in check the intense passion he felt for the salvation of people.



36. Only they who have the ability to hear can respond (to a call); as for the dead, God will raise them to life, and then to Him they will be returned.<sup>7</sup>

37. And they say: “Why is not a miraculous sign (of the kind we desire) sent down on him from his Lord?” Say (to them): “Surely God has the power to send down a sign (of any kind).” But most of them have nothing to do with knowledge (so that they would know the nature of the signs, Revelation, and Prophethood, and the purpose for them).

38. (Should not those whose ears are closed to the Qur’ān look around themselves to see the signs of the truth?) No living creature is there moving on the earth, no bird flying on its two wings, but they are communities like you.<sup>8</sup> We have neglected nothing in the Book (the Qur’ān, the Supreme

Preserved Tablet, which is the source of all books, and the book of creation: We have created everything just in its place and for a purpose, so that the universe is maintained in perfect balance and order). Then, (a Day will come when the universe will be changed into a new one, and) they will be raised from the dead and gathered to their Lord.

39. Those who deny Our signs and Revelations are deaf and dumb in veils of darkness. Whomever God wills, He leads astray, and whomever He wills, He sets on a straight path.<sup>9</sup>

40. Say (to them): “Do you ever consider: if some punishment of God comes upon you or the Last Hour comes upon you, do you then invoke other than God? (Answer that) if you are truthful (and admit the voice of your conscience)”!

41. (No indeed!) Rather, it is Him alone that you invoke, and He may, if He wills, remove that which caused you to invoke Him,<sup>10</sup> and you forget whatever partners you have been associating with Him.

42. And We did indeed send Messengers to the communities before you, and We seized those (communities) with trials and tribulations so that they might invoke Us with humility (seeking the truth and forgiveness).

43. If only, when Our trial came upon them, they had invoked Us with humility! But their hearts grew hard, and Satan decked out whatever they were doing as appealing to them.

44. Then, when they forgot (the advice and warnings) that they were reminded of, We opened for them the gates of all things, until, even while they were rejoicing in what they were granted, We seized them suddenly, so then they were plunged into despair.<sup>11</sup>

7. Using many literary arts, such as metaphor, simile, comparison, and allusion, the verses of the Qur'ān attain various depths of meaning. This short verse contains several meanings and truths, as well as an admonition:

- There are people through whose ears the Qur'ān cannot penetrate to their hearts and who resist faith; these are the “spiritually” deaf. A deaf person cannot hear the call nor can they respond to it.
- One who has the ability to hear cannot be indifferent to the Qur'ān. Only one who can remain indifferent to the Qur'ān and its call can be “deaf.”
- Those through whose ears the Qur'ān does not enter are no different from the dead, for like the dead, they have no life in their heart, and one whose heart is not “alive” is “dead,” even if they are physically alive. The true life is the life of the heart. The same is true for biological life, which depends on the health of the heart.
- No one will be saved by dying, and no one will stay in the grave eternally. God will raise all of the dead, gathering them together in His Presence and the truth in which they believed or rejected while in the world will appear in their faces. This second life is eternal, either in bliss or despair.

8. “God, Who does not leave the bees without a queen nor the ants without a leader, does not leave humankind without a Prophet” (*The Letters*, 2: 303).

9. It is sometimes necessary to explain what making one's guidance or misguidance by God's absolute Will means. Here we will give a brief overview:

- The original word rendered as “will” is *Mashīah*. God has two kinds of will, one *Mashīah*, and the other *Irādah*. God does not will (*irādah*) unbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, and sins, but these are all, like faith, good deeds, and virtues, included in His *Mashīah*, which is associated with His Knowledge or which can be regarded as “Pre-knowledge.”
- As knowledge depends on what is known, and since it is eternally known to God how

each person will use their free will, God's *Mashīah* encompasses human free will. In other words, as God cannot be contained by time, as He is beyond all time and space, and therefore, as He knows how each person will use their free will, He wills accordingly.

- A person uses their free will to believe or not to believe. But it is God Who puts human free will into effect and Who creates the deeds of people.
- Human choices and inclinations, including every thing and every event in the universe, even the movement of a leaf, occur within the universal system that God has established. So, nothing is excluded from God's Knowledge and Will (*Mashīah*).

10. This part of the verse expresses a very important truth:

We should not expect God to give us exactly what we pray for. God dominates and rules the whole universe by manifesting all of His Names. That is, He has universal rules derived from all His Names which compose the magnificent universal order with its manifestations. These rules encompass everything within the universal frame and operate according to His universal Wisdom. The wheel of the universe does not turn according to the wishes of each thing or person. So God gives what is asked for in compliance with this Wisdom.

However, this does not mean that God does not have special concern for each thing or being; this concern stems from His Compassion. But this concern does not require that He will give exactly the thing that is asked for. He gives whatever is good for the person who prays. For example, a patient who has undergone a medical operation may ask for water, even though this may be very dangerous for them. The doctor does the patient good by refusing them water. Similarly, God gives what is good for His servant who prays to Him, and this is why He sometimes does not give us what we desire in this world, but rather delays it to the Hereafter.

11. These last verses discuss some recurring patterns in the history of different peoples and societies:

- If the Divine Message begins to spread in a place, varying conditions, such as abundance or famine appear there, according to the devotion of its followers and their efforts to spread it, and the attitude of the opposing side.
- Usually God Almighty first sends misfortune and hardship to the people among whom the Divine Message has begun to be spread. This is in order to urge them to renounce their false beliefs and wrong ways and to accept the Message; in most cases, especially for uncivilized peoples, force and hardship are more effective than gentle persuasion. This method also aims at perfecting those who had believed in the Message first, equipping them with the necessary patience to endure all future hardships.
- If people do not renounce their ways, despite the hardships and misfortune they are suffering, and if they remain deaf and blind to the Message, God will then provide them with abundance. That is, as a result of their being lost in the world and exerting all their abilities and strength to achieve a luxurious life, God opens the gates of the world to them. This causes many of them to become extremely rich at the cost of many others, who grow poorer, and these blind people increase in their dissipation, debauchery, corruption, and similar evils.
- The loss of balance in society and the increase in dissipation and corruption all herald general misfortune or disaster. If there is a formidable group that can shoulder the Divine Message and apply it to life, the destruction that will befall society results in the rising of this group. If there is no such group, the destruction becomes more encompassing.
- If, despite all their vices and sins, a person grows in prosperity with nothing adverse befalling them, and if there is welfare in society despite all the wrongdoing, injustices, dissipation and corruption prevalent in it, this means that misfortune or destruction is imminent for that society, and that that person will see the consequence of their misdeeds.

فَقَطَّعَ دَارَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ثُمَّ قُلْ  
 أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ  
 مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ أَنْفُكُمُ تُصْرِفُونَ الْآيَاتِ تُؤْهِمُهُمْ  
 يَصُدُّوْنَ ۝ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَاءَ نَحْنُ أَوْ جِهَنَّمَ  
 هَلْ يَهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۝ وَمَا يُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا  
 مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۝ فَمَنْ أَمَنَّ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
 وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَلْعَنُوهُمْ  
 الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ۝ قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ  
 عَشَدَى حَرَّائِنِ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ  
 إِنْ أَتَيْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ فَلْهَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ  
 أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۝ وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَحْفَظُونَ أَنْ  
 يُحْسِرُوا إِلَىٰ رَيْبِهِمْ لِيَسْهُمُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ وَإِيَّاكَ لَا يُشْفَعُونَ  
 يَسْتَعِينُونَ ۝ وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ  
 يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمِمَّنْ حَسَابِكَ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قَطٌّ دَرَهُمْ فَتَكُونُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝

45. And so (in the end) were uprooted those people who had persisted in wrongdoing. All praise and gratitude are for God, the Lord of the worlds!

46. Say: “What do you think, if God should take away your hearing and your sight and set a seal upon your hearts, what deity but God is there that could restore it<sup>12</sup> to you?” Look, how We set out the Revelations and signs (of God’s Existence and Unity, and other truths of faith) in diverse ways, and yet they turn away.

47. Say: “What do you think, if God’s punishment comes upon you unawares or perceptibly (so that you see its approach), will any be destroyed but the people of wrongdoing?”

48. We do not send the Messengers except as bearers of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness) and warners (against the consequences of misguidance). So whoever believes and mends his way, they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

49. And as for those who deny Our manifest signs and Revelations, the punishment will touch them on account of their transgressing (the bounds in belief and conduct).

50. Say (to them, O Messenger): “(You want me to do miracles. However,) I never tell you that with me are the treasures of God, or that I know the Unseen; nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.” And say: “Are the blind and the seeing alike? Will you not, then, reflect?”

51. Warn with this (Qur’ān) those who (whether they already have true faith or

not yet) are fearful in their hearts because they will be raised from the dead and gathered to their Lord, that they have, apart from Him, no guardian and confidant, nor intercessor, so that they may keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and be protected against His punishment.

52. And do not (in the hope of persuading the chieftains of the unbelievers) drive away any of those (poor believers of humble social standing) who, in the morning and afternoon, call upon their Lord, seeking His “Face” (i.e. the meeting with Him hereafter and His eternal, good pleasure). You are not accountable for them in anything, just as they are not accountable for you in anything, that you should drive them away, and so become among the wrongdoers.

12. Like many other verses which present physical and spiritual elements together, this verse also contains and presents such elements in both a literal and figurative way. The hearing, sight and heart mentioned here are our both the physical and spiritual powers of hearing and seeing and the center of our physical and spiritual life. As it is God Who created our ears, eyes, and hearts, and as there is nobody else who can create them or restore them to us when we lose them, it is also He Who makes them spiritually alive.

This verse in its Arabic original uses the sense of hearing in the singular form (*sem'*),

while the sense of seeing is expressed in the plural (*abṣār*). This means that the duty of the ears with respect to faith is hearing and listening to the Divine Revelation, and that there is a single source of Revelation. By contrast, there are innumerable signs of faith which a person can see with their eyes. In the excerpt, *What deity but God is there that could restore it to you?*, the verse uses the singular pronoun *it* for the powers of hearing and seeing and the heart; in short, in order to attain faith, the powers of hearing and sight, and the heart must be alive, and all these faculties must work together.

وَكَذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لِيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِذَا جَاءَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ أَنَّهُمْ مَرْغُولٌ مِنْكُمْ سَوَاءٌ بِحَسْبِهَا لَهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ قَلْبٌ لِيُحْسِنُوا فَهَمُّهُمْ قُلْ إِنِّي تُهَيِّبُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَا أَسْمِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ قَدْ ضَلَّكُمُ إِذَا وَمَا أَتَاكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرَاتِ ﴿٥٥﴾ قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ مَا عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ إِنْ الْخُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ يُقْضَى الْحُكْمَ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَفُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ رَبِّي وَيَبْيِّنُكُمْ اللَّهُ مَا تَعْلَمُونَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يُعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبُرُوجِ وَمَا تَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْ وَرْقَةٍ إِلَّا فِي سَفَرِهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَأْسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٨﴾



53. And it is in this way that We try people through one another: so that they (who think that such things as wealth and social status are the means of superiority) say (of the believers who are poor and lacking in recognized social status): “Are these the ones among us on whom God has bestowed His favor?” Does God not know best who are the thankful (who recognize the real source and bestower of every good thing one receives, and act accordingly)?

54. When those who believe in all of Our Revelations and signs (whenever they come to them,) come to you, say in welcome: “Peace be upon you! Your Lord has bound Himself to mercy (to treat His servants with mercy) – so that if any of you does a bad deed due to ignorance (an instance of defeat to the evil-commanding soul), and thereafter repents and mends his way and conduct, surely He is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”

55. Thus We set out in detail the signposts of Our way and the relevant Revelations (included in the Qur’ān), and (We do so) so that the path of the disbelieving criminals might become distinct (from that of the righteous believers).

56. Say (to those associating partners with God): “I have been forbidden to worship those beings whom you deify and invoke apart from God.” Say: “I do not follow your lusts and fancies – or else I would go astray and would not be of those who are rightly guided.”

57. Say: “I take my stand on clear evidence from my Lord, whereas you deny it. Not

within my power is what you (derisively) ask to be hastened, (saying: ‘If there is such a punishment with which you threaten us, let it come immediately’). (In the absolute sense) judgment and authority rest with none but God alone. He always relates the truth, and He is the Best Judge between truth and falsehood.

58. Say: “If it were within my power (to bring) what you ask to be hastened, the matter between me and you would have been decided.” God best knows the wrongdoers.

59. With Him are the keys to the Unseen; none knows them but He. And He knows whatever is on land and in the sea; and not a leaf falls but He knows it; and neither is there a grain in the dark layers of earth, nor anything green or dry, but is (recorded) in a Manifest Book.<sup>13</sup>

13. The Qur'ān mentions the Manifest Book and Manifest Record (*sūrah* 36: 12).

The universe displays a magnificent and perfect order; God has created and creates everything perfectly and in exactly the right place. This demonstrates that the universe is based on a universal, perfect knowledge and determination, which we call Divine Destiny. To better understand this subtle point, we should consider the following two examples:

Before setting out to write a book, a writer has the necessary information in their head; this can be regarded as the archetype of the book. Then the writer makes a plan and divides the knowledge in their mind into chapters and sections, which is the “destined” existence of the book. Afterwards, they write the book; i.e. they create the book’s material existence. For another example, before constructing a building, an architect builds it in their mind; i.e. they create the essential or archetypal existence of the building. Afterwards, they draw a plan of the building, which is the “destined” existence of the building. Then, they build it according to the plan they have made.

Similarly, the universe with all the things and events in it, from the first day until the last, has an archetypal existence in God’s Eternal Knowledge. God destined (when considered from the perspective of the universe contained in time and space) or destines (when considered from God’s perspective, as He is beyond all time and space) a particular form, life-time,

and function for each thing or being. This second type of the determined existence of the universe in God’s Knowledge, with everything and every event in it is called the Manifest Record or the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet. This is, in one respect, identical with God’s Knowledge. Destiny gives form to the archetypes, and Divine Power brings them into material existence.

God duplicates the “destined” existence of each thing. One of the copies is included in its seed. For example, when God turns the embryo in the mother into another (human) creation, the destiny of this new human creature has already been determined (for the relation between Destiny and human free will, see note 8 in this *sūrah*, and in *sūrah* 2, notes 10, 14; *sūrah* 3, notes 30, 36; and *sūrah* 4, note 18). Likewise, the future life of every plant or tree is encapsulated in its seed. The life-history of the plant or tree from the time of its germination under soil until it yields fruit is the developed form of its seed. We call this active life-history of a living thing or being its Destiny Practical or the Manifest Book. With every thing and event being included in it, the universe has its own “universal” Destiny Practical, which is the “universal” Manifest Book. The Manifest Record relates to the origins of things or beings and Divine Knowledge, while the Manifest Book contains their entire life-histories and is a notebook written by the Divine Power.

60. He it is Who recalls your souls at night (while you sleep, a state comparable to death), and He knows what You already worked in the daytime. Then He raises you to life therein (the next daytime) so that the exact term appointed by Him is fulfilled. (He causes you to die after the completion of this term, and, just as He raises you again to life each day after sleep, He will raise you from the dead when the appointed time is due.) Your final return is to Him; and then He will make you understand what you were doing (and call you to account for it).

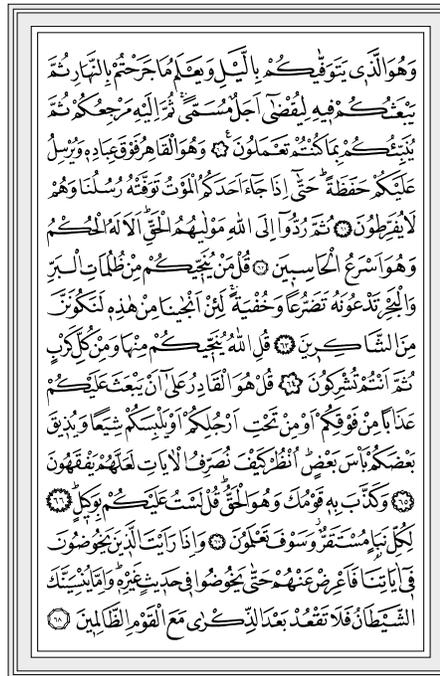
61. He is the All-Omnipotent over His servants; and He sends to you (angel) guardians (who watch over, and keep a record of, whatever you do). When death finally approaches any of you, Our envoys (the angels assigned to this duty) take his soul, and they do not neglect (any part of their tasks).

62. Then they are restored to God, their All-True Master and Protector. Indeed His alone is the judgment, and He is the Most Swift in reckoning.

63. Say: "Who is it that saves you from the veils of darkness on land and the sea, (when) you call upon Him most humbly and in the secrecy of your hearts: 'If You but save us from this (distress), we will most certainly be among the thankful (who turn to You in faith and righteousness)!?'"

64. Say: "God alone saves you from this and from every distress, but then you associate partners with Him (instead of being thankful to Him by believing in and obeying Him)."

65. Say: "He it is Who has the power to send punishment upon you from above you or from beneath your feet, or to confound you by splitting you into hostile groups and make you taste the violence of one an-



other. Look, how We set out the signs (of God's Existence and Unity and other truths of faith) in diverse ways, so that they may ponder and grasp the truth.

66. And yet, your people (O Messenger) deny the Qur'ān, even though it is the truth. Say: "I am not one appointed as a guardian over you to assume your responsibility for you."

67. Every tidings (from God) has a term appointed for its fulfillment; and in time you will come to know (the truth).

68. When you meet such as indulge in (blasphemous or derisive) talk about Our Revelations, turn away from them until they engage in some other talk. And should Satan cause you to forget, no longer remain, after recollection, in the company of such wrongdoing people.

وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَئِنْ  
ذَكَرْتُمْ لَعَنَهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ  
لَعِبًا وَهَلْوًا وَغَرِبَهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكَرِيَّهُمْ أَنْ  
يُسْئَلُوا بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْسَّرَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَيْ وَلا يَشْفِعُ وَإِنْ تَعَدَّلْ كُلُّ تَعَدِّلٍ لَآيُؤَخِّدُ مِنْهَا أُولَئِكَ  
الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ  
أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ قُلْ أَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ وَلا يَضُرُّكُمْ وَمَنْ دَعَا عَلَىٰ عَصَايَا يَأْتِ بِهَا بَدَأُ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا اللَّهُ  
كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ لَهُ  
أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُوهُ إِلَىٰ أُلْحُودٍ أَتَيْتَ قُلُوبَهُمْ قُلُوبًا مَدَى اللَّهِ  
هُوَ أُلْحُودٌ وَأُرْسِلْنَا لِلنَّاسِ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَأَنْ أَقِيمُوا  
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْهُ وَهُوَ الذَّبِّي إِلَيْهِ تُخْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَ  
هُوَ الذَّبِّي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ  
كُنْ فَيَكُونُ قَوْلُهُ لَخَلْقُ وَهَلْ الْمَلَكُ يَوْمَ يَمُوعُ فِي الضُّوِّ  
عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْغَنِيُّ ﴿٧٥﴾

69. Those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety are not accountable for them in anything. But (what rests with them is) to remind and thereby admonish them so that they may fear (the evil of what they do) and avoid it.

70. Quit those who take their Religion (the one appointed for them by God) for a play and pastime (and have made play and fun their own religion), and whom the present, worldly life has deluded. But remind them (through the Qur'an) lest any soul should be given up to destruction for what it has earned, for there will neither be any protecting friend nor intercessor apart from God, and even though it may offer any ransom (in return for its unforgivable sins such as unbelief and associating partners with God), it will not

be accepted from it. They are those who are given up to destruction for what they have earned; for them is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment because they were persistently disbelieving.

71. Say: "Shall we invoke, apart from God, the things that can neither benefit us (when we invoke them) nor harm us (when we do not invoke them), and (thus) be turned back on our heels, after God has guided us - like the one whom the satans have infatuated on earth so that they blunder about in valleys of misguidance, though he has companions calling him to the guidance, saying: 'Come to us!'" Say: "Surely God's guidance is the (only true) guidance, and we have been commanded to submit with all our being to the Lord of the worlds;

72. "And to establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety." He it is to Whom you will be gathered.

73. He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in truth (meaningfully, and for definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth). Whenever He says "Be!" it is. His word is the truth. And His is the sovereignty on the day when the Trumpet is blown,<sup>14</sup> the Knower of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm). He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.<sup>15</sup>

14. We do not know the exact nature of the Trumpet and what is really meant by its being blown. It will be blown twice (see also *sūrah* 39: 68, note 22) by the archangel Isrāfīl, and when it is blown the first time, the entire order of the universe will be disrupted, and on its second blowing, all the dead will be raised in a completely fresh world and order.

God has absolute ownership and dominion over the whole creation, even in this world. But, since this world is the world of Wisdom, His acts are screened by some apparent causes; that is, He allows things to occur according to certain (apparent) causes, and beings like humans and the jinn, endowed with free will, are allowed to have property and exercise some sort of dominion, and are tested. However, in the next world, which will be the world of Power and where there will be no causes nor time or duration for a thing to occur, He will act without the intervention of causes and no one will be allowed to enjoy any dominion.

15. The verses which so far have concentrated on the pillars of faith, in particular the two most cardinal, namely belief in God's Existence and Unity and belief in the Resurrection, present us with observable, manifest truths and evidence:

- It is God Who has created the heavens and the earth and, in connection with them, brings darkness and light into existence. It is also He Who gives existence to people's will and preference for belief or unbelief, along with the causes of these.
- God also created the first human being from clay, a material propitious for cultivation, and all succeeding men and women, from the food that is obtained from earth. He appoints for each person, as well as appointing for humanity, a fixed term in this world; after the completion of this term, He takes us all into another, eternal world.
- God has not left the universe and humankind to their own devices after creating them. He is the All-Omnipotent and has full sway over them. He knows whatever happens in the universe, down to the fall of

a leaf, and He knows all the deeds, thought, and intentions of humankind. His appointed angels record these, and people will be called to account for these acts in the other world. To avoid punishment, people must follow the way He has established for them through His Messengers.

Having presented the cardinal pillars of faith along with their indisputable proofs, which the Qur'ān calls "signs," that are understandable to and observable by everybody, the verses proceed to reject polytheism in all its forms and consolidate the truths of faith with manifold proofs:

- Despite the evidence of belief that is observable by everybody, God also sent Messengers to people to teach them and bring the message to their attention. But, unfortunately, most people, particularly those who have some status in society, such as the wealthy, aristocrats, the governing elite and some intellectuals, willfully reject the messages brought by the Messengers, as well as their manifest signs that are derived from the universe and life, including the miracles which the Messengers work when necessary and when God allows them to do so.
- Those who reject the truths of faith have no truth at all on which to base their claims. This is why they attempt to oppose the Messengers with derision, demanding that they work miracles, and claiming that the miracles they work are nothing but magic. This openly shows their intellectual defeat and bankruptcy when placed before the truth brought by the Messengers. The true reason for their unbelief and resistance against the Divine Message is that they fear losing their status; they cannot give up their life-style or bear to be together with those they have despised as being poor and lacking status in society; that is, arrogance, having the wrong viewpoint and world-view, wrongdoing, and luxury prevent them from believing. These attitudes have caused them to lose their senses of hearing and seeing, and they can no longer hear the revealed message nor see

its manifest evidence (signs) in life and the universe, and, as a consequence, they lose the capacity to believe, a capacity which God has ingrained in their nature.

- The life of the world is not only transient; it also consists of play and pastime in respect to human carnal life. The wealth, posts and positions, and social status, to which people tend to attach much importance and on which they depend, are not lasting. God, Who gives these favors as a means of testing people, may take them away at an unexpected time. History is full of instances of this giving and taking away; there are many lessons to be learned from destroyed civilizations and the lost wealth and positions of our ancestors.
- God is, first of all, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate; all His acts are based on mercy. For this reason, He provides for every living thing in the world without discriminating between believers and unbelievers, maintaining the lives of everything. So it should not be expected that He will immediately destroy those who are bent on unbelief, those who associate partners with Him, and those who indulge in sins. The place where people are rewarded or punished for their beliefs and deeds is the Hereafter. God has special laws for the worldly life, and people usually see the consequences of their deeds in the world according to these laws. However, this does not mean that God does not have special concern and compassion for His believing, righteous servants in the world. He helps them according to His Wisdom, accepts their repentance, forgives them, and protects them as long as they remain devoted to His cause and religion. When wrongdoing and transgression exceed all limits, God punishes people in the world through calamities, such as earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, epidemics, or wars, internal conflicts, anarchy, terror, or causing them to lose their wealth, status or jobs. But since this punishment usually appears to be in accordance with the (sociological) laws of life

and “(physical) laws of nature,” not everyone can see the Divine Hand behind them.

- God is not of the same kind as the created, so He cannot be conceived of in terms of the created. He never eats and drinks, nor does He need anything. He feeds, sustains, and provides. His Existence and Unity are more manifest than anything else, and it is rationally impossible to accept the existence of anything without accepting His Existence. The universe, with whatever is and happens in it, testifies to this, as does the Qur’ān, the other Divine Scriptures, tens of thousands of Prophets, and billions of people who followed them throughout history. Those who deny Him have nothing substantial on which to base their claims, for denial cannot be proved, and, therefore, it has no rational or scientific weight. Denial consists in mere conjecture and hypothesis.
- Even if a person denies the truths of faith, defeated by their carnal soul, they will see, when they die, the true nature of those truths that are manifested in our world with their outer dimensions, and they will understand the truth of the other life clearly; yet, it is of no use for this person to feel remorse. They desire to be returned to the world, but it is of no avail! Even if they were allowed to return, they would not act otherwise. No one can go to the Hereafter with a valid excuse for their wrong beliefs and acts. Everybody feels the existence of a Supreme Power in their conscience, especially when they are facing danger or death. They invoke only God with both their tongue and their conscience, for God has inculcated in the conscience of everyone a point where we seek help and a point where we seek support. Both of these manifest themselves, especially when there is no apparent, material means to escape from peril or difficulties, and this causes a person to turn to God alone. Every person has had this experience several times in their life. But most people, upon reaching safety, behave as if they have had no such experience. They pursue their ambitions, and under the pressure of such attitudes as arrogance,

wrongdoing and having the wrong viewpoint of things and events, they insist on unbelief or the association of partners with God.

- In order to show people that the way they follow is wrong and to warn them against its consequences, God Almighty repeatedly presents to them evidence, and He renews His admonitions. A time comes when He will expose them to different hardships and disasters, such as famine and warfare, in order to help them to come to their senses, and, at other times, He will pour on them His bounties in order to stir up feelings of gratitude in them. But, if a person has already lost their inborn capacity to believe, none of these will be of any avail. Furthermore, they are deluded by Satan into seeing their way as being good.
- Those who persist in unbelief or polytheism are too arrogant to find themselves side by side with those whom they see as being devoid of any social status and attempt to excuse their own unbelief by mocking the belief of those others. This is because they are beguiled by Satan into judging the degree of intelligence and worth of a human by the post, wealth and social status one has, and, therefore, think of themselves as much more intelligent and better than those who are poor and devoid of status. This leads such people to conclude that if the Message brought by the Prophet is true, then they should have been among the first to accept it. But this is Satan's trickery; they become the victims of their carnal souls; wealth and social status are not the criterion to judge one's intelligence or worth. There are many people who are very knowledgeable and intelligent, but who are poor and have no positions and social status. Imam Ghazzālī calls the intelligence that grasps worldly affairs the intelligence of worldly life. It can never be asserted that one who is advanced in the intelligence of worldly life is also advanced in grasping the perennial truths and principles that lie at the root

of and govern life, existence, things and events, and their meaning. Moreover, the Divine criteria to judge people are different.

At the foremost of these criteria comes the grasping of the truths and principles mentioned, which automatically lead to believing in God and to the other pillars of faith, and living according to these truths and principles in reverence for God and piety; this is what the Qur'ān calls *taqwā*. If life and existence consisted only of economy, then there would be no philosophy, religion, and contemplative thought, nor even art and literature, which are the elevated products of the human mind and heart. Human thought should be based on, and guided by, the truths and principles mentioned here so that there will be no deviation in thought and belief; these deviations are what lead to unbelief or associating partners with God.

- As mentioned above, God is not, as some think, "a passive deity" who created the universe and humanity and left everyone to their own devices. He has full knowledge of everything, is fully aware of whatever one thinks, intends, and does, and the reins of all things and events are in His Hand. Whatever happens in the world occurs by His commanding "Be!" He makes His appointed angels record all the deeds of human beings, and He will call people to account in the other world for what they have done in this world. Going to sleep every night and waking up every morning is evidence of the fact that we will, one day, be raised from the dead; it is a means of comparison for us.

After all these truths and all the evidence which has been presented in this *sūrah*, the Qur'ān goes on to narrate a very significant event from the life of the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, one of the greatest heroes of the truth of *Tawḥīd* (believing in and declaring God's Oneness), from whom all the greatest Messengers descended, including Muḥammad, Jesus and Moses, upon them be peace.

وَأَذَقْنَا لِرَبِّهِمْ لَابِيَهُ أَرْزَأْتَجِدُ أَصْبَأَمَا أَلِهَةً إِنِّي  
 أَرَيْتُكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ۝ وَكَذَلِكَ نَسِي  
 لِرَبِّهِمْ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَيْكُونَ مِنَ الْخَافِينَ  
 ۝ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي  
 فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْإِفْلَاقَ ۝ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ  
 بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي  
 لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ۝ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ  
 بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي  
 بَرَأءُ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ۝ إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
 وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝ وَحَاجَّةً قَوْمَهُ  
 قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ  
 بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا  
 تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝ وَكَذَلِكَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ  
 أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَوْ يُزِيلُ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا  
 فَأَنَّى الْفَرِيقِينَ آخِئًا بِالْآخِرِينَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

74. And (call to mind) when Abraham spoke to his father Āzar: “Do you take idols for deities? Indeed, I see you and your people lost in obvious error.”<sup>16</sup>

75. Thus (he spoke and acted for) We had showed Abraham (the ugliness and irrationality of polytheism and) the inner dimension of (the existence of) the heavens and the earth, and the eternal truth (which this outer, corporeal dimension manifests and depends upon) – this We had done so that he might be one of those who have achieved certainty of faith (that he might attain the final degree in his certainty as a Messenger of God):

76. When the night overspread over him, he saw a star; and he exclaimed: “This is my Lord, (is it)?” But when it set (sank from sight), he said: “I love not the things that set.”<sup>17</sup>

77. And when (on another night), he beheld the full moon rising in splendor, he said: “This is my Lord, (is it)?” But when it set, he said: “Unless my Lord guided me, I would surely be among the people gone astray.”

78. Then, when he beheld the sun rising in all its splendor, he said: “This is my Lord, (is it)? This one is the greatest of all!”<sup>18</sup> But when it set, he said: “O my people! Surely I am free from your association of partners with God and from whatever you associate with Him as partners.”

79. “I have turned my face (my whole being) with pure faith and submission to the One Who has originated the heavens and the earth each with particular features, and I am not one of those associating partners with God.”<sup>19</sup>

80. His people set out to remonstrate with him. Abraham said: “Do you remonstrate with me concerning God, when He has guided me? I do not fear those that you associate with Him as partners (and that cannot even benefit or harm themselves, so what do I have to fear of your threats?). Whatever my Lord wills happens, and no evil befalls me unless He so wills. My Lord embraces all things in His Knowledge. Will you not, then, reflect and take heed?

81. “And how should I fear those that you associate with God as partners when you do not fear to associate partners with Him without His having sent down on you any authority (to do so)? (Tell me,) then, which of the two parties has right to feel secure, if you have anything of knowledge?”

16. The nation that Abraham was sent to as a Messenger was that of the ancient Chaldeans, who lived in modern-day Iraq. Abraham began his mission in Ur, the capital of the state, located in southern Iraq, in around 2100 BC. The founder of the ruling dynasty was Ur-Nammu, who established a vast kingdom that stretched from Susa in the east, to Lebanon in the west, and which extended a little beyond the boundaries of modern day Iraq to the north. This dynasty was called Nammu, becoming Nimrud in Arabic.

It was estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 people lived in Ur at that time. The majority of these people were merchants and craftsmen; these people had a purely materialistic outlook on life. They were comprised of three classes: (1) the priests and government and military officers; (2) the merchants, craftsmen, and farmers; and (3) slaves. Abraham's family belonged to the first class, and his father had a high position in the government.

The people worshipped about 5,000 deities. The chief deity of Ur was Nannar (the moon god). The idol carved in its image was kept in a palace-like building. Every night a female worshipper went to the bedroom of the god, adorned as a bride. A great number of women were consecrated in the name of this deity; they were considered as a means to salvation, and it was generally the priests who made most use of this institution.

The other major city was Larsa, which later replaced Ur as the capital. Its chief deity was Shamash (the sun deity). Under these major deities there was a myriad of minor deities; these were generally chosen from among the heavenly bodies. Polytheism in this state, as in almost all others, did not consist merely of a set of religious beliefs and polytheistic rites; it also provided the foundation on which the order of economic, cultural, social, and political life rested.

Even though we are not exactly sure of the impact of Abraham's teachings on the people and the state, after his emigration, both the ruling dynasty and the nation of Ur were subjected to a succession of disasters. First, the Elamites sacked Ur and captured Nimrud along with the

idols of Nannar. Later on, an Elamite state was established in Larsa, which governed Ur as well. Later still, Babylon prospered under a dynasty of Arabian origin, and both Larsa and Ur came under its dominion. The laws which were codified by the Babylonian king, Hammurabi, in 1910 BC. show the impression of the prophetic influence (al-Mawdūdī, 2: 246–248, note 52, from Leonard Wooley, *Abraham*, London 1935).

17. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960), a Muslim thinker and scholar who lived in Turkey, writes:

This verse, which illustrates the decay of the universe uttered by the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, made me weep. The eyes of my heart wept bitter tears for it. Each tear was so bitterly sad that it caused others to fall, as though the tears themselves were weeping. Those tears make up the lines that follow. They are like a commentary on the words of that wise Prophet of God contained in the Qur'an.

A beloved one who disappears is not beautiful, for one doomed to decline cannot be truly beautiful. It is not, and should not be, loved in the heart, for the heart is created for eternal love and mirrors the Eternally-Besought-of-All. A desired one doomed to disappear is unworthy of the heart's attachment or the mind's preoccupation. It cannot be the object of desire, and is unworthy of being missed. So why should the heart adore, and be attached to, it?

I do not seek or desire anything mortal, for I am myself mortal.

I am impotent, so I do not desire the impotent.

I surrendered my spirit to the All-Merciful One, so I desire no one else.

I want only One Who will remain my friend forever.

I am but an insignificant particle, but I desire an everlasting sun.

I am nothing in essence, but I wish for the whole of creation.

I do not invoke or seek refuge with something that will decay, for I am infi-

nately needy and impotent. That which is powerless cannot cure my endless pain or solve my infinitely deep wounds. How can anything subject to decay be an object of worship? A mind obsessed with appearance wails upon seeing that which it adores begin to decay, while the spirit, which seeks an eternal beloved, also wails, saying: "I love not the things that set."

I do not want or desire separation, for I cannot endure it. Meetings followed immediately by separation are not worthy of thought or longing. Just as the disappearance of pleasure is painful, imagining it is also painful. The works of lovers (poetry on metaphorical love for the opposite sex) are lamentations caused by the pain that arises from imagining this disappearance. If you condensed their spirit, this lament would flow from each. The pain coming from such meetings and painful metaphorical loves causes my heart to cry out, like Abraham: "I love not the things that set."

If you desire permanence in this transient world, permanence is born out of self-annihilation. Annihilate your evil-commanding soul so that you may gain permanence. Free yourself of bad morals, the basis of worldly adoration, and realize self-annihilation. Sacrifice what is under your control in the way of the True Beloved. See the end of beings, which marks extinction. The way leading from this world to permanence passes through self-annihilation.

The human mind, absorbed in causality, laments the upheavals caused by the world's decay. The conscience, desiring true existence, wails like Abraham: "I love not the things that set." It severs the connection with metaphorical lovers and decaying beings, and attaches itself to the Truly Existent One, the Eternal Beloved.

O my base soul. This world and all beings are mortal. However, you may find two ways to the All-Permanent Being in each mortal thing, and may discern two glimpses or mysteries of the manifestations of the Undying Beloved's Grace - if you sacrifice your mortal being.

The act of bestowing is discerned, and

the All-Merciful's favor is perceived in each bounty. If you discern this act through what is bestowed, you will find the Bestower. Each work of the Eternally-Besought-of-All indicates the Names of the All-Majestic Maker, like a missive. If you understand the meaning through the inscription, the Names will lead you to the One called by those Names. If you can find the kernel, the essence, of these transient things, obtain it. Discard their meaningless shells into the flood of mortality. Every item that exists is a word of embodied meaning and shows many of the Names of the All-Majestic Maker. Since beings are words of Divine Power, understand their meanings and place them in your heart. Fearlessly cast the letters left without meaning into the wind of transience and forget about them.

The worldly mind, preoccupied with appearance and whose capital consists only of knowledge of the material world, cries out in bewilderment and frustration as its chains of thought end in nothingness and non-existence. It seeks a true way leading to truth. Since the heart has withdrawn from what sets and what is mortal and has abandoned the deceiving beloveds, and since the conscience has turned away from transitory beings, you, my wretched soul, must seek help in: "I love not the things that set," and be saved.

See how well Mawlānā Jāmi', who was intoxicated with the "wine" of love as if created from love, expressed it:

Want only One (the rest are not worth wanting);

Call One (the others will not help you);

Seek One (the others are not worth seeking);

See and follow One (the others are not seen all the time; they become invisible behind the veil of mortality);

Know One (knowledge other than that which adds to your knowledge of Him is useless);

Mention One (words not concerning Him are useless).

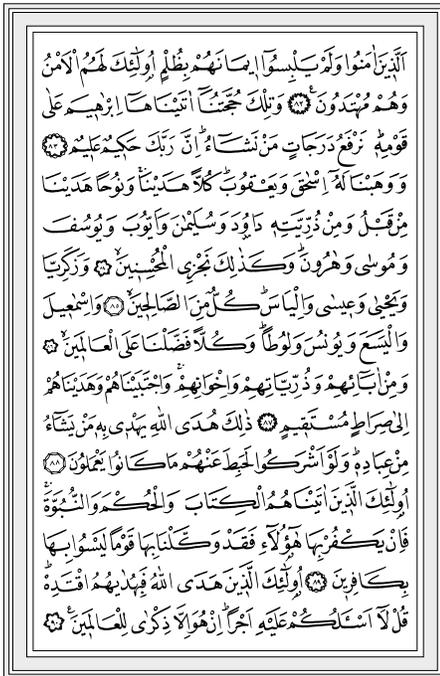
O Jāmi', I admit that you spoke the

truth. The True Beloved, the True Sought One, the True Desired One, and the True Object of Worship is He alone. In the mighty circle of remembering and reciting God's Names, this universe and its inhabitants declare, in various tongues and tones: "There is no deity but God," and testify to Divine Oneness. It salves the wound caused by those that set, and points to the Undying Beloved (*The Words*, "The 17<sup>th</sup> Word," 229–231).

18. This verse also hints at an important reality through a grammatical rule which is impossible to render in translation: The sun is a feminine word in Arabic; whereas the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, used a masculine pronoun when pointing to it. This means that his people, like almost all other polytheist peoples, considered their greatest deity as being male. It was pointed out in 4: 117, note 26, that whatever they may claim, in nearly all communities that reject Divine Religion in the establishment of their society, women are only objects exploited by men for their interest and tools used to satisfy their carnal desires. Men hold the sovereignty. This is because those who reject God's authority depend on and adore force and might; this is possessed and represented by men, rather than

women. Therefore a (supreme) god, in such a system, cannot be seen as being female.

19. The conclusion of the verse *sūrah* 3: 67, *He (Abraham) was never of those who associate partners with God*, removes a serious misunderstanding concerning the verses above. Unfortunately, some interpreters of the Qur'ān have misunderstood from the Prophet Abraham's mentioning a star, and then the moon, and then the sun, as his Lord, that he took these heavenly objects as Lord for a short time one after the other before being chosen as Prophet. However, the verses are explicit about the fact that he made a mental and spiritual journeying in the *malakūt* (the inner dimension of existence) to have certainty of faith, not faith simply, according to his rank as one near-stationed to God. In addition, He mentioned them as his Lord also to demonstrate to his people that none of the heavenly objects could be the Lord. He openly declared before he beheld the sun and said that it was his Lord: "Unless my Lord guided me, I would surely be among the people gone astray." If he had not yet found his true Lord – God Almighty, he would not have said: "Unless my Lord guided me." And the conclusion of the verse 3: 67 quoted above explicitly states that Abraham was never of the idolaters.



82. “Those who have believed and not obscured their faith with any wrongdoing (of which, associating partners with God is the most grave, unforgivable kind)<sup>20</sup> – they are the ones for whom there is true security, and they are rightly guided.”

83. That was Our argument which We granted to Abraham against his people. We raise in degrees whom We will. Your Lord is All-Wise (having many wise purposes for what He does), All-Knowing (whatever He does is based on His absolutely comprehensive Knowledge).

84. And later, We bestowed upon him (a son) Isaac and (a grandson) Jacob, and each of them We guided (and distinguished them with Prophethood). Earlier We had guided Noah (and distinguished him with Prophethood). And of Abraham’s descen-

dants (We guided and distinguished with Prophethood) David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward those devoted to doing good as if seeing God.

85. And Zachariah, John, Jesus and Elijah: every one of them was of the righteous.

86. And Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot: every one of them We favored above all other people.

87. And some from among their forefathers, and their descendants, and their brothers: We chose them and guided them to a straight path (which has characteristics particular to each according to his epoch).

88. That is God’s guidance, with which He guides whomever He wills of His servants.<sup>21</sup> And had they (the ones mentioned above) associated partners with God, then all that they did (of good and the recompense they had earned) would have gone to waste.

89. Those are the (illustrious) ones to whom We granted the Book and authority with sound, wise judgment, and Prophethood. Then if those (people of yours, O Messenger,) disbelieve in it (Our guidance which We have sent them with you), then certainly We entrust it to a people who are not disbelievers in it.

90. Those are the (illustrious) ones whom God guided. Follow, then, their guidance, and say (to your people): “I ask of you no wage for it (for conveying the Message); it is but a reminder (an admonition and advice) for all created, conscious beings (humankind and the jinn).”

20. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessing, explained that what is meant by wrongdoing in this verse is the association of partners with God. Literally meaning not putting a thing in its place, *ẓulm* (wrongdoing) has many degrees, the worst of which is unbelief and the association of partners with God. Denying the Existence of God or associating partners with Him without having a correct judgment of Him with His Attributes and acts is the greatest error one can ever commit in life, and causes darkness upon darkness in one's heart and mind. This darkness also envelops one's whole life and causes one to always remain in darkness in the grave and in the other world.

Associating partners with God is of various kinds and degrees. Ascribing divinity or lordship with Divine functions and absolute sovereignty in the heavens and the earth, including the human realm, to others is one of the gravest forms of associating partners with God; hypocrisy, ostentation and desiring others to hear of the good things one does are also forms of associating partners with Him, especially for people who are spiritually evolved. Not aiming to ob-

tain God's good pleasure in the thing one does in the name of the Religion or not doing it only because God wants it to be done, taking credit for one's abilities and accomplishments and feeling proud of them, and making use of the Religion for worldly purposes, such as acquiring wealth and positions and satisfying one's feeling of superiority – each of these is a kind of wrongdoing that obscures one's belief. For this reason, belief that is free from all such kinds of wrongdoing – associating partners with God – means true security for those who have it.

21. Even though Prophethood and being chosen are a special grace and favor of God which He bestows upon His servants as He wills, this does not mean that human free will has no part in it. Since God knew (beforehand) how those chosen people would act in the world, and in what direction they would use their free will, He determined and decreed for them accordingly. Like all other people, the Prophets are also tested in the world; their testing is more stringent, according to the degree of each. They are not a "privileged class" of human beings in God's sight. The second part of the verse corroborates this.



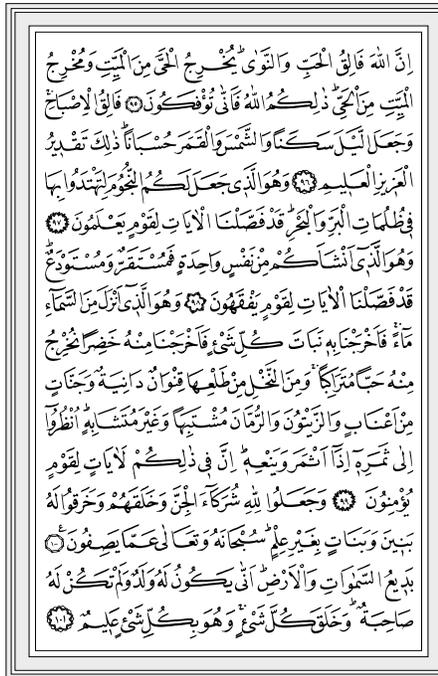
91. And they (some of the Jews) had no true judgment of God, such as His being God requires, when they say: “God has not sent anything down on any human being.” Say: “Then, who sent down the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for the people (you know), and which you put into, and treat as, mere leaves of paper to make show of, while you conceal much of it, and you have been taught (by it) what neither you knew nor your forefathers?” Say: “God (sent it down),” and then leave them to their game of plunging into vanities.

92. And this (the Qur’an) is a (Divine) Book that We send down – blessed and full of blessing, confirming (the Divine authorship of) whatever was revealed before it – so that you may warn (the people of) the Mother of Cities (Makkah) and

those around it. Those who believe in the Hereafter do believe in it; and they are ever mindful guardians of their Prayers.

93. Who is more in wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God, or says, “I receive Revelation from God,” when nothing has been revealed to him, and he who claims, “I will produce the like of what God has sent down”? If you could but see how it will be when those wrongdoers find themselves in the agonies of death when the angels (appointed to take their souls), stretching forth their hands (say): “Yield up your souls! Today you will be recompensed with the punishment of ignominy for having continuously and persistently spoken about God other than the truth, and in persistent arrogance scorned His Revelations.”

94. (God says:) “Now assuredly you (having died and been buried alone) have come to us quite alone, as We created you in the first instance; and you have left behind all that We bestowed upon you (in the world). And We do not see with you any of those “intercessors” (whom you associated with God as partners, and) of whom you supposed that they had shares in you (i.e. authority to order your life in certain ways). Indeed, all the bonds between you and them have now been severed, and all that you supposed (to be God’s partners in your affairs) has failed you.



95. God is He Who splits the grain and the fruit-stone (so that they germinate by His command). He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is One Who brings forth the dead from the living; such is God: how then are you turned away from the truth and make false claims?<sup>22</sup>

96. He it is Who splits the dawn (from the darkness of night). He has made the night for repose, and the sun and the moon a means for reckoning (the divisions of time). This is the ordaining of the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Knowing.

97. He it is Who has made for you the stars (in their present conditions and positions) so that you may find your way by them in the darkness of the land and the sea. Assuredly We have set out in detail the signs and proofs (of the truth) for a people seeking knowledge.

98. He it is Who developed you from a single human self, and has appointed (in each station of your journeying from mother's womb to eternal life) for each of you a lodging-place where, and time-limit during which, you will stay and then be transferred. We have certainly set out in detail the signs and proofs (of the truth) for a people seeking to attain profound understanding.

99. He it is Who sends down water from the sky, and therewith We bring forth vegetation of every kind (from their seeds under the soil), and then from it We bring forth a lively shoot, from which We bring forth close-packed and compounded ears of grain, and from the palm-tree – from the spathe of it – dates thick-clustered hanging (ready to the hand), and gardens of vines, and the olive tree, and the pomegranate: alike (in the fundamentals of life and growth) and diverse (in structure,

look, taste, and smell). Look at their fruit, when they begin to fruit and as they ripen. Surely in that there are signs for those who will believe and who will deepen in faith (as they see new signs).

100. Yet they associate the jinn as partners with God, although He created them, and, devoid of any knowledge, they invent for Him sons and daughters. All-Glorified is He, and absolutely Exalted above what they attribute (to Him).

101. The Originator of the heavens and the earth with nothing before Him to imitate. How can He have a child, when there is for Him no consort; and He has created all things (so as the Eternal, self-existent Creator it is inconceivable for Him to have a consort and children)? And He has full knowledge of everything.

22. Life and death form a cycle. Death is an inevitable end that awaits every living being; it is a reality more manifest than life. For this reason, the verse uses the simple present tense with respect to God's bringing forth the living from the dead, which denotes repetition and renewal; it uses the present participle and noun clause with respect to His bringing forth the dead from the living, which denotes stability and constancy.

The verse also points out that living beings are in a state of death before they are brought to life. This is what the verse *How can you disbelieve in God, seeing that you were dead* (sūrah 2: 28), indicates. By being brought to the worldly life, living beings attain the first life or, in other words, they are raised to life while they are dead. So life in every phase is the result of death and death is the foundation of life. Water, carbon dioxide, hydrogen and inorganic salts in soil change into organic substances forming the life-substance in plants and animals by means of sunlight, vegetation, and certain bacteria. Inorganic elements die in plants, and in animal and

human bodies, and become vegetable, animal and human life respectively, and plants die in animal and human bodies to become animal and human life, and animals whose flesh is edible by human beings die in human bodies to become part of human life. This leads one to understand that human beings falling into soil like seed will wake up into a higher rank of life in another world.

Bringing forth the living from the dead and bringing forth the dead from the living is also observed in the life of the earth in the cycles of day and night, and spring and winter, and in the lives of individuals and communities. Individuals frequently change spiritual states and are guided to belief from unbelief or turn to unbelief from belief. Small seed-like communities grow into great states and civilizations, which, in time, are gradually destroyed. It is God Who causes all these to happen and the events in which human free will has a part also happen according to the (psychological, sociological, and historical) laws that God has established. Nevertheless, most people waste away in the valleys of misguidance despite this manifest reality.

102. Such is God, your Lord; there is no deity but He, the Creator of all things; therefore worship Him alone. He holds all things in His care and control.

103. Eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends all eyes. He is the All-Subtle (penetrating everything no matter how small), the All-Aware.<sup>23</sup>

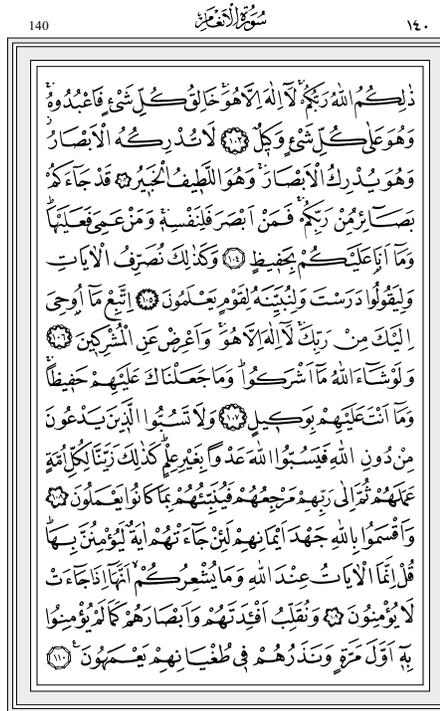
104. Lights of discernment and insight have come to you from your Lord. Whoever therefore (by choosing to open the eye of his heart and place his eyes in its service) discerns, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to be blind (to the truth), does so to his own harm. And (O Messenger, say to them): "I am not a keeper and watcher over you."

105. Thus do We set out the signs of the truth and Revelations in diverse ways, so that they (who choose blindness) say, "You have learned it (from somebody else);" this We do in order that We may make it (the truth, the Qur'an) clear to a people seeking knowledge.

106. Follow (O Messenger) what has been revealed to you from your Lord; there is no deity but He; and withdraw from those who associate partners with God (do not care what they say and do).

107. Yet if God had so willed (and not enabled their free choice), they would not have associated partners with Him, (so do not torment yourself to death with grief because they do not believe). And We have not made you a keeper over them, and you are not one charged with care and control of them.

108. And do not (O believers) revile the things or beings that they have, apart from God, deified and invoke, lest (if you do so) they attempt to revile God out of spite and in ignorance. Thus have We made their deeds seem fair to every people;<sup>24</sup> then to their (true) Lord is the return of all of them, and He will make them understand



what they were doing (and call them to account for it).

109. They swear by God with their most solemn oaths that if a miracle (of the kind they desire) is shown to them, they will believe in it (and, therefore, in the Message). Say: "Miracles are in God's power alone (His is the sole authority to produce them or not)." (O believers, who think that if such a miracle were produced, the unbelievers would believe:) Are you not aware that even if such a miracle were shown to them, they would not believe?

110. Just as they did not believe in it (the Qur'an) before (despite many evidences sufficient to convince one who really means to believe), and (because of their attitudes preventing them from belief,) We confound their hearts and eyes, and leave them blindly wandering in their rebellion.

23. Based on this verse, the Mu'tazilah, the Shī'ah scholars, and some others who trust exclusively in their reason have claimed that God will not be seen in the Hereafter. Yet, this verse states that God is not a 'body' whom people are able to see, to comprehend, with their eyes, and relates God's comprehending all eyes not to His being the All-Seeing (*Al-Basīr*) but to His being the All-Subtle penetrating everything, no matter how small (*Al-Laṭīf*), and to His being the All-Aware (*Al-Khabīr*). So God is beyond all physical conceptions, and people can only "see" Him, have knowledge of Him, with the "eye of the heart," or with insight and through knowledge.

Secondly, it is clear that seeing in the Hereafter will not be the same as seeing here in this world. It is not the eyes which see, even in this world, and how we see is still not fully understood by science. Seeing means comprehending something with its outer dimensions, and it is neither the eyes nor the brain which comprehends this. Eyes are totally blind to the inner dimension of existence. Yet, eyes can serve for penetrating the inner dimension of existence if the spirit or heart, which is what truly "sees,"

can be refined and acquire sufficient keenness. However, when people die, the veil preventing them from seeing the metaphysical dimension of existence is removed and people will acquire in the Hereafter a keen sight and the ability to penetrate beyond the obvious. Believers will observe God beyond all qualitative and quantitative conceptions with their eyes, which will be equipped with the required ability, according to the conditions of the Hereafter; they will observe God to the extent of their insight and the knowledge of Him that they have obtained in this world, and as a reward of this insight and knowledge. However, this does mean that they will comprehend or encompass God with their eyes. God, being all infinite, is exalted above comprehension or encompassing.

As with the verse, *Indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, it is rather the hearts in the breasts that are blind* (sūrah 22: 46), the following verse illustrates the same truth dealt with here.

24. That is, it is in the nature of humans to see their beliefs and deeds as good, even as the best and the only true ones.

وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَائِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْفَى وَحَشَرْنَا  
 عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَيُبَايِعُوا مَا كُنَّا نُؤْمِنُ بِهَا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ  
 وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا  
 سَيَّئًا طِينًا لَإِنْسٍ وَالْجِنَّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ  
 غُرُورًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا قَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ  
 ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَلِيَضْحَكُوا إِلَيْهِ أَفْئِدَةُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
 وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوا مَا هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ  
 آيَاتِنَا حِكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا  
 وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْتَمِرُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
 بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا يَكْفُرُونَ مِنَ الْمُنزَّلِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى رَبِّكَ  
 صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ  
 ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَإِنْ تُطِيعْ أَكْثَرِ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
 إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ  
 هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُنْتَهِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَكُلُوا  
 مِمَّا كَرِهَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ يَكُنْتُمْ بآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

111. Even if We were to send down angels to them (whenever they wished it), and the dead were to speak to them, and We were to assemble before them, face to face, all the creatures (to bear witness to the truth of the Message you bring), they would still not believe, unless God so willed (and came to their aid out of His pure grace); but most of them are ignorant (they pursue worldly pleasures, completely unaware of faith and mindless of their own selves).

112. And thus it is that (as a dimension of human earthly life taking place according to Our eternal Will, embracing human free will, and according to the wisdom in sending the Religion) We have set against every Prophet a hostile opposition from among the satans of humankind and the jinn, whispering and suggesting to one another specious words, by way of delusion. Yet had your Lord willed (and compelled everybody to behave in the way He wills), they would not do it. So leave them alone with what they have been fabricating.

113. And the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter incline towards it (their deluding speech) and take pleasure in it, and they continue (perpetrating the evils, and) earning what (the sin) they have long been earning.

114. (Say to them, O Messenger:) "What! shall I seek other than God for judge (to settle the matters between you and me), when it is He Who has sent down to you this (unique, most perfect) Book (in which truth and falsehood, right and wrong are) fully distinguished?" (The scholars among) those to whom We gave the Book before know that it is one being sent down in parts in truth by your Lord. So never be among the doubters (concerning the truth of your way).

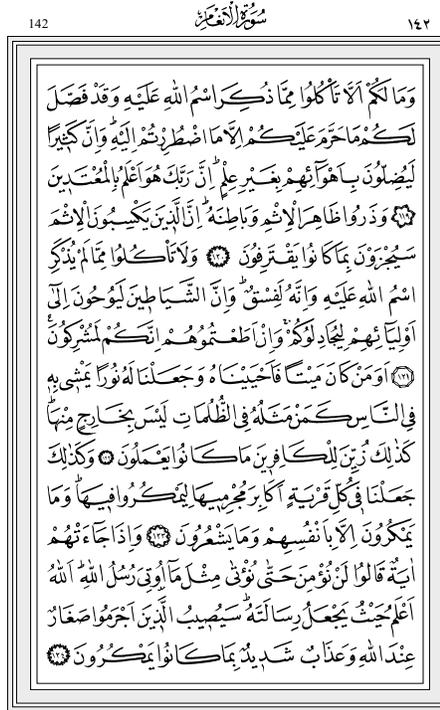
115. The Word of your Lord (which He

sent down in parts in different periods considering the conditions of each period) is perfected (with the Qur'ān) as the embodiment of truth (with respect to the essentials of faith, principles of worship and good conduct, the rules to govern human life, and all the tidings it gives considering the past and future including the Hereafter), and of justice (regarding all the commandments it contains): there is no altering of His words (the laws He has established for life and the operation of the universe; attempting to interfere with them will bring about great disasters, so no one must ever attempt to change His commandments, which are contained in the Book). He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Who knows every need of every creature, and every requirement of every age, just as He knows how you respond to His commandments).

**116.** And if you pay heed to the majority of those on the earth, they will lead you astray from God's way. They follow only conjecture (not knowledge), and they themselves do nothing but make guesses (they pronounce and act according to their fancies, selfish interests, and personal value judgments).

**117.** Indeed your Lord is He Who knows best who goes astray from His way, and He knows best (those who are) the rightly-guided.

**118.** Eat, then, of (the flesh of) that over which God's Name has been pronounced, if you are sincere believers in His Revelations.



119. And why should you not eat of (the flesh of) that over which God's Name has been pronounced, seeing that He has clearly spelled out to you what He has made unlawful to you unless you are constrained to it by dire necessity?<sup>25</sup> But, indeed many people lead others astray, driven by their lusts and fancies, without any knowledge (from God). Indeed your Lord is He Who knows best those who exceed the bounds.

120. Abstain from sinning, whether done in public or secret, (and the intentions and attitudes that accompany either). Indeed, those who earn sin (and record it to their account) will be recompensed for what they have (perpetrated and) earned.

121. And do not eat of that which is slaughtered in the name of other than God and over which God's Name has not been pronounced (at the time of its slaughtering), for that is indeed a transgression. And the satans do whisper and make suggestions to their confidants to contend with you. If you obey them, you are indeed those who associate partners with God.<sup>26</sup>

122. Is he who was dead (in spirit), and We raised him to life and set for him a light by which he moves (without any

deviancy) among people, (is then he) like the one who is as one lost in depths of darkness, from which he cannot get out? (But) thus it is: to the unbelievers are the things they have been doing decked out to be appealing.

123. And in that way have We set up in every township as leaders its most prominent criminals so that they scheme (against the believers). But they scheme only against their own selves – and they do not perceive it.

124. When a Revelation is conveyed to them, they say: "We will not believe unless we are given the like of what God's Messengers were given." God knows best upon whom to place His Message. Soon will an abasement from God's Presence befall these criminals and a severe punishment for their scheming.

25. In order to emphasize the sensitivity which people should have in eating and drinking, the Qur'ān refers to these activities after it has stressed the importance of accepting and obeying God's commandments. This is because people are easily lost to their carnal desires and act carelessly in the matter of eating and drinking. Also, many nations have imposed on themselves superfluous religious rules in this matter. If left to their own judgment, every people, or those with authority, will make some things lawful and others unlawful, according to their caprices and own interests. In addition, eating and drinking have an important place in one's personal, social, and spiritual life.

26. As in the part of verse 112 above, *We have set against every Prophet a hostile opposition from among the satans of humankind and the jinn, whispering and suggesting to one another specious words, by way of delusion*, in this verse, too, the Qur'ān refers to satans and their whispering and suggestions to their confidants. This reference is especially significant on two points and contains an important warning to the believers of every age:

There has always been, and will always be, a group composed of the satans of the jinn and some people who are opposed to Islam and its message being conveyed; these people are open to the suggestions of the satans, and they have been like Satan in their opposition to Islam and in the evils that they have committed. The struggle on the earth is between humankind and Satan, and some people are deluded by Satan and his agents, unfortunately becoming like Satan in their enmity towards God and His Religion.

This group frequently holds meetings in secret places (also see *sūrah* 2: 14) and decides on new methods and ways to struggle against Islam and Muslims, and suggests them to the men they employ in this struggle. What Muslims must do is to know such people well, be on the alert against their tricks and intrigues, and never obey them. Such people will always try to make Muslims to fall back and turn away from Islam, and those who make "idols" out of their carnal desires, personal interests, fondness for posts and fame, ostentation, some systems or ideologies, and certain other people will follow and obey them. Their doing so means associating partners with God.

125. Thus, whomever God wills to guide, He expands his breast to Islam, and whomever He wills to lead astray, He causes his breast to become tight and constricted, as if he were climbing towards the heaven.<sup>27</sup> Thus, God lays ignominy upon those who do not believe (despite many signs and evidences).

126. And this (the way of Islam) is the Straight Path of your Lord. We have assuredly set out in detail the signs (of the right and wrong ways) for a people who reflect and are mindful.

127. For them is the Abode of Peace with their Lord (where they will enjoy perfect bliss, peace, and safety), and He is their Guardian because of what they have been doing.

128. On the Day when He will raise to life and gather them (the jinn and humankind, believers and unbelievers) all together, (He says): "O you assembly of the jinn! You have seduced a good many of humankind (and included them in your company)."

Their closest fellows from among humankind will (confess and) say: "Our Lord! We enjoyed one another (in self-interested fellowship, serving one another's selfish ends), and now we have reached the end of our term that You appointed for us." He (God) will say: "The Fire is now your dwelling to abide therein – God decrees however He wills." Indeed your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing (Whose every decree and act are based on absolute wisdom and knowledge).

129. In this manner, We cause the wrongdoers to befriend and help one another (with seduction and sinning) because of what they are engaged in earning.

130. "O assembly of the jinn and human-

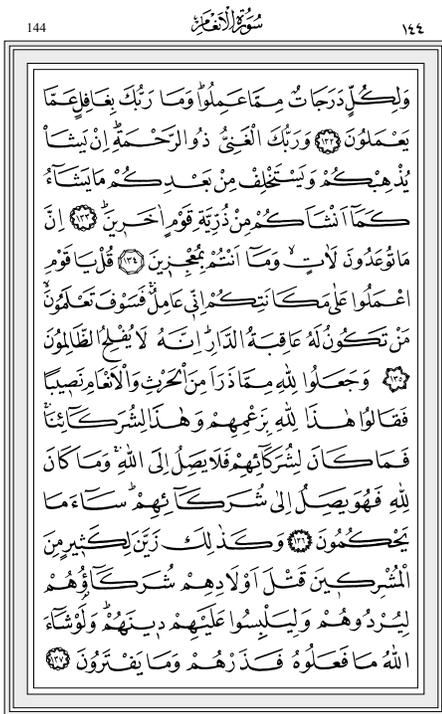
فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا مِمَّا تَصْعَدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَهَذَا صِرَاطٌ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا آيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ هُمْ دَارَ السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَيْلُهُمْ مِمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَنْهُمْ جِوْشَاءَ يَمْشُرُ الَّذِينَ قَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنَّا مِن الْإِنسِ وَقَالَ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنسِ إِنَّا اسْتَمْتَعْنَا بِبَعْضِنَا بَعْضًا وَبَلَّغْنَا آجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَلْتُمْ لَنَا قَالُوا نَشَاءُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَجَعَلْنَا لِلْإِنسِ الْآيَاتِ اللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْحِكْمَ عَلَيْهِ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُوحِي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ يَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ وَاللَّيْنِ وَالْإِنسِ أَلْسِنَهُمْ لِيَلْقُوا رَسُولَكُمْ وَيَكْفُفُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِنَا وَعَازَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَنَسُوا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ ذَٰلِكَ أَرْسَالُ رَبِّكَ مُهْلِكِ الْقُرَىٰ يَظُنُّ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾

kind! Did there never come to you Messengers from among yourselves, relating to you My signs and Revelations, and warning you of encountering this Day of yours?" They say: "We bear witness against ourselves." The life of the world had deluded them, and (just as their speeches and actions in the world testified to their unbelief, so) they have borne witness against themselves that they were unbelievers.

131. Clearly it is not the way of your Lord that He would destroy lands unjustly without their people being warned (beforehand of the consequence of their way of life) and, therefore, unmindful (of the distinctions between right and wrong, truth and falsehood).

27. It is possible to see here a Qur'anic miracle concerning scientific developments. As we now know, as we ascend a mountain, or go up in the air, the amount of oxygen diminishes, the air pressure decreases, and breathing becomes impossible without special equipment.

The Qur'an describes the state of one who feels depressed in the face of Islam and insists on not believing in it, despite many signs and all the evidence that they see, in the terms of a physical fact, thus alluding to a scientific fact which would be discovered centuries later.



132. For everyone, there are (different) ranks according to what they have done (of right and wrong). Your Lord is not unmindful of what they do.<sup>28</sup>

133. Your Lord, having boundless, all-encompassing mercy, is the All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (with no need of any kind, including His servants' belief and worship). If He so wills, He can put you away and cause whom He wills to succeed you, just as He produced you from the seed of another people.

28. For everyone there are (different) ranks according to what they have done (of right and wrong), means that people are not of the same rank. People differ in rank from one another according to whether they are believers, unbelievers, hypocrites, believers but sinful, or unbelievers who are actively fighting against belief and truth,

134. What you have been promised (and warned of, concerning your future and the Hereafter), is indeed bound to happen, and you have no power at all to frustrate it.

135. Say: "O my people! Do all that lies within your power, indeed I (too) am at work (doing my task). So, in time, you will come to know to whom the ultimate abode of happiness will belong. Indeed the wrongdoers do not prosper and attain their goals.

136. They assign to God, of the produce and cattle that He has created, a portion, and they say: "This is God's" – so they assert – "and this (the rest) is for our associate-deities." Then (acting in what they deem to their own interest), what is assigned for their "associate-deities" does not reach God, while what is assigned for God reaches their "associate-deities." How evil is what they ordain as laws (and how badly they enforce them)!

137. And, in the way they follow, their associate-deities (their association of partners with God or their idol-worshipping, and the satans of the jinn and humankind they obey,) deck out the killing of their children to be appealing to many among those who associate partners with God, so as to bring them to ruin and confound them in their religion. If God had so willed (if He had not decreed freedom of will to humankind, thus compelling them to act in a particular way like other beings), they would not be doing all this. So, leave them alone with what they have been fabricating.

etc. This also means that not everybody will have the same recompense for the same actions. The recompense for an action differs according to how it is done, the intention of doing it, the degree of sincerity or insincerity in doing it, the time when and the conditions where it is done, the care shown in doing it, and similar other factors.

وَقَالُوا هَذِهِ أَمْثَلُ الَّذِي أَجْعَلُ لَهَا لَئِيْلًا مِّنْ  
 نَّشَأِ بَرْعِهِمْ وَأَنْتَ مُخْتَلِفٌ قَلْبًا وَمِثْلًا لِّمَا  
 لَا يَذْكُرُونَ أَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ كَيْدٌ سَاجِدٌ  
 كَمَا نُوَاقِفُونَ ۖ وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَذِهِ الْأَنْعَامِ  
 خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُورِنَا وَمُحْرَمُونَ عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَإِن يَكُنْ  
 مِثْلَهُ فَأَهْبَهُ فَبِهِمْ شُرَكَاءُ سَاجِدٌ بِهِمْ وَضَعَهُمُ  
 اللَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ۖ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا  
 أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
 افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ۗ  
 وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوسَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوسَاتٍ  
 وَالْفَحْلَ وَالرِّزْقَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكَلُهُ وَالرِّزْقُونَ وَالرِّمَاطَ  
 مَمْتَسًا ۗ وَغَيْرَ مَمْتَسًا ۗ كَلِمَاتٌ لِّمَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 حَقٌّ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِمْ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا اللَّهَ لَا يَجِدُ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۗ  
 وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةٌ وَفَرَسَاتٌ لِّكُلِّ مَسَارِقٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ  
 وَلَاتُتَّبَعُوا حَطُّوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ۗ

138. (Putting some of the produce and cattle to one side,) they say: “These animals and crops are taboo; none can eat of them save those whom we will – so they assert – and there are cattle whose backs they declare are forbidden (to bear loads), and cattle over which they do not pronounce God’s Name. This (their attributing these customs to God) is a lie against Him. He will soon recompense them for all that they fabricate in attribution to God.<sup>29</sup>

139. They also say (concerning certain other cattle they consecrate): “All that is in the wombs of these cattle is (if they are born alive) exclusively for our males and is unlawful for our wives. If it (the newborn) is born dead or dies soon after birth, all of them (men and women) may share therein.” He will soon recompense them for their attributing (these rules falsely to Him). Surely He is All-Wise (in Whose every act and commandment are many instances of wisdom), All-Knowing (whose every act is based on absolute knowledge).<sup>30</sup>

140. Assuredly those are lost who, in folly and without knowledge, kill their children (either in the wombs of their mothers or after birth), and make unlawful (the lawful and pure, wholesome things) that God has provided them as sustenance, falsely attributing that to God. Assuredly they have gone astray, and have never been able to find the right way.

141. (Ever providing you with lawful, pure, and wholesome food), He it is Who produces gardens (and vineyards, and orchards) trellised and untrellised, and date-palms,

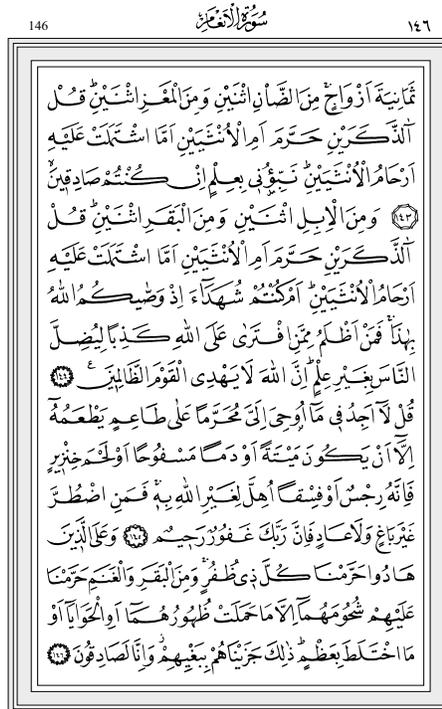
and crops varying in taste, and olives, and pomegranates, resembling one another and yet so different. Eat of their fruits when they come to fruition, and give (to the poor and the needy) the due thereof on harvest day. And do not be wasteful (by over-eating or other unnecessary consumption, or by giving to others so much as to leave in need those whose maintenance is your responsibility); indeed He does not love the wasteful.

142. And of the cattle (He has created) some for carrying loads, and some for the sake of their flesh, and skins and fur. Consume from what God has provided for you as sustenance, and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan (by laying down rules other than those of God, and adopting ways other than God’s); surely he is a manifest enemy to you.

29. Just as the recompense or punishment mentioned can come in the Hereafter, it may also come in this world. This can be understood from the fact that the verse uses a tense that indicates the near future. Those who make false attributions to God or fabrications may lose their dominion, positions, wealth, or even their lives, or they may be subject to certain natural-seeming calamities or their system may be replaced by a new one. Muslims have been suffering the same punishment for their

neglect in practicing Islam and for not paying due respect to it.

30. For a sound state, based on law and which is truly accepted by its people, the principles of wisdom, the laws of the government, the rules of right, and the directives of power should all be in accord with, and support, one another. Otherwise, no one thing could be influential on the people by itself, and it would not be possible to talk of a state of law that is approved of by people, nor of solidarity between them.



143. Eight in pairs of cattle: two of sheep, two of goats. Say (to them, O Messenger): “Is it the two males that God has made unlawful or the two females, or what the wombs of the two females may contain? Inform me about this with sound, authoritative knowledge, if you are truthful (in your claim that God has made them unlawful).”

144. And, likewise, of camels there are two, and of oxen there are two. Say: “Is it the two males that God has made unlawful or the two females, or what the wombs of the two females may contain? Or were you present there to witness when God laid down this (the commandment you attribute to Him) for you?” Who is more in wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God, and thus leads people astray without sound, authoritative knowledge? Indeed, God does not guide wrongdoing people (to the truth and the attainment of their goals).

145. Say (O Messenger): “I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything made unlawful to one who would eat except it be carrion or blood outpoured (not that which is left in the veins of such organs as the liver and spleen), or the flesh

of swine, which is loathsome and unclean, or that which is profane, having been slaughtered in the name of other than God (or without pronouncing God’s Name over it).<sup>31</sup> Yet whoever is constrained by dire necessity (to eat thereof), provided he does not covet nor exceed the bounds (of the necessity): (no sin shall be on him). Your Lord is indeed All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

146. And for those who are Jews, We have made unlawful all beasts with claws, and of oxen and sheep We have made unlawful for them their fat, save that which is in their backs or entrails, or that which is mixed with the bone. Thus did We recompense them for their continuous rebellion.<sup>32</sup> And We are indeed true (in all Our decrees and deeds).

31. When this verse is considered alongside those of *sūrah* 2: 173; *sūrah* 5: 3, and *sūrah* 16: 115, it will be seen that they elucidate each other, and there are no differences between them in declaring the things that are unlawful to eat. For example, the flesh of the animals that is mentioned in *sūrah* 5: 3, along with their ways of dying or being killed that are forbidden, is included in carrion.

The animals or kinds of meat that are forbidden are not only these. The forbidden things mentioned in these two verses pertain only to domestic animals – sheep and cattle. Based on the Revelation, God’s Messenger informed us of the other animals that we are forbidden to eat. They can be found in the relevant books of Islamic law. Also see *sūrah* 22: 30, note 9.

32. The Qur’an is a miracle of eloquence throughout. Seeing that this verse begins with the phrase, “to those who are (had become) Jews,” it can be understood that the commandment mentioned was in the nature of a recompense. For the Jews mentioned deviated from their way and made several things unlawful for themselves, and as a punishment, God allowed these to remain unlawful. (See also *sūrah* 4: 160; *sūrah* 3: 93). These include birds with claws, such as the ostrich, seagull and water-hen, and also the fat of oxen and sheep. Prohibitions of these kinds have been interpolated among the injunctions of the Torah (See *Leviticus*, 3: 17, 22–3; 11: 16–18; *Deuteronomy*, 14: 14–16). This point can be considered as being the same as that which was explained in note 26 above.

147. Then, if they still deny you (O Messenger), say to them: “Your Lord (Who creates, nourishes, and provides you,) has an all-embracing mercy (and so does not immediately punish you for your acts of insolence but gives you respite so that you may repent and ask Him for forgiveness). However, (if you do not mend your ways, know that) His punishment cannot be averted from disbelieving criminals.

148. Those who persist in associating partners with God will say: “Had God willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have associated partners with Him, nor would we have declared anything (which God has made lawful) unlawful.” Even so did those who lived before them deny (their Prophets with similar false excuses) until they tasted Our mighty punishment. Say (to them): “Do you have any sound, authoritative knowledge (to support your claim)? (If you have,) then bring it out for us! In fact, you follow only conjecture, and you yourselves are only making false surmises (you pronounce judgments and act only according to your fancies, interests and personal value judgments).”

149. Say: “(As against what you argue) God’s is the final, conclusive argument. And had He so willed (and compelled you act in a certain way, rather than letting you associate partners with Him and make unlawful what He has made lawful), He would have guided you all together to the truth.”<sup>33</sup>

150. Say: “Bring forward your witnesses who could testify that God has made unlawful (what you claim to be forbidden.)” Then, if they bear witness (falsely), do not bear witness with them, and do not follow the lusts and fancies of those who deny Our signs and Revelations, who do

فَإِنْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ  
عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ  
اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَمَلْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ  
كَلَّمَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ نَأْتُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا عَلَّمْنَا  
مِنْ عِلْمٍ فَتَمَيَّزُوا لَنَا إِنْ تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا  
تَخْرُمُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَيْتُكُمْ  
أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ لَمْ يَشْهَدُوا كُمْ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ  
اللَّهُ حَسْرَةً هَذَا وَإِنْ شِئْتُمْ فَلَا تَشْهَدُ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا  
تَسْمَعُ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ  
بِالْآخِرَةِ وَهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ إِلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَلْهَمَ اللَّهُ لِقَابَ  
رَبِّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلا تَشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِأَلْوَالِيهِ  
إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ  
نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْقَوْلَ إِحْسَانًا  
ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ  
اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ وَضَعَتْ لَكُمْ لَعْنَتَكُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

not believe in the Hereafter, and who (as the main source of their unbelief in other essentials of faith) ascribe equals to their Lord.<sup>34</sup>

151. Say: “Come, let me recite what your Lord has made unlawful for you: that you associate nothing with Him; and (do not offend against but, rather) treat your parents in the best way possible; and that you do not kill your children for fear of poverty – it is We Who provide for you as well as for them; and that you do not draw near to any shameful thing (like adultery, fornication, and homosexuality), whether committed openly or secretly; and that you do not kill any soul, which God has made sacred and forbidden, except in just cause. All this He has enjoined upon you, that you may reason (and so believe, know right from wrong, and follow His way).

33. God presents signs and evidence of the truth so clearly that human reason and conscience cannot help but confess the truth of the essentials of faith, in particular that of God's Existence and Unity, but He never compels people to believe. He leaves the choice to believe or not to believe up to human free will.

34. Each essential of faith demands the existence of the others. One who believes in God should believe in Messengership, for Divine Lordship requires Messengership to make Itself known and to convey Its demands to conscious beings. Messengership cannot be conceived of without Books, which cannot be thought of without the mediation of angels which bring them to the Messengers. The Divine Names, such as the All-Compassionate, the Lord (One Who creates, sustains, and brings up), the All-Just, the All-Munificent, the All-Generous, the All-Gracious, the All-Beautiful, and the All-Recording and Preserving require the Hereafter. For absolute beauty and perfection are loved. The One Who creates all-beautifully and Who does best whatever He does, makes Himself known and loved more perfectly in the eternal world, not in this fleeting world where His beauties are manifested behind many veils. This perfect Tree of Creation, which has been created in order to yield humanity as its final fruit, cannot be confined to this transient life, for otherwise many things in it would be in vain and a waste, whereas God is absolutely free from doing anything in vain. We see that in the world full justice cannot be established

in many cases – oppressors die without suffering the necessary punishment, with many oppressed people leaving the world without having their rights restored. Yet God is absolutely Just, and this requires absolute justice, which in turn demands another world where it will be realized. The seeds of plants and trees are a way for us to see that everything is recorded, as within them is encapsulated the whole life-history of the plants and trees; human memory also shows us that everything is recorded. Human beings have not been sent to this world without purpose, and they have not been left to their own devices. The faculties with which they have been equipped, such as reason, spirit, will-power, and the senses and feelings, demonstrate that humanity has an important duty in life. This is why all the deeds and sayings of humanity are recorded along with the intentions and the degree of sincerity in performing the action and in saying it; the consequences of these will become apparent in another, eternal world. Like all these, the perfect order and magnificent accord in the universe display an all-encompassing knowledge and a perfect plan made by that knowledge. Every thing or being is clothed with a body particular to itself, which is appropriate to its duties or functions in life. In addition, almost every human being has a dream of some future events. All these show that there is a Divine determination, which we call Destiny. To conclude, belief in God requires other essentials of faith, and these require one another.

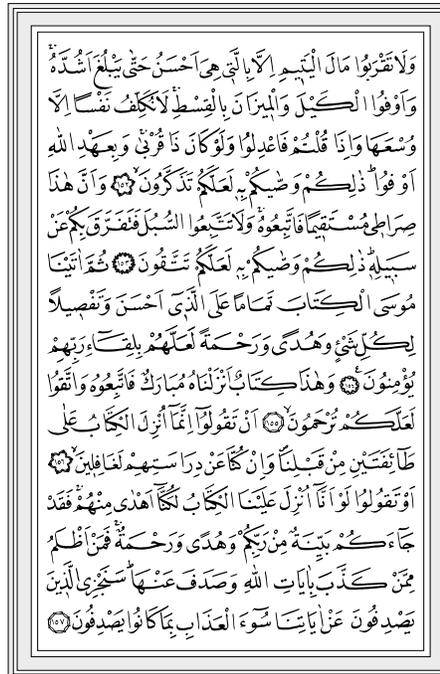
152. “And do not draw near to the property of the orphan except in the best way (such as to improve and increase it) until he comes of age. Weigh and balance with full measure and equity.” We do not burden any soul beyond its capacity. “And when you speak, be just, even though it be against one near of kin; and fulfill God’s covenant (and the covenants you make with one another in God’s Name). All this He has enjoined upon you, that you may reflect and be mindful.

153. “This is my straight path, so follow it, and do not follow other paths, lest they scatter you from His Path. This He has enjoined upon you, that you keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety to deserve His protection.”

154. And once again: We gave Moses the Book, completing Our favor upon those devoted to doing good deeds in the awareness that God sees them, and detailing everything (concerning truth and falsehood, and right and wrong), and as a guidance and mercy, that they may have ever-deepening faith in the (final) meeting with their Lord.

155. And likewise, this (Qur’ān) is a Book We have sent down, blessed and giving blessing; so follow it, and keep from disobedience to it, that you may be shown mercy (to be granted a virtuous life in this world and eternal happiness in the Hereafter).

156. (We have sent it down) lest you should say (as an excuse), “The Book was sent down only on the two groups of peo-

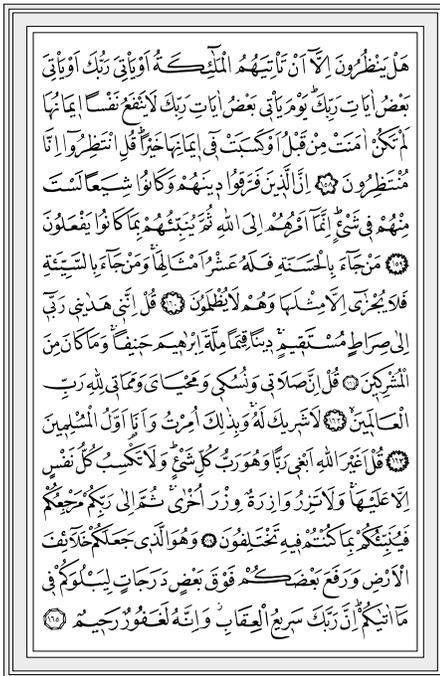


ple before us and indeed we were unaware of what they were taught by it.”

157. Or lest you should say, “Had the Book been sent down on us, we would surely have been more rightly guided than they are.” Now there has come to you a manifest proof from your Lord, and a guidance, and a mercy.<sup>35</sup> Who, then, is more in wrong than he who denies God’s Revelations and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our Revelations with an evil punishment for turning away.

35. It is very interesting that in verse 154 above, God Almighty mentions the Book sent to Moses, upon him be peace, as a Book given as a guidance and a mercy. That is, that Book functioned as a guidance and mercy, and being a guidance and mercy was an attribute of

it. But He mentions the Qur’ān as the Book which itself is a guidance and mercy. That is, guidance and mercy are not merely attributes of the Qur’ān; rather, the Qur’ān is guidance, in and of itself, and it is a mercy, in and of itself.



158. Do they wait only for the angels to come to them (to take their souls or bring them a disaster), or for your Lord to judge them (and bring forth Hell for them), or for some clear signs of your Lord to appear (such as rocks pouring down on them, which they want you to show them, or signs signaling the final destruction of the world)? When some clear signs of your Lord appear, believing will be of no avail to anyone who did not believe before, or who has earned no good through his belief. Say (to them, O Messenger): “Wait on; we, too, are waiting!”

159. Those who have made divisions in their Religion (whereas they must accept it in its totality), and have been divided into different parties – you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with God, and then He will make them understand what they were doing, (and call them to account).

160. Whoever comes to God with a good deed will have ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed will be recompensed with only the like of it; and they will not be wronged.

161. Say: “Surely my Lord has guided me to a Straight Path, being an upright Religion leading to prosperity (in both worlds), the way of Abraham based on pure faith (free from unbelief, associating partners with God and hypocrisy). He was never of those associating partners with God.”

162. Say: “My Prayer, and all my (other) acts and forms of devotion and worship, and my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of the worlds.

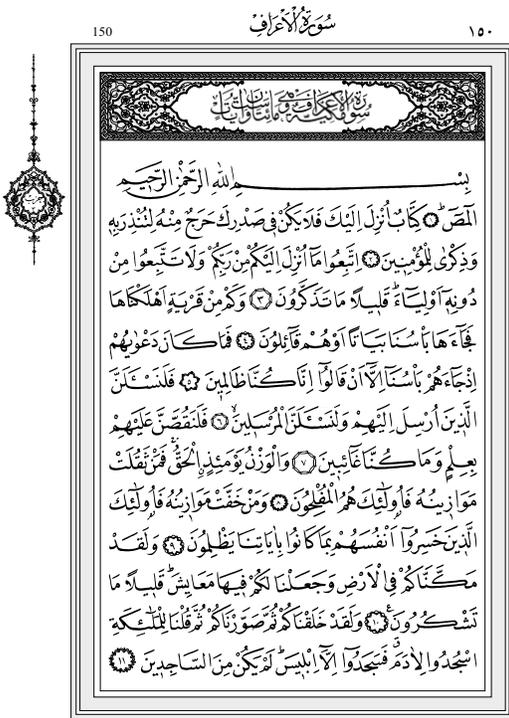
163. “He has no partners; thus have I been commanded, and I am the first and foremost of the Muslims (who have submitted to Him exclusively).”

164. Say: “Am I, then, to seek after someone other than God as Lord when He is the Lord of everything?” Every soul earns only to its own account; and no soul, as bearer of burden, bears and is made to bear the burden of another. Then, to your Lord is the return of all of you, and He will then make you understand (the truth) concerning all that on which you have differed.

165. He it is Who has appointed you vicegerents on the earth (to improve it and rule over it according to God’s commandments), and has exalted some of you over others in degrees (of intelligence, capacity, and then wealth and status); thus, He tries you in what He has granted you. (Always bear in mind that) your Lord is the Most Swift in retribution (when it is due), and surely He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate (especially towards those who turn to Him in repentance as His believing servants).<sup>36</sup>

36. Working around God's Oneness and other essentials of faith from the beginning to the end, the *sūrah* ends with the threat that God is most swift in delivering punishments, and with the glad tidings that God is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate (especially towards those who turn to Him in repentance, and to His believing servants). However, the

glad tidings come last, and His being the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate is stressed and confirmed. This is because God's Mercy is greater than His punishment, and God has bound Himself to mercy and treating His creatures with mercy; it is also intended to encourage His servants to repent and take refuge in His Forgiveness and Mercy.



In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,  
the All-Compassionate.

1. *Alif. Lām. Mīm. Šād.*
2. This is a Book sent down to you (O Messenger) – so let there be no tightness in your breast in respect of it (in conveying it to people and fearing that they may not believe in it) – that thereby you may warn (people against any deviation), and as an admonition and advice to the believers.
3. Follow what has been sent down to you (O humankind) from your Lord, and, do not follow as confidants and guardians other than Him. How little you reflect and take heed!
4. How many a township We have destroyed (because they did not pay heed to Our warning). Our scourge fell upon them at night or when they were taking their ease in the noontime.
5. And there was no appeal from them when Our scourge fell upon them, except for their saying: “Indeed, we have been wrongdoers.”
6. So We will surely question those to whom Messengers were sent (as to how they responded to them), and We will surely question the Messengers (concerning their duty of conveying it and how their peoples reacted to it).
7. Then We will surely relate to them (the full account of their worldly lives) with (full, accurate) knowledge; We were not absent (while they were doing their deeds and so we have a perfect record).
8. The weighing on that Day shall be the truth (complete and accurate), and he whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy – they will be the prosperous.
9. And he whose scales are light (because they have no acceptable good deeds) –

## SŪRAH 7

### AL-ARĀF (THE HEIGHTS)

Makkah Period

**S**ūrat *al-Arāf* was revealed in Makkah and consists of 206 verses. It takes its title from the word *al-arāf*, which occurs in verses 46 and 48. *Al-Arāf* is the heights between Paradise and Hell. Following *Sūrat al-Anām*, which discusses the Oneness of God and other essentials of faith, this *sūrah* also is concerned with the same themes, as well as focusing on the basis of human nature and the lives of some of the Messengers. It concentrates on the consequences in both this and the next world of following the way of faith in God’s Oneness or of following polytheism.

they will be those who have ruined their own selves because they wrongfully treated Our Revelations and signs (in both the universe and themselves).

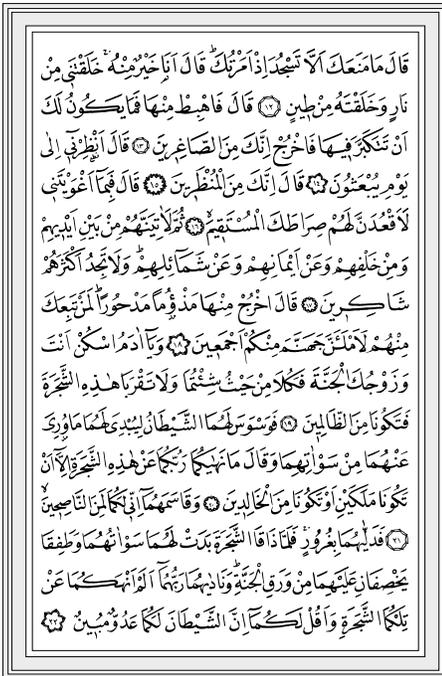
10. Indeed, We have established you on the earth (O humankind, endowed you with great potential) and arranged for your livelihood in it. Scarcely do you give thanks!<sup>1</sup>

11. We brought you into existence, then

We gave you each a form (perfectly suited to your nature), and then We said to the angels (to signify that they affirm the degree of knowledge and superiority of Adam and his deserving vicegerency, and that they will help him to perform his duty on the earth): “Prostrate before Adam!” They all prostrated, but *Iblis* did not; he was not of those who prostrated.

1. When we look about the earth and at the universe from the earth, we can easily see what great bounties humankind have been endowed with. The earth has been prepared for humankind, and we have been endowed with what is necessary to live on the earth, being equipped in a way that will satisfy both our material needs and all our outer and inner senses. Furthermore, not only the earth, but the heavens with the sun, the moon, and the stars are at the service of the earth and humankind, even though the earth is no bigger than a dot when compared to the heavens. Humans have an innate tendency to thank anyone who does them some good, so how ungrateful it would be not to give thanks to God Who has spread before us the earth like a table and made the universe a palace in which we can reside. Giving thanks to God is based on acknowledging that what-

ever humankind has and whatever we acquire in our earthly life is from God, and to follow the way He has established for us. Thankfulness, which we can say consists largely of belief and worship in all its forms, is a duty to be performed not for the sake of a future reward, but in return for the bounties already granted. That is, belief and worship are not a cause for God to give further rewards to humankind, like eternal bliss in Paradise; rather, they are a duty required by the bounties which have already been granted. Eternal bliss in Paradise is only given out of God's grace and mercy. For this reason, the Qur'ān expresses the attitude of those who have entered Paradise as being, *All praise and gratitude are for God, the Lord of the worlds!* (sūrah 39: 75); this is felt in their hearts and emerges as speech from their mouths.



before them and from behind them, and from their right and from their left.<sup>2</sup> And You will not find most of them thankful.”

18. (God) said: “Get out from there, disgraced and disowned! Those of them that follow you, surely I will fill Hell with you all!”

19. (To Adam, He said): “O Adam! Dwell, you and your spouse, in the Garden, and eat (of the fruits) thereof where you desire, but do not approach this tree, or you will both be among the wrongdoers.”

20. Then Satan made an evil suggestion to both of them that he might reveal to them their private parts that had remained hidden from them (and waken their carnal impulses), and he said: “Your Lord has forbidden you this tree only lest you should become sovereigns, or lest you should become immortals.”

21. And he swore to them: “Truly, I am for you a sincere adviser.”

22. Thus he led them on by delusion; and when they tasted the tree, their private parts (and all the apparently shameful, evil impulses in their creation) were revealed to them, and both began to cover themselves with leaves from the Garden. And their Lord called out to them: “Did I not prohibit you from that tree, and did I not say to you that Satan is a manifest enemy to you?”<sup>3</sup>

12. He (God) said: “What prevented you from prostrating, when I commanded you to do so?” *Iblis* said: “I am better than he, for You have created me from fire, and him You have created from clay.”

13. (God) said: “Then go down from it; it is not for you to act haughtily there! So be gone! Surely you are of the degraded.”

14. (*Iblis*) said: “Grant me respite till the Day when they are raised from the dead.”

15. (God) said: “You shall be among the ones (humankind) granted respite (so long as they remain on the earth).”

16. (*Iblis*) continued: “Now that You have allowed me to rebel and go astray, I will surely lie in wait for them on Your Straight Path (to lure them from it).

17. “Then I will come upon them from

2. That is:

- I will come upon them from before them, and sow in them worry and hopelessness concerning their future; I will invite them not to pay the *Zakāh* or do any supererogatory forms of charity in fear of becoming poor; I will urge them to hoard their wealth; I will provoke them to disbelieve in the Hereafter and show them a dark future; I will present to them the way of the Prophets as reactionary and regressive, and I will call them into valleys of misguidance through the promises I make to them about their future.
- I will come upon them from behind them, and show them the past as a dark cemetery; and by showing them both the past and the present as dark, I will drive them to pessimism and distress after distress; I will incite them to turn away from the way of the Prophets, and to condemn and reject their past while following this way, encouraging them to revive their former (ancient) past when they had worshipped many so-called deities and had lived a corrupt life of sheer ignorance, and to see all this as progress.
- I will come upon them from their right and show them their religious devotions as being perfect, driving them to ostentation, self-pride, and to the desire that their religious life be known and praised by others, thereby causing all their good deeds to go to waste. I will also provoke them to attach more importance to secondary matters in religion, while neglecting the essentials, thus provoking them to disagree and causing conflict. Again, I will cause them to use religion for their worldly interests and ambitions, and for the satisfaction of their carnal desires, but will whisper to them that they do so for the sake of religion, and try my best in order that they may go to the Hereafter devoid of any good deeds.
- I will come upon them from their left, and incite them to reject God's Existence, the Hereafter, and other essentials of faith, and to search different systems of belief or ideology; I will urge them to struggle and even

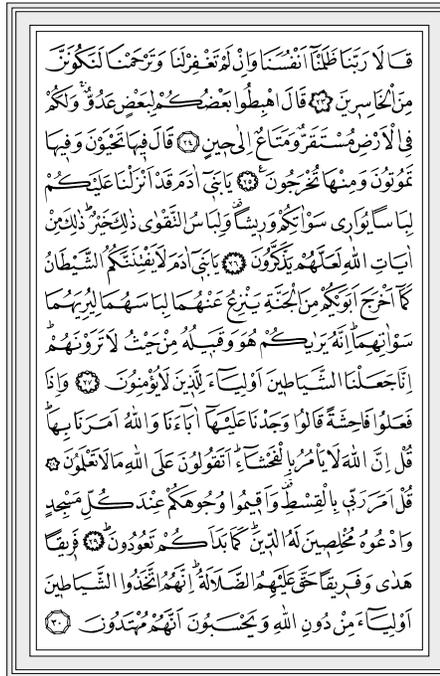
fight against God's religion and those who follow it; I will invite them to dive into the swamp of sins, such as adultery, prostitution, drinking alcohol, and gambling and similar games of chance; I will provoke them to unlawful transactions, like bribery, usury, corruption, theft, robbery, and deception, and other forms of wrong, such as injustice, oppression, murder, disrespect to parents, and the violation of basic human rights, and I will call them to present all these under the titles of justice, peace, humanism, progress, and civilization, etc.

3. The relationship between Adam or humankind and *Iblīs* or/and Satan, some of the important points of which were mentioned in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (verses 34–39, notes 34–44), is narrated here with further details that are related to the main topic of this *sūrah*. In order to be able to understand the nature of humanity and its earthly life well, this relationship should be made clear. The main aspects of this relationship can be summed up as follows:

- Although they have free will, however weak it may be, the angels do not have the capacity to do evil, while Satan is a being who has completely lost his capacity to do good. Contrary to this, human beings have the capacity to do both good and evil because of our dual nature that arises from our belonging to both the physical and the metaphysical realm and our having both spiritual, or angelic, and satanic dimensions. However, evil means destruction; the absence of only one part of something will suffice for its destruction; good means existence, and the existence of something is dependent upon the existence of all of its parts. Therefore, humanity can cause great destruction and can even excel Satan in doing harm, yet we have very little power and ability to do good. We need help and support in doing good, and this is why God has established senses that ask for help and support in our hearts. These senses lead humankind to God.
- The dual nature of humankind and our being equipped with free will are the reasons why our inner world is an arena of struggle

between good and evil. We feel the two opposing calls or invitations, one coming from God and the angels, the other coming from Satan and the carnal, evil-commanding soul. Real humanity lies in this struggle. Since the angels have no capacity to do evil, and therefore do not struggle with any inherent evil force, they do not progress spiritually; their stations are fixed. But the human struggle with evil forces stimulates the potential of humankind and causes us to progress both scientifically and spiritually. For this reason, this struggle is the engine that powers the spiritual evolution of human beings.

- What caused Satan to be excluded from God's mercy was his arrogance and vanity. Like many modern people, he thought that superiority lay in physical composition and
- opposed God's command. He insisted on his defiance and tried to excuse himself for it. This caused him to lose his ability to reform himself and forced him to be subjected to eternal condemnation. In contrast, Adam and Eve felt immediate remorse after their lapse and pleaded with God for forgiveness. This teaches us that we must repent and ask God for forgiveness for any evil we have committed. In order to be able to do this, we must understand our innate poverty and helplessness before God, and we must be able to comprehend how always we need His help and support. We must also abandon all arrogance and be humble.
- We must always be on the alert against the seductions of the satans found among humankind and the jinn, and we must never give in to their invitations.



23. They said (straightaway): “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we will surely be among those who have lost!”

24. He said: “Go down, (all of you,) (and henceforth you will live a life,) some of you being the enemies of others. There shall be for you on the earth a habitation and provision until an appointed time.”

25. He said: “You will live there, and there you will die, and from it you will be brought forth (on the Day of Resurrection).”

26. O children of Adam! Assuredly We have sent down on you a garment<sup>4</sup> to cover your private parts, and garments for adornment. However, (remember that) the garment of piety and righteousness – it is the best of all.<sup>5</sup> That is from God’s signs, that they may reflect and be mindful.

27. O children of Adam! Never let Satan seduce you (and cause you to fail in similar trials) as he caused your (ancestral) parents to be driven out of the Garden, pulling off from them their garment and revealing to them their private parts (and the carnal impulses ingrained in them). He sees you, he and his host (see you), from where you do not see them. We have made satans the confidants and fellow-criminals of those who do not believe.

28. And whenever they commit an indecency (like going round the Ka’bah naked), they say (attempting to excuse themselves): “We found our fathers doing that

(and follow in their footsteps), and this is what God has enjoined upon us.” Say: “Indeed, God does not enjoin indecency. Or is it that you speak about God things you have no knowledge of?”

29. Say: “My Lord enjoins right and justice.” Turn towards Him your faces (i.e. your whole being) whenever you rise to perform the Prayer, and call upon Him, sincere in your faith in Him and practicing the Religion for His sake. As He initiated you (in existence), so to Him you are returning.

30. A party He has guided (to the right way), and for another party straying in error is their just due: they have taken satans, rather than God, for confidants, supporters, and guardians, yet they suppose that they are rightly-guided.<sup>6</sup>

4. The use of the phrase “sending down” for the things human beings need in life, such as garments and, as appears later in the Qur’an (*sūrah* 57: 25), iron, means that these are all bounties of God which He has created especially for the benefit of humankind.

5. We cover our private parts and the whole of our body with other garments, but the garment of piety and righteousness transforms the apparently negative elements and impulses in our nature and channels them into means of virtues that adorn us.

6. The last two verses, especially the sentences, *As He initiated you (in existence), so to Him you are returning*, and, *A party He has guided (to the right way), and for another party straying in error is their just due*, indicate significant truths:

- While all creatures have an archetypal existence in God’s Knowledge, Destiny determines their nature, and (the Divine) Power clothes them in the kind of existence that is peculiar to each. Being transferred from one world to another and clothed in the physical existence of this world, humankind has started on the road that leads to the Hereafter; this journey started when we first stepped into this world. Humans will be stripped of the garment of the body when they die and will be raised into another realm on the Resurrection Day, when this world will be destroyed and re-built. The world of every one in this new realm will be built upon his or her deeds in this world.
- In addition to indicating this journeying of humankind that consists of coming down from high, transcendental worlds and of ascending towards the same worlds, the expression, *As He initiated you (in existence), so to Him you are returning*, also alludes to the fact that time progresses not linearly, but in cycles, just like the earth, the sun and the solar system, that go on-ward or progress in orbit, each around itself. This expression also refers to the fact that day and night, spring and winter, and spring or day-like periods, and winter or night-like periods exist in the lives of individuals and communities, one progressing after the other.
- The sentence, *A party He has guided (to the right way), and for another party straying in error is their just due*, teaches that guidance to the right way is from God, but it is the persons themselves that cause straying. This is because guidance means existence and construction. The existence of something depends on the existence of all its parts. Therefore, human beings are totally incapable of creating the conditions necessary for guidance and in dire need of God and His help for their guidance. In contrast, to stray or be misguided means non-existence and destruction. Seeing that the destruction of something is possible by the destruction or non-existence of one of its parts, humanity can outstrip the satans in destruction. So, in order to be saved from destruction and straying, human beings also need the help of God, and should never give up taking care or practicing self-criticism. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi gives us a golden criterion in this respect: “Take asking God for forgiveness for your sins in one of your hands, and prayer in the other. Asking for forgiveness severs evils and sins from their roots, while prayer encourages doing good” (*The Words*, "The 26th Word," 485). That is, a person should always ask God for forgiveness for their sins and pray to Him, while also trying to be saved from sins and evils.

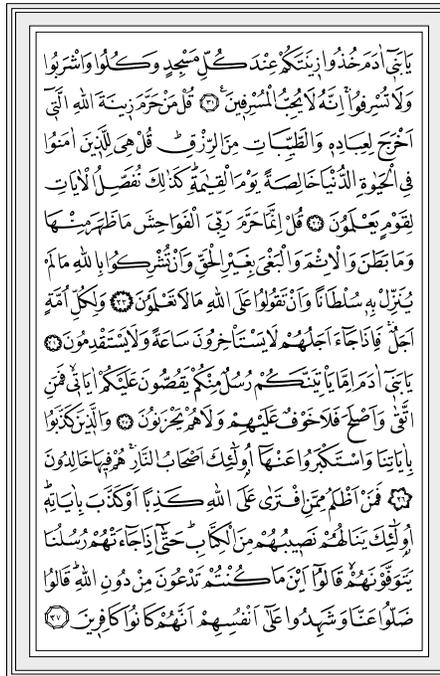
31. O children of Adam! Dress cleanly and beautifully for every act of worship; and (without making unlawful the things God has made lawful to you) eat and drink, but do not be wasteful (by over-eating or consuming in unnecessary ways): indeed, He does not love the wasteful.

32. Say: "Who is there to make unlawful the beautiful things (obtained from plants, animals and minerals) that God has brought forth for His servants, and the pure, wholesome things from among the means of sustenance?" Say: "They are for (the enjoyment of) the believers in the life of the world (without excluding others), and will be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection." Thus, We set out in detail Our signs (showing Our way) and Revelations for a people seeking knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

33. Say: "My Lord has made unlawful only indecent, shameful deeds (like fornication, adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality), whether those of them that are apparent and committed openly or those that are committed secretly; and any act explicitly sinful;<sup>8</sup> and insolence and offenses (against the Religion, life, personal property, others' chastity, and mental and bodily health), which is openly unjustified; and (it is also forbidden) that you associate partners with God, for which He has sent no authority at all, and that you speak against God the things about which you have no sure knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

34. And (know that) for every community, there is a term appointed (by God considering their free will); and when the end of the term falls, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it.<sup>10</sup>

35. O children of Adam! (As to your earthly life, the term of which has already been appointed, We decreed): Whenever there come to you Messengers from among yourselves, relating to you My Revelations, then whoever keeps from disobedience to



Me and the, so as to deserve My protection and mends his ways, thus acting for the general peace in the community, they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

36. But those who deny Our Revelations and turn arrogantly from them, they are the companions of the Fire, and therein they will abide.

37. Who is more in wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God and denies His Revelations and signs (in the universe and their selves)? Their full portion of God's decree (concerning life and providence) will reach them, until Our envoys (angels assigned for this duty) come to them to take their souls, and say: "Where, now, are those beings whom you deified and invoked apart from God?" They say: "They have failed us," and thus bear witness against themselves that they were (always) unbelievers.

7. Great misunderstandings and incorrect behavior have been caused by the fact that some specific matters are generalized. One of these matters is the categorical condemnation of the world and the concept of asceticism.

Human beings have the function or duty to be vicegerents on the earth. This function or duty entails the right to interfere with things within the bounds (the ecological equilibrium and the universal laws of “nature”) set up by God and to improve the earth, ruling on it in the name of God according to the laws He has established. It goes without saying that this duty falls on, first of all, the believers. The denial of God or irreligion severs the link between God and human beings, turning humans into the kind of beings that shed blood and cause unrest on the earth. Since the maintenance of human existence in the world depends on there being a formidable group of believers that has the potential to bear the Divine Trust, the Divine bounties on the earth belong, first of all, to these people, and it is their duty to administer and distribute the same justly among people. This means it is the believers’ right to make use of the bounties on the earth within the limits established by Islam, and it is their duty to administer and distribute these bounties justly among people, and to thank God in return. However, it is forbidden for them to go beyond the lawful limits in benefiting from these bounties, and to make eating and drinking the goal of their lives. Over-consumption not only causes competition and conflict over the things that are eaten and drunk, it also means that the accumulated energy of human beings is being spent without measure, causing some destructive sins, such as adultery and prostitution. If one is inclined to overindulge in eating and drinking, then one is more likely to seek the gratification of other desires in an indulgent manner. So, in order to protect against such destruction, individuals can seek shelter in asceticism, and it is even advisable that they do so. But the Muslim community cannot leave the earthly bounties and their administration and distribution to others in the name of asceticism. As Bediüzzaman puts it, believers must

not set their hearts on the world, but they must work and earn to maintain themselves, uphold the Word of God, and spend in God’s cause.

8. Examples of explicitly sinful acts are consuming intoxicants, blood, carrion, the flesh of swine; taking part in games of chance, bribery, usurpation, corruption, and theft, etc.

9. See also *sūrah* 5: 3, and *sūrah* 6: 151–152.

10. This verse does not mean that an absolute determinism prevails in history. Rather, the Qur’ān sees human beings as the “motor” of history, contrary to the fatalistic approaches of some nineteenth century Western historical philosophies, such as dialectical materialism and historicism. Such philosophies assert that time and conditions direct human history, and the only thing that people must do is to keep up with the stream of time, which progresses independently of human will. Whereas, according to the Qur’ān, just as every individual’s will and behavior determine the outcome of their life in this world and in the Hereafter, a society’s progress or decline is determined by the will, world-view, and lifestyle of its inhabitants. The Qur’ān says (*sūrah* 13: 11): *God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves (their beliefs, world-view, and lifestyle)*. In other words, each society holds the reins of its fate in its hands. A prophetic Tradition emphasizes this idea: “You will be ruled according to how you are” (al-Hindī, 6: 89). Therefore, this verse should be viewed in the light of human free will in its relationship with the Divine Eternal Will, and in other verses and our explanations that concern it (see *sūrah* 2: 20, note 13; *sūrah* 4, note 18; *sūrah* 5: 40, note 8; *sūrah* 6: 39, 112, 137, note: 8). Since God is absolutely independent of time and sees everything, witnessing all times as if they were no more than one point, He cannot be viewed in terms of the past, the present, or the future. His Will is, in some respect, identical with His Knowledge, and every event takes place according to the law of cause and effect, which His Will has appointed. Therefore, the verse mentions a phenomenon, rather than a compelling, determining law. The verses to come will clarify the matter.

قَالَ إِذْ خُلُوا فِي آسَافٍ قَدْ خَلَّتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ  
وَالْإِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ كَمَا دَخَلْتَ أُمَّةً لَعَنَتْ أَخْتَهَا حَتَّى إِذَا  
أَكَرَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا قَالُوا أَخْرَجَهُمْ لِأُولِيهِمْ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ  
أَضَلُّونَا فَأَتِينَهُمْ عَنَّا بِضِعْفٍ مِنَ الْبَأْسِ قَالُوا لِكُلِّ ضِعْفٍ  
وَلِكُلِّ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ ۝ وَقَالَتْ أُولِيهِمْ لِأَخْرَجَهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ  
عَلَيْنَا مِنْ قَضِيلٍ فذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ۝  
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتِّحْ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابَ  
السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَبْرُجَ الْجَلُّ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ وَكَذَلِكَ  
نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ۝ لَسْمٌ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مَهَادٌ وَمِنْ قَوْفِهِمْ عَوَائِشٌ  
وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلا وُسْعَهَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا  
خَالِدُونَ ۝ وَتَرَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غَلٍّ تُجْرِي مِنْ  
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا  
لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلٌ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَنُودُوا أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُمُ الْبُرْجَانُ يُورِثُهُمْ إِذَا رِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

38. (God) says: “Enter in company with the communities of the jinn and human-kind that went before you into the Fire!” Every time a community enters the Fire, it curses its fellow-community (that went before it) – so much so that, when they all have gathered there one after another, those who came later say of those who came earlier: “Our Lord! Those are the ones who led us astray: give them therefore double suffering through fire!” (God) says: “For each is double (since those who went earlier both strayed themselves and led others astray, and those who came later both strayed themselves and imitated the others blindly), but you do not know.”

39. Then the preceding ones among them say to the succeeding ones: “You are in no wise superior to us, so taste the punishment for all (the sins) that you were busy earning (through your belief and deeds)!”

40. Those who deny Our Revelations and turn arrogantly from them – for them, the gates of Heaven will indeed not be opened (i.e. God will not accept even their good deeds) and they will enter Paradise no further than a camel can pass through the eye of a needle. Thus do We recompense the disbelieving criminals.

41. For them is a bed of Hellfire and, over them, is a covering (of the same fire).<sup>11</sup> Thus do We recompense the wrongdoers.

42. But those who believe and do good, righteous deeds – We do not burden any

soul beyond its capacity – they are the companions of Paradise; and therein they will abide.

43. We will strip away whatever is in their bosoms of rancor and any jealousy (they may have felt against other believers while in the world). Rivers flowing beneath them (and themselves overflowing with gratitude), they say: “All praise and gratitude are for God, Who has guided us to this (prosperity as a result of the guidance with which He favored us in the world). If God had not guided us, we would certainly not have found the right way. The Messengers of our Lord did indeed come with the truth.” And a voice calls to them: “That is the Paradise that you have been made to inherit in return for what you used to do (in the world).”

11. Using an extraordinarily eloquent style, the verse implies that those described are fond of lying in comfortable beds under comfortable coverings. One's recompense is given in the same form as the crime. Those fond of lying in comfortable beds are also fond of eating and entertainment, and give in to their sexual impulses. Here we can remember the Prophetic

saying, "Concerning my community, I fear a large stomach, oversleeping, idleness and a lack of certainty" (al-Hindī, 3: 460). In addition to being an obstacle to believing, such a life also impinges on the rights of others. It is significant that the verse depicts these people as wrongdoers. They wrong both others and their own selves.

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا  
 رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ  
 بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ  
 اللَّهِ وَيَسْعَوْنَهَا أَوَّجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَبَيْنَهُمَا  
 حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَاهُمْ  
 وَنَادَى أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ  
 يَطْمَعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَإِنَّا صَرَفْنَا أَبْصَارَ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا  
 رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ  
 الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَ سِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَعْنَى عَنْكُمْ  
 جَعَلَكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ أَمْؤَالَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمْ  
 اللَّهُ رِيحَةً أَدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾  
 وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ  
 أَوْ مِمَّا زَرَعْتُمْ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّا لَنَرِيهِمْ عَلَى الْكُافِرِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾  
 الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِنَا هُكَاوًا وَعَزَّوهُمْ لِحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا قَالُوا تَنْدِبُهُمْ  
 كَمَا تَنْدُبُونَ الْيَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ هَذَا وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

44. And the companions of Paradise call out to the companions of the Fire: “Now we have found what our Lord promised us to be true. Have you (also) found true what your Lord promised you?” They say, “Yes!” And an announcer announces among them: “God’s curse (rejection and condemnation) is the due of all wrongdoers!”

45. (The wrongdoers are) those who bar people from God’s way and seek to make it crooked; and they are persistent unbelievers in the Hereafter.

46. And between the two there is a barrier, and on the Heights (between Paradise and Hell) are some men,<sup>12</sup> recognizing each by their countenances. They – not yet entering Paradise, but longing for it – call out to the companions of Paradise: “Peace be upon you!”

47. And when their eyes are turned towards the companions of Hell, they say (in dread of that state): “Our Lord! Do not include us among the wrongdoing people!”

48. The people of the Heights call out to some men (who were the leaders of unbelief in the world, and) whom they recognize by their marks (on their countenances), saying: “(Now you see that) neither your numbers and the wealth you amassed nor your growing arrogance and vanity have availed you!”

49. (Pointing to the companions of Paradise, they continue): “Are those not the ones of whom you swore that God would

not favor them with mercy?” (For now it is they who have been told:) “Enter Paradise; you will have no fear, nor will you grieve.”

50. And the companions of the Fire call out to the companions of Paradise: “Pour out some water upon us, or something of what God has provided for you!” They say: “Indeed God has forbidden both to the unbelievers.”

51. (The unbelievers are) those who took their Religion (the one appointed for them by God) for play and pastime (and have made play and fun their own religion), and the present, worldly life deluded them. So We are oblivious of them today (concerning forgiveness and favoring), as they were oblivious of the encounter of this Day of theirs, and were obstinately rejecting Our Revelations.

12. Some interpreters of the Qur'ān are of the opinion that those men mentioned are Prophets and other beloved servants of God who have drawn near to Him. Others defend the idea that they are the believers whose good and bad deeds are equal and who, therefore, expect God's forgiveness. Fethullah Gülen, a contemporary Turkish scholar, offers a good explanation: "Whatever misfortune happens to a believer, it serves as a means of forgiveness for some of their sins. God forgives some of His believing servants' sins by making them suffer death pangs, some by making them suf-

fer in the grave, some through tribulations in the Plain of Supreme Gathering, some while their deeds are being weighed, and there are still those who remain whose sins are to be forgiven by being kept on the Heights of the wall between Paradise and Hell. So, those people mentioned in this verse may be the believers whose remaining sins will be forgiven by being kept between Paradise and Hell in suspense and fear of being thrown in Hell, while they also expect God's forgiveness and admission to Paradise" (*Tereddütler* 4: 133-136). God knows best.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَا هُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً  
لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سَاءَ مَا يَكْفُرُونَ بِطُورِ آيَاتِنَا  
تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِسُورَةِ الْقُرْآنِ فَسُورَةُ الْقُرْآنِ كَالْحِجَابِ  
عَنْهُمْ وَعَنْ عَذَابٍ يُعَذَّبُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ أَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ آيَاتُ مَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾  
إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ فَسِتْوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ عِشْرِينَ لَيْلًا لَّا يَئُودُهُ  
حِفْظُهُمْ سُبْحَانَ وَجْهِكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَالصَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ وَالنَّجْمِ  
مُتَّحِرَاتٍ يَا أُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٥٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ  
تَضَرُّعًا وَخُضوعًا إِنَّهُ لَاسْمِعُ الْمُعْتَبِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَا تُشْفِقُوا فِي  
الدُّعَاءِ بَعْدَ إِضْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ  
قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا  
بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَتِ نُبُوحًا رَبِّهَا لَمْ يَكُن لَهَا رُوحٌ  
لِّسَالَةِ رِيَّتِهِ فَاَنزَلْنَا فِيهَا الْمَاءَ فَأَنزَلْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ  
الشَّجَرَاتِ كَذَلِكَ نُفْرِجُ الْمُؤْتِقَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

52. Assuredly We have brought them a Book (the meaning and commandments of) which We set out in detail with knowledge, as guidance and mercy for people who will believe and who will deepen in faith.

53. Are they waiting but for the final end of the call to that Book? On the Day when this end comes, those who, until then, have been oblivious of it, say: “The Messengers of our Lord assuredly came with the truth (but we did not pay heed). Have we, then, any intercessors who will now intercede on our behalf? Or can we be returned (to the world) that we might do otherwise than we used to do (when we were in the world)? They have certainly ruined their selves and what they fabricated (of false deities) has failed them.

54. Indeed your Lord is God, Who has created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He has established Himself on the Supreme Throne, covering the day with the night, each pursuing the other swiftly, with the sun, the moon, and the stars obedient to His command. Know well that His is the creation and His is the command. Blessed and Supreme is God, the Lord of the worlds.<sup>13</sup>

55. Call upon your Lord (O humankind) with humility and in the secrecy of your

hearts. Indeed your Lord does not love those who exceed the bounds.

56. (Keep within the bounds He has decreed:) Do not cause disorder and corruption on the earth seeing that it has been so well ordered, and call upon Him with fear (of His punishment) and longing (for His forgiveness and mercy). God’s mercy is indeed near to those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

57. And He it is Who sends forth the merciful winds as glad tidings in advance of His mercy – so that, when they carry heavy clouds, We drive them towards a dead land, then We cause thereby water to descend, and bring forth thereby fruits (crops) of every kind. Even so We make the dead come forth (on Judgment Day), that you may reflect and be mindful.

13. This verse and those that follow show humans traveling in the outer world and their inner world to demonstrate to them God's absolute dominion. A person first focuses on their own private world. It is God, our Lord, Who creates all of us with all our features, and nourishes us and governs our lives and bodies. The verse, therefore, draws our attention to this fact, and therefore we must accept Him as our Lord Who has the right to direct us in all aspects of our lives. Then it has us travel in the outer world and explains why the right to rule or command belongs to God both in our world and the universe as a whole. Since it is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, He owns them and has the absolute right to rule over them. Seeing that a person claims exclusive ownership over their private property in which they have only one share out of a thousand, the others belonging to God, God will surely have the total right to execute dominion over His property.

The verse also states that God has created the heavens and the earth in six days and established Himself on the Supreme Throne. The Qur'an uses the word "day" not only in the sense of our normal day, but also as time unit and period. Another verse (*sūrah* 32: 5) mentions that one day is like 1,000 years in our reckoning, and another mentions a day which lasts 50,000 years (*sūrah* 70: 4). This shows that the concept of day is relative. The "world" does not consist in our world or the visible universe. Rather, there are worlds or dimensions one within another. Just as time is different in the world of dreams, so is it also different in the worlds of the spirit and imagination, as well as in the world of immaterial forms and the High Empyrean (*Jabarūt*). It can even be said that the whole lifespan of the universe, from its creation to its final destruction, is a day, and

as mentioned in the Qur'an, the lifetime in the other world is also a day. So, what the Qur'an means by six days may be the geological eras of the earth or the creational periods of the universe, which still continue, or the periods from the beginning of the creation of the universe until the time it took its present form.

'*Arsh* (translated as the Supreme Throne) literally means anything constructed high like a roof, a dome, an arch, or pavilion. However, since the Qur'an addresses all levels of understanding through all ages, it tends to present certain abstract truths, like those pertaining to Divinity, with concrete expressions, and it uses metaphors and comparisons. It presents the *Kursiyy* (Seat: see *sūrah* 2: 255) as if it were a platform or seat, and the '*Arsh* as if it were a throne and God were the ruler of the universe seated on His throne, governing all creation. By so doing, the Qur'an establishes in our minds God's supreme authority and dominion. God is not just the Creator of the universe, but is also its Sovereign and Ruler. Having created the universe, He did not detach Himself from it, nor become indifferent to His creation. On the contrary, He effectively rules over the universe as a whole, as well as controlling every small part of it. All power and sovereignty rest with Him. Everything in the universe is fully in His grasp and is subservient to His Will and Power. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi says that "'Arsh" is the composition (of the manifestations) of God's Names the First, the Last, the All-Outward, and the All-Inward (*Mathnawī*, 175). Also, deducing from his description of water as the '*Arsh* (throne) of mercy and earth, the throne of life, we can say that '*Arsh* (the Supreme Throne) implies God's full control of, and authority over, the universe. Elements such as water and earth are things that conduct God's decrees or media by which they are manifested and executed.

وَالْبَادِئُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ بِكَائِهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي حَبِثَ  
لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا يَكْبُكًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ  
﴿١٥٧﴾ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ غَيْرُهُ ۗ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥٨﴾  
قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرِيكَ فِي صِلَا لِيُطِيبِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ قَالِ يَا قَوْمِ  
لَيْسَ بِي صِلَا لَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾  
أَتَّبِعُكُمْ رَسُولَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ أَوْحَيْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ  
عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّثْلِكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾  
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلَاكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ  
كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَإِلَىٰ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ  
هُودًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ غَيْرُهُ أَفَأَتَّخِفُونَ  
﴿١٦٤﴾ قَالِ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرِيكَ فِي  
سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ قَالِ يَا قَوْمِ  
لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

58. And the good, pure land: its vegetation comes forth in abundance by its Lord's leave, whereas from the bad, corrupt land, it comes forth but poorly (like thorny bushes). Thus do We in diverse ways set out the signs (of God's Existence and Unity and other truths of faith) for the people who give thanks (from the heart and in speech, and in action by fulfilling God's commandments).<sup>14</sup>

59. Indeed, We sent Noah to his people as Messenger (to convey Our Message to them), and he said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of an awesome day!"

60. The leading ones among his people said: "We see that you are surely lost in obvious error."

61. (Noah) said: "O my people! There is no error in me. Rather, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.

62. "I convey to you the messages of my Lord, give you sincere advice, and I know from God that which you do not know.

63. "What! do you deem it strange that a reminder from your Lord has come to you through a man from among yourselves, that he may warn you (against the consequences of your way of life), and that you may guard against His punishment, and so that you may be favored with His grace and mercy?"

64. And yet, they (instead of paying heed to Noah's warning) denied him. And so

We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark, and caused to drown those who denied all the Revelations and signs (of Our Existence and Unity). They were indeed a blind people.<sup>15</sup>

65. And to the (people of) 'Ād We sent their brother, Hūd.<sup>16</sup> He said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Will you not, then, keep from disobedience to Him and deserve His protection?"

66. The leading ones among his people who were persisting in unbelief said: "We see you to be indeed foolish and weak-minded, and we are certain that you are a liar."

67. (Hūd) said: "O my people! There is no folly and weak-mindedness in me; rather, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.

14. The Qurʾān mentions “natural” truths along with sociological truths and those that pertain to human spiritual life, in order that the more familiar truths (natural truths, which surround us in our everyday life) can provide an example for the other truths. These verses provide one of the best instances of this aspect of the Qurʾānic style. They mention the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the fact that the celestial bodies are subservient to God’s command to present the absolute sovereignty of God, calling on humanity to submit to this sovereignty and worship and to pray to Him. Both in the spiritual life of people, and in the lives of communities and the life of the earth, the days and nights (light and darkness), winter and spring (winter-like and spring-like periods), and dearth and abundance follow one another. It is God Almighty Who will change night to daytime, winter to spring, and dearth to abundance, and the duty that falls upon human beings is to turn to God sincerely and entreat Him with fear (of His punishment) and expectation (of His forgiveness and mercy), remaining within the bounds which He has established for us. In the same way that He accepts the prayers the “dead” earth recites in the language of need and disposition, and as He moves the winds and clouds of rain to revive it, so too, exhausted or dead hearts and communities are revived with the rain of Revelation, mercy, and are favored as a result of turning to God. What is important here is that the earth, and our minds and hearts should be fertile and pure (uncontaminated by prejudices, not clinging to wrong viewpoints, wrongdoings, or having attachments to worldly ambitions). Then, the fertile, pure earth and our minds and hearts are favored with a rain of mercy that helps to produce an abundance of good, fresh vegetation and delicious fruit (faith, true and enlightening knowledge, good morals, and virtues). If this is not the case, our infertile, unclean earth, and our contaminated minds and hearts will only produce thorny bushes (false beliefs, and misleading thoughts and ideologies), no matter how much the rain of mercy pours from the heavens.

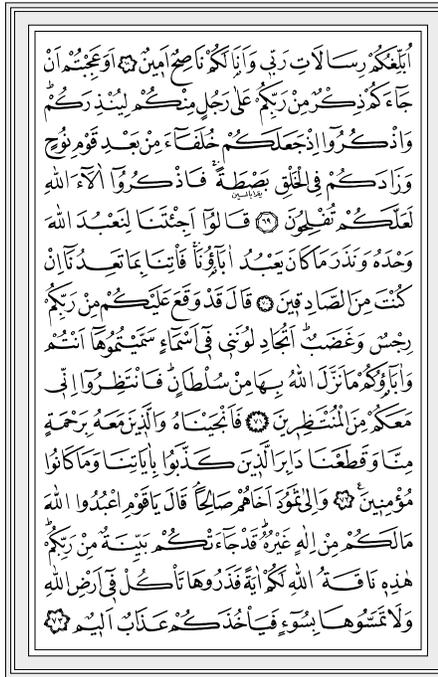
After such expressions, full of meaning and messages, after presenting what is abstract and what is concrete, and after discussing the

physical realities alongside sociological and spiritual ones, the *sūrah* continues by giving concrete examples from history.

15. The Qurʾānic allusions and Biblical statements lead us to conclude that the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, lived in Iraq around Mosul (Nineveh). This is also supported by the inscriptions belonging to pre-Biblical times discovered during archaeological excavations. Kurdish and Armenian traditions also corroborate this account. Some relics ascribed to Noah can still be found in the vicinity of Mount Ararat. The people of Nakhichevan believe that their city was founded by Noah.

Traditions similar to the story of Noah and the Flood are also found in classical Greek, Egyptian, Indian, and Chinese literature. Moreover, stories of identical import have been popular since time immemorial in Burma, Malaya, the East Indies, Australia, New Guinea and various parts of Europe and America. This is a good indication that this story was either learned from the Messengers sent to these areas or that the people in the company of Noah and their descendants dispersed to different parts of the world after the Flood. It is also possible that both these events happened.

16. The people of ‘Ād were an ancient Arab people known throughout Arabia for their legendary prosperity. There were many references to them in pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyyah*) poetry, and their stories circulated widely, so much so that the word *ādī*, in the sense of ancient things, and *ādiyāt* in the sense of archeological remnants, found their way into Arabic as derivatives from the name of this people. The region called Ahqāf that is situated between Hijaz, Yemen, and Yamāmah is their native land; they scattered as far as the western coasts of Yemen and expanded their dominion to Oman, Hadramawt, and Iraq. A few remnants found in the southern Arabian Peninsula and a grave in Hadramawt are attributed to this tribe. In 1837, James R. Wellested, a British naval officer, found an inscription in Hisn al-Ghurab where the name of Hūd was mentioned. It clearly belonged to those who followed the religion of Hūd (al-Mawdūdī, 3: 42–43, note 51).



68. “I convey to you the messages of my Lord, and I am a trustworthy counselor to you.

69. “What! do you deem it strange that a reminder (a message and guidance) from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, that he may warn you (against the consequences of your way)? Remember and be mindful that He has made you successors (on the earth) after Noah’s people and increased you in stature and power. Remember and be mindful, then, of God’s bounties, that you may prosper (in both worlds, and attain your goals).”

70. They said: “Have you come to us (with the command) that we should worship God alone and forsake what our forefathers used to worship? Then bring about what you have threatened us with, if you are truthful!”

71. (Hūd) said: “Already abhorrence and anger (i.e. idol-worship in blind imitation of your forefathers) from your Lord have befallen you. What! do you dispute with me about mere designations which you and your forefathers invented and for which God has not sent down any author-

ity? (If that is the case) then wait, as indeed I too am among those who wait.”

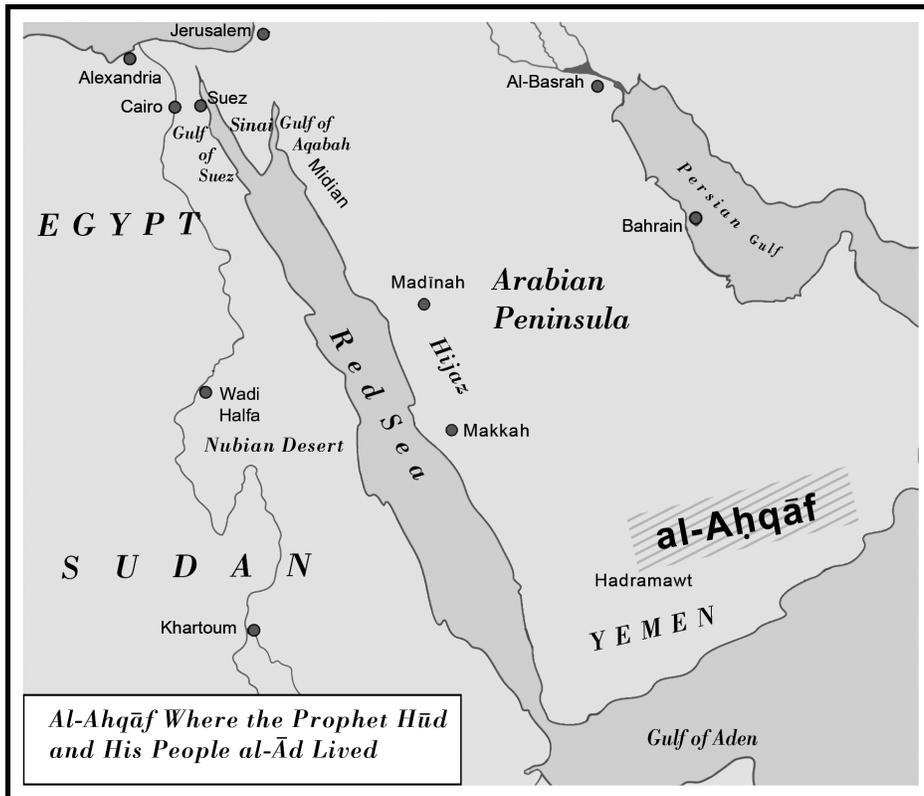
72. Then, through mercy from Us, We saved him and those who were in his company, while we uprooted those who denied Our signs and Revelations and were not believers.

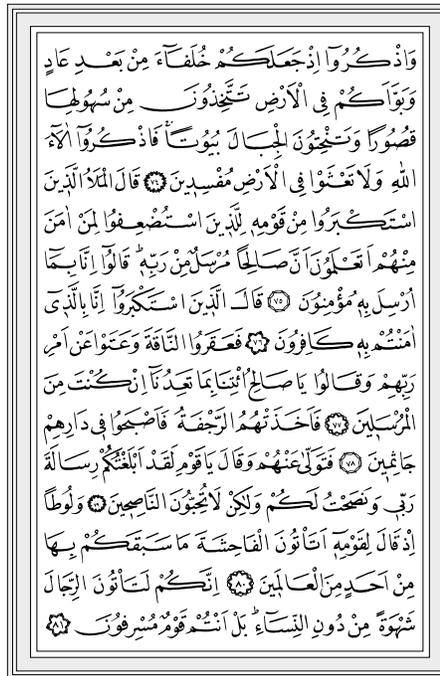
73. And to (the people of) Thamūd (We sent) their brother, Ṣāliḥ.<sup>17</sup> He said (conveying the same message): “O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Assuredly a manifest proof has come to you from your Lord: this is a she-camel from God as a sign for you (of the truth of my Messengership). So leave her to pasture on God’s earth, and touch her with no harm lest a painful punishment should seize you.

17. The Thamūd were another ancient Arab people almost as famous as the ‘Ād. Their name was frequently mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry and Greek, Alexandrian, and Roman histories and geographies. The Roman historians recorded that they joined the Roman armies against the Nabateans. They lived in Hījr in the north-west of Arabia, and their main city was Madā’in Šālīh, situated along the route of the famous Hījāz railway. Some remnants of this city can still be found. The Makkan merchants passed by this area on their journeys to Syria. It was during the Tabuk Campaign that the Messenger passed by there with his army; he did not halt there because it was a region

where God’s scourge had fallen. He told his Companions to reflect on it and to take lessons from it (al-Mawdūdī, 3: 45–46, note 57).

The she-camel appeared as the result of the demand of the Thamūd chieftains to have a sign or miracle to prove Šālīh’s Messengership. There is nothing in the Qur’ān or authenticated Hadīth literature to indicate how this camel came into existence. However, she was an extraordinary creature and recognized by the people as a sign or miracle. Some wicked person killed her, and the other unbelievers, instead of opposing him, supported him. This was the final atrocity of the Thamūd that brought upon them God’s punishment. It caused their ruin.





74. “And remember and be mindful that He made you successors of the people of ‘Ād and established you securely on the earth, so that you build castles on its plains and hew out dwellings in the mountains. Remember, then, and be mindful of God’s bounties, and do not go about acting wickedly in the land, causing disorder and corruption.”

75. The leading ones among his people, who were arrogant and oppressed the others, said to those that they scorned, to those among them who were believers: “Do you really know and consider Ṣāliḥ as one sent by His Lord with a message?” They replied: “We do indeed believe in what he has been sent with.”

76. Those who were arrogant said: “What you have come to believe in we indeed disbelieve.”

77. Then (without enduring any longer to see her as evidence of the truth of Ṣāliḥ’s message), they cruelly slaughtered the she-camel, and disdainfully disobeyed the command of their Lord, and said: “O Ṣāliḥ! Bring upon us that (punishment) with

which you have threatened us, if you are of those sent (by God with the truth)!”

78. Then a shocking catastrophe seized them, so that they lay prostrate and lifeless in their very dwellings.

79. And Ṣāliḥ left them, saying: “O my people! I conveyed to you the Message of my Lord and gave you good counsel; but you have no love for good counselors.”

80. And (remember) Lot (Lūt), when he said to his people<sup>18</sup>: “Will you commit that abhorrent indecency such as no people in all the world have ever done before you?”

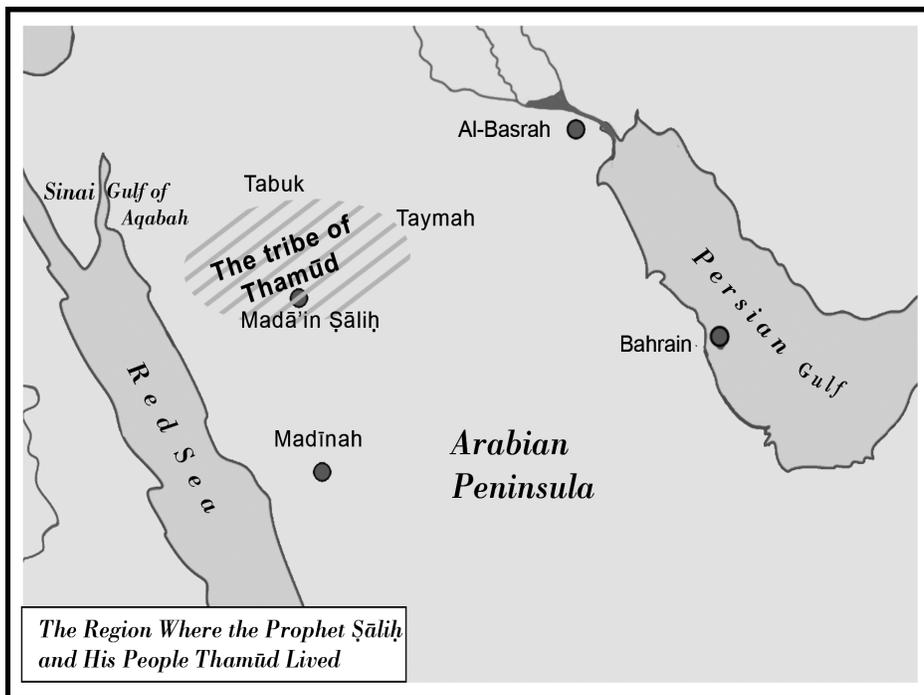
81. “What! will you continue to come with lust to men in place of women? You are a people committing excesses and wasteful (of your God-given faculties).”

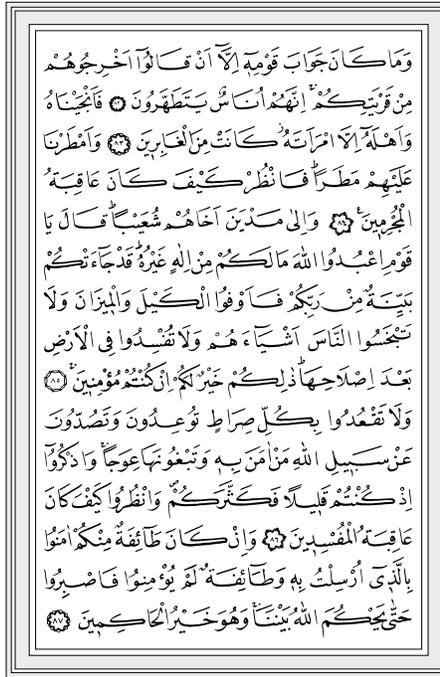
18. The people of the Prophet Lot, upon him be peace, lived in the region lying to the south-east of the Dead Sea. According to archeologists, this area was very prosperous between 2300 and 1900BC. It has been estimated that the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, the uncle of Lot, lived around 2000 BC. The people of Lot were destroyed during Abraham's lifetime (*sūrah* 15: 51-60).

The land in which they lived was very verdant; it was resplendent with gardens and orchards, appearing as if a single garden, and fascinated those who saw it. The most fertile and populous part of the region was the area

called the "Valley of Siddim." The major cities were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zo'ar.

These cities were devastated on account of the major sins that were indulged in there, in particular homosexuality, which had almost become a general way of life. The valley sank and was covered by the Dead Sea. The rain mentioned in verse 84 was a rain of stones. According to the Bible, when Abraham heard about what had befallen Lot's people, he traveled from Hebron and observed: "The smoke of the land rose like the smoke from a furnace" (*Genesis*, 19: 28).





82. But his people's response was only that they said (to one another): "Banish them from your township, for they are a few persons who make themselves out to be pure!"

83. Then We saved Lot and his household (who left the land upon Our command) except his wife, who was among those who stayed behind.

84. And We rained a destructive rain (of stones) upon them (those who stayed behind). Then, see what was the outcome for the criminals committed to accumulating sins.

85. And to (the people of) Midian (We sent) their brother, Shu'ayb, as Messenger.<sup>19</sup> He (conveying the same message) said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. A clear proof has assuredly come to you from your Lord. So give full measure and weight (in all your dealings), and do not wrong people by depriving them of what is rightfully theirs, and do not cause dis-

order and corruption in the land, seeing that it has been so well-ordered. That is for your own good, if you are (to be) true believers.

86. "And do not lurk in ambush by every pathway, seeking to overawe and bar from God's way one who believes in Him, and seeking to make it appear crooked. And remember how you were once few (and weak), and then He increased you in number (and strength). And see what was the outcome for those who cause disorder and corruption (on the earth).

87. "If there is a party among you who has come to believe in the message with which I have been sent, while another party does not believe, then persevere and be patient until God judges between us. He is the Best in judging."

19. The territory of Madyan (Midian) lay to the north-west of the Hijāz and south of Palestine, on the coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of 'Aqabah; part of the territory stretched to the northern border of the Sinai Peninsula. The towns were situated at the crossroads of the trade routes from Yemen through Makkah and Yanbu' to Syria along the Red Sea coast, and from Iraq to Egypt. Midian was therefore quite well known to the Arabs. The Midianites related themselves to Midyan, a son of the Prophet Abraham, born of his third wife, Qatūrā. Initially they were Muslims, but later contaminated their pure faith with polytheism, and their economic life with corruption and dishonesty.

The destruction of Midian remained well-

known in Arabia for a long time. As such, the following lines in the *Psalms* are significant:

For they have consulted together with one consent;

They form a confederacy against You:

...

Deal with them as *with* Midian,

As *with* Sisera,

As *with* Jabin at the Brook Kishon,

Who perished at En Dor

Who became as refuse on the earth.

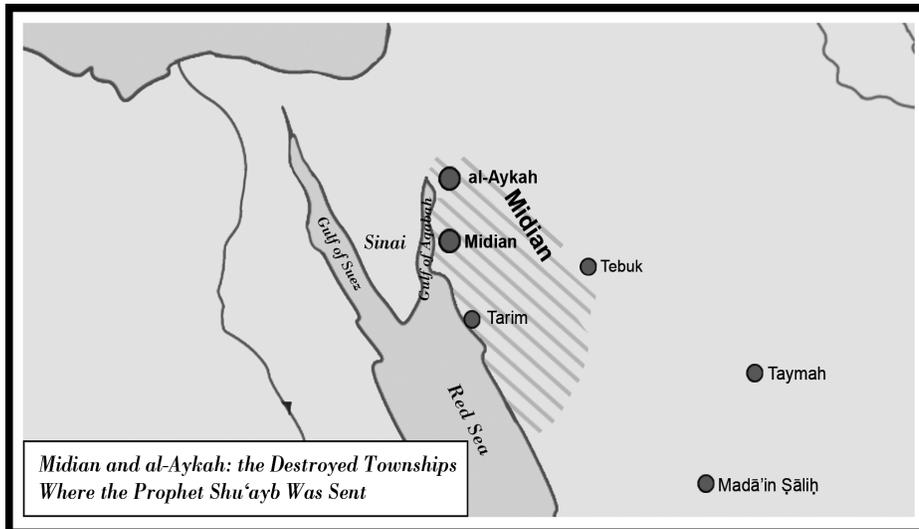
...

O my God, make them like the whirling dust,

Like the chaff before the wind! (*Psalms*,

83: 5, 9-10, 13).

(al-Mawdūdī, 3: 53, note 69)



88. The leading ones among his people who were arrogant and oppressed the others said: "We will surely banish you, O Shu'ayb, and those who believe in your company from our township, or else you will return to our way (of faith and life)." (Shu'ayb) said: "What? Even though we abhor it?

89. "Should we return to your way after God has saved us from it, then most certainly we would be fabricating lies in attribution to God. It is not for us to turn back to it, unless God, our Lord, should so will.<sup>20</sup> Our Lord embraces all things within His Knowledge. In God do we put our trust. Our Lord! Judge between us and our people, making the truth manifest, for You are the Best in judging to make the truth manifest."

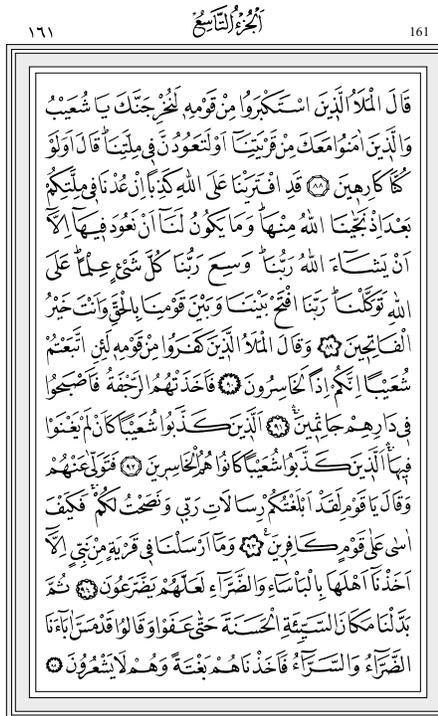
90. The leading ones who persisted in unbelief said (so as to put pressure upon the others among his people): "Should you follow Shu'ayb, you will then surely be the losers!"

91. Then a shocking catastrophe seized them, so that they lay prostrate and lifeless in their very dwellings.

92. Those who denied Shu'ayb – as though they had not lived there in abundance: those who denied Shu'ayb (and threatened the believers with loss and ruin) – it was they who were the losers.

93. And Shu'ayb left them, saying: "O my people! I conveyed to you the messages of my Lord and gave you good counsel. How, then, could I mourn for a people ungrateful and persistent in unbelief?"<sup>21/22</sup>

94. And We did not send a Prophet to a town-



ship but We seized its people with distress and hardship so that they might (wake from heedlessness and) be humble (invoking Us for forgiveness and turning to the truth.)

95. Then (after this phase of trial and training), We changed the affliction into good (ease of life) until they increased (in numbers and wealth, and indulged in comforts) and said (without taking any lesson from it): "Sometimes distress and sometimes happiness visited our forefathers (whereas we are living an easy life." So We seized them all of a sudden without their being aware (of what was coming).<sup>23</sup>

20. That is: "We will never turn back to your way, but we cannot know what God, our Lord, has in store for us in His Will and Knowledge. We cannot do anything unless He wills it, and He embraces all things within His Knowledge."

21. The Messengers whose stories are narrated in the Qur'an are those who lived and conveyed the Divine Message in the places which, particularly, the people of Makkah passed through during their travels to the south, north, and the

north-east. Their stories were known to a certain extent in the region. In addition, they were the greatest of the Prophets who, if we can make such a comparison, were like great persons founding the spiritual orders and schools of law, each being an important link in the chain of Messengers, and guiding our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, especially during the Makkan period of his mission. Though all were endowed with the necessary characteristics, capacities, and attributes that are found in a Messenger, some exceeded others in patience, some in gratitude, some in mildness, some in knowledge, and some in their ability to administer; these particular strengths were in relation to what was required by each mission, and each set an example for the last Messenger of God. Having progressed in their footsteps during a certain period of his mission, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, exceeded them all later and became the universal guide, as required by his universal mission.

Just as with God's final Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, all the preceding Messengers, upon them be peace, conveyed, first of all, God's Oneness as the bedrock of God's Religion, and then they conveyed the other pillars of faith and Divine worship, along with principles of good morality and behavior. These are the roots of the universal tree of Islam, providing irrefutable proof for the Messengership of the Last Prophet. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, due to the conditions in which the previous Messengers lived and the restrictions of their mission to a certain time and people, each tended to attach more importance to certain dimensions of God's Religion that were of paramount importance in his time, while other things were more briefly explained. It is the last form of this Religion, namely "the Islam" communicated by the Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, that expounded and established this Religion with all its dimensions, giving each matter the importance it needed to be given, and which has grown into a blessed, universal tree encompassing all times and places. The Qur'ān having provided the roots and the principles and laws

of its growth, this blessed tree grew up, making a strong trunk consisting of the life and practices of the Messenger, which we call the Sunnah, and became a tree which has yielded its ever-fresh fruits during all times in Islamic history. The great contribution that Muslim statesmen, commanders, scholars in every field of religious knowledge, scientists, and spiritual masters have made to Islamic civilization cannot be forgotten or neglected. Those who claim to return to the Messenger's Age of Happiness omit this magnificent history, and then go so far as to criticize the Sunnah and even the Qur'ān itself; these are people who recognize no bounds and who invite ruin upon themselves.

The Qur'ān relates stories of the previous Messengers as examples of guidance to be used during the period when Islam was first conveyed by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and during later times. So it presents these stories in dimensions that are related to the main subject of the *sūrah* where they occur. It never aims to make reiterations or to tell stories. These stories are like a prism which reflects a different, but complementary view, within a whole.

22. The stories of the Messengers mentioned demonstrate that there are points shared among all the destroyed peoples and that are peculiar to each:

- Manifest polytheism was common among all. However, this was not something that was mentioned in relation to the people of Lot, but which was particularly ingrained in the peoples of Noah, Hūd, and Šāliḥ, upon them be peace. For this reason, all of the Messengers mentioned except Lot based their mission on the precept: *Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him.*
- There are other important social and economic diseases, other than polytheism, that are fatal, mentioned as afflicting the peoples of Šāliḥ and Shu'ayb. In the former, there is a fondness for luxury and the problems that accompany such indulgence, while in the latter, economic life is based on deception, injustice, and total corruption. The people of Shu'ayb gave no respite

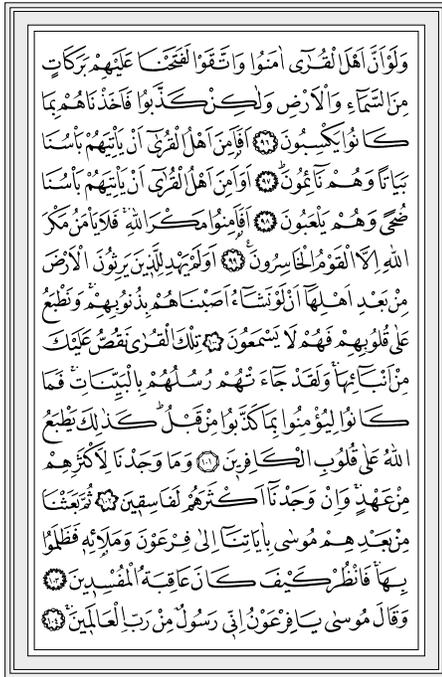
to those who attempted to oppose them and reform the economic life.

- In all of these communities, there was a leading elite or class. However, at the time of the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, this class was merely a “leading elite,” and the whole of the people, with the exception of the believers, were equally persistent in their unbelief and polytheism. The leading elite among the people of ‘Ād led others in associating partners with God and forced them to follow them. During the time of Sāliḥ (the Thamūd), this elite group formed a small, despotic oligarchy that indulged in vices and tyrannized the people. Likewise, during the time of Shu‘ayb, upon him be peace, this class became a despotic oligarchy leading the people in unbelief.
- During the time of the Prophet Lot, upon him be peace, moral corruption demonstrated itself, more than other vices, in the homosexuality that had become the way by which people satisfied their lusts; at that time, this was the most prevalent problem, even more than polytheism. The people as a whole had been engulfed by it; in fact, they showed no inclination towards stopping this behavior.

23. The last two verses express an important historical and sociological truth. When the Divine Message begins to be conveyed to a people by a Prophet or by a person or community qualified to be an heir to a Prophet, distress and hardship (like diseases, wars, famine, and poverty) appear among that people so that they may make their hearts softer and turn to God

Almighty. If, despite this, people insist on unbelief and wrongdoing and struggle against the preaching of Islam, God changes this adversity to ease and abundance: abundant rain replaces famine, new ways of treatment are discovered, wars come to an end, etc. This means that a destruction is on its way to the wrongdoers, and it also stimulates a feeling of thankfulness in people to remind them of the blessings that have come along with the Divine Message. People tend to perceive and appreciate a blessing more if it follows adversity. Repletion after hunger, health after disease, and wealth after poverty make these blessings more appreciated. Nevertheless, if a people cannot see the Divine Hand and wisdom behind these blessings and continue to resist the Divine Message, and if those who represent it and try to communicate it are too weak to carry it to a victory, then Divine punishment comes.

These two verses contain another important message. Ease and abundance also follow after the Divine Message has been accepted by a people and when this message has become a way of life. However, if succeeding generations lead a life of ease, forgetting that this easy life is the result of the acceptance of the Divine Message and, instead of continuing to fulfill their duties towards God in thankfulness, attribute it to their own ability to indulge in luxuries, then this is a grave error, and heedless behavior. This will be the start of a decline, which will pervade all the community like a cancer. The time when corruption has almost entirely encompassed an entire community is when its death is imminent.



96. If the peoples of those townships had but believed and, in order to deserve His protection, had kept from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, We would surely have opened up for them blessings from heaven and earth; but they denied (the Messengers and the Divine Message they brought), and so We seized them for what they habitually earned (through their deeds).

97. Did the peoples of the townships feel secure that Our mighty punishment would not come upon them at night while they were sleeping?

98. Or did the peoples of the townships feel secure that Our mighty punishment would not come upon them in the daytime while they indulged in worldly play?

99. Or did they feel secure from God's designing (against them some unexpected disaster)? But none feels secure from God's designing (against them some unexpected affliction) save the people of loss and self-ruin.

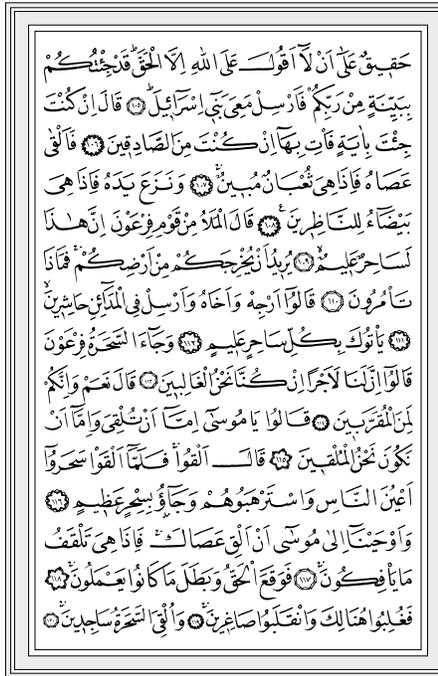
100. Has it not, then, become clear to those who have inherited the earth in the wake of former generations that, if We so willed, We could strike them for their sins? But (they are unresponsive to the meaning of events because, in consequence of their wrongdoing, their misguided attitudes and arrogance, and the grave sins they commit) We impress their hearts with a seal so that they cannot hear (the revealed truths and any admonition).

101. Those townships – We relate to you some tidings of them by way of exemplary histories (to teach you this): assuredly the Messengers came to them (chosen by God) from among themselves, with clear proofs of the truth but they did not believe in that which they used to deny before. Thus does God impress the hearts of the unbelievers with a seal (that shuts them off from the effects of admonition).

102. We did not find in most of them any (faithfulness to) covenant; indeed We found most of them to be transgressors.

103. Then, after those (early Messengers), We sent Moses to the Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our Revelations and signs (miracles to support him), but they treated them wrongfully. So see what was the outcome for those causing disorder and corruption!

104. And Moses said: "Pharaoh! I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds,



105. "Bound in truth to say nothing about God except the truth. I have surely come to you with a clear proof from your Lord (Who creates, nourishes, and sustains you). So let the Children of Israel go with me!"

106. He (the Pharaoh) said: "If you have come with a sign, then bring it forth, if you are truthful!"

107. Then he (Moses) threw down his staff, and thereupon it was a serpent manifest (clear for all to see as a sign).

108. And he drew forth his (right) hand (from his armpit, where he had put it), and thereupon it was shining white to those looking on.<sup>24</sup>

109. The chiefs among the people of the Pharaoh said, (discussing the matter among themselves): "This is, indeed, (as the Pharaoh says,) a learned, skillful sorcerer,

110. "Who seeks to drive you out from your land. Then, what do you advise (to do)?"

111. They said (to the Pharaoh): "Put him and his brother off for a while, and (in the meantime) send forth heralds to all cities,

112. "To bring to your presence every learned, skillful sorcerer."

113. The sorcerers came to the Pharaoh and said: "We must surely have a reward, if we are the victors."

114. (The Pharaoh) answered: "Yes, and you will indeed be among those near-stationed to me."

115. They (the sorcerers) said: "Moses! Ei-

ther you throw first or we will be the first to throw!"

116. He answered: "Throw!" And when they threw (whatever they held in their hands to make spells), they cast a spell upon the people's eyes (i.e. overawed and deluded them), and produced a mighty sorcery.

117. We revealed to Moses: "Throw down your staff!" and behold! it swallowed up their false devices.

118. Thus was the truth made victorious, and all that they (the sorcerers) were doing was proved false.

119. Thus were they (the Pharaoh and his chiefs) defeated there (in front of everyone's eyes), and brought low.

120. And the sorcerers threw themselves down, prostrating,

24. We must approach the Divine Being, existential reality, the universe, and the things and events in it from two viewpoints: one from a viewpoint related to God, and the other from our own viewpoint. When we approach the matter from the viewpoint related to God, the concepts of time, space, and dimensions no longer exist; everything consists in God's manifestations and deeds beyond time, space, and dimension. For this reason, the Qur'an usually relates events connected to the Resurrection and Judgment Day in the past tense. In addition to this is the fact that the past tense in Arabic expresses the certainty of an event's having taken place; such a usage also indicates that for God there is no difference between that which took place, that which is taking place, and that which will take place.

When we approach existential reality, the universe, and things and events in it from our viewpoint, restrictions such as time, space, and dimension intervene, as do human free will and its functions. Moreover, causality is added to these restrictions, which exist so that we can follow events by including some principles that we call "law," and order our life accordingly. These function as veils before God's manifestations and actions that are beyond all dimensions; we deal with whatever takes place before the outermost veil in the framework of causality and the principles which we call "laws." This is one of the most important points that cause materialists and naturalists to err. Since the outer five senses of human beings cannot penetrate the veils, those who restrict themselves to the perceptions of their five senses accept only those things that are in front of the veils

as being existent and real. However, a person who merely considers only their own being can easily perceive that this being has many "mental worlds:" for example, the imagination, and the "worlds" of concepts, thoughts, ideals, and intentions. Besides, even if they do not believe in the existence of spirit, there are other innermost worlds, like those of consciousness, willpower, emotions, and the heart, all one within another, each one more spacious than the last. These are reflections or examples of the worlds beyond the material one.

The phenomena that the Qur'an calls "signs" - and theologians, "miracles" - are God's certain executions and acts of creation which, from the human viewpoint of things and events, exceed the frame of causality and other laws, and are therefore extraordinary. Although they are miracles from our viewpoint, they are actually only some "ordinary" actions of God, Who holds the universe in His Grasp of Power and governs it as He wills, manifesting, along with other Attributes, His Attributes of Knowledge, Wisdom, Absolute Will, and Favor. For those who view things and events with the eye of faith, everything and every event in the universe is a miracle that is no less than the miracles worked by the Prophets. For this reason, addressing the period of human history where reason and science have much greater prominence and importance, the Qur'an and "the Islam" in the form perfected through the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, give prominence to knowledge and such mental faculties as thought, reflection, and reasoning, as well as to the spiritual aspects of these and other human faculties.

121. And they said: “We have come to believe in the Lord of the worlds,

122. “The Lord of Moses and Aaron.”

123. The Pharaoh said: “What! Do you believe in Him before I give you permission? This is indeed a plot you have contrived in the city that you may drive out its (native) people from it. But you shall come to know!

124. “I will certainly have your hands and feet cut off alternately, and then I will certainly have you crucified all together.”

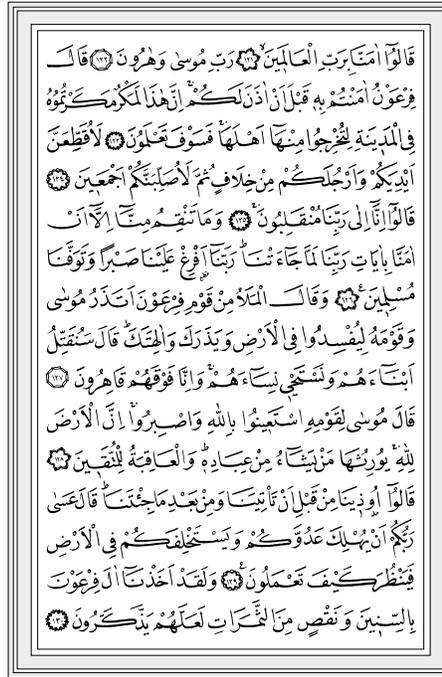
125. They responded: “Indeed, to our (true and everlasting) Lord are we bound to return.

126. “You take vengeance on us only because we have come to believe in our Lord’s messages when they came to us.”<sup>25</sup> “Our Lord! Pour out upon us persevering patience and take our souls to You as Muslims (wholly submitted to You)!”

127. The chiefs among the Pharaoh’s people said: “Will you (O Pharaoh) leave Moses and his people to cause disorder and corruption in the country, and forsake you and your deities?” He replied: “We will kill their sons and let live their womenfolk (to serve and satisfy our desires). And, indeed, we hold irresistible sway over them.”

128. Moses said to his people: “Seek help from God and be patient, persevering. The earth belongs indeed to God, and He makes it an inheritance for whom He wills of His servants. The (final, happy) outcome is in favor of the God-revering, pious.”

129. They (having been subjected to per-



secutions by the Pharaoh) said: “We suffered hurt before you came to us, and since you came to us.” (Moses) replied: “It may well be that your Lord is going to destroy your enemy and make you the inheritors of rule in (some part of) the earth: and then He will look to see how you act (when you hold power).”

130. And We certainly seized the clan (the court and military aristocracy) of the Pharaoh with years of famine and scarcity of corps, so that they might reflect and be mindful.

25. Throughout history, the opposing side has always attempted to take vengeance on believers merely because they declare, “Our Lord is God alone!” Such actions have been concealed behind many false excuses – for example, that the

believers have been disturbing the social order, exploiting religion and religious sentiments for their personal interests, or dividing people in the name of religion – to mention just a few of the spurious claims that have been made over time.

فَأَلْجَأَ آبَاءَهُمْ إِلَىٰ الْحَسَنَةِ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ نَصَبُوا سِتْرَةً  
يُنَالُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَلَا نُمَاتِيكُم بِمَا كُفَرْتُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا اللَّهُ  
وَلَكِنَّكُمْ تَكْبَرُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَقَالُوا هَذَا مَا تَنسِبُ إِلَيْهِ  
مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لِنَفْسِكَ إِنَّهَا فَتَاخُنْ لَكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا  
عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدمَّ  
آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾  
وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ  
يَا عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَكَ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ  
وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ  
إِلَىٰ أَجْلِ هَمِّهِمُ بِالْعُوقِ إِذْ هُمْ يُنْكِرُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ فَانفَقْنَا مِنْهُمْ  
فَأَعْرَضُوا عَنْ آيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَأَوْزَيْنَا  
الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُصْعَقُونَ مِشْقَاقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبِهَا  
الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا فِيهَا وَتَمَسَّكَتْ رَبِّكَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ يَا صَبْرُوا وَدَسْرُنَا مَا كَانَ  
يُصْعَقُونَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمَهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

131. But whenever prosperity came their way, they would say: “This is but our due and by our deserving,” and whenever evil befell them, they would attribute it to the evil auspices (they alleged) of Moses and whoever was in his company. Beware! their auspice (whether evil or good) was decreed by God, but most of them did not know (being ignorant of true knowledge).

132. And they would say: “Whatever sign you produce before us to cast a spell on us, we are not going to believe you.”

133. So (in order that they might reflect and be mindful) We sent upon them floods and (plagues of) locusts and vermin, and frogs, and (water turning into) blood: distinct signs one after another. Yet they remained arrogant, and they were a criminal people committed to accumulating sins.

134. Each time a plague befell them, they would say: “O Moses, pray for us to your Lord for the covenant He has made with you (of servanthood and Messengership with respect to His Lordship): for sure, if you remove this plague from us, we will surely believe in you, and we will surely let the Children of Israel go with you.”

135. But when We removed the plague from them for a term in which they were to fulfill (what they promised), they then broke their promise.

136. So We inflicted Our retribution on them (just as they deserved), and so caused them to drown in the sea, as they denied Our signs (with willful persistence), and were heedless of them.<sup>26</sup>

137. And We made the people who had been persecuted and oppressed (for centuries) inherit all the easts and wests (the whole length and breadth) of the land that We had blessed (with benefits for humankind). And your Lord’s gracious word to the Children of Israel was fulfilled,<sup>27</sup> for they had endured patiently; and We obliterated what the Pharaoh and his people had produced (by art or industry), and what they had erected (of castles, palaces, gardens, and the like).<sup>28</sup>

26. Prior to our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, many well-developed, strong communities were totally destroyed by what seemed to be “natural catastrophes.” It may be asked why the same kind of total destruction has not taken place since this time. The first

thing to be said in reply to such a question is that the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was sent as mercy for the whole of creation. As he is a mercy for all creation, the religion he brought and the Qur’ān also provide universal mercy for all beings.

This means that as long as the Qur'ān and Islam exist, an overall, sudden destruction, like those witnessed in the pre-Islamic era, will not occur. When there are almost no Muslims and when the Qur'ān is no longer heeded, the final destruction of the world will occur.

Secondly, the pre-Islamic era communities were crude and uncivilized to a great extent. They were very obstinate, refractory, and unyielding. The vices causing their destruction were so widespread that they became almost a life-style. Only a few people believed in the Prophets that had been sent, and these were too weak to carry out the requirements of the Divine Religion.

Thirdly, it is difficult to say that there is no destruction. The communities in the pre-Islamic era were totally destroyed by calamities such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and whirlwinds; we refer these to nature and call them natural calamities. When such calamities take place, costing many lives and even towns, we try to explain them away by referring them to nature. However, these are also a type of punishment sent by God in recompense for disobedience to God's Religion and laws of life and the operation of the universe. In addition to these, there are disturbances, in particular world wars, internal conflicts and coups, economic imbalances, and revolutions costing millions of lives, and instances of famines; these are also punishment from God. But we attempt to explain these on the basis of their apparent reasons and never try to discover their real reasons or understand their meaning.

It may be asked here why these acts of destruction may also encompass the believers. These kinds of destruction, unlike the total destructions that came in the early ages purely to punish the criminals, come partially both as a punishment and as an admonition. Not only the disbelieving criminals but also the believers may also need admonition and deserve punishment. In addition, admonition comes in a way that it appeals to reason to take heed but does not compel human will to believe and submit. If the calamities were to encompass only the disbelieving criminals, this would be like the miracles which were given to earlier Prophets. When their peoples did not believe despite all

the miracles, they were destroyed. So, if the calamities were to come to the disbelieving criminals exclusively, and then other peoples did not believe, this would cause the coming of even greater calamities. God saves humanity from such greater calamities due to some important reasons. A powerful reason is that it is hoped that many people will embrace Islam in the future. Thirdly, the destruction of the believers causes the forgiveness of their sins and is a kind of martyrdom for them, and the destruction of their goods causes them to gain the merit of giving charity. Fourthly, it may be argued that the destruction of some "good" believers who are ever ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of others may serve for the salvation of believers from greater destruction for their sins and their failures in representing Islam.

As an example for Muslims, the defeat of the Ottoman State in the First World War, resulting in its collapse, has some apparent reasons. Commenting on this event and its relationship to Turkey, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi deals with the real reason, the reason why Divine Destiny judged this collapse necessary, in two categories:

- Based on His Attribute of Will, God has a way, or a form, of acting in creating and governing the universe with whatever there is in it, the events, and human individual and collective life. Since this way or form of acting is apparently constant, we can reach certain conclusions as the result of our study of "nature" and human life and call them "laws of nature," "laws of sociology," "laws of history," and "principles of science." Obeying or disobeying God with respect to these laws and principles has recompense in the world, such as prosperity or poverty, win or loss, success or defeat, or development or regress. As Muslims, we tend to neglect these laws while the part of the world that has equipped itself with the power of science and technology obeys them, consciously or unconsciously, thereby taking the upper hand.
- To the degree which we have unforgivably neglected obeying the laws of the first category, we also neglect to obey the second

collection of Divine laws, which issue from God's Attribute of Speech and which He has sent as Religion. God ordered us to assign approximately one hour of our day to performing the prescribed five daily Prayers, but we were negligent in the last centuries preceding the First World War, and in return He prostrated us during the war, (and unfortunately we have not been able to raise our heads from this prostration yet). He ordered us to fast for a single month in Ramaḍān each year, but we neglected, pitying our souls. In return, He made us fast for five years during the war (and additionally the next 25 years. In many parts of the Muslim world, we still suffer this punishment of fasting!) He ordered us to give the *Zakāh* (Prescribed Purifying Alms) at a rate of 1 out of 40, or 30, or 20, or 10, or 5 - varying according to the kind of the property - of the property He provided for us. We neglected this and acted niggardly, and in return He took back for five years all of our belongings that had accumulated as the *Zakāh*, (and since we have not been able to be saved from this niggardliness, our wealth still continues to be plundered by world powers). God ordered those who could to go on the Pilgrimage; this is a very important, multi-dimensional form of worship. We neglected this and in return He drove us from one front to another for five years, (and we still continue to seek our livelihood in foreign lands) (*Sözler*, "Lemaat," 667).

When we approach the matter from the perspective of the main truth, other truths disclose themselves.

27. This word was what is mentioned in *sūrah* 28: 5-6: *We willed to bestow Our favor upon those who were being humiliated and oppressed in the land (of Egypt), and make of them (exemplary) leaders (to guide people on the way to God and in their lives), and make them inheritors (of the glory of the Pharaoh and the land in which We produced blessings for people), and to establish them in the land with power.*

28. This verse expresses another important historical and sociological principle: doing wrong or carrying out an injustice, and anything based on these, cannot endure. God has made an enduring promise to the oppressed believers who, without submitting to unjust systems of polytheism or unbelief, adhere to God's Religion, carrying out its commandments within the principles that God has established and who, without yielding to persecutions, are able to show "active patience" in serving God after the way of His Messengers, and refrain from sins. In this verse, the Qur'an informs us of the final triumph God bestowed upon the Children of Israel that came with Prophets David and Solomon, upon them be peace, almost four centuries after their escape from the Egypt of the Pharaohs, under the leadership of the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace. It is emphasized that this came about as the result of their patience, as described above. In *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, some episodes are given that took place during this span of four centuries (50-61, 63-74, etc.), and others will be given in the following verses, in a suitable style and according to the main topics of the *sūrah*, and in consideration of the conditions prevalent in Makkah at the time when these verses were revealed.

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَى قَوْمٍ يُمِجُّونَ  
عَلَىٰ آصْنَامِهِمْ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ  
آلِهَةٌ قَالِ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مَتَّبِعُوا مَا هُمْ فِيهِ  
وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَالَ اغْبِرُوا إِلَهُ اللَّهِ أَنْبِيَئَكُمْ إِلَهُكُمْ  
وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَإِذْ أَخْبَرْنَا لَكُمْ  
مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَوْمُ مَوْتِكُمْ لَسَاءَ الْعَذَابُ الَّذِي قَدِّمْنَا  
لِابْنَاءِكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذِكْرِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ  
مَنْ رَدَّكُمْ عَظِيمًا ﴿١٤١﴾ وَوَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ تَلْبِينَ لِسَانِهِ  
وَأَتَمْنَا هَاهُنَا رِجَّتَهُ مِيقَاتِ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً  
وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْبِحْ وَلَا  
تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَكَلَّمَا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمَلَأَيْنَا كَلِمَةَ رَبِّهِ  
قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرَ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ نَرِيكَ وَلَكِنْ نُنظِرُ إِلَى  
الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَرَ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوَّفَ رَبِّي فَلَا تَجْعَلِ رَبَّهُ  
لِلْجِبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ  
قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

138. And We led the Children of Israel across the sea, and then they came upon a people who were devoted to the worship of some idols that they had (particular to themselves). They said: “O Moses! Make for us a deity even as they have deities!”<sup>29</sup> He replied: “You are indeed a people given to ignorance.

139. “As for those people – what they are engaged in (by way of religion) is bound to destruction, and false and vain is all they have been doing (by way of worship).”

140. He said: “What! shall I seek a deity for you other than God, when He has exalted you above all other people (through faith and the true Religion with which He has favored you)?”

141. And (remember, O Children of Israel,) when We saved you from the clan of the Pharaoh, who were afflicting you with the most evil suffering (by enslaving you to such laborious tasks as construction, transportation and farming), slaughtering your sons and letting live your womenfolk (for further humiliation and suffering). In that was a grievous trial from your Lord.

142. And (so that you would be favored with the Torah to order your affairs) We appointed with Moses thirty nights, to which We added ten, so he completed the term of forty nights set by His Lord (for him to spend in devotion).<sup>30</sup> (Before leaving his people in order to come to Our Presence) Moses had said to his brother (Aaron): “Take my place among my people (act to reform them and set things right), and do not follow the way of those who provoke disorder and corruption.”

143. And when Moses came to Our appointed time, his Lord spoke to him. (Then, in the rapture of nearness to God arising

from his being addressed by Him) he said: “My Lord, show me Yourself, so that I may look upon You!” (God) said: “You cannot see Me (with your eyes in the world). But look at that mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.” And the moment his Lord manifested His glorious Majesty to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust, and Moses fell down in a faint (as if struck by lightning). When he awoke, he said: “All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defects and any resemblance with the created)! I turn to You in repentance (for my desire to see You), and I am the first of the (true) believers (who realize that You are beyond any resemblance to any creature and beyond the grasp of any creature’s senses).<sup>31</sup>

29. This shows how slavery can degenerate a people. The Children of Israel, descended from Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, were Muslims for centuries in the fundamental sense of submitting to God. But after they had been enslaved by the Pharaohs they lost their identity. This degeneration showed itself frequently during their lives. The sight of a temple would be enough to stir up in them what they had observed among their former masters. Even though, according to the Bible, they had been taught by Moses for 40 years and by Joshua for nearly 30 years after their exodus from Egypt, Joshua still addressed them as follows:

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord. And it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (*Joshua*, 24: 14–15).

For the influence of slavery on the Children of Israel, see also: *sūrah* 2, notes 62, 71, 72, 74, 155; and *sūrah* 4, note 3.

30. As God also ordered the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to keep long vigils at night due to the fact that devotion at night is more potent and effective (*sūrah* 73: 1–8; *sūrah* 76: 26), it can be concluded that the time of devotion that brings a human being nearer to God is the night-time. It is because of this that the Qurʾān mentions 30 and 40 nights, not days. Assigning 40 nights (yet meaning a 24-hour period) for devotion, ascetic discipline, and reflection is very important in following a spiritual path to God in Muslim Sufism. It is called *arbaʿīn* (Arabic) or *chilah* (Persian), which means forty. The Sufis also attach great importance to 40 days as being the time period required to acquire a second nature or form a habit, and be saved from a bad habit or sin.

31. Each Prophet bears some traits peculiar

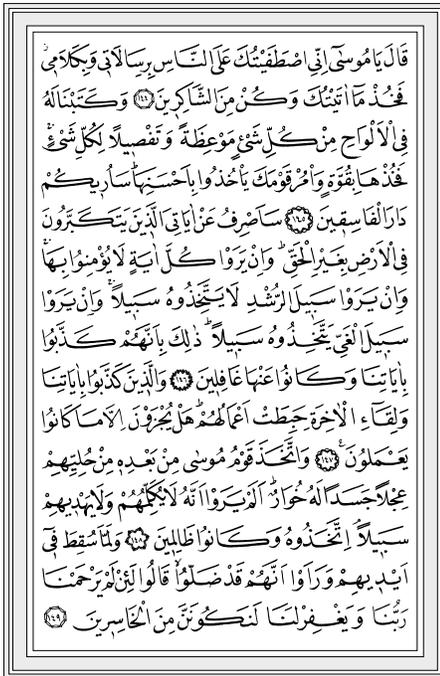
to his people, and as required by his mission. An educator will be more successful in matters in which they have personal experience and which they share with their students. This explains why the Children of Israel (2: 55) among nations, and the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, among Prophets, desired to see God. However, there is a great difference between the two desires. While the demand of the Children of Israel arose from doubt about God's Existence, despite all the evidence that they had observed until then, Moses, upon him be peace, displayed the ardent desire that every lover of God has to see Him. That is why God responded to the demand of the Israelites by nearly killing them with a thunderbolt followed by revival, while He answered Moses' desire with an exclusive manifestation upon a mountain, making it crumble to dust. Moses fell down in a swoon in the face of this manifestation.

The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was favored with, and distinguished by, receiving a particular manifestation of God's Speech. However, it should be noted that this manifestation came according to the receiving capacity of his spirit. When he desired a manifestation beyond the degree of that which he was favored with, he could not bear it. As stated in the verse to come, God told him by way of compliment that He had favored him with bearing His Messages and being His addressee, and therefore without aspiring to something higher, he should be thankful for what he had been granted. We should, however, point out here that the noted scholar, Fethullah Gülen, comments on Moses' falling down in a swoon as being the result of his utter amazement and shock in the face of God's partial manifestation of His Majesty in all Its transcendence and above all corporeality (*Key Concepts*, 2: 41).

God Almighty manifests Himself with His Names and Attributes behind numerous veils. Neither anything in the universe, nor the universe in its totality, is able to bear His manifestation beyond that. Those who feel His particular manifestations in their hearts, each

according to the capacity of their hearts, are enraptured or intoxicated like Prophet Moses. But some among them cannot measure these manifestations according to the rules and criteria of the Shari'ah, and they utter some words for which they would be held accountable if they were to utter them in a normal state. The utterance of Hallāj al-Mansūr, a Muslim Sūfī "I am the Truth," is an example. Nevertheless, there are many who demonstrate sainthood or see themselves as saints and utter the same kinds of words; they will be held accountable for such words. There are still some who think that they have attained great ranks when they

feel favored with a few slight manifestations in return for their devotion or ascetic discipline, and who cannot balance their words and acts, with the result that they finally deviate and lead others to deviation. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi writes: "I have observed that the deviating sectarian groups have all been led to deviation by their leaders. Those leaders follow a spiritual path. When they advance a little, they think that they have reached the final station and turn back, deviating and leading others to deviation" (*Mathnawī an-Nūriyah*, 224). For this reason, any spiritual path must be followed in the light of the rules of the Shari'ah.



144. He (God) said: “O Moses! Indeed I have chosen you above people by virtue of My Messages (that I have entrusted to you) and My speaking (to you). So (without aspiring to what is not for you), hold fast to what I have granted you, and (in return, with your every word and action) be of the thankful!”<sup>32</sup>

145. (Moses completed the term appointed by his Lord for him to be favored with the Book to order his people’s affairs.) And We recorded for him on the Tablets whatever is necessary as instruction and guidance (to follow the way to God), and as explanation for all matters. And (We said): “Hold fast to them with strength, and command your people to hold fast to the best thereof (fulfill the commandments in the best way

possible). I will soon show you the (ultimate) abode of the transgressors.”

146. I will turn away from My Revelations and signs those who act with haughtiness on the earth against all right. And though they see every sign (of the truth), they do not believe in it; and though they see the way of right guidance, they do not take it as a way to follow. But if they see the way of error and rebellion against the truth, they take it as a way to follow. That is because they deny Our Revelations and are ever heedless of them.

147. Those who deny Our Revelations and the meeting of the Hereafter – their works have been wasted. Or are they to be recompensed for anything but what they used to do?

148. The people of Moses, after (he had left them to meet with his Lord), adopted for worship a calf (in effigy, made) of their ornaments, which gave out a lowing sound.<sup>33</sup> Did they not see that it neither spoke to them nor guided them to a way? They adopted it for worship and so became wrongdoers (acting contrary to all the truths of creation and Divine commandments, and thereby wronging their very selves).<sup>34</sup>

149. When they realized in remorse that they earned nothing but ruin, and perceived that they had gone astray, they said: “If our Lord does not have mercy on us and forgive us, we will certainly be among the losers.”<sup>35</sup>

32. This verse gives a very important lesson: God the Almighty reminds even the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, who is one of His greatest Messengers, that he should not crave for what is beyond the favors bestowed on him. He means: "Be pleased with what I have favored you with, and try to do the duty of thanksgiving it requires." That is, God the Almighty bestows upon each and every one the exact favor which each can receive, and the favor bestowed upon each without the part of their free will (such as capacities, lifespan, physical structure, race and family, and the time and place of birth, and the like), is that which is best for each. So what everyone must do is simply being pleased with the favors bestowed upon them and, without making objections as to why certain other favors have not been bestowed upon them, try to fulfill the duty of thanksgiving required by those favors.

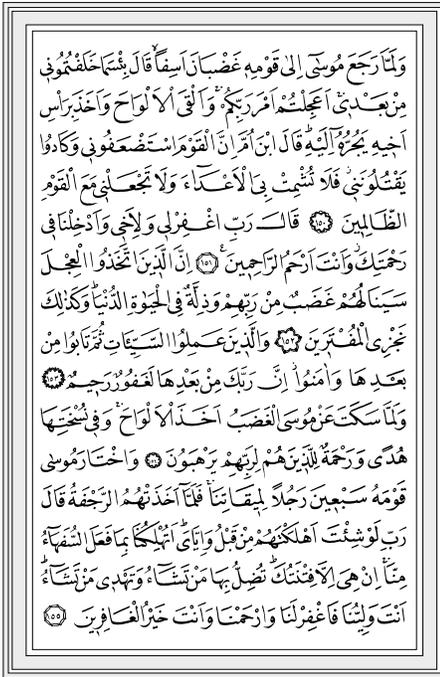
33. This verse contains three allusions to the character of the Children of Israel:

- The ancient Egyptians, among whom the Children of Israel lived for centuries, were mainly farmers, and due to the importance of animals in farming, they worshipped cattle. This idolatry penetrated their hearts so deeply that, as we can also see in verse 138 above, it would frequently reveal itself, despite the education Moses was providing. They still carried the traces of slavery in their souls.
- The Children of Israel were a people, like so many people of the past and present, who were often inclined towards weakness and corruption; therefore, they could benefit from strict controls over certain aspects of their lives.
- Like so many people of the past and pres-

ent, they were deeply attached to the world, and material wealth meant a great deal to them.

34. It is significant that in this verse speech and guidance are mentioned in connection with the Deity. God Almighty spoke to the Children of Israel through the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, whom He had specially favored with His address, and constantly guided them along their way from Egypt to Palestine. They openly witnessed these two great favors of God upon themselves. Despite this, and despite the fact that anything which cannot grant such favors cannot be a deity, they adopted the calf as a deity. This was a grave sin, no less than treating all the truths of creation, the universe, and Deity unjustly and, therefore, they wronged themselves.

35. As can clearly be seen in verses 137 and 142, as well as in this verse, the Qur'an sometimes mentions the result of something first, and then proceeds to narrate the events that led up to it, thus teaching us eloquence in the name of guidance. Verse 137 mentions the final result which would come about five centuries later, along with the more immediate one, namely the Exodus from Egypt. It then proceeds to relate some important events that took place after the Exodus. Verse 142 presents Moses' instruction to his brother before leaving for the mountain; this is described after mentioning his term of 40 days spent in the mountain, and the verses that follow relate his experiences on the mountain and what happened to his people in his absence. As for this verse, it draws attention to the consequence of worshipping the calf, while the verses that follow mention certain events prior to this event.



150. And when Moses (having received the Tablets and learned that his people had adopted a calf to worship) returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, he said: “Evil is the course you have followed after me! Have you forsaken your Lord’s commandment so hastily to hasten your destruction?” And he threw down the Tablets (to postpone enforcement of the laws therein until he put an end to this rebellion against faith in God’s absolute Oneness), and laid hold of his brother’s head, dragging him towards himself. He (Aaron) said: “Son of my mother! Indeed the people deemed me weak, and almost killed me. So let not my

enemies gloat over me, and do not count me among the wrongdoing people.”

151. He (Moses) said: “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother, and admit us in Your special Mercy, for You are the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate.”

152. Those who adopted the calf for worship – a severe punishment and condemnation from their Lord will indeed overtake them, and humiliation in this life of the world. Thus do We recompense those who fabricate falsehood (in attribution to God).<sup>36</sup>

153. But as for those who do evil deeds, but later turn to God in repentance and (truly) believe – after that (effort of self-reform) your Lord is assuredly All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially towards His servants who turn to Him).

154. And so when the anger subsided from Moses, He took up the Tablets (to put them into force). Inscribed on them was guidance and mercy for those who have awe of their Lord.

155. Moses chose of his people seventy men (to represent them) for Our appointment (on the mountain, in order to ask God for forgiveness for the calf-worship of some among them and to renew their covenant with Him). Then, when the shocking catastrophe seized them,<sup>37</sup> Moses said: “My Lord! Had You so willed, You would have destroyed them before, and me (along with them). Will You now destroy us for what the fools among us have done? This is a trial from You whereby You lead whom You will astray, and whom You will guide. You are Our Guardian (to Whom we entrust our affairs and on Whom we rely), so forgive us and have mercy on us! You are the Best in forgiving.

36. God punished those who adopted the calf for worship, but forgave the others. The others had not prevented the calf-worshippers from this deviance or apostasy. However, they repented after Moses’ return and God forgave them (See 2: 54; 4: 153).

37. This shocking catastrophe was an earthquake. It came because, despite all the manifest signs they had witnessed, the seventy men refused to believe that the commandments Moses brought were indeed from God unless they openly saw God speak to him.

وَاصْتَبْنَا لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدُّنَا  
 إِلَيْكَ قَالَ عَدَايَ أَصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَسَاءَ وَرَحْمَتِي  
 وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَاسْتَغْنِي لِلَّذِينَ يَشْقُونَ  
 وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾  
 الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْنُوبًا  
 عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ  
 عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ  
 وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
 فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ  
 الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ  
 إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ  
 السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ  
 فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ  
 وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَمَنْ  
 قَوْمٍ مُوسَى أَمَّهُ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

156. “Ordain for us good in this world as well as in the Hereafter, for we have turned to You, following Your way.” (God) said: “My punishment – I afflict with it whom I will (and no one can escape it except that I have mercy on him), and My Mercy embraces all things; and so, (although in the world every being has a share in My Mercy, in the Hereafter) I will ordain it for those who act in reverence for Me and piety and pay their Prescribed Purifying Alms, and they are those who truly believe in all of Our Revelations and signs.

157. They follow the (most illustrious) Messenger, the Prophet who neither reads nor writes (and has therefore remained preserved from any traces of the existing written culture and is free from any intellectual and spiritual pollution), whom they find described (with all his distinguishing features) in the Torah and the Gospel (that are) with them. He enjoins upon them what is right and good, and forbids them what is evil; he makes pure, wholesome things lawful for them, and bad, corrupt things unlawful. And he relieves them of their burdens (remaining of their own Law) and the restraints that were upon them. So those who believe in him (with all sincerity), honor and sup-

port him, and help him, and follow the Light (the Qur’an) which has been sent down with him – they are those who are the prosperous.”<sup>38</sup>

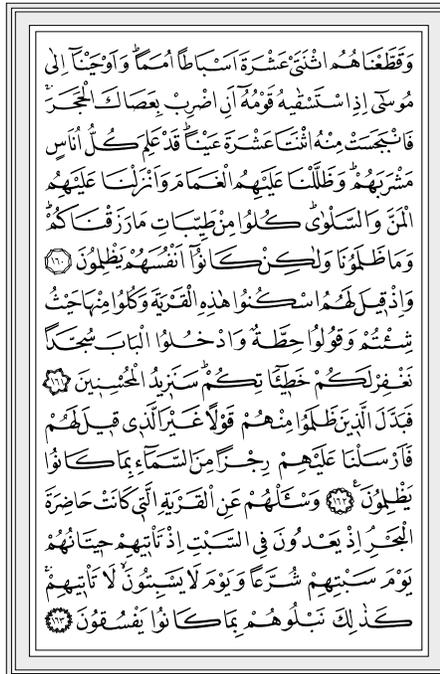
158. Say (O Messenger to all humankind): “O humankind! Surely I am a Messenger of God to all of you, of Him to Whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity but He. He gives life and causes to die.” Believe, then, in God and His Messenger, the Prophet who neither reads nor writes, who believes in God and His words (all His Books, commandments, and deeds); and follow him so that you may be rightly-guided.

159. And of the people of Moses, there was a community who guided by the truth (by God’s leave) and dispensed justice by it.

38. The Qur'ān suddenly, and in a purposeful style, jumps to the period of God's Messenger – the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings – and makes the acceptance of Moses' prayer for those who live in the Messenger's period dependent upon believing in, and following, both him and the Qur'ān. It gently reminds the People of the Book, especially the Children of Israel, of the fact that following their own Prophets and Books requires following God's Messenger and the Qur'ān; or in other words, believing in, and following, God's Messenger and the Qur'ān is the same as believing in and following their own Prophets and Books. It also warns that true prosperity can only be achieved by so doing, and thus once more refers to the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*. The verse to come will announce that the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings,

includes all human beings, and will explain the foundation upon which his mission is based.

Another point that is emphasized in this verse is that there were strict commandments in the Torah that were there due to the conditions of the time and the character of the Children of Israel; these commandments are what the Qur'ān describes as burdens and fetters. The Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, modified and lightened some of them (3: 50). God's Messenger removed all of them, and it is for this reason that Islam is described as the pure, primordial religion which is easy to follow. In the last verse of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the believers are taught to pray: "Our Lord, lay not on us a burden such as You laid on those gone before us (as required by the education they had to receive according to the time and conditions and to their disposition)."



160. We divided Moses' people into twelve tribes, forming them into communities. We revealed to Moses when his people asked him for water (on the occasion that they were left without water in the desert), saying: "Strike the rock with your staff!" And (as soon as he struck) there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Each tribe knew their drinking place. And We caused the cloud to shade them, and sent down upon them manna and quails: "Eat of the pure, wholesome things that We have provided for you." And (by disobeying Our commandments) they wronged not Us, but themselves they used to wrong.

161. And when they were told, "Dwell in this town and eat (of the fruits) thereof as you may desire, and say words of imploring forgiveness and loyalty to Him, and enter it (not through different ways with the aim of plundering it and massacring its people, but) through its gate humbly, and in utmost submission to God, so that We forgive you your misdeeds." We will in-

crease the reward for those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

162. But those among them who persisted in wrongdoing changed what had been said to them (regarding humility, imploring forgiveness, submission, and loyalty) for another saying (and acted contrarily to how they had been ordered). So We sent down on them a scourge from heaven because they were persistent in wrongdoing.<sup>39</sup>

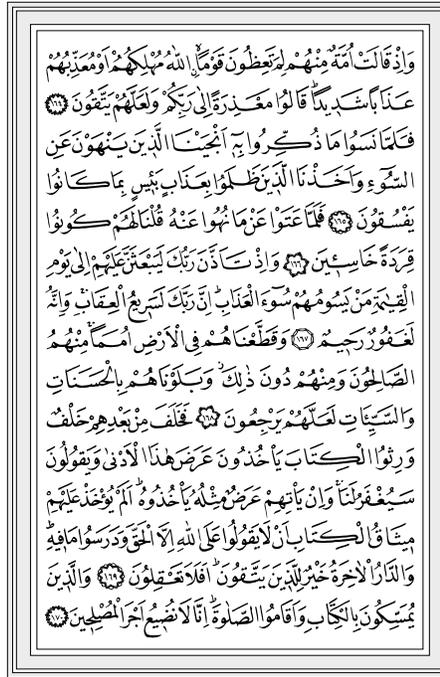
163. Ask them about the township that was by the sea: how its people were violating the Sabbath when their fish came swimming to them on the day of their Sabbath, but on the day they did not keep Sabbath, they did not come to them. Thus did We try them as they were transgressing (all bounds).<sup>40</sup>

39. See also *sūrah* 2: 57–60, notes 67–71.

40. God Almighty never tests a person or a people in order to mislead them. God has established the laws for the operation of the universe and life. Religion is also a collection of the laws God has established to order our personal and collective life and which He has conveyed to us through His Messengers. Just as these laws include our relationship with, and duty towards, all other creatures, they also include our relationship and duty towards our Creator, God. We come to know what will happen as a consequence of what we do either through the teachings of God sent to us through the Messengers or from the Books He has sent to them, or through our study of the universe and life. Everyone sees the consequence of their decisions and actions in life. We meet the consequences of both types of God's laws, the laws for the operation of the universe and life, and

the laws comprising religion. This is what God calls testing or trial. In this sense, all of life is a collection of trials.

If persons or communities continuously perform good deeds, they will find themselves in a "virtuous circle," where good deeds give rise to good results which, in turn, lead to good deeds again. If they continue to do evil, this time a vicious circle will appear whereby evil deeds yield evil results which, in turn, lead to evil deeds again. Either of these circles becomes "second nature" in a person. The Qur'ān also indicates this fact with expressions like, *Thus did We test them as they were transgressing all bounds (sūrah 7: 163); so taste the punishment for all (the sins) that you were busy earning (through your belief and deeds) (sūrah 7: 39); That is the Paradise that you have been made to inherit in return for what you used to do (in the world) (7: 43);* etc.



164. And when a community of people among them asked (others who tried to restrain the Sabbath-breakers): “Why do you preach to a people whom God will destroy or punish with a severe punishment?” They said: “So as to have an excuse before your Lord and so that they might keep from such disobedience in reverence for God.”

165. Then, when they became heedless of all that they had been reminded of, We saved those who had tried to prevent the evil-doing, and seized the others who had been doing wrong with an evil punishment for their transgressions.

166. Then, when they disdainfully persisted in doing what they had been forbidden to do, We said to them: “Be apes miserably slinking and rejected!”<sup>41</sup>

167. And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed that He would, until the Day of Resurrection, send forth against them those who would afflict them with the most evil of suffering. Your Lord is indeed swift in retribution (when it is due), and He is indeed the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate (especially towards those who turn to Him in repentance and His believing servants).<sup>42</sup>

168. And We have split them up on the earth as separate communities. Among them are those who are righteous, and those who are not; and We have tried them with blessings as well as with afflictions, that they might turn back (to the right way from the misleading paths they follow).

169. And there have succeeded after them new generations who inherited the Book, taking the gains of this low life (for which they sell it), and saying: “We will

be forgiven.” (Although by saying so they recognize what they do as a sin), if there comes to them the same sort of fleeting gains, they are ready to take them (instead of refraining). Was there not taken from them the solemn promise concerning the Book that they should say of God nothing but the truth, and are they not the people who have repeatedly studied and taught what is therein? But the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Will you not, then, reason and understand?

170. And as for those who hold fast to the Book sincerely and establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions – indeed We do not let waste the reward of those who are ever reforming (themselves and society), and setting things right.

41. For an explanation, see *sūrah* 2: 65, note 75.

42. This proclamation of God is restricted by both the conclusion of the verse, which declares that God is the All-Forgiving and the All-Compassionate, and the verse: *Ignominy has been their (the Jews') portion wherever they have been found except for (when they hold on to) a rope from God or a rope from other peoples*

(see *sūrah* 3: 112, note 24). So the verse means:

And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed that He would, until the Day of Resurrection, send forth against them those who would afflict them with the most evil of suffering, (so long as they persist in their wrongdoing and transgressions, and they do not hold on to a rope from God or a rope from other peoples).

171. And (remember) when We shook the Mount above them as if it were a canopy, and they thought that it was going to fall upon them: Hold firmly to (the Book) that We have given you and be mindful of (the commands and warnings) that it contains, that you may attain piety and due reverence for God, so deserving His protection (against any kind of deviancy and its consequent punishment in both this world and the Hereafter).

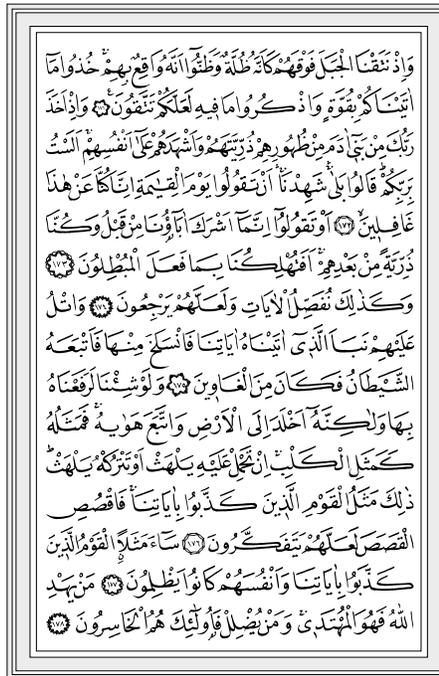
172. And (remember, O Messenger,) when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their offspring, and made them bear witness against themselves (asking them:) “Am I not your Lord?” They said: “Yes, we do bear witness.” (That covenant was taken) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “We were indeed unaware of this (fact that you are our Lord).”

173. Or lest you should say (in trying to excuse yourselves): “Our forefathers used to associate partners with God before us, and we were their offspring just following after them. Will You, then, ruin us for what those did who rejected Your Lordship and invented that false way (of associating partners with You)?”<sup>43</sup>

174. And thus do We set out in detail the signposts of Our way and the relevant Revelations (included in the Qur’ān), so that they may turn back (from their wrong ways to Us).

175. Tell them (based on Our Revelation) the story of him whom We made well-informed of Our signs and Revelations, but he cast them off, and Satan overtook him, and he became of those (followers of Satan) who rebel (against God’s way) and go astray.

176. If We had willed (to impede the way he chose by his free will), We could in-



deed have lifted him (towards the heaven of perfections enabled by faith) through those signs and Revelations, but (by his own free choice) he clung to the earth and followed his desires. So (in his being surrendered to greed), his likeness is that of a dog: if you move to drive it away, it pants with its tongue lolling out (still hoping to be fed more), or if you leave it, it pants with its tongue lolling out. Such is the likeness of those who deny Our signs and Revelations. So tell them this narrative, that they may (be stirred to) reflect.

177. How evil an example are the people who deny Our signs and Revelations, and (in so doing) are ever wronging themselves.

178. He whom God guides, he is indeed rightly guided; and he whom He leads astray – they are the losers.

43. The event mentioned in verse 172 is of great significance in understanding the existential position of humanity and its relationship with God. We can summarize its meaning and importance as follows:

- As God cannot be contained in time or space, nothing exists and no event takes place in relation to Him within the framework of the past, the present, or the future. It is human beings that are contained in time and space, and it is we who view all things and events within the framework of time and space. So, in relation to God, it is meaningless to ask when and where He spoke to us.
- When viewed from our perspective and within the framework of time and space, creation follows a descending and ascending line that passes through many stages or realms. Just as an article, for instance, has many stages of existence, like existing in the mind of the writer, and then as a plan, and then in a written form, so too, every being has a primordial existence in God's Knowledge, then as a general form determined by Destiny, and then in the stages of its material existence. Since our consciousness comes not from our corporeal being, but rather from our spiritual existence, it is completely possible that God may have spoken to us before He sent us, or may speak after He has sent us, to the world, through our spirit or our nature. Some people whom God has enabled to acquire such spiritual refinement that they are able to live at the life-level of the spirit and heart, and therefore able to travel in these realms, can remember the incident mentioned in the verse, namely God taking from them the primordial covenant.
- It is very important to note that the covenant God received from all human beings is binding on them, to the extent that we must remember it and cannot defend ourselves in the Hereafter by simply saying that we were unaware of it. Therefore, this covenant must have an objective reality. We can find this reality in the Prophetic Tradition: "Every new born child is born with a primordial nature and disposition inclined to Islam (al-Bukhārī, "Janā'iz," 80)." Despite this, as

stated in the continuation of this same Prophetic Tradition, the human disposition to find God and the innate inclination to find Him can be obscured by the family, environment or education received, and in many verses such as, *Say (to them): "Tell me, if some punishment of God comes upon you or the Last Hour comes upon you, do you then invoke other than God? (Answer that) if you are truthful (and admit the voice of your conscience)"!* (sūrah 6: 40); the Qur'ān stresses that the human conscience cannot help but be aware of Him in certain circumstances. God has inculcated in everyone's conscience a point where we seek help, and a point where we seek support. Both manifest themselves at various times, especially when one is left with no apparent, material means of escaping from danger or difficulties, and one feels that there is no way out other than turning to God. Even if most people behave as if they have had no such experience when they reach safety, every one has had some such experience several times in their lives. A person can deny God when they are under the influence of their carnal soul, directed by Satan, but every truth, becomes manifest when they die and are left with no other choice but to acknowledge that they have felt deeply and many times during their worldly life the Existence of God, and that He is their Lord, and protected them during their worldly life many times against dangers that appeared unexpectedly.

- The expression *made them bear witness against themselves*, draws our attention to the fact that, although we are innately aware of God's Existence and His being our Lord, our carnal soul does not want to accept and acknowledge His Existence or His being our Lord. This is because it desires to live in whatever way it wishes, satisfying all of its ambitions and appetites without recognizing any power that may be able to restrict it. But the carnal soul cannot prevent its owner, the human being, from feeling and acknowledging God's Existence and being aware of the fact that He is our Lord in our conscience, although this acknowledgment goes against the carnal soul.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ  
بِهَا وَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ أذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا  
أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَسَاوِيلُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ وَلِلَّهِ  
الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ  
سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ  
بِالْحَقِّ وَيَبْغُونَ بِالْكَذِبِ وَإِنَّا بِمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ لَخَبِيرُونَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ  
مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ وَأَمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ كَيْدٌ مِّمَّنْ ﴿١٧٧﴾ أَوَلَمْ  
يَنْفَكِرُوا مَا بَصَّاحِهِمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أُنزِلُوا لِآبَدٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾  
أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ  
مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَإِنْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِيرًا قَرِيبًا جَاهِلُهُمْ فِيمَا تَحَدَّثُ بِهِ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾ مَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَسِّرْ لَهُمْ  
طُغْيَانَهُمْ يَوْمَ هُمْ يَبْكُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ إِنَّا نَمُرِّيْبُهُمَا  
قُلْ اسْمَاعِلْهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَيَجْلِبَنَّ لَوْ قَبَّلَ الْأَهْوَىٰ تَمَلَّتْ فِي  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَأَنَابِيكُمْ إِنَّا بَعَثْنَا لَبِئْسَ لَوْ تَكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمَنَّىٰ  
قُلْ اسْمَاعِلْهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَكْفَىٰ النَّاسَ لَاجِلُونَ ﴿١٨١﴾

179. Surely, among the jinn and human-kind are many that We have created (and destined for) Hell (knowing that they would deserve it). They have hearts with which they do not seek the essence of matters to grasp the truth, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle (following only their instincts) – rather, even more astray (from the right way and in need of being led). Those are the unmindful and heedless.

180. To God belong the All-Beautiful Names, so call and pray to Him by them.<sup>44</sup> And keep aloof from those who blaspheme (and distort the meaning of) His Names. They will be recompensed for what they are doing.

181. And of those whom We have created, there are people who (in due recognition of God with His Names,) guide by the truth (by God’s leave) and dispense justice by it.

182. Whereas those who deny Our signs and Revelations, (as the consequence of their way,) We will step by step lead them on to perdition in ways they do not know.

183. I grant them respite. My designing is firm and impossible to resist.

184. And do they not reflect (by all that they witness in the Messenger and the Revelations coming to him) that there is no madness in their companion (the Prophet Muḥammad)? He is but a plain warner.

185. And do they never consider the inner dimension of the heavens and the earth and God’s absolute dominion over them, and what things God has created, and that

the end of their appointed term may already have approached? In what other discourse than this (warning contained in the Qur’ān) will they believe?

186. Whomever God leads astray there is no one to guide him; and He leaves them wandering blindly in their rebellion.

187. They ask you about the Hour, when it will come to anchor. Say: “It is my Lord alone Who knows it; none will disclose it in its time but He. It weighs heavily on the heavens and the earth. It does not come to you except unawares.” They ask you as if you (being a Messenger required or meant that you) were well-informed of it. Say: “It is indeed God alone Who knows it, but most people have no knowledge (of this).”

44. A perfectly written article demonstrates the perfection of the act or work of writing, which, in turn, demonstrates the perfection of the title “author.” This title is a sign of the perfection of the attribute of authorship, which, in turn, demonstrates the perfection of the talent for or ability in writing possessed by the author. And this capacity indicates the perfect writer who has written the article. Similarly, the perfection of creation or the universe demonstrates the perfection of the act of creation which, in turn, indicates the perfection of the title of the Creator. The perfection of the title is a sign of the perfection of the attribute of creativity, which, in turn, demonstrates the perfection of the essential, indispensable quality of having the “ability” to create. And the perfection of this indispensable quality or ability shows the perfection of the Being Who has it.

An article displays many other abilities or qualities, such as knowledge, fluency in writing, eloquence, the will to write, and the abilities to write, to arrange, and to express one’s opinions; in short, there are many titles such as scholar, author, and organizer. The universe displays many Attributes and Titles or Names of God in the same way. Since it must be the product only of a perfect, infinite knowledge, will, and power, we can deduce from this that God is All-Knowing, All-Willing, and All-Powerful. Similarly, as the universe also displays the acts of forming, giving shape, and adorning, etc., and many attributes, such as infinite

mercy, munificence, justice, wisdom, grace, and purity, etc., we can deduce that God is All-Merciful, All-Munificent, All-Just, All-Wise, All-Gracious, and All-Pure. This means that the universe, with whatever is in it, points to the Names of God which originate in His Attributes. These, in turn, originate in His Essential, Indispensable Qualities of being God, and these qualities have their source in God Himself, as the Divine Essence or Being. One or some of these Names are more manifested in a being, with other Names being subordinate; this is what gives it its essence with its particular characteristics. This causes differences among beings. For example, human beings on whom the Divine Name, the All-Generous is more manifested than on others are potentially more generous; those on whom the Name, the All-Knowing is more manifested become more knowledgeable potentially, and those on whom the Name, the All-Wise is more manifested, generally become wiser, and so on.

We call and must call God by His Names which He taught us, and we cannot, and must never, call Him by names that are not compatible with His absolute perfection. Also, we pray to Him by mentioning His Names. For example, if we are ill and pray to Him for recovery, we pray to Him as the All-Healing, and mention this Name. If we feel we need provision and compassion, we pray to Him as or mentioning His Names the All-Providing and the All-Merciful. This is what is meant in this verse.



46. Some elementary school teachers in some Muslim lands used to enter their classrooms with sweets in their pockets and, in order to avert young minds from belief in God, would ask the students, “Ask God for sweets and see whether He will give you any!” When, naturally, the students did not receive their sweets, using the most primitive method of dialectics, the teacher then would say: “Now ask me and see whether I will give you any!” This was the basest and most primitive way of thinking that history has ever seen, conceiving of God as being of the same as the created. Like Abraham’s challenging Nimrod to make the sun rise from the west, as opposed to how God makes it rise from the east, this verse, too, provides an answer to such primitive modes of thinking. The operation of the universe, like its creation, is included in God’s acts; these are not based on partial wisdom, taking into consideration individual entities as being independent from others, but rather are based on the universal wisdom, considering the universe both as a whole and with every individual entity in it, and the universe’s relationships with individual entities as well as the relationships among those entities.

Among beings, humans have the most developed consciousness and the greatest ability to do or bring about something; yet most aspects of our lives are independent of us. For example, we have no say in the matter of our color, race, family, physique, and the date and place of our birth and death. Our bodies work automatically, according to a system established by the Creator and independently of us. Our vital needs, such as hunger, thirst, respiration, and sleeping keep us always under their grip and, therefore, we cannot overcome them; rather, we are compelled to live bound to these needs. However, we observe a magnificent, perfect coordination and harmony between our lives, our needs, the composition and working of our bodies, and the “natural” environment that surrounds us. If, despite all this and the magnificent order of the universe with whatever is in it that demonstrates the existence of an absolute, all-including knowledge, will, and power, we deny that there is One Who possesses them, then this is nothing less than self-deception. Denial of God

is the deepest abyss into which we can fall, the darkest ignorance, the basest choice, the meanest lie, and it means abandoning reason, consciousness, and the power of thought.

God makes humankind aware of His Existence in many other ways. Everyone has experienced how some of their needs have been met unexpectedly; some of our inward prayers, those that appear in the form of desires, have been answered; an unseen hand has come to our aid in an impossible situation or we have been saved from a danger when left without any other means. But, in order to be able to deny the Existence of a Supreme Being, people attribute all these to chance or coincidence; both are in fact nothing more than mere designations, and attributing the creation and direction of the universe and events to them is the greatest and most shameful of crimes. In the face of such an unforgivable crime, committed by many in the world, including many scientists, it is not possible to perceive and acknowledge how great a blessing belief is, how valuable a gift He grants us almost for nothing.

The verse to come will explain that anything substituted for God – be it nature or chance or matter or causality or an idol – must possess power, seeing, and hearing. In the universe, there are beings, like animals and humanity, which have these powers. Seeing that it is not these beings themselves who create with such faculties; seeing that their lives pass independently of themselves to a great extent; and seeing that anyone who does not have these powers cannot impart them to others, there must be one who possesses them and imparts them to others. What a great pity it is that in the present age, which we call the age of science, many scientists cannot see this most manifest reality; this is a reality which even the people who lived in the most “primitive” ages could see. The reason many refuse to see this nowadays is merely in order to deny the Existence of God, and to attribute existence to such idols as matter, nature, chance, and causality, which have no knowledge, consciousness, seeing, or hearing. This is a most heinous deception on their part and a trick that their carnal selves, caprices, and satans play on them.