46. Wealth and children are an adornment of the present, worldly life, but the good, righteous deeds (based on faith and) which endure are better in the sight of your Lord in bringing reward and better to aspire for.

47. (Bear in mind) the Day when We set the mountains in motion, and you see the earth denuded, and We raise to life and gather them together (all those who are content with themselves, deluded by the charms of the world), leaving out none of them.

48. They are arrayed before your Lord, (Whom they disregarded in the world), all lined up (without discrimination of wealth or status as in the world, and they are told): “Now, indeed, you have come to Us (divested of all worldly things) as We created you in the first instance – though you used to suppose that We had not appointed for you a meeting with Us.”

49. And the Record (of everyone’s deeds) is set in place; and you will see the disbelieving criminals filled with dread because of what is in it, and they will say: “Alas, woe is ours! What is this Record? It leaves out nothing, be it small or great, but it is accounted!” They have found all that they did confronting them (in the forms thereof particular to the Hereafter). And Your Lord wrongs no one.

50. And (recall) when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam!” and they all prostrated, but Iblīs did not; he was of the jinn (created before humankind, from smokeless, scorching fire), and transgressed against his Lord’s command. Will you, then, take him and his offspring for guardians (to rely on and refer your affairs to) rather than Me, when they are an enemy to you? How evil an exchange for the wrongdoers!

51. I did not make them (Iblīs and his offspring) witnesses to the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own selves, nor did I (being absolutely beyond need) ever take as helpers those that lead (humankind) astray.

52. The Day (will come when) He will say, “Now call upon all those whom you alleged to be My partners.” Thereupon they will invoke them, but they will not respond to them, and We will place between them an unbridgeable gulf.

53. And the disbelieving criminals will see the Fire and know certainly that they are bound to fall into it, and they will find no way of escape from it.
21. This means that Satan was not of the angels, as the Qur’an openly declares that the angels are sinless, always doing what they are commanded by God and never disobeying Him ( sûrah 16: 49–50; sûrah 66: 6). Satan belongs to the species of the jinn, which, like humankind, have free will and can either obey or disobey God.

If it is asked why God also ordered him to prostrate before Adam, upon him be peace, after having made the same order to the angels, the answer is: The prostration of the angels was an action signifying that they affirm the degree of knowledge and superiority of Adam and the fact that he deserves the vicegerency on the earth. Among the angels, there are many who are charged with life on the earth and aiding humankind in many aspects of their lives. Therefore, their prostration also means that God commanded them to help humankind to perform our duty on the earth. Those angels are also the representatives of the earthly creatures in God’s Presence, and humans are the masters of these creatures. Satan, who belongs to the jinn, is an earthly creature and has duties toward humankind. When our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, took the oath of allegiance from the jinn in the valley of Baṭn an-Nakhlah, he wanted them to appear to his community either in their own form or in other agreeable forms, not in the forms of harmful animals like dogs and scorpions. He also warned his community, saying: “When you see any vermin in your house, say to it three times: ‘For the sake of God, leave here!’ For it may be from your jinn friends. If it does not leave, it is not from the jinn. Then you are permitted to kill it, if it is harmful.” The jinn who gave allegiance to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, promised him: “If your community recites basmalah (the formula In [and with] the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate) before anything they do, and cover all their dishes, we will touch neither their food nor their drink.” We do not know how they eat of our food or drink of our beverages. Another Tradition says: “(When you have relieved yourselves) do not clean yourselves with bones and dried pieces of dung, for they are among the foods of your jinn brothers.” (at-Tirmidhī, “Ṭahārah,” 14; al-Bukhārī, “Manāqib al-Anṣār,” 32; Muslim, “Salām,” 139, 140) All these Traditions show that there is an important relation between humankind and the jinn, and this relationship is a requirement of human earthly life, which is why God also ordered Satan to prostrate before Adam. But he refused and, despite being eternally excluded from God’s Mercy, he was granted respite until the Day of Judgment as a dimension of humankind’s being tested on the earth, and he was given the ability to whisper to humankind in order to mislead us.

The verse also mentions Satan’s offspring. This may mean either that Satan has a wife and begets children or, as mentioned in sûrah 17: 64, that he has a share in the children of human beings, or both. Some human beings become like Satan.

22. What right do Iblīs and his offspring – satans (devils) – have to be taken as guardians, whom humankind should obey and refer their affairs to, seeing that they themselves are created beings in absolute need of God and not their own masters? Neither the satans of humankind nor of the jinn, in fact, no created being, has the right to impose their rules and views upon others. Such a being is not even their own master, does not play the least part in their coming into existence, the choice of their family, brothers and sisters, the place and date of their birth and death, or their color and physique. Therefore no one has any right to impose their rules and views upon others.
54. Assuredly We have set out in diverse ways for humankind in this Qur’an all kinds of parables and comparisons (to help them understand the truth); but human is, above all else, given to contention.

55. What is there to keep people from believing when guidance has come to them, and from imploring their Lord for forgiveness – unless it be that they follow the way of the (sinful) people of the olden times as if wishing for their fate to come upon them, or the punishment (which they did not believe in but asked their Prophet, in derision, to bring down upon them) comes and confronts them? (Then, indeed, they would have no opportunity to implore forgiveness and hope for relief).

56. We send the Messengers (not as bearers of punishment) but as bearers of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness) and warners (against the evil consequences of misguidance), whereas those who disbelieve contend on the basis of falsehood in order to refute the truth thereby; and they take My Revelations and that (the punishment) of which they are warned in mockery.

57. Who is more in the wrong than he who has been reminded of his Lord’s Revelations and signs, yet turns away from them and forgets all that his hands have forwarded (to the reckoning in the future life). Surely over their hearts We have laid veils (made up of their ill-intention, wrongdoing, and arrogance, which caused them to lose the ability to believe,) so that they do not grasp (the Qur’an with faith and understanding), and in their ears, a heaviness (so they do not hear the Qur’an). And if you call them to guidance, they will never even then accept guidance.

58. Your Lord is the All-Forgiving, having infinite Mercy. If He were to take them immediately to task for what they have earned, surely He would hasten on the punishment for them; but for them is an appointed time-limit, beyond which they will never find an escape (from God’s punishment).

59. And (that was the case with) all those townships that We destroyed when they were given to wrong. We had surely appointed a time fixed for their destruction.

60. (Now relate to them, O Messenger, the experience of Moses): When Moses said to his (young) attendant: “I will not give up (journeying) until I reach the junction of the two seas, though I may march on for ages.”

61. When they reached the junction of the two (seas), they forgot their fish, and it took its way amazingly through the sea as in an underground channel.
62. So when they had passed further on, Moses said to his attendant: “Bring us our morning meal; assuredly we have endured much fatigue in this journey of ours.”

63. (The servant) said: “Would you believe it? When we betook ourselves to that rock for a rest, I forgot about (our cooked) fish – and none but Satan caused me to forget to mention it (to you) – and it took its way into the sea in an amazing way!”

64. (Moses) said: “That is what we have been seeking!” So they retraced their footsteps.

65. And they found (there) one of Our servants to whom We had granted a (special) mercy from Us and taught him special knowledge from Our Presence.

66. Moses said to him: “May I follow you so that you may teach me something of the knowledge of guidance which you have been taught?”

67. He said: “You will never be able to have patience with being in my company.

68. “How could you be patient about something that you have never encompassed in your knowledge?”

69. (Moses) said: “You will find me patient, if God so wills and allows me to, and I will not disobey you in anything.”

70. (Al-Khadr) explained: “Well, if you go with me, do not ask me concerning anything (that I may do) until I myself make mention of it to you.”

71. So they set forth until, when they embarked on the boat, he (Al-Khadr) made a hole in it. (Moses) said: “Have you made a hole in it in order to drown its people (who would be using it)? You have certainly done an awful thing!”

72. He said: “Did I not tell you that you would never be able to have patience with being in my company?”

73. (Moses) said: “Do not take me to task because I forgot, and do not overburden me in my affair (in what you ask of me).”

74. So they went on until, when they met a young boy, he (Al-Khadr) killed him. (Moses) said: “Have you killed an innocent soul (not in lawful retaliation but) without his having killed anyone? Assuredly you have done a horrible thing!”
23. As we know, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, is one of the five greatest Messengers (42: 13) to whom God granted a Book as a guidance for all aspects of people’s lives. As God’s Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, stated, once one from among Moses’ community asked him if there was any of God’s servants on whom He bestowed more knowledge than him. The Almighty informed him of the existence of one of His servants on whom He bestowed a special mercy and special knowledge from His Presence (al-Bukhārī, “Kitāb at-Tafsīr,” 18).

This means that that servant’s knowledge was not of the kind which everyone can possess. Even the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, did not have it. In reports from the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, that servant was called al-Khadr or al-Khidr. Al-Khadr, which must have been a title he had been given, means “the green one” and signifies life. As quoted in note 2: 120 from Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, human life consists of five degrees, and al-Khadr possesses the second degree of life, which is free to some extent from the necessities of our life. He can be present in different places at the same time. The revival of the cooked fish implies al-Khadr’s special mission and represents enduring life.

Existence does not consist in only the visible, material world. Beyond it, like the appearances in facing walls of mirrors, there are many other worlds or dimensions of existence, each inner one being more refined than the outer one before it. Although we accept that Moses and his attendant traveled on the earth until reaching a point where two seas met, this journey had a spiritual aspect and therefore was like a spiritual journey toward God. So the point Moses and his young servant reached signifies the junction of the material and spiritual worlds. The revival of the fish suggests that they had just entered the field of al-Khadr, where everything is enduringly alive in some way. This journey is truly a tiring one. In order to attain some of the knowledge that had been specially given to al-Khadr, Moses had to make this journey, a journey which corresponds to the spiritual journey to God Almighty.

According to some reports from God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the young, virtuous servant (ifātā, for the meaning of which see note 5 in this sūrah) was Yūshā (Joshua) son of Nun, who would later succeed the Prophet Moses, upon them be peace.

24. These verses are stating that the knowledge taught to al-Khadr is not of the kind which had been taught to Moses up until that point. That was because the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was a Messenger whose mission was to guide or lead people in life according to God’s commandments. That is, he was the leader or guide of (his) people living on the earth; he was responsible for their guidance, and they were a people greatly varied in intelligence and understanding. Guiding people in life and teaching them how to live according to God’s commandments in order to please Him is the greatest mission, and the knowledge inherent in this is the most valuable and important of all. As for al-Khadr, although it has not been established if he was a Prophet or a saintly person, God’s referring to Himself using the first plural form of noun while mentioning him (one of Our servants to whom We had granted a mercy as a grace from Us and taught a special knowledge from Our Presence – verse 65 above) and al-Khadr’s using the same form in explaining his actions (verse 81 below) and referring them to God (verse 82), suggest that, even though not in the special sense of the concept, he was also a Messenger or an envoy with special mission. However, he had knowledge on some special matters which we will examine in the following verses; these do not interest the majority of people and they are not compulsory to learn. For this reason, it was not a defect on the part of Moses, upon him be peace, that he did not have such knowledge, nor did the fact that al-Khadr had the knowledge mean that he was superior to Moses, upon him be peace. The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace
and blessings, sheds light on this matter, saying: “Al-Khadr told Moses: ‘I have a kind of knowledge that you do not have; and you have a kind of knowledge that I do not have.’ ” (al-Bukhārī, “Kitāb at-Tafsīr,” 18).

25. It is highly interesting that there is no mention of Moses’ young attendant after Moses met with al-Khadr, and that just the two of them made the mysterious journey. When we take into consideration Moses’ experience in its totality and the identity of al-Khadr, upon him be peace, along with the knowledge given to him, we can conclude that this journey did not take place in the corporeal realm. Many people can have dream-like experiences while awake, which are called mushēhadah (vision, witnessing). The spirit enters the incorporeal realm of “forms,” or “ideas,” or “symbols” (al-ʿĀlam al-Mithāl) and has a vision of some truths. This vision resembles true dreams, with the exception that dreams are experienced while asleep, whereas people have such a vision or experience while awake. Like dreams, the mushēhadah is quite brief. Although there may be other people next to the one who is having such an experience or vision, they remain unaware of it. For this reason, while Moses and al-Khadr had this mysterious journey, Moses’ young attendant did not accompany them, even though he was with them.

So, the journey that Moses and al-Khadr took resembles the spiritual vision we have just described. However, God favors even common believers with such visions. Therefore, Moses and al-Khadr may have made this mysterious journey in the incorporeal realm of forms or ideas with both their spirits and bodies; their bodies had temporarily gained the degree of refinement of the astral body, energetic form, or envelope of the spirit (see Appendix 12). There is resemblance between this journey and the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as well as that of Jesus’ being taken from the world; the differences being that this journey may have been made in the world of ideas or forms. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, made the Ascension in all the higher dimensions or worlds of existence with his spirit and his body, which became so refined as to be almost identical with the “astral” body of the spirit. After the Ascension, he preferred to return to the world to continue to guide people and to complete the preaching of Islam. As for the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, since his mission as a Messenger had ended, he was taken from the world with his spirit and body, which also became identical with the astral body of his spirit and remained in “heaven” where he had been elevated. (God knows best.)
75. He said: “Did I not tell you that you would never be able to have patience with being in my company?”

76. (Moses) said: “If I should ever question you about anything after this, keep me no more in your company. You have already received (full) excuse from me.”

77. So they went on until when they came upon the people of a township, they asked its people for food, but they refused them hospitality. They found there a wall which was on the verge of tumbling down, and he (al-Khadr) restored it. (Moses) said: “If you had wished, you could have taken payment for it.”

78. He (al-Khadr) said: “This is the parting of ways between me and you. I will tell you the meaning of what you were unable to bear patiently.

79. “As for the boat, it belonged to some destitute people who worked on the sea – and I wished to damage it, for there was a king after them who was seizing every boat by force.

80. “And as for the young boy, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should oppress them with rebellion and unbelief.

81. “So we wished that their Lord would grant them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer in affection (to his parents).

82. “And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and beneath it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father had been a righteous man. So your Lord willed that they should come of age and bring forth their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not do this (any of the actions that you witnessed) of my own accord. This is the meaning of all (those events) with which you were unable to have patience.”

83. And they ask you (O Messenger) about Dhu’l-Qarnayn. Say: “I will recite to you a mention of him (quoting the Almighty).”
26. Any event which takes place in life has an apparent meaning and reason pertaining to the people involved in it, and a true meaning and reason pertaining to Divine Destiny. Destiny takes into consideration both the whole of creation and events from the time of Adam, upon him be peace, to the Last Day, and each individual person and event at the same time. It never wrongs anybody; it always does justice, and this justice usually dwells on mercy. Whatever good reaches one, it is because of the Divine Mercy, although a person has little share in it; but whatever one suffers is completely due to one’s own errors. However, the Almighty forgives many of His servants’ errors and never hastens to punish; He gives respite so that people may mend their ways. But if He punishes a servant, it is absolutely what that servant deserves. As Said Nursi reminds us, a court may pass a sentence on us because of a crime we did not commit and thus carry out an injustice; but Destiny allows this sentence to be passed on us because of another crime which we did commit, yet which has remained unknown.

We understand from the Prophet Moses’ experience with al-Khadr, upon them be peace, that the latter’s mission is in connection with the inner, true meaning and reasons of events. But we judge according to the apparent reasons; this does not mean that we are not obliged to investigate the truth. But we cannot judge according to future expectations. Even if we have foreknowledge about something which will take place in the future, this cannot be a basis for our judgment. For this reason, those events may, as pointed out above, have taken place in the world of forms or ideas in which the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, journeyed in the company of al-Khadr. According to the religious rules and laws that God has laid down for our worldly life, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was right to make his objections. But what al-Khadr did was not wrong; his mission pertained to the world of Destiny. God may have desired to teach Moses the true nature of Destiny and the true meaning of events, many of which people are unable to grasp. Whatever God does is absolute justice, and everyone gets what they deserve. Moreover, God is the All-Compassionate and overlooks many of His servants’ errors ( sûrah 42: 30, 34).

27. By recounting the experience of the Prophet Moses with al-Khadr, upon them be peace, after the stories of the People of the Cave and the orchards of the two men, the Qur’ân is suggesting that for a faith movement, spiritual profundity and discovery of the inner meaning of existence and events are important.

28. There are different views about the identity of Dhu’l-Qarnayn. It is not of great importance who he really was in history. What is important is what the Qur’ân intends to teach by this narration.

Like al-Khadr, it is not certain whether Dhu’l-Qarnayn was a Prophet or not, but God’s referring to Himself with the first plural form of the noun while narrating His speech to him (verse 86 below) can be seen as an allusion to Dhu’l-Qarnayn having a special mission. The expression of the Divine Revelation with the word “say” also suggests Messengership, if it is not used to mean inspiration; while when it is expressed with the verb “reveal,” it can suggest Messengership, Prophethood, or sainthood. For example, God’s revelation to a bee ( sûrah 16: 68) is Divine guidance and direction, while it is inspiration when it is sent to someone like Moses’ mother, who was not a Prophet or Messenger ( sûrah 28: 7). However, what is clear concerning Dhu’l-Qarnayn is that, as reported by ‘Ali, the beloved Companion of the Prophet, and fourth Caliph, he was a righteous servant of God who loved and was loved by God (Yazîr, 5: 3279).
84. We surely established him with power in the land, and for everything (that he rightly purposed), We granted him a way (the just means appropriate to just ends).

85. One such way he followed,

86. Until, when he reached the setting-place of the sun, he saw it setting in a spring of hot and black muddy water, and nearby he found a people. We said: “O Dhu'l-Qarnayn! You can either punish them or you can treat them with kindness. (Which way will you choose?)”

87. He said: “As for him who does wrong (by disbelieving in Him or associating partners with Him and oppressing others), we will punish him; and then he is brought back to his Lord, and He punishes him in an indescribable manner.

88. “But as for him who believes and does good, righteous deeds, for him there is recompense of the best, and we will speak to him an easy word of Our command (we will charge him with easy tasks).”

89. Then he followed another way,

90. Until, when he reached the rising-place of the sun and found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter against it.

91. So it was (such was their state and the extent of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's power). We assuredly encompassed all concerning him in Our Knowledge.

92. Then he followed another way,

93. Until, when he reached (a place) between two mountain-barriers, he found before them a people who scarcely understood a word.

94. They said: “O Dhu'l-Qarnayn! Gog and Magog are causing disorder in this land. May we pay you a tribute so that you set a barrier between us and them?”

95. He said: “What my Lord has established me in (the power that He has granted me on this earth) is better (than what you offer). So help me with strength (manpower) and I will set a strong rampart between you and them.

96. “Bring me blocks of iron.” Then, when he had filled up (the space between) the two steep mountain-sides, he said: “(Light a fire and) work your bellows!” At length, when he had made it (glow red like) fire, he said: “Bring me molten copper that I may pour upon it.”

97. And they (Gog and Magog) were no longer able to surmount, nor were they able to dig their way through (the barrier).
29. The Qur’ān, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago and is valid until Judgment Day, pursues four main purposes: it seeks to establish in minds and hearts the Existence and Unity of God, Prophethood, bodily Resurrection, and the worship of God and justice. It addresses all times and places, and it is aimed at all levels of understanding. It is an accepted fact that the people of average understanding in every community, in every age, constitute its great majority. Therefore, in order to guide everyone to the truth and to its basic purposes, the Qur’ān considers the level of that majority, who usually follow their eye-perceptions. However, this never means that it ignores the existence of knowledge-able ones among humankind. So, it uses such styles that an ordinary person with average intellect can benefit from the Qur’ān, while prominent scientists, no matter in which field of science they have expertise, can also have their share in it. It sometimes uses symbolic language and frequently resorts to metaphors, allegories, comparisons, and parables. Those who are well-versed in knowledge (3: 7) know how to approach the Qur’ān and benefit from it, and they conclude that the Qur’ān is the Word of God.

So, by the setting-place of the sun, he saw it setting in a spring of hot and black muddy water, the Qur’ān means that Dhu’l-Qarnayn marched a long way toward the west and went as far as the point where he (probably) saw a sea or ocean, appearing like a spring. The description of the sea or ocean as a spring of hot and black muddy water suggests that he had reached that point in the hottest days of summer when vaporization was at its greatest.

The expressions the setting-place of the sun and the rising-place of the sun (verse 90 in the sūrah) also denote that Dhu’l-Qarnayn made long military trips toward the east and west.

30. Verses 89–91 mean that Dhu’l-Qarnayn went forth eastward and, conquering one land after another, he reached the farthest territory of the then civilized world. Those living in that territory were primitive people who had no clothes or buildings to protect them from the sun. God Almighty does not inform us of how Dhu’l-Qarnayn treated them. However, it may be inferred from the verses that being a beloved servant of God and a just, righteous conqueror equipped with every kind of correct means to attain all correct ends, Dhu’l-Qarnayn may have invited them to the right path and they may have made some advances in the way of civilization. The observations of some Western writers on the transformative power of Islam can give us a clue in this respect.

Below are the impressions of the influence of Islam on native Africans, as written by a Westerner in the nineteenth century:

As to the effects of Islam when first embraced by a Negro tribe, can there, when viewed as a whole, be any reasonable doubt? Polytheism disappears almost instantaneously; and magic, with its attendant evils, gradually dies away. The general moral elevation is most marked; the natives begin for the first time in their history to dress, and neatly. Squalid filth is replaced by some approach to personal cleanliness; hospitality becomes a religious duty; drunkenness, instead of the rule, becomes a comparatively rare exception... chastity is looked upon as one of the highest, and becomes, in fact, one of the commoner virtues. It is idleness that henceforward degrades, and industry that elevates, instead of the reverse. Offences are henceforward measured by a written code instead of the arbitrary caprice of a chieftain – a step, as everyone will admit, of vast importance in the progress of a tribe. The Mosque gives an idea of architecture at all events higher than any the Negro has yet had. A thirst for literature is created and that for works of science and philosophy, as well as for commentaries on the Qur’ān (Ezzati, quoting from B. Smith, Muhammad and Muhammadism, 111-112, 117-118, 231).

Isaac Taylor, in his speech delivered at the Church Congress of England about the effects and influence of Islam on people, said the following:

When Muhammadanism (mislabeling
for Islam by some Westerners as the result of an incorrect comparison of Islam with Christianity (Aū) is embraced, paganism, fetishism, infanticide and witchcraft disappear. Filth is replaced by cleanliness and the new convert acquires personal dignity and self-respect. Immodest dances and promiscuous intercourse of the sexes cease; female chastity is rewarded as a virtue; industry replaces idleness; license gives place to law; order and sobriety prevail; blood feuds, cruelty to animals and slaves are eradicated... Islam swept away corruption and superstitions. Islam was a revolt against empty polemics... It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature. The virtues which Islam inculcates are temperance, cleanliness, chastity, justice, fortitude, courage, benevolence, hospitality, veracity and resignation... Islam preaches a practical brotherhood, the social equality of all Muslims. Slavery is not part of the creed of Islam. Polygamy is a more difficult question. Moses did not prohibit it. It was practiced by David and it is not directly forbidden in the New Testament. Muhammad limited the unbounded license of polygamy. It is the exception rather than the rule... In resignation to God’s Will, temperance, chastity, veracity and in brotherhood of believers they (the Muslims) set us a pattern which we should do well to follow.

Islam has abolished drunkenness, gambling and prostitution, the three curses of the Christian lands. Islam has done more for civilization than Christianity. The conquest of one-third of the earth to his (Muhammad’s) creed was a miracle. (Ezzati, 235–237)

31. Gog and Magog (Ya‘ūj and Ma‘ūj in the Qur’an) are also mentioned in the Bible (Genesis, 10: 2; Chronicles, 1: 5; Ezekiel, 38: 2; 39: 6; John, 20: 8). They were wild tribes that probably inhabited the north-eastern region of Asia. They constantly carried out raids against civilized lands, overrunning the primitive people found on the way. The Mongols that invaded the Muslim lands and reached as far as the Central Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries were regarded as Gog and Magog by both the Muslims and the Europeans. The Qur’an states that the strong rampart which Dhu’l-Qarnayn built would collapse and that those peoples would invade the civilized world once more before the end of time (18: 98; 21: 96). Reports from God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, regard this invasion as one of the signs of the approach of the Last Hour. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi remarks that like the locusts that fly in great swarms and, then, after destroying crops and vegetables, disappear, Gog and Magog are wild peoples that invade the civilized world at times and then disappear (Şualar [“The Rays”], 453–454).
98. Dhu'l-Qarnayn said: “This is a mercy from my Lord. Yet when the time of my Lord’s promise comes, He will level it down to the ground; and my Lord’s promise is ever true.”

99. On that day We will leave people to surge like waves on one another; and the Trumpet will be blown, then We will gather them all together.

100. And on that Day, We will place Hell before the unbelievers, plain to view,

101. Those whose eyes are veiled from My Book and any remembrance of Me, and who cannot bear to hear (them).

102. Do they who disbelieve reckon that they can (rightly and justifiably) take any of My servants as guardians (to own and protect them) besides Me? Surely We have prepared Hell to welcome the unbelievers.

103. Say: “Shall We inform you who are the greatest losers in respect of their deeds?

104. “Those whose endeavor has been wasted in this world (because it is directed only to this-worldly ends, and so it is bound to be wasted hereafter also) but who themselves reckon that they are doing good.”

105. They are those who disbelieve in the signs and Revelations of their Lord, and in the meeting with Him. Hence, their deeds have come to nothing, and on the Day of Resurrection, We will not accord to them any weight.

106. That will be their recompense – Hell – because they have disbelieved and taken My signs and Revelations and My Messengers in mockery.

107. Surely for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, their welcome is Gardens of the highest level of Paradise.

108. Therein will they abide, without desiring any change therefrom.

109. Say: “If all the sea were ink to write my Lord’s words (the acts, decrees, and manifestations of all His Names and Attributes), the sea would indeed be exhausted before my Lord’s words would be exhausted, even if We were to bring the like of it in addition to it.”

110. Say: “I am but a mortal like you, but it is revealed to me that your God is the One and Only God. So, whoever looks forward to meeting his Lord, let him do good, righteous deeds, and let him not associate any partner in the worship of his Lord.”
32. It is clear that Dhu'l-Qarnayn made great conquests toward the west, east and north-east, throughout the civilized world as far as the “natural” limits, such as the sea, deserts and mountain ranges. By recounting his conquests after the narration of the Prophet Moses’ journey with al-Khadr, which followed the stories of the People of the Cave and the orchards of the two men, the Qur’an is referring to a “natural” outcome. What is more important than this is that a faith movement can and must be represented by perfect, righteous people. In particular, those who lead it after the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, must be true, perfect successors to the mission of the Messengers, except that they are not Prophets and they do not receive Revelation that came to the Prophets.

There have also been different opinions concerning where the rampart which Dhu'l-Qarnayn constructed was located. Some have suggested that it was built among the mountains in the range between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea; while others suggested that the rampart was the Iron Gates near Bukhara, which stood between Transoxiana and Mongolia; and still others suggest that the rampart was the Great Wall of China.

What is of interest in this respect is that it was a barrier which kept the wild, aggressive masses or raiders of Gog and Magog from attacking the civilized world. For centuries there was no such barrier. However, if the latest assaults of Gog and Magog were not the Mongol invasion on the great part of the Muslim world and eastern Europe in the 13th century, then, as suggested by the Qur’an (verse 99 in this sûrah, and 21: 96) and Prophetic reports, the civilized world will witness the greatest destruction of all human history at some time in the future. If we understand that the word sadd (barrier) in verse 94 also means a spiritual barrier, it is possible to think that prior to this latest destruction, a spiritual barrier will have been erected.

Some Prophetic Traditions say that memorizing (and reciting on every Friday) ten verses from the beginning or end of this sûrah may enable one to be safe from the corruption and evils of the Dajjāl (the Anti-Christ in the Christian tradition), the man, or collective personality or movement, expected to appear toward the end of time, which will try to eradicate Islam from the social life of Muslims (Muslim, “Salāt al-Musāfirīn,” 257). So the stories narrated in this sûrah must have close relevance to, or implications for, the worldwide events that are expected before the end of time.

33. This verse contains a great threat and several warnings. First of all, if a person thinks that he or she is doing good, this does not mean that he or she is actually doing good. What is good is that which is acceptable to God Almighty and therefore what God has declared to be good. So, doing good depends on knowledge – that is, knowing what pleases God in every case, and doing it in the way approved by Him. This requires either having the knowledge, insight, sagacity, and ability to distinguish good and evil in all cases, or in following a true guide who has these characteristics.

The first part of the verse has several meanings.

- Unbelievers and/or polytheists can do some useful things for the worldly life. But their being of use with respect to the afterlife depends on true belief. So, whatever unbelievers and/or polytheists do is bound to be wasted with respect to the afterlife.
- If there are true believers who form a formidable community and strive in God's cause, whatever unbelievers do to defeat them is bound to be in vain.
- Throughout history, unbelievers may, at times, have or had the upper hand against the believers. However, the end always belongs to the believers.
This sūrah was revealed just before the majority of the Muslims in Makkah emigrated to Abyssinia to escape the persecutions of the Makkan polytheists in the 5th year of the Messenger’s mission. In that time, a monotheist king ruled Abyssinia. The Quraysh sent ‘Abdullāh ibn Rabī‘ah and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to the king to attain the return of the refugees. The king questioned the Muslims about their faith and their view of the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, and his mother Virgin Mary. Ja‘far ibn Abī Tālib, the head of the Muslim refugees, answered him by reciting the initial 35 verses of this sūrah.

The sūrah begins with the mention of the Prophet John, upon him be peace, and continues by relating facts about the Prophet Jesus and Virgin Mary. Then it mentions the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, whose life was partly spent in emigrations, and hints that the way of God’s Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, would be no different from those of the previous Messengers, upon them be peace. Then it strongly criticizes the harsh reactions of the Makkan polytheists, and ends by giving the glad tidings to the believers that God will put love for them in the hearts of people and that many people will welcome Islam.

The sūrah takes its name after Virgin Mary, and consists of 98 verses.

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

2. A mention of your Lord’s mercy to His servant Zachariah:
3. When he invoked his Lord with a call in secret,
4. Saying: “My Lord! My bones have grown feeble and my head glistens with gray hair from old age, and, my Lord, I have never been unblessed in my prayer to You.
5. “I have fears about (how) my kinsmen (will act in respect of continuing my mission, and safeguarding the future of Mary), and my wife is barren. So bestow upon me a successor out of Your grace,
6. “Who will be my heir (in my duty) and heir to (the straight way of) the House of Jacob; and make him, my Lord, one with whom You are well-pleased.”
7. (The angels called out to him on God’s behalf:) “O Zachariah! We give you the glad tidings of a son whose name will be Yahyā (John). We have not given this name to anyone before.”
8. He said: “My Lord! How shall I have a son when my wife is barren and I have already reached infirmity in old age?”
9. (The angel) answered (quoting God): “Just so. Your Lord says: ‘It is easy for Me – even as I created you before, when you had been nothing.’ ”

10. (Zachariah) prayed: “My Lord, appoint a sign for me.” “Your sign,” He said, “is that you will not be able to speak to people for three nights.”

11. So he came out to his people from the sanctuary, and signified to them (by gestures): “Glorify your Lord at daybreak and in the afternoon.”

1. The Prophet Zachariah, upon him be peace, recited the prayer mentioned in these verses as he could not perceive of anyone among his kinsmen being able to succeed him in his duty of preaching God’s Message, and safeguarding the future of Mary, whose guardianship he had undertaken.

While quoting a person’s speech, God does not quote it word by word and in its literal sense; He is not narrating an event simply as a historian or observer. Rather, He considers the intentions and feelings of the speaker and the parts of the speech that a person may not utter. In narrating an event, He considers it with its meaning, causes, and the lessons it provides, as well as with the circumstances under which it took place and the intentions, status, and positions of the principal actors in it. For this reason, we can find the same event or speech narrated in different words and from different perspectives in the Qur’an, according to the subject that is being dealt with and the context in which it is found.

The Prophet Zachariah’s prayer is mentioned in surah 3:38 as: My Lord, bestow upon me out of Your grace a good, upright offspring, from which we understand that he asked for a successor from his own family and, therefore, asked for a son, as he had no children yet. One may wonder why Zachariah requested a successor from his own family; the answer is that God knows best upon whom to place His Message (surah 6:124), and God made pure Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of ‘Imrān, choosing them above all humankind, as descendants of one another (surah 3:33-34). It is impossible that the Prophet Zachariah was not aware of this, so he knew that the successor among his progeny would be one who would descend from Jacob’s House. (See also surah 3:34, note 7.)
12. (John was born, and when he grew up, We commanded him:) “O John! Hold fast to the Book (the Torah) with (all your) strength!” And We granted him authority with sound, wise judgment (and true understanding of God's Law) while he was yet a little boy;
13. And (the gift of) compassion from Our Presence, and purity. He was very pious and righteous,
14. And dutiful towards his parents; and he was never unruly, rebellious.
15. So peace be upon him on the day he was born and the day of his death, and the day when he will be raised to life.
16. And make mention, in the Book, of Mary. She withdrew from her family to a chamber (in the Temple) facing east (to devote herself to worship and reflection).
17. Thus, she kept herself in seclusion from people. Then We sent to her Our spirit, and it appeared before her in the form of a perfect man.
18. She said: “I seek refuge in the All-Merciful from you, if you are a pious, God-revering one.”
19. He replied: “I am only a messenger of your Lord to be a means (for God’s gift) to you of a pure son.”
20. She said: “How shall I have a son, seeing no mortal has ever touched me, and I have never been unchaste?”
21. He said (quoting God): “Just so. Your Lord says: ‘It is easy for Me; and (you shall have a son) so that We make him for humankind a sign (of Our Power on account of his birth) and a mercy from Us (on account of his being a Messenger). It is a matter already decreed.’
22. So she conceived him, and then she withdrew with him to a distant place.
23. And the throes of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said: “Would that I had died before this, and had become a thing forgotten, completely forgotten!”
24. (A voice) called out to her from beneath her: “Do not grieve! Your Lord has set a rivulet at your feet.
25. “And shake the trunk of the date-palm towards you: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon you.”
2. The Qur’an presents Mary as one of the two exemplary women who lived before the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings (66: 12). The Prophet Muhammad mentions her as one of the greatest four of all women, the other three being ‘Asya, the wife of the Pharaoh; Khadijah, the Prophet’s first wife; and Fāṭimah, his daughter (al-Bukhārī, “Anbiyā,” 45). Mary was perfectly chaste, devout, and righteous. Her mother dedicated her to the service of the Temple. She spent all her time in that service and in the worship of God. She used to pray, prostrate, give thanks, and feel the inspiration of angels in her heart. God chose her as the virgin mother of the Prophet Jesus, who was distinguished among the Prophets with his superior spirituality. (Also, see sūrah 3: 35–37, 42–48)

3. As explained in Appendix 12, the spirit is the source of both physical and spiritual life. For this reason, it is used in the Qur’an to describe both Revelation and the angel of Revelation (Gabriel). The designation of the angel as spirit is made because angels are spiritual.

Concerning the identity of the spirit who appeared before Mary in the form of a perfect man, the majority of interpreters of the Qur’an are of the opinion that he was Archangel Gabriel, the angel of Revelation, upon him be peace. There are several arguments to support this, among these being that the Qur’an mentions Gabriel as the Spirit of Holiness (sūrah 16: 102) and the Trustworthy Spirit (sūrah 26: 193). In verse 19 of the sūrah, the spirit presents himself as a messenger or envoy of the Lord. The Qur’an also mentions Gabriel as a noble messenger (sūrah 69: 40). The same event, or other aspects of this event, are told in Sūrat Al 'Imrān, 3: 45–47. These verses mention angels, rather than a single angel. This means that Gabriel came to Mary to be a means of God’s conveying to Mary the gift of a son, while other angels gave her the glad tidings of that son.

Despite the opinions of many interpreters of the Qur’an concerning the identity of the spirit mentioned above, some hold the view that it may be another being mentioned in several places of the Qur’an with the name of the Spirit, and about whose identity there is an explanation in sūrah 70, note 1.

There are reports in the Gospels that Virgin Mary was later married to Joseph, the carpenter, and gave him sons and daughters. However, contrary to some Protestants who read these reports literally and argue that Mary gave birth to additional children, Catholics read them metaphorically, and believe that she remained a perpetual virgin. It is much more likely that a chaste woman like Mary, who gave birth to a great Messenger like Jesus, upon him be peace, without a father, would not have later married a man.

The verse indicates that spirit beings may assume visible forms. But the Qur’an is not alluding to modern necromancy, which some “civilized” people practice by trying to contact the spirits of the dead, for these, in reality, are evil spirits masquerading as dead people. Rather, this form is the form known to certain saints, like Muḥyī’d-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī, who could communicate with good spirits at will, make contact, and form relations with them.

4. While some of the commentators are of the opinion that the person who called out to Virgin Mary was the Spirit, others argue that that person was the new-born child, and that the rivulet emerged suddenly, and the date-palm, which had been dried up, grew green all at once and yielded fresh, ripe dates. We cannot deny such miracles could happen during the birth of a Prophet, as many miracles were reported to take place during the Prophet Muhammad’s birth, upon him be peace and blessings. Whichever of these views is right, and whether this place suddenly became a restful place with a spring or not, we learn from sūrah 23: 50 that the place to which Virgin Mary retreated was a lofty, quiet setting with a spring flowing in it.
26. “So eat and drink, and be comforted. If you should see some person, say (through gesture): “I have vowed a fast of silence to the All-Merciful, so I cannot speak to any human being today.”

27. She came to her people, carrying him. They exclaimed: “O Mary! Assuredly you have done an unexpected, strange thing!

28. “O sister of Aaron, your father was never a wicked man, nor was your mother unchaste.”

29. Mary pointed to him (the infant, signifying that they should ask him). They cried: “How can we talk to one in the cradle, an infant boy?”

30. (The infant) said: “Surely I am ‘abdul-‘ādh (a servant of God). He (has already decreed that He) will give me the Book (the Gospel) and make me a Prophet.

31. “He has made me blessed (and a means of His blessings for people) wherever I may be, and He has enjoined upon me the Prayer (the Ṣalāh) and the Prescribed Purifying Alms (the Zakāh – and to enjoin the same upon others) for as long as I live.”

32. “And (He has made me) dutiful towards my mother, and He has not made me unruly, wicked.

33. “So peace be upon me on the day I was born and the day of my death, and the day when I will be raised to life.”

34. Such was Jesus son of Mary, in the words of the truth about which they (the Jews and Christians) have been doubting (and disputing amongst themselves and with each other).

35. It is not for God to take to Himself a child. All-Glorified is He (in that He is absolutely above doing such things). When He decrees a thing, He does but say to it “Be!” and it is.

36. “Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path (to follow).”

37. And yet, the parties (the Jews and Christians) have differed among themselves (about him). Woe, then, to those who disbelieve because of the meeting of an awesome Day.

38. How well they will hear and how well they will see on the Day when they come before Us (the truth that they hide or push away will be clear to them)! But today (it will be of no avail to) the wrongdoers, (and they) will be in obvious loss.
5. It was a custom among the Children of Israel that they gave or linked their children to the names of renowned people, or people were linked with one of their renowned ancestors. Mary was a descendent of Prophet Aaron, so people called her the sister of Aaron.

6. It can be expected that different opinions will emerge concerning a person who was born without a father from a chaste virgin. In this way, it was not long after his being withdrawn from the earth that some erroneously declared Jesus, upon him be peace, God Himself, while others claimed him as God's son, with his virtuous mother being the mother of God, although they also reported that she married a man after Jesus' birth and gave him many children. By causing Jesus to speak while he was a baby in the cradle, the Almighty made him proclaim first that he was a servant of God, and forewarned against possible deviations. Using the standard Religion, preached by the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, that “I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and again I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger,” the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, stressed that he was, first of all, God's servant and, then, one of His Prophets.

7. All the Prophets came with the same essentials of belief, worship, morality, and behavior. The only difference was in some secondary laws relating to changing time and conditions. Like all other Prophets, the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, also mentioned the Divine Oneness, Divine Books, Messengership, the Prescribed Prayer and Prescribed Purifying Alms as the primary essentials of his mission.
39. So warn people of the coming of the Day of anguish and regrets, when everything will have been decided, for (even now) they are in heedlessness, and they do not believe.

40. Surely it is We alone Who will inherit the earth and all who live on it; and to Us all will be brought back.

41. And make mention of Abraham in the Book. He was surely a sincere man of truth, a Prophet.

42. When he said to his father: “O my father! Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor can in anything avail you?

43. “O my father! There has indeed come to me of knowledge (of truth) such as has never come to you, so follow me, and I will guide you to an even, straight path.

44. “O my father! Do not worship Satan (by obeying his suggestions to you to worship idols)! Satan is ever rebellious against the All-Merciful.

45. “O my father! I am fearful lest a punishment from the All-Merciful should fall you, and then you will become a close friend of Satan (and an instrument in his hand).”

46. His father said: “Have you turned away from my deities, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I will surely cause you to be stoned! Now get away from me for a long while!”

47. He said: “Peace be upon you! I will pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely He has ever been gracious to me.

48. “And I will withdraw from you (all), and from whatever you deify and invoke other than God. I pray to my Lord alone; I hope that I will not be unblessed in my prayer to my Lord.”

49. After he had withdrawn from them and from all that they were worshipping other than God, We bestowed upon him Isaac (for son) and Jacob (for grandson); and each of them We made a Prophet.

50. We bestowed upon them (many other gifts) out of Our Mercy, and granted them a most true and lofty renown.

51. And mention Moses in the Book. He was one chosen, endowed with perfect sincerity and purity of intention in faith and practicing the Religion, and was a Messenger, a Prophet.”

9. As is known, the Prophet Jacob was the son of Isaac and grandson of the Prophet Abraham, upon them all be peace. Abraham had another son, Ishmael, upon him be peace. The reason why the Qur’an mentions Jacob here is that this surah, like the previous two, al-Isra’ and al-Kahf, makes frequent reference to the People of the Book – the Jews and Christians – in between the main topics. The Jews descended from the Prophet Jacob’s twelve sons.

10. The Qur’an mentions the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, here in particular in order to console the Muslims over their emigration to Abyssinia and to prepare their hearts for a possible, permanent emigration. Fethullah Gülen (1941 –), a renowned Turkish scholar, writes about emigration as follows:

Emigration is an important phenomenon in human history. In addition to its general relevance to the establishment of civilizations, it has special significance in connection with the “holy ones,” those dedicated to carrying the light throughout the world.

First of all, every individual is a traveler and, therefore, in some sense, an emigrant. Their journey starts in the world of spirits and continues through the stations of their mother’s womb, childhood, youth, old age and the grave, and from there to a completely new world. Although a person is one among millions of people, in essence, each individual is born alone, lives their own life, endures their own death, and is bound to be resurrected alone. Likewise, each of those people of high stature who, throughout history, have guided humankind started their sacred mission from a single being, then disseminated the light from the torch they carried, illuminating the minds and hearts of others, inculcating hope and faith in their followers, and transforming lands once submerged in darkness into lands of light. And each one of these guides had to emigrate from one place to another for the sake of that cause.

Emigration should not, of course, be understood only in the material sense. Rather, a person experiences emigration throughout their life in the spiritual sense. Each inner intellectual or spiritual transformation, from indolence to action, from decay to self-renewal, from suffocation in the atmosphere of sinfulness to exaltation in the realm of the spirit, may be regarded as an emigration. It is my conviction that only those who have been able to actualize these inner emigrations can find in themselves the strength and resolution to leave their homes and families for the sake of a sublime ideal.

Emigration in its two dimensions, spiritual and material, was first represented by the great Prophets, Abraham, Lot, Moses, and Jesus, upon them be peace, who shone like suns on the horizon of humanity, and in its most comprehensive meaning and function, was realized by the greatest of
them, namely the Prophet Muhammad, who is the pride of mankind, upon him be peace and blessings. The door to emigration has since been open to all those who walk in his footsteps.

Emigration for the truth’s sake is so sanctified that the community of holy ones around the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, who sacrificed their possessions and souls for the sake of the cause they believed in, were praised by God as (and have since been called) “the Emigrants.” We can see the importance of this in the fact that the beginning of the sacred era of this holy community was marked, not by the birth of the Prophet, or by the first Revelation, or by such victories as Badr or the conquest of Makkah, but by the emigration to Madīnah.

Devout believers who have emigrated for the sake of a sublime ideal will always deeply feel the pressure of the ideal which urged them to emigrate and to design their life according to that ideal. Secondly, they will be freed from criticism over some mistakes that they might have made in their childhood or youth. While, in their own land, they are probably remembered and criticized for their past faults, and, therefore, have little influence upon people, in the land they have emigrated to, they will be known for their spiritual brilliance, unadulterated ideas, pure intentions, and extraordinary sacrifices. For these and other reasons, it has almost always been emigrants who change the flow of history and start new eras in the life of humankind.

Toynbee, the renowned British historian, mentions twenty-seven civilizations founded by nomadic or migrant peoples. No one can overcome such dynamic people. They are not accustomed to ease and comfort; they are ready to sacrifice everything worldly; they are used to every kind of hardship; and they are always ready to march wherever their cause requires them to go. (Towards the Lost Paradise, 94–97)

11. For the distinction between a Messenger and a Prophet, see surah 3: 81, note 16.
52. We called out to him from the right side of Mount Sinai, and drew him close for communication.

53. Out of Our Mercy, We granted him his brother Aaron to be a Prophet.

54. Also make mention of Ishmael in the Book. He was one always true to his promise, and was a Messenger, a Prophet.

55. He used to enjoin on his people the Prayer and the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and he was one favored and pleasing in his Lord’s sight.

56. And mention Idrīs in the Book. He was surely a sincere man of truth, a Prophet.

57. And We raised him to a high station.

58. Those are some of the Prophets – upon whom God bestowed His blessings (of Scripture, Prophethood, authority with sound judgment, and wisdom) – from among the descendants of Adam and of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and from among the descendants of Abraham and Israel (Jacob), and those whom We guided and chose. When the All-Merciful’s Revelations were recited to them, they would fall down, prostrating and weeping.

59. Then, there succeeded them generations who neglected and wasted the Prayer and followed (their) lusts, (abandoning the service of God’s cause). They will meet perdition (as their just deserts).

60. Except those who repent and come to faith and do good, righteous deeds. Such will enter Paradise and will not be wronged in anything:

61. Gardens of perpetual bliss which the All-Merciful has promised to His servants while unseen (beyond the perception and knowledge of the servants). His promise is ever sure of fulfillment.

62. They will hear therein no idle talk, but only peace (contentment and safety). And they will have their provision therein morning and evening.

63. That is the Paradise which We will cause those of Our servants who are God-revering, pious to inherit (as theirs forever).

64. (In response to an interval in the coming of Revelation, Gabriel explained:) “We do not descend but by your Lord’s command only. To Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us, and whatever is between (all time and space and, whatever we do at all times in all places). And your Lord is never forgetful (so do not fear that He might forget you).”
12. On his way to Egypt from Midian, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, saw a fire as he was passing along the south of Mount Sinai. On drawing near to it, he heard a voice calling out to him, “O Moses, I am your Lord!” This voice came from the eastern side of the mountain; that is the right side according to where Moses was standing, as he was facing it.

13. The majority of Qur’an’s interpreters are of the opinion that Idrīs was the Prophet who lived before Noah and was known as Enoch in the Bible. According to the Bible, Enoch begat Methuselah when he was 65 years old, and he walked with God after he begat Methuselah for three hundred years. Then God took him. The Talmud adds that when people were corrupted before Noah, upon him be peace, an angel of God came to Enoch, who had been living in seclusion, to bring him the Lord’s order to teach people the way they should follow. People accepted his teachings, and he ruled them for 353 years with justice, during which God poured His bounties on people (H. Plano, *The Talmud Selections*, 18-21, quoted by al-Mawdūdī, 5: 163, note 33).

Many hold that the fact that Idrīs, upon him be peace, was raised to a high station means that God had granted him a high position. However, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi writes that life has five degrees, and the third degree is manifested in the lives of the Prophets Jesus and Idrīs, who live in heaven with their bodies. Their bodies are not bound by the necessities of human life and have acquired a sort of refinement and luminosity to the degree of astral bodies and an angelic type of life (*The Letters*, “The 1st Letter,” 1: 2).

Writers and scholars such as Seyyed Hussain Nasr make a connection between Idrīs, upon him be peace, being raised to a high station (in heaven) with the theory that he lived in Iraq and that astronomy made great developments during his lifetime. This astronomical knowledge was then transmitted by those who were on Noah’s Ark, and was misused by the people in Iraq centuries later to worship celestial bodies. As is known, when the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, began his mission in Iraq, people were worshipping celestial bodies. Those proponents also draw attention to the basic difference between the views of Islam and modern views of humanity and its relationship with God. In the legend of Prometheus, which provides the basis for the modern view of humanity and its relationship with God, and which developed in the West during and after the Renaissance, Prometheus was punished by the gods because he had stolen from the sacred fire to bring it to humanity. However, God raised the Prophet Idrīs, upon him be peace, who was the father of astronomy and who brought Heaven’s light or message to humanity, up to heaven.

14. For similar verses for these and other Prophets, see surah 6: 87-89.

15. The verse draws attention to the fact that neglecting and wasting the Prayer, which causes or is accompanied by following some of the lusts which are mentioned in 3: 14 – women, children, treasures of gold and silver (hoarded money), cattle, plantations (and profits) – is the main reason for the corruption of the generations that came after the Prophets. When we consider this verse along with verse 29: 45 – *Surely, the Prayer restrains from all that is indecent and shameful, and all that is evil* – the matter will be clearer. We should bear in mind that it is Satan who invites people to indecencies and evils (surah 24: 21). The neglect of the Prayer, as we can see, then, is the primary cause for submission to Satan.
65. (He is) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; so worship Him alone, and be constant and patient in His worship. Do you know of any whose name is worthy to be mentioned along with His (as Deity and Lord to worship)?

66. And (despite this, that disbelief) human says: “What? Once I am dead, will I then be brought forth alive?”

67. Does (that) human not bear in mind that We created him before when he was nothing?

68. And so, by your Lord, We will most certainly raise to life and gather them all together, as well as the satans (of humankind and jinn whom they used to follow,) before Us, and then We will most certainly heap them up on their knees in groups around Hell.

69. Then We will certainly pluck out from every group of the same belief the ones who were most obstinate in rebellion against the All-Merciful.

70. Indeed, We know best who deserves most (and before all others) to be thrown into Hell to roast therein.

71. There is no one among you, (O humankind,) who will not come to it. This is a fixed decree which your Lord has bound Himself to fulfill.

72. Then We will save those who keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety, and We will leave in it the wrongdoers (who associate partners with God or deny Him), humbled on their knees.

73. When Our Revelations, clear as evidence and in meaning are recited (and conveyed) to them, those who persistently disbelieve say to those who believe: “Which of the two parties (~ you or us ~) is superior in status with more impressive dwellings and more imposing as a company?”

74. And yet, how many a generation have We destroyed before them who were superior in respect of possessions and outward show!

75. Say: “Whoever is lost in error, no matter how much the All-Merciful adds (to their wealth and how long He prolongs their life-span), when they face what they were promised – whether it be punishment (here in this world) or the Last Hour – they will come to know who is worse in position and weaker in forces.

76. God strengthens in guidance those who have sought and found guidance. The righteous, good deeds of lasting merit are best in your Lord’s sight for reward, and best for returns.”
16. The existence of Paradise increases the suffering of Hell, and the existence of Hell increases the happiness in Paradise. So, everyone will come to Hell so that the believers may witness its horror and be more thankful to God because He has not condemned them to its punishment. Those who deserve to be burned will be thrown into the Fire and left there, while the believers who have not been sentenced to burn will never enter it. Some of them will not even hear its sound (sūrah 21: 102).

17. Human beings are inclined to show haste in making decisions based on current conditions. The Makkan polytheists argued that they had more beautiful and more richly furnished houses, that they were greater and more esteemed in position, and more powerful in company, and, therefore, their way or belief must be true. The same argument has been put forward by many in the world in order to abase Islam. As Muslims, we sometimes make the same mistake by starting with the same argument in order to criticize Muslims. However, the primary criterion to judge and compare belief and unbelief or Islam and other religions is the afterlife. In the verses above, the Qur’ān refers to this point, and it also draws attention to the fact that if Muslims really follow God’s way in the footsteps of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the superiority of unbelievers in number and possessions will not save them from their eventual doom. The Muslims were almost an unrivalled power in the world for nearly eleven centuries from the time of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. A few centuries of decline cannot be a criterion to make a true judgment. Those who will live long enough will see what the future will bring and the final judgment in the Hereafter will show the truth in all its clarity.
77. Have you ever considered the one who disbelieves in Our Revelations and says (in insolence): “(Whatever you say, I will continue just as I am, for) I will most certainly be given wealth and children”?

78. Has he gained knowledge of the Unseen, or has he made a (particular, private) covenant with the All-Merciful?

79. No indeed! But We will record what he says and saddle him (with its consequence) as an ever increasing punishment.

80. And We will inherit of him what he says, and he will come to us quite alone (berset of wealth and children).  

81. They have taken deities apart from God so that they may be (a means of) might and glory for them.

82. No indeed! Those (whom they deified – beings such as angels, jinn, Prophets, saints, and heroes, etc.) will deny their worship of them and turn against them as adversaries (on Judgment Day).

83. Do you not see that We send the satans upon the unbelievers (because of their unbelief), and they impel them (towards sin and every kind of evil) with strong impulsion?

84. Hence, be in no haste against them (so that their days and their persecutions of you might end sooner), for We but number for them a certain (fixed) number (of days, the time allotted for their respite).

85. A Day (will come) when We will gather the God-revering, pious ones as honored guests of the All-Merciful (in Paradise);

86. And drive the disbelieving criminals to Hell like thirsty cattle.

87. (Those who have taken deities so that they may intercede with God on their behalf should know that) none will have a right of intercession except such as have a covenant with the All-Merciful (by virtue of the quality of their faith and worship, and their nearness to Him).

88. As it is, some say: “The All-Merciful has taken to Himself a child.”

89. Assuredly you have (in such an assertion) brought forth something monstrous –

90. The heavens are all but almost rent, and the earth split asunder, and the mountains fall down in ruins –

91. That they ascribe to the All-Merciful a child!

92. It is not for the All-Merciful to take to Himself a child.

93. There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes to the All-Merciful as a servant.

94. Most certainly He knows and registers them, and has numbered them exactly, (having appointed for every being a
particular service or duty, and determined for each a life-span and provision);

95. And every one of them will appear before Him on the Day of Resurrection, quite alone (bereft of all worldly things, children and family, friends and helpers).

18. A person’s possession of wealth and children is dependent on laws which the Almighty has established without discriminating between belief and unbelief. By using the phrase “No indeed!” in verse 79, the Qur’án rejects the claim that insistence on unbelief brings wealth and children; it is not stating that unbelievers cannot have these. However, in addition to unbelief being totally wrong, insistence on unbelief because of one’s wealth and children may cause one misfortunes in the world. Furthermore, unbelief means Hell in the spirit, even when one is in material luxury. The apparent merry-making of unbelievers is no more than their trying to appease their inner unhappiness and purposeful self-deception. By contrast, belief and spiritual contentment cause one to experience Paradise in the heart, even if one is lacking material goods.

19. Everything is assigned a place in the grand scheme of the universe, which works in a magnificent way. The sun, the moon, stars, and all other heavenly bodies are knit together in a splendid system, following unalterable laws, and never deviating from their ordained course. So all of them are God’s servants – those submitted to Him consciously or unconsciously – just as are the air, water, heat, stones, trees, and animals, for everything in existence obeys God by submitting to His laws. Even unbelievers and atheists are “submitters” as far as their bodily existence is concerned, for each part of their bodies follows the course God has established for it, from birth until death and dissolution. Moreover, they can never escape the sphere of God’s Will and Power, even in the realm where they are allowed to exercise their free will. God has established what consequences they will meet by their actions. They do not play the least part in their coming into and departing from the world, and when, where and into what family they will be born. They can never determine their physical structure or color. So all things and beings in the universe can only live within the borders as God has determined them. Finally, everyone will appear before God in total submission on Judgment Day.
641

**Sūrah 20**

**Ṭā. Hā**

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 135 verses was revealed in Makkah. It begins by consoling God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. As in nearly all of the Makkān sūrahs, it concentrates on the essentials of God’s Religion which was preached by all the Prophets. It allots most space to the mission and experiences of the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, because they are extremely significant for the preaching and future of Islam. It consoles the Muslims, who were suffering great persecutions at the hands of the Makkan polytheists, by mentioning Moses’ victory over the magicians and the Pharaoh; and it also warns them against straying in belief in any way, presenting as an example the time when the Children of Israel began to worship a golden calf made by one among them, shortly after Moses went to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah.

Some commentators maintain that even though Ṭā. Hā is made up of two separate letters, it signifies the Perfect Human Being, while Yā. Sīn (the title of sūrah 36) signifies human.

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

1. Ṭā. Hā.
2. We do not send down the Qur’ān on you so that you suffer distress (in your duty of conveying it to people);
3. But only as a reminder for him who holds some awe of God in his heart (and so has the potential to achieve faith).
4. A gradual sending down from Him Who has created the earth and the high heavens,
5. The All-Merciful, Who has established Himself on the Throne.
6. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and

96. Surely those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, the All-Merciful will assign for them love (in the hearts of the inhabitants of the heaven and many on the earth, so that they will receive welcome throughout creation, no matter if they are weak and small in number now).

97. We make it (this Qur’ān) in your tongue and easy (to recite and understand) so that you may thereby give glad tidings to the God-revering, pious ones, and warn, thereby, a people given to contention.

98. And how many a generation We have destroyed before them! Can you feel (the existence) of a single one of them, or hear any whisper of them?
whatever is between them, and whatever is under the soil.

7. If you say something aloud (or keep it to yourself), He surely knows the secret as well as (whatever you may be keeping as) the more hidden.

8. God – there is no deity save Him; His are the All-Beautiful Names.

9. Has the report of Moses come to you?

10. (He was traveling with his family in the desert) when he saw a fire, and so said to his family: “Wait here! Indeed I perceive a fire far off. Perhaps I can bring you a burning brand from it, or find guidance by the fire.”

11. Then when he came near to it, he was called by name: “O Moses!

12. “Indeed it is I, I am your Lord. So take off your sandals, for you are in the sacred valley of Tuwâ.

---

1. For the Throne and God’s establishing Himself on It, see surah 7: 54, note 13; and surah 11: 7, note 2. This verse, along with the three following it, emphasizes God’s absolute dominion and Oneness as the Lord of creation.

2. For God’s All-Beautiful Names, see surah 7: 180, note 44, and surah 17: 110, note 41.

3. Apart from references to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, in the surahs revealed earlier, the narrative in this surah from this verse to verse 98 is the earliest Qur’anic explanation of the story of Moses as such.

4. This happened in the Sinai desert while Moses was returning with his family from Midian, where he had spent eight to ten years, to Egypt, or while he was in search of a suitable place to dwell. It was a cold night and they needed a fire to warm themselves, and a light to be able to continue their way. They must have been lost in the desert in the darkness of the night.

5. Taking off one’s sandals or shoes is done in the Presence of God; the sacredness of the valley arises from the fact that it was where God’s Presence was manifested to Moses, upon him be peace. However, it should also be noted that, just as some parts of time have sacredness of their own – if this sacredness is not because of their being the time of certain types of worship – some places on earth may have some sacredness for some reasons beyond our comprehension – if this sacredness does not arise from their being the places of certain Divine manifestations.

As stated in Surat al-Qasas (28), the Almighty called out to the Prophet Moses from behind a tree (surah 28: 30). This type of Divine calling is one of the three types of Divine Revelation. The Qur’an clarifies that God speaks to a human being either from behind a veil, or by putting the meaning in the heart of the human being (as a special kind of Revelation), or by sending an angel (surah 42: 51). A Prophet is sure that the one who speaks to him from behind a veil or puts a meaning in his heart is God. So the Qur’an does not mention any reaction of Moses, upon him be peace, when God called out to him. A Prophet who will receive Revelation has already been prepared for it. The Qur’an mentions that God granted Moses knowledge, insight, and good judgment years before he received this first Revelation, and that he was one devoted to doing good as if seeing God (surah 28: 14).
13. “I have chosen you (to be My Messenger), so listen to what is revealed (to you).

14. “Surely it is I, I am God; there is no deity save Me. So worship Me, and establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions for remembrance of Me.”

15. “Surely the Last Hour is bound to come (unexpectedly. It is so great a truth that) I all but keep it hidden so that every soul may strive for what it strives for (and achieve the just recompense for it).

16. “So do not let anyone who does not believe in it and (instead) follows his lusts and fancies, turn you from (believing in and preaching the truth about) it, lest you then perish!”

17. “What is that in your right hand, Moses?”

18. He said: “It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my flock, and I have some other uses for it.”

19. (God) said: “Throw it down, O Moses!”

20. So he threw it down, and there and then it was a big snake, slithering very swiftly.

21. (God) said: “Take hold of it and do not fear! We will return it to its former state.

22. “Now, put your (right) hand under your armpit: it will come forth shining white, flawless, as another (miraculous) sign,

23. “So that We may show you some of Our greatest miraculous signs,

24. “Go to the Pharaoh, for he has indeed rebelled.”

25. (Moses) said: “My Lord! Expand for me my breast.

26. “Make my task easy for me.

27. “Loose any knot from my tongue (to make my speech more fluent),

28. “So that they may understand my speech clearly.

29. “And appoint a minister (helper) for me from my family:

30. “Aaron, my brother.

31. “Confirm my strength with him,

32. “And let him share my task;

33. “So that we may glorify You much,

34. “And mention and remember You abundantly.

35. “Surely You are ever seeing and watching us.”

36. (God) said: “Your request has already been granted, O Moses.

37. “And assuredly We did bestow Our favor upon you at another time before.”
6. Mentioning the Prayer in addition to worship – although the Prayer is a kind of worship – is because of its importance as the chief way of worship.

7. Islam is the Divine Religion preached by all the Prophets, with slight differences in matters of law, according to time and conditions, a religion which was universally perfected through the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. It is based on four fundamentals, and it is upon these that the Qur’an dwells. The first and most important of these is the belief in God’s Existence and Oneness. It is this very fundamental which was first conveyed to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace. Although belief in the Resurrection and the Hereafter is the fundamental of second-degree importance, the relationship of God as the Deity and Lord, and His servants as the created and sustained, requires worship on the part of the servants; therefore, worship, another of the fundamentals discussed, is mentioned after belief in God’s Existence and Oneness in the verses above. Justice in human individual and collective life is a dimension of worship, and verse 16 alludes to it. Belief in the Resurrection and the Hereafter, which is the final or ultimate purpose of the existence of the world and humankind and human worldly life, is the second fundamental of Islam. The fourth fundamental is Prophethood, which is required by God’s being the Lord of the whole creation and the fact that He created it. If God had not made Himself known to His conscious servants, informed them of His purpose for creating the whole universe and humankind requires Prophethood or the sending of Prophets. In conclusion, God mentions these four fundamentals in the first Revelation He sent to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace.

8. The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, grew up in the Pharaoh’s palace. The term “Pharaoh” was a title by which the kings of the native Copts in ancient Egypt were called. The Pharaoh to whom Moses was sent was the son of the Pharaoh in whose palace he grew up. As mentioned in several verses of the Qur’an, this Pharaoh persecuted the Children of Israel. While trying to protect one of his people against an Egyptian, Moses accidentally caused the death of the man and, on hearing that he was being sought by officials, he left for Midian. After having stayed there for eight to ten years, he most probably was returning to Egypt when he received the Divine Revelation. Now he was to go to the Pharaoh’s palace with an extremely important and difficult task. So he asked his Lord to expand his breast, so that he would be able to show greater patience with whatever difficulty he would encounter from the Pharaoh and his clan, and to fully understand God’s Religion and all that He would be pleased with. He also asked Him to increase his own power of speech and to allow his brother, Aaron, a fluent speaker, to share his task as a Messenger. His purpose was to worship, exalt, glorify, and mention God as much as possible.

By saying, You are ever seeing and watching us, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, presented, despite being a great Prophet, his weakness as a mortal human being before the Almighty, and his need of help as a servant, to the Divine Court as a means of intercession.
38. “We inspired in your mother what she was to be inspired with, saying:
39. ‘Place the child in a chest and cast it into the river, then the river will throw it up on the bank: one who is both My enemy and his enemy (the Pharaoh, who has decided to kill all the new-born sons of the Children of Israel) will take him up.’ I cast over you (Moses) love from Me (protecting you, so love for you was aroused in the hearts of people who saw you), and so that you were brought up under My eyes. 
40. “When your sister (on your mother’s instruction, knowing the Pharaoh’s household had taken you in) went and said: ‘Shall I guide you to one who will nurse him?’ Thus ( – and it is We Who made none other capable of nursing you – ) We returned you to your mother, so that she might rejoice and forget her grief. And (much later on) you killed a man (not intending it), so We saved you from the (ensuing) trouble, and We tested you with trial (of different kinds and degrees only to perfect you). You stayed for years among the people of Midian, and then you attained to the (quality of mind and spirit) expected of and decreed for you, O Moses.
41. “And I have attached you to Myself (and so trained you to My service).
42. “Go, you and your brother, with My miraculous signs (with which I have provided you), and never slacken in remembrance of Me and reminding (others) of Me.
43. “Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh for he has exceedingly rebelled.
44. “But speak to him with gentle words, so that he might reflect and be mindful or feel some awe (of Me, and behave with humility).”
45. They said: “Our Lord, we fear lest he act hastily in regard to us (not allowing us to complete our preaching), or become (more) tyrannical.”
46. He said: “Do not fear! Surely I am with you, hearing and seeing.
47. “Go to him and say: ‘We are indeed Messengers of your Lord (Who has created and sustains you), so let the Children of Israel go with us, and do not cause them to suffer (longer). Assuredly we have come to you with a clear proof from your Lord. And peace (success and safety and triumph) is upon him who follows His guidance. 
48. ‘It has surely been revealed to us that (only) punishment is upon him who denies and turns away (from God’s call).’ ”
49. (When they had spoken to the Pharaoh as God had commanded them,) the Pharaoh said: “Who is this Lord of you two, O Moses?”
50. (Moses) said: “Our Lord is He Who creates everything and endows each thing with its particular character, and then guides (it to the fulfillment of the aim and purpose of its existence).”

51. (The Pharaoh) said: “Then, what is the case with the earlier generations (all of whom have passed away – how are they recompensed for their beliefs and deeds)?”

9. The tentative form of the phrase so that he might ponder, as well as similar phrases that frequently exist in the Qur’ān, never implies any doubt on God’s part. Rather, it relates to the intention or hope with which the Messengers (and other addressees) should approach their task.
52. (Moses) answered: “My Lord holds the knowledge of them in a Record. My Lord never errs, nor forgets.”

53. He Who has made the earth a cradle for you and traced out roads on it for you, and sends down water from the sky, and produces with it pairs of various plants.

54. Eat thereof, and feed your cattle. Surely in all this there are signs (manifesting the truth) for people of sound, unbiased thinking.

55. From it (earth) We create you, and into it are We returning you, and out of it will We bring you forth a second time.

56. We certainly showed the Pharaoh Our signs, all of them (including those We granted particularly to Moses), but he denied them and refused (to believe).

57. He said: “Moses, have you come to drive us from our land with your sorcery?

58. “Then, We will most certainly produce before you sorcery like it. So appoint a meeting between us and you, which neither we nor you will fail to keep, in an open, level place convenient (to both of us).”

59. (Moses) said: “The meeting will be on the Day of the Festival, and let the people assemble in the forenoon.”

60. The Pharaoh then left, and he (set out to) mobilize all his devices, then presented himself (at the appointed meeting).

61. Moses said to them (warning them before it was too late for them to be warned): “Woe to you! Do not fabricate lies against God (such as falsely describing His clear proofs as sorcery, falsely pretending that His Message to you aims at driving you out of your land, and by adopting other deities than Him), lest He ruin you with a severe scourge. Whoever fabricates a lie is doomed.”

62. (Moses’ warning having influenced some among the sorcerers,) they began to debate their affair among themselves. (Whereupon, the Pharaoh’s men intervened, and) spoke to them secretly.

63. They said: “These two men are surely sorcerers intent on driving you out of your land with their sorcery, and doing away with your exemplary way of life.

64. “So gather your devices, and then come in ordered ranks (as an organized, unified force), for the one who gains the upper hand today has surely triumphed.”
10. The Prophet Moses’ decision is very significant. By appointing a time when almost all of the people would assemble on a special day, a day when they would be in different mood, he manifested his utmost confidence in his message and mission. In addition, he would deal a great blow to the Pharaoh and to his prestige and belief, and have the possibility to announce his message before all people with undeniable, visible proofs.

11. History is a telling of the recurring patterns and meanings in events at different times. The encounter told here is of the recurring battle between truth and falsehood, justice and tyranny. The Qur’an presents events in such a way that we not only follow clearly the line of events unfolding, but also understand the weight of meaning carried in them, their causes and outcomes, and the manners and motives of the people involved in them.

Islam never aims to debase or destroy people; instead it comes to exalt them. For this reason, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, made an influential address to his opponents, warning them. Through the earlier efforts of the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, God’s true Religion – Islam – had begun to prevail in Egypt. Therefore, at the time the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, began his mission, it could still be traced among the people there. As can be understood from the miracles granted to Moses – for the miracles given to every Prophet were in relation to the branch of science or craft most developed at that time – chemistry and alchemy were of great import. Sorcerers were the leading scientists and intellectuals of the time. By addressing them (and other people) in verse 61, the Prophet Moses, who knew Egypt very well, did his principal task of conveying the Divine Message, while also warning them against a possible calamity. His address had the expected influence on the sorcerers and caused a difference of opinion to arise among them. But, as always happens in history, the Pharaoh and his men intervened and attempted to eliminate this difference. They tried to encourage the sorcerers by saying that Moses and Aaron, upon them be peace, were sorcerers, like them, and alarmed and provoked them by saying that Moses intended to drive the people out of their own land and abolish their way of life, and then went on to make alluring promises to them. We read this promise in sūrah 7: 113–114 and 26: 41–42: Pharaoh promised: “(If you are the victors), you will indeed be among the near-stationed to me.”
65. They (the sorcerers) said: “Moses, either you throw or we will be the first to throw!”

66. He said: “No, you throw first!” And there and then, by their sorcery, their ropes and their staffs seemed to him to be slithering.

67. Then Moses felt in his soul a bit apprehensive (that people may have been influenced by their sorcery).

68. We said: “Do not fear! You surely, you are the uppermost.

69. “Throw that which is in your right hand: it will swallow up all that they have contrived. What they have contrived is only a sorcerer’s artifice. And a sorcerer can never prosper whatever he may aim at.”

70. And so (it happened, and) the sorcerers were thrown down, prostrate. They proclaimed: “We have come to believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses!”

71. (The Pharaoh) said: “Do you believe in Him before I give you permission? I see that he (Moses) is your master who taught you sorcery! I will surely have your hands and feet cut off alternately, and have you crucified on the trunks of palm-trees, and you will certainly come to know which of us (– the Lord of Aaron and Moses or I –) is more severe in punishment and (whose punishment is) more lasting.”

72. They said: “We will never prefer you above the clear proofs (manifesting the truth) that have come before us, and above Him Who originated us. So decree whatever you decree: you can decree only for the life of this world.

73. “We have surely come to believe in our Lord, and (we hope) that He may forgive us our faults and that sorcery to which you compelled us. God is the Best (in giving reward), and the Most Permanent.”

74. Whoever comes before his Lord as a disbelieving criminal, for him surely there will be Hell: he will neither die therein nor live.

75. Whereas he who comes before Him as a believer who did good, righteous deeds, for such are high ranks and lofty stations –

76. Gardens of perpetual bliss through which rivers flow, therein to abide. Such is the recompense of whoever attains purity.
12. When the sorcerers threw their ropes and staffs, it seemed to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, as if hundreds of snakes were gliding on the ground. This is what verse 7: 116 describes: *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.* It caused some apprehension to arise in his heart that people might be influenced by sorcery. However, the miracle with which God endowed him would show that sorcery had nothing with the truth and was bound to be defeated in the face of it.

13. The Pharaoh’s reaction is the reaction of all dictators throughout history. Nimrod and his men showed the same reaction before the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace; when they were defeated in intellectual argument, they threw him into fire. The sorcerers who began to show their skills by declaring that they would triumph by the Pharaoh’s honor and might (26: 44) were able to distinguish between sorcery and the truth. They saw that what the Prophet Moses did was not sorcery, and that the Pharaoh’s honor and might were of no avail, so they came to believe. Yet the Pharaoh refused to believe, even in the face of the truth which showed itself in utter clarity. The event had taken place before a crowd, so it was quite probable that some among those, too, would believe, and some others would feel a light in the name of belief appearing in their heart. This was what the Pharaoh feared. He could not bear defeat, and he felt that his sovereignty was at stake if people were to believe. So he resorted to threats and massacres.

This verse discloses another aspect of dictatorship. Dictators want people to do whatever they order them to do. They see themselves as the one and only authority to decide for people what to believe and what not to believe in, as well as what and how to think and what and how not to think. That is, they try to command even their minds and hearts.

The miracles granted to each Prophet were of the same kind as the science and crafts which had developed in his time; each Prophet surpassed the level of that science and those crafts through the miracles he worked. Moses’ experience with the Pharaoh also revealed that in addition to having outstanding virtues, the representatives and preachers of Islam also should excel others in knowledge.
77. We revealed to Moses: “Set forth with My servants by night, and (when you reach the sea’s edge with the Pharaoh and his army in pursuit) strike for them a dry path with your staff through the sea, and you need have no fear of being overtaken (by the Pharaoh) or of drowning in the sea.”

78. Then the Pharaoh pursued them with his armed hosts, and they were overwhelmed by the sea to their complete destruction.

79. The Pharaoh had led his people astray (and finally he led them to destruction); he did not guide them (either to the truth or to prosperity).

80. O Children of Israel! We saved you from your enemy; and We made a covenant with you through Moses on the right side of Mount Sinai (and granted you the Torah); and We sent down on you manna and quails (to sustain you in the desert).

81. (We said:) Eat of the pure, wholesome things that We have provided for you, but do not exceed the bounds therein (by wastefulness, ingratitude, unlawful earnings, and the like). Otherwise, My wrath (condemnation) will justly fall upon you, and upon whoever My condemnation falls, he has indeed thrown himself into ruin.

82. Yet I am surely All-Forgiving to whoever repents and believes and does good, righteous deeds, and thereafter keeps himself on the right path.

83. (When Moses came to Our appointment with him in Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, We asked him:) “Moses, what has caused you to leave your people behind in such haste?”

84. He replied: “They are following in my footsteps; and I have shown haste to come to You so that You may be well-pleased with me.”

85. (God) said: “Then (know that) We have put your people to a test in your absence, and the Sāmīrī has led them astray.”

86. So Moses returned to his people in anger and sorrow. He said: “My people! Did your Lord not make you a fair promise (that He would grant you the Torah for your happiness in both world, and settle you in the land the environs of which He has blessed)? Did, then, the time appointed (for my absence) seem too long to you, or did you desire that a condemnation from your Lord should fall upon you, that you broke your promise to me?”

87. They said: “We did not break our promise to you of our own accord (with intent), but we were loaded with (sinful) loads of ornaments of the people (of Egypt), and we threw them (to get rid of them), in the same way as the Sāmīrī threw (them, into a fire).”
14. For the events which took place in the encounter of the Prophet Moses and the sorcerers and the Exodus, see surah 7: 127–135; surah 10: 75–90.

15. For details of the events and warnings and the subsequent events mentioned in verses 80 and 81, see surah 2: 51, 57, and 61, and the notes 67 and 73; surah 7: 142, note 30.

16. The Old Testament records that it was the Prophet Aaron, upon him be peace, who made the effigy of a calf for the Children of Israel to worship (Exodus, 32: 4, 24), whereas the Prophet Aaron was the Prophet Moses’ elder brother who shared his mission. He, in fact, tried his best to prevent the calf-worship. The Qur’an openly states that the one who made the calf is a man referred to as as-Sāmīrī.

The article (al-) before Sāmīrī and the suffix (i) of the case ending suggest that the man was someone belonging to a place or tribe called Sāmīr. Although some Orientalists and Christian writers, starting from the fact that Samaria was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel established in 925 BC, tried to accuse our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, of ignorance, as if he were the author of the Qur’an, the Bible itself refutes this ungrounded accusation. We read in I Kings, 16: 24 that King Omri bought the hill, Samaria, from a man named Shemer and built the city of Samaria on this hill, naming it after Shemer. So Samaria already existed before Moses, upon him be peace, as the name of a hill. The Sāmīrī may well have been from that territory, or he may have descended from the ancestry of Shemer. Another point to be considered is that the Sumerians lived in Iraq before the time of the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace. There were emigrations from this region to Egypt. For example, the Hyksos, who ruled Egypt during the time of the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, had emigrated from Syria. So it is possible that the Sāmīrī had descended from a Sumerian tribe that had immigrated to Egypt.

It is also possible that the personal name of the Sāmīrī was “Aaron,” and the later scribes of the Torah confused him with the Prophet Aaron, upon him be peace.

The Bible sadly contradicts itself in attributing the making of the calf to the Prophet Aaron, upon him be peace. For we read in Exodus, 32: 27–28 that God ordered “every man to kill his brother (who had worshipped the calf), and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor, and the sons of Levi did, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” The Prophet Aaron was not among those who were killed. Again, according to Exodus, 32: 32–33, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, prayed to God to forgive his people or blot his name out of His book, and God answered that He would blot whoever had sinned against Him out of His book. It is clear in Numbers, 18: 5–7 that God did not blot Aaron’s name out of His book; instead, He favored him and his sons with the duty of being in charge of the sanctuary and the altar, that there might be no further wrath on the Children of Israel (al-Mawdūdī, 5: 217–218, note 69).
88. And then he brought out for them a calf, shaping to it (from the molten ornaments) a body (which made a sound like) mooing. Then they said (some of them to others): “This is your deity and the deity of Moses, but he has forgotten.”
89. Did they not see at all that (even) it could not return to them a word (for answer), and had no power to harm or benefit them?
90. And assuredly Aaron had said to them before Moses’ return, (warning them:) “O my people! You are only being tested through this (idol to prove the quality of your understanding and faith). Truly Your Lord is the All-Merciful (Who is most forgiving), so follow me and obey my order!”
91. But they said: “We will by no means cease to worship it until Moses comes back to us.”
92. (Having returned, and unaware of Aaron’s warning, Moses) said: “O Aaron! What prevented you, when you saw them gone astray,
93. “From following me? Have you, then, disobeyed my order?”
94. Aaron said: “O son of my mother! Do not seize me by my beard, nor by my head! I was afraid lest you should say: ‘You have caused division among the Children of Israel, and paid no heed to my orders!’ ”
95. (Moses turned to the Sāmirī and) said: “What is the matter with you, O Sāmirī, (that you did such a monstrous thing)?”
96. He answered: “I have seen something which they were unable to see, and so I took a handful (of dust) from the trail of the messenger and cast it into the molten ornaments: thus did my soul prompt me to act.”
97. (Moses) said: “Be gone, then! (The sentence) upon you is that in this present life, you say ‘Touch me not!’ (to warn people against proximity to you); and surely there is for you a promise (of punishment) that you cannot evade. Now look to this deity of yours to whose worship you have become devoted: we will most certainly burn it, and scatter whatever remains of it over the sea!
98. “(O my people!) Your only deity is God, other than Whom there is no deity. He encompasses all things in His Knowledge.”
17. Before leaving for Mount Sinai, the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, appointed Aaron as his deputy among his people, saying: *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* (ṣūrah 7: 142).

18. As we have stated elsewhere before (i.e., ṣūrah 7, note 35; ṣūrah 15, note 11; ṣūrah 19, note 1), while narrating an event in different places, the Qurʾān deals with the aspects of the event that concern the topic discussed. So it reports here only part of Aaron’s answer to Moses, upon him be peace, *I was afraid lest you should say: “You have caused division among the Children of Israel, and paid no heed to my orders!”* This does not mean that Aaron did nothing else. As reported in ṣūrah 7: 150, he did his best to prevent the fundamental error into which his people had lapsed, but they nearly killed him. So Aaron, upon him be peace, aware of the delicacy of the situation, did not proceed, in order to avoid causing a division among them which would most probably have amounted to bloodshed. He waited for Moses’ return, as he knew he had gone for a short, definite period.

19. How should we understand these words of the Sāmirī?

The people of ancient Egypt were farmers who worshipped cattle in addition to other major deities. The Children of Israel had been influenced by this. This influence manifested itself as devotion to this statue of the calf, to the extent that the Qurʾān describes it as follows: *Because of their unbelief, they were made to drink into their hearts (love of) the calf (with then no place left therein for faith)* (2: 93). They were also inclined toward idol-worship or adopting figures as deities, as manifested by their asking the Prophet Moses to make them an idol when they found a people worshipping idols along their way in the desert after departing from Egypt: *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!”* (ṣūrah 7: 138).

Some people have exceptional abilities or characteristics, such as telepathy, necromancy, the ability to make contact with the jinn, and the ability to act as a medium. They can bring about some accomplishments which may seem extraordinary to others, and they themselves like to add some mystery to their accomplishments. But because of their haughtiness and self-admiration that arise from these accomplishments, and because of their misuse of the abilities God has given them, God Almighty makes their abilities a means of gradual perdition for them.

The Sāmirī had the ability of smelting ore and making statues. He intentionally made an effigy of a calf to lead the Children of Israel astray, and caused it to produce a sound by means of some holes located in the effigy.

The Qurʾān introduces the matter of the calf as a trial and temptation for the Children of Israel. By saying, *I have seen something which they were unable to see, and so I took a handful (of dust) from the trail of the messenger and cast it into the molten ornaments*, is merely a lie the Sāmirī made up to add a spiritual and mysterious dimension to some abilities he had or that he thought he had, and, in fact, to what he had done. He must also have attempted to excuse himself for what he did.
Thus do We relate to you (O Messenger) some of the exemplary events which happened in the past. Indeed We have granted you a Reminder (a Book of knowledge and instructions) from Our Presence.

Whoever turns away from it, certainly bears a burden on the Day of Resurrection, forever carrying it. How evil a burden is theirs on the Day of Resurrection!

That Day the Trumpet will be blown, and We will raise to life and gather the disbelieving criminals white-eyed (with terror and fatigue);

They whisper among themselves: “You stayed in the world only ten (days).”

It is We Who have full knowledge of what they talk about, when the most perceptive among them say, “You stayed only one day.”

They ask you (O Messenger) about (what will happen to) the mountains (on Doomsday). Say: “My Lord will blast them into scattered dust.

“And He will leave it (the earth) as a desolate waste.

“You will see in it neither curve nor ruggedness.”

On that Day, all will follow the summoning Voice straightforwardly without any deviation, and all voices will be humbled for the All-Merciful, and you will hear nothing but a hushed murmur.

On that Day, intercession is not of any avail except his to whom the All-Merciful gives permission and with whose words He is well-pleased.

He knows what lies before His servants (especially on Judgment Day) and whatever (of intentions, or speech, or actions) they have left behind, whereas they cannot comprehend Him with their knowledge.

And (on that Day) all faces are humbled before the All-Living, the Self-Subsisting One (by Whom all else subsist). And assuredly, he has failed whose load is wrongdoing,

Whereas whoever does good, righteous deeds, being a believer, need have no fear of being wronged or deprived (of his just recompense).

And thus have We sent it down as a qur’an (a discourse) in Arabic and set out in it warnings in diverse contexts and from diverse perspectives, so that they may keep from disobedience to Us in reverence for Us and piety, or that it may prompt them to remembrance and heedfulness.
114. Absolutely Exalted is God, the Supreme Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant. Do not show haste (O Messenger) with (the receiving and memorizing of any Revelation included in) the Qur'an before it has been revealed to you in full, but say: “My Lord, increase me in knowledge.”

115. Assuredly We had made a covenant with Adam (and forbidden him to approach a tree in the Garden), but he acted forgetfully. We did not find resolve in him (at that moment).

116. And when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam,” they all prostrated. But Iblīs did not; he refused.

117. So We said: “O Adam, surely this is an enemy to you and your wife; so let him not drive the two of you out of the Garden, lest you become distressed.

118. “Surely it is provided for you that you shall not go hungry therein nor become naked,

119. “And that you shall not go thirsty therein, nor suffer the sun’s heat.”

120. But Satan made an evil suggestion to him, saying: “O Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of everlasting life and a kingdom that will never decay?”

121. They both ate of it, so their shameful parts (and all the seemingly evil impulses in their creation) were apparent to them, and both began to cover themselves with leaves from the Garden. Adam disobeyed his Lord and fell into error.

122. Thereafter, his Lord chose him (for His favor), accepted His repentance, and bestowed His guidance upon him.

123. He said: “Go down from there, the two of you, all together (with Satan, and henceforth you will live a life), some of you being the enemies of others. If there comes to you from Me a guidance (like a Book through a Messenger), then whoever follows My guidance (and turns to Me with faith and worship), will not go astray, nor will he be unhappy.

124. “But as for him who turns away from My remembrance (and from the Book), his will be a suffocated life, and We will raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection.”

125. He says: “My Lord, why have You raised me up blind, while I used to be seeing (in my life of the world)?”
20. For the incidents and truths described from verse 115 on, see Surah 2: 30–39, notes 30–44; Surah 7: 11–27, notes 3–4. Here we can add the following points:

• The prohibition of approaching a tree in the Garden was not a prohibition included in the Sharī'ah or the Religious Law. It was a prohibition and instruction concerning the life of Adam, upon him be peace, and his spouse. It is clear that the purpose of such a prohibition was, for their part, to avoid suffering from hunger, nakedness, thirst, and the heat of the sun. So the consequence of, or recompense for, not heeding this prohibition would be exposure to these kinds of suffering.

• The verses reveal that the desire for eternity, the passionate desire for the opposite sex (especially for women on the part of men), and the worldly kingdom are, at least, among the most alluring lusts or appetites for human beings, so much so that they cause human beings many sufferings.

• The Qur’ān mentions Adam, upon him be peace, as being chosen and forgiven just after their lapse in order to prevent us from harboring any negative feelings towards Adam. It also teaches us that we should immediately repent and pray for forgiveness as soon as we have sinned or lapsed.

• The Bible unfortunately blames Eve more than Adam for their lapse (Genesis, 3: 1–6). According to the Bible, Eve incited Adam to eat from the forbidden tree. This caused the Jews and Christians to see women as being accursed creatures for many centuries. By contrast, the Qur’ān tells us that Satan approached Adam and deceived him. This reveals an important truth that it is generally men who have been responsible for the deviation of women from the right path, and not the other way round.
126. (God) says: “Just so. Our Revelations came to you but you disregarded them, so today you will be disregarded.”

127. Thus do We recompense him who is wasteful (of his God-given faculties) and commits excesses, and does not believe in his Lord's Revelations. And indeed, the punishment in the Hereafter is more severe and most enduring.

128. Is it not a guidance for them how many a generation We have destroyed before them, in whose ruined dwelling-places they walk about (in the present)? Surely in that there are signs (manifesting the truth) for people of discernment.

129. Had it not been for a decree already issued by your Lord, and for a term already appointed (by Him), the judgment (against them) would certainly have been given and executed.

130. Therefore, be patient (O Messenger) with whatever they say, and glorify your Lord with His 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 – so that you may obtain God's good pleasure and be contented (with what God has decreed for you).

131. Do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some groups among them to enjoy (in this worldly life), the splendor of the present, worldly life, so that We may test them thereby. The provision of Your Lord (the favors He has bestowed upon you here and will bestow in the Hereafter) is better and more lasting.

132. Order your family and community to establish the Prayer, and be diligent in its observance. We do not ask you to provide for Us; rather, it is We Who provide for you. (So all your worship is for your own benefit.) And the (desired) outcome is in favor of piety and righteousness.

133. And they say: “If only he brought us a sign (a miracle) from his Lord!” Has there not come to them (as a sufficient miracle) a Clear Proof of (the truth) in what is (to be found) in the former Scriptures?

134. Had We destroyed them with a punishment before it (before the Proof came to them), they would surely have said: “Our Lord! If only You had sent us a Messenger, we would have followed Your Revelations before we were humiliated and disgraced.”

135. Say: “Everyone (we and you) is in an expectation (of what the future will bring), so continue to expect! You will soon come to know who have been the followers of the even path and who have been rightly guided (and, therefore, whose expectations have proved true).
21. The decree is that which was proclaimed during Adam’s descent from the Garden: *There shall be for you on the earth (where you have already been appointed as vicegerent) a habitation and provision until an appointed time* (sūrah 7: 24).

22. Is it not a sufficient miracle for them that there has come to them a Messenger who was predicted by the former Divine Scriptures and whose features are found in them? That Messenger, though an illiterate one, has come to them with a Book which contains all the truths concerning correct belief and worship, and eternal principles for a good life, which are all to be found in the former Divine Scriptures. This Book also explains what happened to the peoples who asked their Messengers for similar miracles.
SÛRAH 21

AL-ANBIYÂ’
(THE PROPHETS)

Makkah Period

This sûrah of 112 verses was revealed toward the end of the Makkah period of the Messenger’s mission. It explains the “even path” mentioned at the end of Sûrah Tâ-Hâ. It gives answers to the objections made by the Makkans to the creeds of Islam, and provides support for these creeds, as well as relating some episodes from the lives of a number of earlier Prophets. It concludes by stating that, with its essentials of faith, worship, morality, and individual and collective life, Islam is the Religion which God has appointed for humankind and which He has conveyed to them through all the Prophets.

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

1. Their reckoning has drawn near for humankind, yet they do not pay heed to it, being lost in worldly things and heedlessness.

2. Whenever a new Revelation comes to them from their Lord to warn and enlighten them, they only listen to it in a playful manner,

3. With hearts set on passing pleasures; yet those who lead in wrongdoing, especially by associating partners with God, confer among themselves in great secret: “Is this (not) but a mortal like you? Will you, then, yield to sorcery while you see it patently?”

4. (The Messenger) says (in response): “My Lord knows every word spoken in the heaven and on the earth. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”

5. (Confused about which source they should attribute the Qur’an to) they say,

6. “No, but Muhammad offers some jumbles of dream images he has. No, but he fabricates all this! No, but he is a poet. If he is true in his claim, then let him come to us with a sign (a miracle), just as the previous Messengers were sent with miracles!”

7. Nor did We make them bodies not needing food so that they would not eat like others; nor were they immortals.
9. We promised them help and victory and We kept Our promise: We saved them and all whom We willed (– the believers), and We destroyed those who wasted their God-given faculties and committed excesses.

10. Now We send down to you (O people of Makkah and O all humankind,) a Book which contains what you must heed in life for your honor and happiness. Will you not, then, reason and understand?

1. Knowledge of the Last Day rests only with God, and the Last Day may come unexpectedly at any time. If we look at how many centuries have passed since this warning was given concerning the Last Hour, which has not yet come, compared with the life of the world and humankind on the earth, the period is very brief. A person who says in the late afternoon that evening is near is telling the truth. Secondly, reckoning for everybody begins just after their death, and nothing is nearer to one than death.

11. How many a community that did the greatest wrong (by associating partners with God) and thereby wronged itself have We shattered, and raised up another people after them.

12. When they felt Our mighty punishment coming, they at once attempted to flee from it.

13. “Do not attempt to flee, but return to all that (ease and comfort) in which you had been lost without scruples, and to your homes, that you may be appealed to by the poor and needy, or to take your valuable counsels!

14. They could only cry: “Oh, woe to us! We were indeed wrongdoers!”

15. That cry of theirs did not cease until We made them like reaped corn, and a heap of ashes.

16. We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them as a play and game for Us.

17. If We had willed to find a pastime (without creating the heavens and the earth with all that is in and between them), We would indeed have found it in Our Presence, if We were going to do so!

18. No, but We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it breaks the latter’s head, and see, it vanishes. So woe to you for all the falsehood you attribute to God.

19. To Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those (the angels) who are with Him, never disdain to worship Him, nor do they ever weary.

20. They glorify Him by night and day (proclaiming that He is absolutely exalted above any shortcoming or need of partners, or doing pointless things), and never show tiredness, nor lose zeal.

21. What! have those polytheists (given up hope of heaven and) adopted deities from the earth, (do they believe) that they (those deities) can raise up the dead?

22. But the fact is that had there been in the heavens and the earth any deities other than God, both (of those realms) would certainly have fallen into ruin. All-Glorified is God, the Lord of the Supreme Throne, in that He is absolutely above all that they attribute to Him.

23. He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, but their false deities (they have adopted from among conscious beings) are accountable.

24. What! have they adopted deities other than Him? Say: “If so, present your proof! But look, here is the Book those who are in my company follow, and there are the Books those who came before me followed (what is stressed in all of them is that there is no deity other than Him).” But they have nothing to do with knowledge so that they might know the truth, and this is why they turn away from it in aversion.
25. We never sent any Messenger before you except that We revealed to him that there is no deity but Me, so worship Me alone.

26. Yet some say, “The All-Merciful has taken to Himself a child.” All-Glorified is He (in that He is absolutely above doing such things). Rather, those (the angels, whom they regard as God’s offspring) are but His honored servants.

27. They speak only what He has spoken to them and allows them to speak, and they act by His command.

28. 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 cannot intercede for any but His believing servants, those with whom He is well-pleased, and they themselves quake for reverent awe of Him.

29. If any of them were to attempt to say, “I am a deity besides Him,” We would recompense him with Hell. Thus do We recompense all such wrongdoers.

30. Do those who disbelieve ever consider that the heavens and the earth were at first one piece, and then We parted them as separate entities; and that We have made every living thing from water? Will they still not come to believe?

31. We have set up firm mountains in the earth lest it should shake them with its movement, and We have made thereon broad paths, so that they might find their way.

32. And We have established the heaven as a canopy well-secured (against collapse and the ascension of devils). Yet they turn away from all such signs (of truth manifested) in the universe.

33. It is He Who has created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Every one (of such celestial bodies) floats in its orbit.

34. We never granted everlasting life to any human being before you (O Messenger); so if you die, will they live forever?

35. Every soul (person) is bound to taste death, and We try you through the bad and the good things (of life) by way of testing (so that your real character and rank may reveal itself). In fact, you are on the way to return to Us, (to finally be brought to Our Presence).
3. Every verse of the Qur’ān has both outer and inner meanings, and limits, and a point of comprehension, as well as boughs, branches, and twigs. Each phrase, word, letter, and diacritical point has many aspects. Each person who hears it receives their share through a different door.

To learned people who have not studied modern sciences, one piece in the verse means that when the heavens were clear and without clouds, and the earth was dry, lifeless, and incapable of giving birth, God opened the heavens with rain and the soil with vegetation, and created all living beings through some sort of marriage and impregnation by means of water. They understand that everything is the work of such an All-Powerful One of Majesty, and that the surface of the earth is merely His small garden, and all the clouds that veil the surface of the sky are sponges for watering it. They prostrate themselves before the greatness of His Power.

To exacting scholars, it means: “In the beginning, the heavens and the earth were a formless mass, each consisting of matter as if “dough,” without produce or creatures. The All-Wise Creator separated them and rolled them out and, giving each a comely shape and beneficial form, and made them the origins of multiform, adorned creatures.” These scholars are filled with admiration at His Wisdom’s comprehensiveness.

Modern scientists understand that the solar system was like a cloud of gases, or was fused like a mass of “dough,” without produce or creatures. The All-Powerful and Self-Subsistent One rolled it out and placed the planets in their respective positions; or the mass of gases began to cool due to the extremely speedy movement. The Almighty left the sun where it was and brought the earth here. Spreading soil over its surface, watering it with rain, and illuminating it with sunlight, He made the world inhabitable and placed us on it. These scientists are saved from the swamp of naturalism, and declare: “I believe in God, the One, the Unique.”

Another meaning this verse presents to modern scientists is: The universe was only in the form of ether, a pervasive matter (which some regard as hydrogen, one of the two atoms that are needed to make up water). God made ether a source of atoms from which He created all things, and He has placed everything in this “ocean” of the ether (See The Words, “The 25th Word,” 411–412, “The 31st Word,” 587–588).

4. The verbs SaBaHa and JāRā (36: 38), meaning floating and running in the water, respectively, and the terms which the Qur’ān uses for the movement of celestial bodies, suggest that space is not empty, but rather is filled with some pervasive matter. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi emphasizes that space consists of ether and refers to it as “the ocean of heaven” (The Words, “The 31st Word,” 587–588).

5. The term nafs (soul, self) is used in the Qur’ān in various, but similar, complementary meanings. First, it means the self of a person or a thing. In this meaning, it is also used for God (sūrah 3: 28; sūrah 5: 116).

Its second meaning is the substance and essence which is the source of physical life in a human being or the dimension or aspect of the spirit which is the basis of animal and human physical life (sūrah 6: 93). In its third meaning, as the basis of the human physical or worldly life, it is the essence or substance which is aware of the needs of life, which demands and tastes pleasures and encourages a person to meet those needs and experience those pleasures. In a sense, it is the substance which incites a person to commit evil (sūrah 12: 53). It can and must be trained. When trained, it can be elevated from being a substance which commands evils, or being an evil-commanding soul, to the rank of being a soul at rest with faith in and worship of God (sūrah 89: 27–28).

In its other and most comprehensive meaning, it is human nature or the individual person (sūrah 4: 1).
36. When those who persistently disbelieve see you, they make you but a target of mockery, (saying to each other): “Is this the one who speaks against your deities?” (They cannot bear to hear their false deities denied.) And yet, it is they themselves who deny the Book of the All-Merciful (Who has created them, and embraces them with mercy – without recognizing this as a crime).

37. Human is, by nature, impatient as if made of haste, (this is why they ask derisively when the punishment with which they are threatened will come). I will soon show you the truth of My threats, so do not ask Me to hasten it.

38. But they insistently ask, “After all, when will this threat be fulfilled? (Answer us, O you who believe in it,) if you are people of truth!”

39. If only those who persistently disbelieve knew the time when they will be unable to ward off the Fire from their faces, and from their backs, and they will never be helped against it!

40. But it will come upon them all of a sudden and dumbfound them. They will not be able to avert it, nor will they be given respite to escape it.

41. Indeed, Messengers were mocked before you (O Muhammad), but the very thing, because of which the people used to mock them, overwhelmed those who scoffed at the Messengers (to humiliate them).

42. Say: “Who could protect you by night and day from the All-Merciful, if He wills to punish you? And yet, they turn away from the Book of their Lord in aversion.

43. Or do they really have deities apart from Us to defend them? They (those alleged deities) are not even able to help themselves, nor can they get any help and friendship from Us.

44. The truth is that We have provided for those (polytheist sinners) and their forefathers to enjoy life, so that they have lived for a long time in ease and safety. (This is why they think that they will live forever in prosperity.) But do they not see how We deal with the earth, reducing it of its outlying parts? So, can they really be the victors?

6. For reducing the earth of its outlying parts, see 13: 41, note 14.
45. Say: “I warn you only on the strength of the Revelation (in which there is no doubt). But the deaf do not hear the call, however much they are warned.”

46. And yet, if but a breath of your Lord’s punishment touches them, they are sure to cry: “Oh, woe to us! We were indeed wrongdoers!”

47. We will set up balances of absolute justice on the Day of Resurrection, and no person will be wronged in the least. Even though it be a deed so much as the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it forth to be weighed. We suffice as reckoners.

48. We granted Moses and Aaron the Criterion (the Book distinguishing between truth and falsehood), and made it a (guiding) light and reminder for the God-revering, pious.

49. They stand in great awe of their Lord though unseen (and beyond their perception), and tremble with the thought of the Last Hour.

50. And this one (the Qur‘an), too, is a Reminder full of blessings which We are sending down. Will you then reject it?

51. Indeed, We had, before this, granted Abraham discretion and his particular consciousness of truth, and We knew him very well (in all aspects of his character).

52. He said to his father and his people: “What are these images to which you pay such sincere devotion?”

53. They said: “We have found our forefathers worshipping them.”

54. “So, it is certain that,” said he, “both of you, you and your forefathers, have been in obvious error.”

55. They asked: “Is it the truth that you are proclaiming to us or are you jesting?”

56. He answered: “No, but your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who has originated them each with particular features, and I am one to bear witness to this truth.”

57. And (he made a decision:) “By God, I will most certainly devise a plan against your idols as soon as you have turned your backs and gone away!”
7. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi cites this verse as one of the typical examples of the Qur’ān’s miraculous eloquence. To indicate the severity of God’s punishment, the clause points to the least amount or slightest degree of it. As the entire clause expresses this slightness, all of its parts should reinforce that meaning.

The words “If but” (la-in) signify uncertainty and, therefore, imply slightness (of punishment). The verb massa means to touch slightly, also signifying slightness. Nafbatun (a breath) is merely a puff of air. By both its meaning and its being used without the definite article and, therefore, indicating indefiniteness, this word again underlines the slightness. The partitive min implies a part or a piece, thus indicating paucity. The word ‘adhel (punishment) is light in meaning compared to nakal (exemplary chastisement) and ‘qab (heavy penalty), and denotes a light punishment. The use of Rabb (Lord, Provider, Sustainer, Protector), suggesting affection, instead of (for example) Overwhelming, All-Compelling, or Ever-Able to Requite, also expresses slightness.

Therefore, when so slight a breath of punishment has such an effect, we should ponder how severe Divine chastisement might be. We see in this short clause an example of the way the Qur’ān’s parts are related to each other and complement each other’s meaning. This example demonstrates the Qur’ān’s choice of words and the wisdom in choosing them (The Words, “The 25th Word,” 392).
58. And then he broke all of them to pieces except the one biggest in their sight, so that they might be able turn back to it (to ask what had happened!)

59. “Who has done all this to our deities?” they exclaimed. “Indeed, he is one of the worst wrongdoers!”

60. Some said: “We heard a young man make mention of them, who is called Abraham.”

61. They said: “Then bring him before the people’s eyes, so that they may bear witness against him!”

62. “Abraham,” they asked, “is it you who have done this to our deities?”

63. He answered: “Rather, (some doer) must have done it – this is the biggest of them. Ask them, if they are able to speak!”

64. So they turned to their conscious nature which awoke to truth, and said (among themselves): “You (we) – it is you (we) who are the wrongdoers!”

65. But afterwards (under the influence of the same factors causing them to disbelieve), they relapsed into their former way of believing, and said to Abraham: “You know very well that these (images) cannot speak.”

66. (Abraham) said: “Then, do you worship, instead of God, that which cannot benefit you in any way, nor harm you?

67. “Shame on you and on all that you worship instead of God! Will you not reason and understand?”

68. They exclaimed: “Burn him and so protect your deities, if you really mean to do something!”

69. “O fire,” We ordered, “Be cool and peaceful for Abraham!”

70. They had schemed to destroy him, but We frustrated them, making them the worst of losers.

71. We saved him and Lot (who believed in him), guiding them to the land (of Damascus, including Palestine) in which We have produced many blessings for all peoples.

72. We bestowed upon him Isaac, and as an additional gift, Jacob (for grandson); and each We made righteous.
8. This verse contains three subtle points:

First: Like every element in nature, fire performs a duty under God's command. It did not burn Abraham, upon him be peace, for God commanded it not to do so.

Second: One type of heat burns through coldness. Through the phrase, *Be peaceful*, God Almighty commanded the cold: “Do not burn him.” An interpreter of the Qur’an remarks: “If He had not said ‘Be peaceful!, it would have burned him with its coldness.” Fire can simultaneously burn and be cold. Science has discovered a fire called “white heat” which does not radiate its heat. Instead, by attracting the surrounding heat, it causes the surrounding area to become cold enough to freeze liquids, and in effect burns them through its cold. (Hell, which contains all degrees and sorts of fire, may well have this intense cold.)

Third: Just as there is an immaterial substance like faith, and an armor like Islam, which will remove the effects of Hellfire and prevent them from harming us, there must be a physical substance that will protect against and prevent the effects of fire. As the fire did not burn Abraham’s body or clothes, people can make a similar armor to protect them against fire.

Thus, the verse suggests:

O nation of Abraham. Be like Abraham, so that your garments may be your guard against the fire, your greatest enemy, in both worlds. Coat your spirit with faith, and it will be your armor against Hellfire. Moreover, earth contains substances that will protect you from fire’s evil. Search for them, extract them, and coat yourselves with them.

As an important step in our progress, humankind discovered a fire-resistant substance. But see how elevated, fine, and beautiful a garment this verse indicates, one which will be woven on the loom of purity of faith in and submission to God, and which will not be torn for all eternity (See The Words, “The 20th Word,” 273).
73. And We made them leaders guiding people by Our command, and We revealed to them to do good deeds, and to establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms. They were Our servants devoted to worshipping us with all sincerity.

74. And Lot, too (We made a leader), to whom We granted authority with sound, wise judgment, and (revealed) knowledge, and We saved him from the people of the land who were given to deeds of corruption. Truly, they were a wicked people lost in transgression.

75. We embraced him in Our Mercy; surely he was among the righteous.

76. And Noah, too. He had called out to Us long before (Abraham), and We answered his prayer and saved him and (those of) his family and people (who believed in him) from the tremendous distress.

77. We helped him to safety from the people who denied Our Revelations. Truly, they were a wicked people, so We caused them all to drown.

78. (Among those whom We made leaders were) David and Solomon. The two were once judging a case regarding a field into which the sheep of some other people had strayed at night. We were watching and witnessing their judgment.

79. We made Solomon understand the case more clearly. We granted each of them authority with sound, wise judgment and knowledge (pertaining to the mission and in accordance with the time and conditions of each). And We subdued the mountains, as well as birds, to glorify Us along with David. It is We Who do all these things.

80. And We taught him the art of making iron coats-of-mail so that these might fortify you from the violence of war. So, are you (really people who are) thankful?

81. And in Solomon’s service We put the stormy wind, running at his command to carry him to the land in which We have produced blessings (for people). We have full knowledge of everything (with their true nature and all their aspects).
9. According to the reports, Solomon, upon him be peace, judged that the owner of the field should temporarily possess the sheep and benefit from their milk, wool, and new-born lambs. In the meanwhile, the field was to be entrusted to the owner of the sheep to cultivate it and restore to its former condition. David, upon him be peace, approved this judgment.

The verse is silent about David’s judgment. The sentence, *We granted each of them sound judgment and knowledge (pertaining to the mission and in accordance with the time and conditions of each)*, removes any misunderstanding concerning him. But it suggests that Solomon’s judgment was more to the point.

A Prophetic Tradition recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* ("Itiṣām," 21) establishes a judicial principle: “If a judge does his best to arrive at the right judgment, he gets two rewards when he gives a correct verdict and one reward when he errs.” The verse supports this and makes it clear that both of the two judges, who give two different verdicts in the same case, get a reward, provided both sincerely do their best to judge rightly in a matter about which there is no clear, specific judgment in either the Qur’ān or the Sunnah.

10. The verse points out that Almighty God gave David’s glorifications such strength and such a resonant and pleasing tone that they brought ecstasy to the mountains. Like a huge sound system, each mountain formed a circle around the chief reciter – David, upon him be peace – and repeated his glorifications. This is a reality, for every mountain with caves can "speak." If you declare before a mountain: “All praise be to God,” the mountain will echo it back. Since God Almighty has granted this ability to mountains, it can be developed.

God endowed David with both Messenger-ship and the Caliphate in an exceptional form. Thus, He made this seed of ability flourish as a miracle with that comprehensive Messenger-ship and magnificent sovereignty, causing the great mountains to follow him like soldiers, students, or disciples. Under his direction and in his tongue, they glorified the All-Majestic Creator and repeated whatever he said.

At present, due to advancements in communication, a great commander can disperse a large army through the mountains to repeat his declaration “God is the Greatest” at the same time, and make the mountains speak and ring with the words. If an ordinary commander can do this, a magnificent commander of Almighty God can get them actually to utter and recite God’s glorifications. Moreover, each mountain has a collective personality and corporate identity, and offers glorifications and worship particular to it. Just as each one through echoes glorifies in the tongue of humankind, it also glorifies the All-Majestic Creator in its own particular tongue (*The Words*, “The 20th Word,” 271).

11. Solomon covered the distance it would normally take two months to walk in two strides by flying through the air (*ṣūrah* 34: 12). This suggests that humanity can and should strive to travel through the air. Almighty God is saying here: “One of My servants did not obey his carnal desires, and I mounted him on the air. If you give up laziness and benefit properly from certain of My laws in nature, you too can mount it” (*The Words*, “The 20th Word,” 267–268).
82. And of the jinn and satans (devils) were some who dived for him (to extract precious stones from the sea) and did other works besides,¹² and We were keeping watch over them (to prevent them from disobeying him).¹³¹⁴

83. And (mention) Job (among those whom We made leaders): he called out to his Lord, saying: “Truly, affliction has visited me (so that I can no longer worship You as I must); and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

84. We answered his prayer and removed all the afflictions from which he suffered; and restored to him his household and the like thereof along with them as a mercy from Us and, as a reminder to those devoted to Our worship.¹⁵¹⁶

85. (Mention also) Ishmael, Idrīs, and Dhu'l-Kifl¹⁷ (among the leaders). All were men of fortitude and patience.

86. We embraced them in Our Mercy. They were among the people of utmost righteousness.

87. And (also mention) Dhu h-Nūn (Jonah). He departed in anger (from his people, who persistently disbelieved and paid no attention to his warnings), and he was certain that We would never straiten (his life for) him. But eventually he called out in the veils of darkness (formed of the belly of the fish, the sea, and dark, rainy night): “There is no deity but You, All-Glorified are You (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves).”

88. We answered His call, too, and We saved him from distress. Thus do We save the believers.¹⁸

89. (Mention also) Zachariah. Once he called out to his Lord, saying: “My Lord! Do not let me leave the world without an heir, for You are the Best of the inheritors.”¹⁹

90. We answered his call, too, and bestowed upon him John, and cured his wife for him (so she was able) to bear a child. Truly, these (three) used to hasten to do good deeds as if competing with each other, and invoke Us in hopeful yearning and fearful anxiety. And they were utterly humble before Us.
12. They made for him sanctuaries and figures (of inanimate objects) and carvings, as well as basins like ponds and boilers built into the ground (ṣūrah 34: 13).

13. The states that the Prophet Solomon, upon him be peace, made the jinn, devils, and evil spirits obey him. He prevented their evil and used them for beneficial work. This verse suggests that the jinn, conscious beings and earth's most important inhabitants after humankind, may serve us and can be contacted. Devils may also be made to serve, either willingly or unwillingly. God Almighty made them obey a servant who obeyed His commands. The verse also implies: “O humankind! I made jinn and devils, including their most evil ones, obey a servant who obeyed Me. If you submit yourself to My commands, most creatures, including the jinn and devils, may be subjugated to you.”

These verses mark the highest point in the occult or supernatural sciences that deal with paranormal events, which appear as a blend of art and science. They urge us to subjugate and employ such beings through the Qur’ān so that we may be saved from their evil.

The Qur’ān, however, does not allude to modern necromancy, which some “civilized” people practice by trying to contact the spirits of the dead, for these, in reality, are evil spirits masquerading as dead persons. Rather, it is the form known to certain saints, like Muhyi’d-din ibn al-‘Arabī, who could communicate with good spirits at will, and make contact and form relations with them.

14. David, upon him be peace, was a Prophet who was given a Divine Scripture (the Psalms) and who is praised in the Qur’ān for his sincere and profound devotion to God (38: 17–20). Even though he was a king, he lived a simple life, making his living through his own labor. He had such a great awareness of God that he cried a great deal and fasted every other day. Our Prophet recommended this type of fasting to some Companions who asked what the most rewarding type of supererogatory fasting was (al-Bukhārī, “Tahajjud,” 7; “Ṣawm,” 59; Muslim, “Ṣiyām,” 182).

Unfortunately, the Bible attributes some sinful acts to the Prophets David and Solomon (II Samuel, 11, and I Kings, 11: 1–8), as it attributes to the Prophet Lot, upon them all be peace. It is inconceivable that these holy prophets would have committed the grievous sins attributed to them.

If the Qur’ān had not been revealed, we would not be sure whether the previous Prophets really were sincere, devout, and thankful servants of God. The Qur’ān frees Jesus, upon him be peace, from his followers’ mistaken deification of him and from his own people’s denial of his Prophethood, explaining that God had no sons and daughters. It also clears the Israelite and non-Israelite Prophets of their supposed “sins” that are mentioned in the Bible. It presents Jesus as a spirit from God that was breathed into the Virgin Mary, Abraham as an intimate friend of God, Moses as one who spoke to God, David as a sincere servant of God, a Messenger and Caliph, and Solomon as a king and a Prophet who prayed to Him humbly. And despite being the greatest and most powerful king that ever lived, the Prophet Solomon, upon him be peace, remained a humble servant of God until his death.

15. Truthfulness, trustworthiness, the ability to communicate God’s commands, intelligence, and sinlessness are essentials of Prophethood. These are the attributes possessed by every Prophet.

All Muslim theologians also agree that Prophets have no bodily or mental defects. Just as they were extraordinarily attractive in personality and conduct, they were also graceful and charming in outward appearance. They were perfect in bodily structure.

Prophets must be free from all bodily defects, for their appearance should not repel others. In explaining the Divine wisdom of God’s Messenger living for 63 years, Said Nursi writes:

Believers are religiously obliged to love and respect God’s Messenger to the utmost degree, and follow his every command without feeling any dislike for any aspect of him. For this reason, God did not allow him to live to the troublesome and often
humiliating period of old age, and sent him to the "highest abode" when he was 63 years old. (The Letters 2, 84-85)

So, just as it is a baseless assertion that the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, had a speech impediment, some allegations about Job’s distress are also baseless. As can be deduced from the Qur’anic verses, and as mentioned in the Bible (Job, 2: 7), he was afflicted with a skin disease, which caused painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. But the allegations that worms lived in his sores or abscesses, and that the resulting offensive odor caused people to leave him, are completely groundless. If people really left him, this might have been due to his later poverty. In the beginning, he was a rich, thankful servant of God; later on, he lost his wealth and children or his family left him. Yet, as a Prophet, he could not have had a repulsive or disgusting appearance; his face, at least, must have been exempt from sores. Nor could his body have emitted an offensive smell. Contrary to the Biblical account that he cursed the day of his birth (Job, 3: 1) and cursed God openly (Job, 7: 20-21), and justified himself rather than God (Job, 32: 2), the Prophet Job, upon him be peace, bore his afflictions for years without any objection. He prayed: *Affliction has visited me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful* (sūrah 21: 83). God answered his prayer and removed his affliction, and restored to him his household (that he had lost) and the like thereof along with them.

16. While afflicted with numerous wounds for a long time, the Prophet Job, upon him be peace, feared that his duty of worship would suffer, and so he prayed, not for the sake of his own comfort, but for the sake of his worship of God: *Affliction has visited me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful* (sūrah 21: 83). God Almighty accepted this sincere, disinterested, and devout supplication in the most miraculous fashion. He granted Job, upon him be peace, perfect health and made manifest in him all kinds of compassion.

Job’s supplication has some important lessons for us to take note of:

Corresponding to the physical wounds and sicknesses of Job, upon him be peace, we have spiritual sicknesses. If our inner being were to be turned outward, we would appear more wounded and diseased than Job. For each sin that we commit and each doubt that enters our mind inflicts wounds on our heart and our spirit.

The wounds of Job, upon him be peace, were of such a nature that they threatened his brief worldly life, but our inner wounds threaten our infinitely long, everlasting life. We need the supplication of Job thousands of times more than he did himself.

Sin, penetrating to the heart, darkens it until it extinguishes the light of faith. Each sin has a path leading to unbelief. Unless that sin is swiftly obliterated by seeking God’s forgiveness, it grows from a worm into a snake that gnaws on the heart.

Secondly, life is refined, perfected, and strengthened by means of disasters and illnesses, and fulfils its own purpose. Life led monotonously on the couch of ease and comfort is almost identical with non-existence.

Thirdly, this worldly realm is the field of testing, the abode of service. It is not the place of pleasure and being rewarded for things done in it in God’s cause. So sicknesses and misfortunes – as long as they do not affect faith and are patiently endured – conform fully to service and worship, and even strengthen it. Since such misfortunes make each hour’s worship equivalent to that of a day, one should offer thanks instead of complaining.

Worship consists, in fact, of two kinds, positive and negative. What is meant by positive is obvious. As for negative worship, this is when one afflicted with misfortune or sickness perceives their own weakness and helplessness, and turning to the Compassionate Lord, seeks refuge in Him, meditating upon Him, petitioning Him, and thus offering a pure form of worship that no hypocrisy can penetrate. If he or she endures patiently, thinks of the reward attendant on misfortune and offers thanks, then each hour that passes will count as a whole day spent in worship. Their brief life
thus becomes much longer. There are even cases where a single minute is counted as being equal to a whole day's worship.

The power of patience given to a person by God Almighty is adequate for every misfortune, unless it has been squandered on baseless fears. But through the predominance of delusion, one's neglect, and imagining that this transient life is eternal, a person squanders their power of patience on the past and the future. When the patience that has been squandered is not equal to the misfortunes of the present, then a person begins to complain. It is as if – God forbid! – he or she were complaining about God Almighty to people.

In short, just as gratitude increases Divine bounty, so too does complaint increase misfortune, removing all occasion for compassion.

Fourthly, the truly harmful misfortune is that which affects the Religion. One should at all times seek refuge at the Divine Court from misfortune in matters of the Religion and cry out for help. But misfortunes that do not affect the Religion are not in reality misfortunes. Some of them are warnings from the All-Merciful One. If a shepherd throws a stone at his sheep when they trespass on another's pasture, they understand that the stone was intended as a warning to save them from a perilous action; full of gratitude they turn back. So too, there are many apparent misfortunes that are Divine warnings and admonishments, some others that cause sins to be forgiven, and still others that awaken people from the sleep of neglect, reminding them of their human helplessness and weakness, thus affording them a form of peace. Illness that is deemed as a variety of misfortune is indeed not a misfortune, as has already been said, but rather a favor from God and a means of purification.

The Prophet Job, upon him be peace, did not pray for the comfort of his soul, but rather sought cures for the purpose of worship, because disease was preventing his remembrances of God with his tongue and his meditation upon God in his heart. We too should make our primary intent, when making that supplication, the healing of the inward and spiritual wounds that arise from sinning.

As far as physical diseases are concerned, we may seek refuge from them when they hinder our worship. But we should seek refuge in a humble and supplicating fashion, not by protesting or being plaintive. If we accept God as our Lord, then we must resign ourselves to all that He gives us as a manifestation of His Lordship. To sigh and complain in a manner that suggests we object to the Divine Destiny and Decree is a form of criticizing Divine Destiny, an accusation leveled against God's compassion. One who finds fault with God's mercy will inevitably be deprived of it. A person who, when afflicted with misfortune, responds to it with protests and complaints, only compounds his or her misfortune. (Summarized from Lem'alar ["The Gleams"], 8–11.)

17. It is not possible to say anything definite about the identity of the Prophet Dhu'l-Kifl, upon him be peace. Abu'l-'Alā al-Mawdūdī points out that Dhu'l-Kifl is not a name, but a title like the title Dhu'n-Nūn that was used for the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace, meaning “the Companion of the Fish.” According to him, Dhu'l-Kifl means “a man of great portion,” and it was used for him because of his exalted personality and lofty degree in the Hereafter. Like al-Mawdūdī, Professor Suad Yıldırım, of Turkey, is of the opinion that he might be the Prophet Ezekiel, upon him be peace, who was among the Children of Israel driven out of Jerusalem to Babylon. He lived and performed his mission of calling people to God in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar, roughly between 594–572 bc.

18. The supplication of the Prophet Yûnus (Jonah), son of Mattâ, upon our Prophet and him be peace, is the most powerful supplication, a most effective means for the acceptance of prayer by God. The gist of the story of Jonah, upon him be peace, is as follows:

He was cast into the sea and swallowed by a large fish. The sea was stormy, the night turbulent and dark, and his hope was exhausted. But it was while he was in such
a situation that his supplication became a swift means of salvation. The secret of the power of his supplication was this:

In that situation all causes were suspended, for Jonah, upon him be peace, could only be saved by one whose command would subdue the fish and the sea, and the night and the sky. The night, the sea, and the fish were united against him. Only one whose command might subdue all three of these could bring him to the shore of salvation. Even if the entirety of creation had become his servants and helpers, it would have been of no avail. For causes have no real, creative effect. Since Jonah, upon him be peace, saw with the eye of certainty that there was no refuge other than in the Creator of causes, and clearly perceived God's special mercy for every being in the light of his faith in the Divine Oneness, his supplication was suddenly able to subdue the night, the sea, and the fish. Through his substantial faith in God's Oneness and absolute Sovereignty throughout the universe, the belly of the fish became a submarine for him, and the surging sea, which in its awesomeness resembled an erupting volcano, became a serene plain, the site of a pleasant excursion. Again, through the light of his faith, the sky's surface was cleared of all clouds and the moon appeared over his head, like a lamp. In the end he reached the shore of salvation, and observed God's favor clearly.

Now we are in a situation one hundred times more awesome than that in which Jonah, upon him be peace, first found himself. Our night is the future. When we look upon our future with the eye of neglect, it is a hundred times darker and more fearful than his night. Our sea is this earth revolving in space. Each wave of this sea bears on it thousands of corpses, and is thus a thousand times more frightening than his sea. Our fish is the malicious desires of our carnal soul, which strives to destroy the foundation of our eternal life. This fish is a thousand times more harmful than his. For his fish could destroy a hundred-year lifespan, whereas ours seeks to destroy an eternal life. This being our true state, we should, in imitation of Jonah, upon him be peace, take refuge directly in the Creator of causes, Who is our Lord, and should say:

There is no god but You, All-Glorified are You! Surely I have been one of the wrongdoers, and understand with full certainty that it is only He who can repel from us the harm of the future, this world, and the temptations of our carnal souls, united against us because of our neglect and misguidance. For the future is subject to His command, the world to His authority, and our soul to His direction. (Summarized from Lem‘alār ["The Gleams"], 5–7)

19. The conclusion of the verse is not contrary to the first part of Zachariah’s supplication, rather it confirms it. God Almighty usually acts from behind the veil of causality in this world, which is the realm of wisdom and testing. So the meaning is: “I fully believe that You are the Best of the inheritors, so I expect You to favor me with a righteous heir,” and it is similar to Job’s asking for God’s mercy by concluding his supplication: “You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”
91. And (mention) that blessed woman who set the best example in guarding her chastity.\(^{20}\) We breathed into her out of Our Spirit,\(^{21}\) and We made her and her son a miraculous sign (of Our Power and matchless way of doing things) for all the worlds.

92. So, this community of yours (which all the Messengers and their followers have formed) is one single community of the same faith, and I am your Lord (Who creates, sustains, and protects you);\(^{22}\) so worship Me alone.

93. But people have broken up and differed among themselves as regards the Religion. But they are all bound to return to Us (to account for all that they did).

94. Whoever does any deed of good and righteousness, being a true believer, his endeavor will not be left unrewarded in ingratitude. We are keeping the record of every good deed of his in his favor (without the least being neglected).

95. It is inconceivable that a community, the destruction of which We have decreed (because of their unbelief and irremediable sins), could return to faith, (nor that a community which We destroyed should not come back to Us and then be returned to the world again so that they could believe and do good deeds).\(^{23}\)

96. Eventually, a day will come when Gog and Magog will be let loose, and they will rush down from every mound.\(^{24}\)

97. And the true promise of the Last Hour has been close at hand; and look, the eyes of those who obstinately disbelieve stare in horror fixedly, exclaiming: “Woe to us! Indeed we have lived in heedlessness and forgetfulness of this. Ah! We truly have been wrongdoers (who have, most of all, wronged our own selves)”

98. “You and all the things you deify and worship apart from God are but firewood for Hell. You are bound to arrive in it.”

99. If those (false objects of their worship) had truly been deities, they would not arrive in it. Every one of them will abide therein.

100. Moaning will be their lot in it, and (nothing to their benefit) will they be able to hear therein (as a recompense for their willful deafness to the Divine Revelation in the world).

101. But surely those for whom the decree of ultimate good has already gone forth from Us, they will be kept away from it (Hell).
20. Why the Qur’ān mentions Mary along with the Prophets, even though she was not a Prophet, is because of Mary’s exceptional greatness and honor, and for the purpose of introducing Jesus in his real (human) identity.

21. For God’s breathing out of His Spirit into Mary to conceive of Jesus, and into the “body” of Adam, which He shaped out of clay, so that he might come to the world, and the meaning of His breathing out of His Spirit, see sūrah 4: 171, note 34; sūrah 15: 29, note 8.

22. Having discussed many Prophets with the suffering each had to bear and of which they were then relieved by God, and by discussing the distinguished aspect of the character and mission of each, the Qur’ān declares that the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, did not bring a different religion; and, thus, all the Prophets and their followers, from the first day of human history on the earth to the Last Day, constitute a single community with God being their Lord, Who alone must be worshipped. The basic foundation of this faith and the basic point of unity among the believers, which is also the main dynamic against disunity among them, is believing in God as the only Deity, Lord and Sovereign of the whole creation, including, of course, humanity, and worshipping Him alone.

23. The verse has all of the three meanings given. While verse 94 mentions a believing servant, this verse talks about a community. This suggests that corruption is like a contagious disease and individuals usually go astray in imitation of others in a community. Total destruction comes as a result of the corruption that encompasses almost the whole or at least the majority of a community. This shows the importance of social reform or improvement.

102. They will not even hear the slightest sound of it, and they will abide in that which their souls desire, (enjoying it to the full).

103. Even the greatest shock (of the second blowing of the Trumpet) will not cause them any worry, and the angels welcome them, with the greeting: “This is your day, the day which you were promised.”

104. The Day when We will roll up the heaven as written scrolls are rolled up. We will bring the creation back into existence as easily as We originated it in the first instance.25 This is a binding promise on Us, and surely We fulfill whatever We promise.

105. We (recorded in the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet and then) wrote down in the Psalms after the Torah that My righteous servants will inherit the earth.26

106. Surely in this (Qur’ān) there is the explanation (of every truth necessary) for God’s servants devoted to worshipping Him.

107. We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as an unequalled mercy for all the worlds.27

108. Say: “It is revealed to me that your God is the One and Only God. Will you, then, become Muslims (those wholly submitted to Him)?”

109. If they still turn away, say: “I have conveyed to you all that I must convey, and warned you all alike. But I do not know if that with which you are threatened (whether it be the destruction or the Last Judgment,) is near or far.

110. “Truly, He knows all that is spoken openly, just as He knows all that you keep concealed (including your secret intentions).

111. “I do not know but the respite given to you may be a trial for you (– a respite so that you may fully display your deserving His punishment), and enjoyment for a while.”

112. (The Messenger) said (in conclusion): “My Lord, judge (between me and those unbelievers) with truth (and allow the truth to be fully manifested). Our Lord is the All-Merciful, the One Whose help is ever sought against all that you falsely attribute (to Him and me).”
25. God revives this vast earth when it is dead and dry, thereby displaying His Power via quickening countless species of creation, each as extraordinary as humankind. He shows His all-embracing Knowledge in these creatures’ infinite variations within the complex intermingling of all their distinct forms. God turns His servants’ attention toward the eternal happiness, assuring them of Resurrection in His heavenly decrees, and makes visible the splendor of His being their Lord and Nurturer. He causes all His creatures to collaborate with each other, turning within the orbit of His Command and Will, causing them to help each other in submission to Him.

He shows us our value by creating us as the Tree of Creation’s most comprehensive, subtle, worthy, and valued fruit; by addressing us directly; and by subjugating all things to us. Could One so Compassionate and Powerful, Wise and All-Knowing not bring about the Resurrection, assemble His creatures, and restore us to life? Could He not institute His Supreme Court or create the Heaven and Hell? Such ideas are inconceivable.

Indeed, the Almighty Disposer of the affairs of this world continually creates on its finite, transient surface numerous signs, examples, and indications of the Supreme Gathering and the Place where this will take place. Each spring we see countless animal and plant species assembled in a few days and then scattered. All tree and plant roots, as well as certain animals, are revived and restored exactly as they were. Other animals are re-created in nearly identical forms. Seeds that appear so alike quickly grow into distinct and differentiated entities, after being brought to full vigor with extraordinary rapidity and ease in absolute orderliness and harmony. How could anything be difficult for the One Who does this? How could He Who has created the heavens and the earth in “six days” be unable to resurrect humankind with a single blast?

Suppose a gifted writer could write countless books on a vast sheet of paper in just an hour, without error or omission, fully and in the best style. If someone then told you that he could rewrite his own book from memory, even if it had fallen into the water and had become lost, how could anyone say that he could not do so? Or think of a sovereign who, to show his power or warn his subjects, removes mountains at a command, turns his country around, and transforms the sea into dry land. Then imagine that a great boulder blocks the path of guests traveling to his reception. If someone says that the sovereign will remove the boulder at a command, would you say that he could not do so? Or imagine someone assembles a great army, and you are told that he will recall it to parade in battalions by a trumpet blast after dismissing them to rest? If the battalions formed in disciplined rows, would you respond with unbelief? If you did, your error would be enormous (The Words, “The 10th Word,” 96).


This verse will be more understandable when it is considered along with 24: 55: God has promised those of you who believe and do good, righteous deeds that He will most certainly empower them as vicegerents on the earth (in the place of those who are in power at present), even as He empowered those (of the same qualities) that preceded them, and that, assuredly, He will firmly establish for them their religion, which He has (chosen and) approved of for them, and He will replace their present state of fear with security (so that they can practice their religion freely and fully and in peace). They worship Me alone, associating none with Me as partners (in belief, worship, and the authority to order their life). The righteous servants promised to finally inherit the world will be those who combine righteousness with devotion to worshipping God exclusively, as will be mentioned in the verse to come.

27. This verse expounds the mission of our Prophet in all clarity. This mission has two cardinal aspects, one for the creation and life of the whole universe, and the other for the people from his time until the Last Hour.

With respect to the former aspect of his
mission, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is both the seed of the Tree of Creation and its most illustrious and perfect fruit, one about whom God declares, “But for you, I would not have created the worlds” (al-'Ajlūnī, 2: 232), and the mirror or means for God’s manifestation of His being the All-Merciful or His favors of Mercy to reach the whole creation. In Sufi terminology, he is the first and foremost or greatest Universal Man. With respect to the second, religious aspect of his mission, he is the means for the individuals and communities following him to attain eternal happiness, and the owner of the most comprehensive rank of intercession in the Hereafter. In other words, he is the mirror or means for God’s particular favors of His being the All-Compassionate to reach each creature. There is no other way than his which leads to eternal salvation.
It is commonly accepted that this sûrah began to be revealed in Makkah and was completed in Madinah. It has 78 verses.

The sûrah criticizes the Makkani polytheists for their blind, willful insistence on associating partners with God and demonstrates the contradictions in their creeds. It warns new believers, who might waver and be unwilling to persevere through some of the hardships that accepting a new faith naturally entails. Also, the sûrah allows the believers to set up armed resistance to the continuing harassment of the Makkans and their threats to the security of the Muslims in Madinah.

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

1. O humankind! Keep from disobedience to your Lord in reverence for Him and piety and get under His protection. (Never forget that) the violent convulsion of the Last Hour is an awesome thing.

2. On the Day when you all see it, every suckling mother will utterly forsake her infant in dread, and every pregnant female will cast off her burden. You will see all people as if gone out of their senses, while, in fact, they are in their senses. This is because God's punishment is extremely severe.

3. Among people there are such as dispute about God without any true knowledge and follow every corrupt, rebellious, and mischievous Satan.

4. It is decreed about him (Satan) that whoever takes him as a guardian, surely he leads him astray, and guides him to the punishment of the Blaze.

5. O humankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, (consider that) We created you from earth (in the beginning while there was nothing of your existence as humankind), and the material origin of every one of you is earth. Then (We have created you) from a drop of (seminal) fluid, then from a clot clinging (to the womb wall), then from a (chew of) lump in part shaped and in part not shaped, and differentiated and undifferentiated, and so do We clarify for you (the reality of the Resurrection). And We cause what We will (to come into the world) to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then We bring you out as (dependent) infants, then (We provide what is necessary and appropriate) so that you may attain your age of full strength. Among you some are caused to die (during this period of
growth and afterwards), and some are kept back to the most miserable state of old age, ceasing to know anything after once having known some things. (As another proof for the Resurrection and a sign to comprehend it,) you see earth dry and lifeless, and suddenly, when We send down the (known, blessed) water on it, it stirs and swells and grows every pleasant pair of vegetation.

1. For the full stages of the development of the human embryo which the Qur'ān taught us fourteen centuries ago, and which the modern science of embryology has recently discovered, also see sūrah 23: 12–14.

As in several other verses (i.e., sūrah 21: 104, and see the corresponding note 25), the Qur'ān brings the first creation to our attention as an analogy for the Resurrection. It also mentions, as a sign and proof of it, the creation of a human being, starting with the elements in earth, air, and water and continuing with the developmental stages in the mother's womb. It must certainly be much easier for reason to accept that a being who once was not a thing completely unknown in existence, and then was created in stages from materials that bear no resemblance to it, will, by the same Creative Power, be raised to life again after death.
6. And so, God is He Who is the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant, and He gives life to the dead, and He has full power over everything.

7. And the Last Hour is sure to come – there is no doubt about it. And God will surely raise up all who are in the graves.

8. And yet, among people there are some who dispute about God without having any true knowledge, or any true guidance, or an enlightening (Divine) Book.

9. They keep on disputing arrogantly to lead people astray from God’s way. For such there is disgrace in the world, and on the Day of Resurrection, We will cause them to taste the punishment of the scorching Fire.

10. “This punishment is the outcome of what you have (committed and) forwarded with your own hands, and never does God do the least wrong to His servants.”

11. Among people there are also many a one who worships God on the borderline (of faith) in expectation of only worldly gains. If any good befalls him, he is satisfied with it, but if a trial afflicts him, he turns away utterly, reverting back to unbelief. He (thereby) incurs loss of both this world and the Hereafter. This indeed is the obvious loss.

12. He invokes, apart from God, that which can neither harm nor benefit him. That indeed is straying very far away.

13. He even invokes the being that is far more likely to cause harm than benefit: what evil a patron, and what evil an associate!

14. Surely God will admit those who believe and do good, righteous deeds into the Gardens through which rivers flow. Surely God does whatever He wills.

15. Whoever thinks that God will not help the Messenger to victory in the world and to prosperity in the Hereafter, then let him move heaven and earth to prevent His help: let him stretch out a rope to heaven (to prevent God’s help and Revelation from reaching him), and then sever that rope to descend without being broken into pieces. Then let him see whether the schemes he makes will be of any avail to him, and (whether he can) do away with what enrages him.

2. The verse cites three sources that one should base oneself on to have correct knowledge of God. These are: (i) knowledge obtained through the study of, and reflection on, the creation in the light of the Revelation and through the disciplines of the spiritual way; and (ii) true guidance, by which it is referred to the Divine Revelation or inspiration, or the guidance of any of those mentioned in 4:69; and (iii) the Divine Book, which illuminates minds and hearts.

3. Zamakhshari, the author of al-Kashf, writes that those who are mentioned in verses 8 and 9 as disputing about God are the corrupt, rebellious, and mischievous devils mentioned in verse 3, and the disputers in verse 3 are those who follow them.
16. It is in the face of such rage and malice that We send down the Qur'an in messages clear in meaning and content and as manifest signs of the truth; and God guides whomever He wills.

17. Those who truly believe (in God and follow Muhammad), and those who have become Jews, and the Sabaeans, and the Christians, and the Magians, and those who associate partners with God (without having any relation with a Divinely-inspired religion)—God will certainly judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. God is Witness over everything.

18. Do you ever consider that all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth prostrate themselves to God, and so do the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the beasts, and so do many among human beings? But many others are deservedly condemned to punishment. Whoever God humiliates can have none to give him honor. Assuredly, God does whatever He wills.

19. These are two opposing groups (~ those who prostrate to God and those who do not. Though there may be differences of approach within either group), they contend about (the truth concerning) their Lord. As for those who disbelieve (by categorically denying Him, or associating partners with Him in His Attributes or authority as the Lord), garments of fire are certain to be cut out for them, with boiling water being poured down over their heads,

20. With which all that is within their bodies, as well as their skins, is melted away.

21. For them are also goads and maces of iron.

22. Whenever in their anguish they attempt to come out of the Fire, they will be returned into it (and told): “Taste the punishment of the scorching Fire!”

23. (On the other hand,) God will admit those who believe and do good, righteous deeds into the Gardens through which rivers flow; adorned therein with armbands of gold and pearls, and their garments therein will be of silk.
4. This verse mentions three cardinal groups of faith. The first group includes the true believers who follow the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. They are also the true heirs to all the previous Prophets.

The second group is comprised of four sub-groups.

Those Jews who have reduced their God-revealed Religion into a national or tribal religion, and God, into a god that belongs exclusively to a single race. They have also denied eternal life and reduced eternal happiness to worldly happiness in the so-called “promised land.” Moreover, they altered the Divine Law.

The Sabaeans were either those who claimed to follow the Prophet John, upon him be peace, or those who worshipped celestial bodies but claimed to follow the religion of the Prophets Seth and Enoch, upon them be peace. Both groups lived in northern Iraq.

The Christians mentioned here are those who, although they followed the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, sullied the faith of Jesus by attributing a son to God or by claiming that Jesus was God incarnate, and attributed divinity to the Virgin Mary and to the Spirit who functioned as a means for God’s gift of a son reaching Mary. They also imported some other pagan doctrines into their religion.

The term Magians refers to the fire-worshippers of Persia. They believed in the two separate deities: one the deity of light and good; the other, the deity of dark and evil. They claimed to be the followers of Zoroaster.

The Quran regards those who are Jews and Christians as the People of the Book. God’s Messenger and the Companions, based on this verse, also treated the Sabaeans and Magians as People of the Book.

The third group consists of the polytheists who do not follow any Divine Book or Prophet and, though many among them believe in God in some way as the Creator of the universe, they have adopted and worship many deities, usually represented by idols or statues.

5. The reason why many among human beings are specifically mentioned, even though they are included in all those who are on the earth, is that all human beings prostrate to God in the sense that they cannot escape God’s laws of “nature” or creation and the operation of the universe in many respects, such as their coming into and leaving the world, the operation of their bodies, the appointment of their families and races, and their physique, etc. However, many among human beings prostrate before God of their free volition – they believe in Him and worship and live according to His commandments.

6. God Almighty is absolutely free in His will and acts. However, in His judgments about human beings, He considers their choices, acts, and intentions. As we have regularly pointed in these notes, as far as God’s absolute Will and its relation to human will and the judgments about human beings are concerned, the verses, _The earth belongs indeed to God, and He makes it an inheritance for whom He wills of His servants_ (sūrah 7: 128); and _My righteous servants will inherit the earth_ (sūrah 21: 105), constitute a good example. We understand that God’s will takes the choice and free acts of human beings into consideration when He decrees about them.

7. For a similar verse and its explanation, see sūrah 18: 31, note 17.
24. They have been guided to (believe in and declare) the purest of words, and they have been guided to the path of the All-Praiseworthy One, (saying and doing only what is praiseworthy).

25. Those who disbelieve and bar (others) from God’s way and (the believers from visiting) the Sacred Mosque, which We have set up as a place of worship for all (believing) people alike, both for those who dwell therein (in Makkah) and for those who come from abroad – whoever seeks a deviation from the right course therein by deliberate wrongdoing, We cause him to taste a painful punishment.

26. Remember when We assigned to Abraham the site of the House (Ka’bah) as a place of worship, (directing him): “Do not associate any partners with Me in any way, and keep My House pure (from any material and spiritual filth) for those who will go round it in devotion, and those who will stand in prayer before it, and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves in worship.”

27. Publicly proclaim the (duty of) Pilgrimage for all humankind, that they come to you on foot and on lean camels, coming from every far-away point,

28. So that they may witness all the (spiritual, social, and economic) benefits in store for them, and offer during the known, appointed days the sacrificial cattle that He has provided for them by pronouncing God’s Name over them. Eat of their meat and feed the distressed, the poor.

29. Thereafter, let them tidy themselves up (by having their hair cut, removing their ḥāram [Hajj attire], taking a bath, and clipping their nails, etc.), and fulfill the vows (if they have made any, and complete other acts of the Pilgrimage), and go round the Most Ancient, Honorable House in devotion.
8. What is meant in this verse is that such people believe in and declare, *There is no deity but God,* and they only speak pure speech or say pure words, such as a declaration of faith, mentioning God, giving advice for God’s sake, reciting the Qur’an, etc. They refrain from any idle, useless, or unbefitting talk.

9. The last two verses mention certain prescribed acts of the Ḥajj, some of which have already been mentioned in sûrah 2: 196–203.

On arriving at the miqāt (any of the stations designated for entering the state of ihram), pilgrims should shave themselves, clip their fingernails, perform ghusl or wudū’, and put on some perfume. Men don their special Ḥajj attire, which is also called ihram, as it is a symbol of entering the state of ihram. There is no special attire for women other than the modest dress which covers the body loosely from head to foot (but not the hands and face). Pilgrim candidates should offer a prayer of two rak’ah and declare their intention to do Ḥajj or Umrah, or Ḥajj and Umrah together. Wearing ihram and declaring one’s intention to do Ḥajj or Umrah are essential elements of the Pilgrimage rites, and the rites are invalid without these two elements.

While in the state of ihram, pilgrims must avoid sexual intercourse and whatever leads to it, wrangling and useless bickering, and marriage ceremonies or attending marriage ceremonies, for men wearing any clothes that have been stitched or shoes that cover the feet above the ankles and covering their heads and (for both men and women) faces, wearing perfume, cutting their hair or nails, hunting on land, killing any animals, and cutting trees or grass within the sacred precincts of Makkah.

Before sunrise on the first day of ʿId al-Adḥā (the Festival of Sacrifice), pilgrims who have already performed the duties of waqfah (staying for some time) in ‘Arafah on the afternoon of the ninth day of Dhuʾl-Hijjah (the Eve of the Day of the Festival) and in al-Muzdalifah on the following night should return to Mina after collecting pebbles at al-Muzdalifah. After sunrise, they must throw seven pebbles at Jamrat al-Aqabah. Then they offer their sacrifice, have their hair cut, remove their ihram, and return to their everyday life – with the exception that they still cannot sexual intercourse with their spouse.

They then go to the Kaʿbah to perform the obligatory tawaf of Visiting, an essential part of the Ḥajj. Performing this tawaf on the first day of ʿId al-Adḥā is recommended, but one can perform it during the following two days. After this tawaf, it both of the pilgrims (husband and wife) have already had their hair cut and have removed their ihram, then sexual intercourse becomes permissible. If the pilgrims are doing Ḥajj Tamattu’ (combining the Ḥajj and Umrah with a break in between), they must perform a saʿy after this tawaf. Those who are doing the Ḥajj Qiran (combining the Umrah and Ḥajj in one state of ihram) or Ifrād (the Ḥajj only) do not have to make this second saʿy if they did the tawaf and saʿy upon arrival in Makkah.

The pilgrims must now return to Mina and spend the three days of ʿId al-Adḥā there. After midday on the second and third day (Dhuʾl-Hijjah 11 and 12), they throw seven pebbles at each of three Jamrahs, beginning with Jamrat al-ʿUlah, then Jamrat al-Wustah, and then Jamrat al-Aqabah. They exalt God at each throwing and, after throwing pebbles at the first two Jamrahs, they pray for themselves, their parents, and their relatives, as well as for all Muslims. If they want to stay in Mina on the fourth day of ʿId al-Adḥā, they throw pebbles at the Jamrahs before noon.

After returning to Makkah, those pilgrims who will be returning to their native land must perform the Farewell Tawaf. Afterwards, as highly recommended acts, they should go to the Zamzam well and drink as much of its water as possible. Then they go to al-Multazim, rub their face and chest against it, taking hold of the curtain that covers the Kaʿbah, pray, and supplicate.

10. This verse refers to the commandments that forbid the eating of carrion, blood that has spilled out of the animal – other than that which has been left in the veins of the organs, such as the liver and spleen – the flesh of swine,
and that which is profane, having been slaughtered in the name of other than God and without having God’s Name pronounced over it (See 6: 145; 16: 115). 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, upon him be peace and blessings, informed us of the other animals that we are forbidden to eat.

Alongside the Qur’an, the Sunnah of the Messenger is another basic source of the Divine commandments in Islam. It includes everything connected to religious commandments – everything that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, actually said or did, or those actions which he approved of among his Companions. The Sunnah serves as a source of legislation by enjoining and prohibiting; it lays down the principles related to establishing all religious obligations and necessities; and it determines what is lawful or unlawful. It should never be forgotten that the Sunnah is also based on Divine Revelation. The Messenger does not speak on his own, out of own desire; that (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him (sūrah 53: 3-4).

In response to a question whether ṭādū’ could be performed with sea-water, the Messenger declared: “A sea is that of which the water is clean and the dead animals are lawful to eat” (Abū Dāwūd, “Tahārah,” 41; at-Tirmidhī, “Taharah,” 52). This has provided a basis for many rulings. One is that the Qur’an generally forbids eating animals that have died naturally and that were not killed according to Islamic rules. The Sunnah, however, elaborates on this general rule (commandment) by allowing the consumption of sea animals that have died in the water.

For more information about the same point, see also sūrah 6: 145, note 31.
31. Be believers of pure faith in God, without associating any partners with Him. Whoever associates any partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven, and thereupon the wild birds of prey snatch him away, or the wind blows him away into a distant, abysmal ditch (causing him to be shattered into pieces).

32. That (is the truth itself). And whoever venerates the public symbols and rituals set up by God (such as Jumu‘ah and ‘Īd Prayers, the call to the Prayer, the Sacrifice, and the rites of the Pilgrimage), surely it is because of the true piety and God-consciousness of their hearts.

33. There are benefits for you in them (the sacrificial animals, offering of which in God’s cause is among Islam’s public symbols and rituals,) until the appointed term (of their sacrifice). Then their being carried for sacrifice (during the Hajj) ends in the sacred precincts of the Most Ancient, Honorable House.

34. For every believing community We have laid down sacrifice as an act of worship to be performed at a certain time and place. So they must pronounce God’s Name over what We have provided for them of cattle (while offering it). And (bear in mind that) your God is the One and Only God, so to Him alone submit yourselves wholly. And give glad tidings to the deeply devoted, humble servants –

35. Those whose hearts tremble with awe whenever God is mentioned, who are always patient with whatever ill befalls them, who always establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and who spend (in God’s cause and for the needy) out of whatever We provide for them.

36. And the cattle, (including especially the camels) – We have appointed their sacrifice as among the public symbols and rituals set up by God for you, in which there is much good for you. When they (the camels) are lined up in standing position for sacrifice, pronounce God’s Name over them. When they fall down on their sides and fully die ready to be eaten, eat of their meat and feed the poor such as (beg not but) live in contentment and such as beg with due humility. (It is for the purposes and benefits mentioned, and based on the principles mentioned that) We have put the sacrificial animals in your service, so that you may give thanks to God.

37. (Bear in mind that) neither their flesh nor their blood reaches God, but only piety and consciousness of God reach Him from you. (It is for the purposes and benefits mentioned, and based on the principles mentioned that) We have put them in your service, so that you must exalt God because He has guided you (to correct be-
lief and worship and obedience to Him). Give glad tidings to those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

38. Surely God defends strongly those who believe. Certainly God does not love any treacherous, ungrateful one.

11. Considering the extremely eloquent simile the verse contains, we can elaborate on it as follows:

Be believers of pure faith in God, without associating any partners with Him. Whoever associates any partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven (the heights or peak of true humanity), and thereupon the wild birds of prey (of all misleading human or satanic forces) snatch him away and employ him each for its own benefit, or the wind (of lusts, fancies, and events) blows him away into a distant, abyssal ditch of misguidance (causing him to be shattered into pieces).

12. These verses lay down the principles of offering animals as sacrifice and remove some misunderstandings that were widely circulated in the pre-Islamic era concerning them.

Offering a sacrifice (a sheep, a goat; and for seven people, a camel, a cow, or an ox) is incumbent (wa'jib) upon every adult Muslim who has the niṣāb (required) amount of wealth. The difference between having to pay the Zakāh and performing a sacrifice is that the Zakāh must be paid if the person has had the goods or money for one year, while a sacrifice must be offered if the person has had it for only one day. The sacrifice must be made on any of the first three days of ʿĪd al-ʿAḍḥā.

**Sacrifice during Hajj.** Pilgrims doing the Ḥajj Qirān and Ḥajj Tamattu’, and the pilgrims who miss any necessary act (e.g., throwing pebbles, putting on ihram from a miqāt, or doing sa’y), or violate any major ihram restriction or the sanctity of Ḥarām (sacred precincts) of Makkah, must make a sacrifice.

**Sacrificial Animals.** The most common sacrificial animal is a sheep or a goat. Cattle and camels also can be offered as a sacrifice. Pilgrims must sacrifice a camel if they perform ʿaṭāf in a state of major ritual impurity (ju-nud), or while they are menstruating or having post-childbirth bleeding; if they have had sexual intercourse with their spouse after spending Dhu’l-Hijjah 9 (Eve) in ʿArafāt, but before shaving or clipping the hair; or if they have vowed to sacrifice a camel.

**Conditions for Sacrifice.** A sacrificial animal should satisfy the following conditions:

If it is a sheep, it must be one year old, or as fat and healthy as a one-year-old sheep if it is more than six months old. A camel must be at least five years old, a cow two years old, and a goat one year old.

The animal should be healthy and without defect (i.e., it must not be one-eyed, have a limp, be mangy, very thin, or weak).

**Time of Offering.** The sacrifice must be made at a specific time, as follows:

Whether one is performing the Ḥajj or not, a sacrifice must be offered on any of the first three days of ʿĪd al-ʿAḍḥā.

A sacrifice made to fulfill a vow, atone for sins, or perform a supererogatory act of worship may be offered at any time during the year.

**Place of Offering.** A sacrifice that will be offered during the Ḥajj, whether it is necessary (wa’jib) or voluntary, must be offered within Makkah’s sacred precincts.

**Who Must Sacrifice the Animal.** The one who kills the animal must be a Muslim or belong to the People of the Book (i.e., be a Christian or a Jew). He must say Bismillāh before making the sacrifice, for the meat of an animal slaughtered by an atheist, an agnostic, an apostate, or one who intentionally does not say Bismillāh cannot be eaten.
Eating the Meat of the Sacrificial Animal. God commands Muslims to eat the meat of animals that have been sacrificed: *Eat of their meat and feed the poor such as (beg not but) live in contentment and such as beg with due humility* (sūrah 22: 36). It is advisable to eat one-third, to give one-third to the poor, and one-third to one’s friends and relatives. Apparently, this command applies to both the obligatory and supererogatory sacrifice. However, one cannot eat the meat of any animal sacrificed in fulfillment of a vow, for all of that meat must be distributed among the poor and needy.

The skin of a sacrificed animal may be used as a rug or in some other way, after it is tanned, or given away to a charity. It cannot, however, be sold.
39. The believers against whom war is waged are given permission to fight in response, for they have been wronged. Surely God has full power to help them to victory –

40. Those who have been driven from their homeland against all right, for no other reason than that they say, "Our Lord is God." Were it not for God's repelling some people by means of others, monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques, where God is regularly worshipped and His Name is much mentioned, would surely have been pulled down (with the result that God is no longer worshipped and the earth becomes uninhabitable). God most certainly helps whoever helps His cause. Surely, God is All-Strong, All-Glorious with irresistible might.

41. They are the believers who, if We give them authority on earth, without doubt establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms fully, and enjoin and promote what is right and good, and forbid and try to prevent evil. With God rests the outcome of all matters. 13

42. If they are denying you (O Messenger, regarding the Message you communicate to them, you know that), before them the people of Noah, the Ad and the Thamûd also denied (the Messengers sent to each.)

43. And so too, did the people of Abraham and the people of Lot;

44. And the dwellers of Midian, and Moses too was denied (by the Pharaoh and his clan). Every time I granted respite to the unbelievers and then seized them (when they persisted in unbelief and injustices), how awesome was My disowning them!

45. How many a township have We destroyed because it was given up to wrongdoing: so they all lie in ruins, with their roofs caved in, wells and fountains deserted, and towering, lofty castles collapsed.

46. Do they never travel about the earth (and view all these scenes with an eye to learn lessons) so that they may have hearts with which to reason (and arrive at truth), or ears with which to hear (God's call)? For indeed, it is not the eyes that have become blind, it is rather the hearts in the breasts that are blind. 14
13. Almost all scholars are in agreement that verse 39, which was revealed during the first year after the Hijrah, is the first verse in the Qur’an concerning fighting on the part of the believers. It was revealed to permit the believers to fight in self-defense against those who waged war against them. Along with the following two verses, it propounds the reason for, and wisdom in, this permission being granted, as well as the result expected of the believers in case of victory, and it contains certain warnings by allusion.

It is interesting that the verses permitting the believers to fight, and verses surah 2: 190–195, which order them to fight when inevitable, occur in the Qur’an in the same context as the Ḥajj. This suggests that what lies behind both this permission and the order in verses 2: 190–195 is the necessity of putting an end to association of partners with God in Makkah, and particularly in the Ka’bah, thereby purifying it of all idols and idol-worship. The association of partners with God in any way is what lies at the bottom of the disorder on earth, and verse 2: 193 propounds the final end in communicating God’s Religion: there should no longer be any disorder and corruption arising from the association of partners with God, and the authority to organize life should be recognized as belonging solely to God. In addition to the Ḥajj being a sign of the purification of the Ka’bah from idols and idol-worship, and as the place of the final dominion of God’s Religion, it is also the consummation of all the ways or forms of worship that are to be found within Islam. Moreover, it symbolizes the ordering of worldly life according to the requirements of the afterlife, and it is a rehearsal of the events in the Hereafter.

These verses also remind us of the following facts and principles that are concerned with the permission to fight:

Warfare is not an essential of Islam. God wills that there be none other than Him to be worshipped. Only His authority is absolute, and no other power has the right to exercise absolute authority over His creatures. His Messengers come to people to convey this message. Throughout human history, worldly powers that have exercised authority over people in a wrongful way, or that have caused injustice and sedition in the world, have declined to give a positive response to God’s call. Worse than that, they have tried to prevent others from accepting it and have gone as far as to torture and kill those who convey God’s Message and those who have accepted it. The Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and his followers also encountered the same ruthless reaction and were forced to leave their native homeland without being allowed to take any of their property. They were not even allowed to live peacefully and safely in Madīnah, and they were frequently molested. They were also thwarted in all their attempts to visit Makkah and the Ka’bah. It was in such circumstances that the believers were given permission to fight in self-defense.

So long as irreligious, tyrannical forces prevail in a land, believers will not be allowed to order their lives according to God’s commandments. Nor will they be allowed to believe in and worship the One and Only God, to enjoy their freedom of faith and their practice of their faith. The verse is clear in this respect: Those who have been driven from their homeland against all right for no other reason than that they say, “Our Lord is God.” Such forces will not be content with the usurpation of this basic human right. They will close down or destroy all buildings in which God is worshipped. History is a clear witness to this.

If the believers are to enjoy authority on the earth, they must never behave like the tyrannical forces described. They must fulfill the duty of worshipping God, which prevents them from all kinds of evil and leads to their spiritual and moral perfection. They must also pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, which will purify their hearts of a love for wealth, and which eliminates any class differences in society, thus establishing social justice, balance, and peace. Moreover, they will support, promote, and spread all good acts, and try to prevent all evil ones. This means that believers can never have worldly or personal aims in fight-
ing, such as the conquest or colonization of lands, the subjugation of peoples, the attainment of wealth, or the usurpation of the property of others.

14. The word translated here as “to reason (and arrive at truth)” is ‘aql. Literally, it means taking refuge, holding fast to something, fasten, and preserve. As a faculty, it is described as the spiritual power which preserves human through knowledge, and prevents them from being dragged along the ways of perdition.

However, the Qur’ān uses the word ‘aql not as a separate faculty, but as a function or act of the heart. Thus, the verb is used in two forms, (‘A-Qa-La–ya‘qilu–) ‘aqlan and ta‘qqul. This means thinking, deducing, or inferring, thereby arriving at a conclusion, by using one’s heart.

In Qur’ānic terminology, the “heart” signifies the spiritual aspect of the heart, which is the center of all emotions and (intellectual and spiritual) faculties, such as perception, consciousness, sensation, reasoning, and willpower.

An individual’s real nature is found in his or her heart. It is in relation to this intellectual and spiritual aspect of existence that one is able to know, perceive, and understand. The spirit is the essence and inner dimension of this faculty; the soul (nafs) is its mount.

It is one’s heart that God addresses and that undertakes responsibilities; it is the heart that is elevated through true guidance or debased through deviation, and which is honored or humiliated. The heart is also the “polished mirror” in which Divine knowledge is reflected.

The heart or spiritual intellect, if we may call it thus, has an intrinsic connection with its biological counterpart. The nature of this connection has been discussed by philosophers and Muslim sages for centuries. Of whatever nature this connection may be, it is beyond doubt that there is a close connection between the biological heart and the “spiritual” one, which is a Divine faculty, the center of true humanity, and the source of all human feelings and emotions.

In the Qur’ān, religious sciences, morals, literature, and Sufism, the word “heart” signifies the spiritual heart. Belief, knowledge and love of God, and spiritual delight are the objectives to be achieved through this Divine faculty.

God considers one’s heart. He treats human beings according to the quality of their hearts, as the heart is the stronghold of many elements vital to the believer’s spiritual life and humanity: reason, knowledge, knowledge of God, intentions, belief, wisdom, and nearness to God Almighty. If the heart is alive, all of these elements and faculties are alive; if the heart is diseased, it is difficult for those elements and faculties to remain sound.

Belief is the life of the heart; worship is the blood that flows in its veins; reflection, self-supervision, and self-criticism are the foundations of its permanence. The heart of an unbeliever is dead; the heart of a believer who does not worship is dying; and the heart of a believer who worships but does not engage in self-reflection, self-control, or self-criticism is exposed to many spiritual dangers and diseases (Key Concepts, 22–27).

A heart has two windows opening on the outer world: the spiritual ear and eye. It is the heart which hears the Divine messages with its ear, and which sees God’s signs with its eye. If a heart is blinded or dead, even if a person sees and hears with their eyes and ears, they are blind and deaf spiritually and in the sight of God. (Also see surah 2: 7, note 7; surah 6: 36, note 7; surah 10: 100, note 21.)
47. They challenge you to hasten the coming upon them of God’s punishment (with which they are threatened). Let them know that God never fails to fulfill His promise; but a day with your Lord is like a thousand years in your reckoning. 

48. (Let them not hasten you to bring on them Our punishment.) How many a township that was given up to wrongdoing have I given respite to, but then seized them (when they persisted in unbelief and injustices); and to Me is the homecoming.

49. Say (O Messenger): “O people! (I am not a man who can do whatever he wills, nor whatever you wish;) I am only a plain warner sent to you.”

50. So those who believe and do good, righteous deeds – for them is a forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings) and an honorable, generous provision (in the Hereafter).

51. As to those who strive against Our Revelations, seeking to frustrate and void them, they are the companions of the Blazing Flame.

52. Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you but that when he recited (God’s Revelations to the people), Satan would make insinuations (about these Revelations, prompting people to misconstrue them in many wrong senses, rather than the right one). But God abrogates whatever insinuations Satan may make, and then He confirms and establishes His Revelations. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

53. He makes Satan’s insinuations a trial for those in the center of whose hearts there is a disease (that extinguishes their power of understanding and corrupts their character), and who have hardened hearts. The wrongdoers have certainly veered far from the truth and are in wide schism.

54. While those who have been granted knowledge (of the truth) know (with a greater certainty) that whatever God reveals is the truth itself, and they believe in it, and their hearts submit to Him in utmost humility. God most certainly guides to a straight path those who believe with sincerity.

55. Whereas those who persistently disbelieve will not cease to be in doubt about it (the Revelation) until the Last Hour comes upon them suddenly, or there comes to them the punishment of a barren day (when every hope would turn into despair, and after which there will be no night to rest in).
15. This verse touches on certain important facts from the perspectives of astrophysics and the sociology of history.

First of all, it draws attention to the relativity of time. A time or duration which people see as being long may be very short in the sight of God. In addition, God Almighty does not consider time as people do. He is not contained by time or space, and His Wisdom that directs things and events considers each thing and event both as an individual entity in and as an indispensable part of the general fabric of creation and history. As each thing in the universe has an intrinsic relationship not only with every other thing individually, but also with the whole universe at the same time, so too, is each event in human history interrelated with every other event individually and with the whole of history. Human beings cannot grasp this relationship in its entire web; they cannot know the past perfectly, grasp the present completely, nor guess the future well. Besides, the wheel of both the universe and history does not revolve according to the desires of human beings.

Secondly, a day for humanity is the time it takes the earth to make a single rotation around itself. The earth has another day, which consists in its revolution around the sun. This day lasts 365 days according to the reckoning of a day by humanity. So too does every other planet and all systems, like the solar system, have a day that is peculiar to each. This means that the concept of a day differs according to the planets and the systems.

Thirdly, God has laid out certain laws concerning human social life. He judges a community according to the creeds, world-view, and conduct of, at least, the majority. Thus, there are eras and ages in human history and eras of foundation, rising, fall, and decline for communities and civilizations. Thus, we can consider the whole life of a state or community or civilization as a day; the most important changes in the history of humanity usually occur once in 1,000 years. This verse also alludes to this fact.
56. On that Day, the absolute authority belongs to God exclusively. He judges (all people and makes a distinction) between them. Consequently, those who believe and do good, righteous deeds will be in Gardens of bounty and blessings.

57. As for those who disbelieve and deny Our Revelations, for them there will be a shameful, humiliating punishment.

58. Those who emigrate in God’s cause, and then are killed (for God’s cause) or die – God will most certainly provide for them with a good, wholesome sustenance. Surely God is He Who is the Best to be sought as provider with the ultimate rank of providing.

59. He will most certainly admit them into a place with which they will be pleased. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Clement.

60. So it will be. And whoever responds to the wrong done to him to the extent of the wrong, and then is again subjected to oppression, God will most certainly help him. Assuredly, God is All-Pardoning, (Who overlooks the faults of His servants), All-Forgiving.

61. So (will He do), because God makes the night pass into the day and makes the day pass into the night, and God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

62. So (will He do), because God is He Who is the Absolute Truth, and all that they (the unbelievers) deify and invoke instead of (or apart from) Him is sheer falsehood; and God is He Who is the All-Exalted, the All-Great.

63. Do you not consider that God sends down from the sky water, and behold, the earth turns green. Surely God is All-Subtle (penetrating to the most minute dimensions of all things and accomplishing what He wills by ways that are not quite tangible), All-Aware.

64. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. And surely God is He Who is the All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (absolutely independent of the whole creation), the All-Praiseworthy (Who provides for all of them as their Lord).
16. Islam allows retaliation in the case of wrong as a principle of law, for justice requires that inviolate values demand equal respect and retaliation (sūrah 2: 194). However, in many of its verses (i.e., sūrah 2: 237; sūrah 41: 34; 42: 40; and sūrah 42: 43), the Qur’ān advises an individual to forgive an evil done to them, even to repel it with what is better, and warns against exceeding the limits in retaliation (sūrah 17: 33).

However, we should remember here that an individual is urged to forgive any wrong done to them, but no one can forgive any wrong done to a community or its sacred values. As the community or government has no authority to forgive in the name of an individual, neither can an individual forgive in the name of the community. But the Qur’ān also warns a community against exceeding the limits in repelling an attack, and warns it to remain within the limits of piety (sūrah 2: 194).

What verse 60, which is being discussed here, means by, God will most certainly help him is similar to that found in verse 33 of Sūrah 17: If anyone has been killed wrongfully and intentionally, We have given his heir (as defender of his rights) the authority (to claim retaliation or damages or to forgive outright). But let him (the heir) not exceed the legitimate bounds in (retaliatory) killing. Indeed he has been helped (already and sufficiently by the provisions and procedures of the Law) (sūrah 17: 33). In the case of a community being attacked, it also means that God helps it against the attacker, as He helped the believers in the Battle of Badr by sending angels, or in other ways (sūrah 8: 9–12).

As for the verse concluding by mentioning God’s being All-Pardoning and All-Forgiving, it is similar to: Whoever is constrained by dire necessity (and driven to what is forbidden), without purposely inclining to sin – surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (sūrah 5: 3). This means that even if any act that is done in the name of retaliation is an evil in and of itself, if the continuation of human life through justice requires it, God will forgive the person who does it.

17. Something similar to this idea exists in Sūrat Al-‘Imrān (3: 27). Thus, it also has the same meaning as that which exists in that verse and is to be considered together with the verse that comes just before it: 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 You abase whom You will; in Your hand is all good; surely You have full power over everything.” (3: 26) We can also view this together with the verse: 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) (3: 140). God rules over the universe, and just as He makes night and day follow each other and brings about the brightness of the day after the darkness of night, He also changes the dark night of the oppressed into a bright day for them, and the bright day of the oppressors into a dark night for them. Every night is followed by a day, and every winter is followed by spring.

18. For a mention of God’s acts or disposals in the world of humankind and the worlds of other creatures or other parts of the universe, see sūrah 7: 57–58, note 14.
65. Do you not consider that God has made all that is on earth to be of service to you, and the ships that run upon the sea by His command? And He holds the heaven so that it may not fall upon the earth unless by His leave. Surely God is for mankind All-Pitying, All-Compassionate.

66. It is He Who has given you life, then He causes you to die, then He will bring you to life again. However, human is really ungrateful.

67. For every community, We have appointed a whole system of worship which they are to observe. So do not let those (who follow their own systems) draw you into disputes concerning this matter, but continue to call people to your Lord. You are most certainly on the straight way leading to pure guidance.

68. If they argue with you, say only: “God knows well what you are doing. (To me are accounted my deeds, and to you, your deeds. You are quit of all that I do, and I am quit of all that you do.)”

69. God will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection concerning what you used to differ on.

70. Do you not know that surely God knows whatever there is in the heavens and on the earth (including whatever takes place in them). They are all recorded in a Book. This (keeping the record of them all) is indeed easy for God.

71. And yet, they worship, apart from God, things for which He has sent down no warrant, nor are they based on true knowledge (when they claim that there can be partners with Him). The wrong-doers will have no helper (to protect them from God's punishment).

72. When Our Revelations, clear as evidence and in meaning are recited (and conveyed) to them, you perceive utter repugnance and denial on the faces of those who disbelieve; they would almost pounce upon those who convey Our Revelations to them. Say: “Then, shall I tell you of something worse than what you now regard as repugnant? The Fire! God has promised it to those who disbelieve. How evil a destination to arrive at!”
19. The Religion with which all the Prophets came is the same and is in agreement in the essentials of faith or creeds, worship, principles of good morality, and the prescriptions of the lawful and unlawful. However, there are differences in some secondary matters that are open to changes according to time and conditions. This is what is meant by the verse:

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 (surah 5: 48).

There are also differences in the way of observing worship. The system of worship prescribed by God for the Islam conveyed by the Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is the last and perfected one (5: 3), as it is universal and meant for all people. The verse, We have set you on a way of life (shari’ah) based on the Religion, so follow it, and do not follow the lusts and fancies of those who do not know (the Divine Guidance) (surah 45: 18), is related to both verse 5: 48 and this one. So Muslims should not allow others to draw them into disputes concerning this matter. Their system of worship and way of life are perfect. What the Messenger and his followers are expected to do is to continue to call people to God with all their strength.
73. O humankind! A parable is struck, so pay heed to it. Those whom, apart from God, you deify and invoke will never be able to create even a fly, even if all of them were to come together to do so. And if a fly snatches away anything from them, they cannot recover that from it. Powerless indeed is the seeker, and (so is) the sought!

74. They have no true judgment of God, such as His being God requires. God is certainly All-Strong, All-Glorious with irresistible might.

75. God chooses Messengers from among the angels as well as from among humankind (so they are all created beings having no share in Divinity at all). Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

76. 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). To God are all affairs ultimately referred, and whatever He wills occurs.

77. O you who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, (thus performing the Prayer), and fulfill all your other duties of worship to your Lord, and do (all the other commands of your Religion, which are all) good, so that you may prosper.

78. Strive in God’s cause and purely for His sake (against His enemies to raise His Word, and against Satan and your carnal, evil-commanding souls), in a manner worthy of that striving. He has chosen you (especially for this task) and has not laid any hardship on you in the Religion. This is the way of your father Abraham. God named you Muslims previously, and in this Book, that the (most noble) Messenger may be a witness for you (as to the ways you follow), and that you may be the witnesses for people. So establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and hold fast to God. He is your Owner and Guardian. How excellent a Guardian and an Owner He is, how excellent a Helper.
20. This is the only way in which one may hope to prosper, particularly in the other world. However, all duties of worship and commands of the Shari'ah are in order to thank God for His bounties that He has already bestowed on us; they are not performed to receive His future rewards. But purely out of His Compassion, God has made them a reason to forgive us and to admit us into Paradise. Even if we were to spend every second of our life worshipping Him, we would not be able to pay our duty of thanksgiving for, say, our eyes. We should not restrict God's favors to what we are provided with. Nature, with everything in it, life, the family, the environment, love, compassion, belief, and many other things are also included in His favors. Our basic necessities of life are given to us for free, while others are virtually free. So no one can prosper in the other world unless God has mercy on us, and His admitting us into Paradise is purely out of His Compassion. He has made faith and the fulfillment of our duties of worship a reason for us to receive His compassion.

21. For the meaning and types of striving made in God's cause and for His sake (jihād), see sūrah 2: 218, note 147.

22. Al-Mawdūdī notes:

Of all humanity, the believers were chosen for the task mentioned in the present verse. The same point is also made in other places in the Qur'an: 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 (sūrah 2: 143). (For an explanation of this verse, see 2, note 113 in this study.) You are the best community ever brought forth for (the good of) humankind, enjoining and actively promoting what is right and good and forbidding and trying to prevent the evil, and (thus you do because) you believe in God (sūrah 3: 110).

It is perhaps pertinent to point out here that this is one of several verses which establish the excellence of the Prophet's Companions. The verse also makes clear how wrong those people who are prone to launch attacks on the Companions are. It is quite obvious that this verse directly identifies the Companions as those chosen by God, and furthermore it indirectly extols other members of the Ummah (al-Mawdūdī, 6: 71, note 129).

23. Islam contains nothing that hinders the growth of culture and civilization (in ways approved by God); it does not restrain human practical life, nor obstruct intellectual progress. Neither does it have any shackles forged by theologians, priests, and lawyers, as were imported into previous religions. Its principles of faith are quite clear, and its commandments for worship and life are both meaningful and practical. It also contains special dispensations for those who should be excused. It avoids all complicated rituals or systems of taboos, which impose undue restrictions on everyday human life.

24. 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. Our Lord! Make us Muslims, submissive to You, and of our offspring a community Muslim, submissive to You....” (sūrah 2: 127–28).

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, 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 exclusively).” 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” (2: 132–33).
SŪRAH 23

AL-MU’MINÜN
(THE BELIEVERS)

Makkah Period

This sūrah takes its title, “the believers,” from the mention of the believers who are praised for their moral superiority at the very beginning of the sūrah. It was revealed in Makkah when the persecution perpetrated by the Makkan unbelievers was increasing. It consists of 118 verses.

The sūrah begins by mentioning certain moral characteristics of the believers. This is followed by stating the signs inherent in the creation of humankind and the universe in order to draw attention to God’s Existence and Unity. Then, significant episodes from the experiences of several previous Messengers and their peoples are given in order to emphasize that there was nothing untypical about the reactions of the Makkan unbelievers, and also that the teachings that the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, conveyed were the same as those communicated by the earlier Messengers. By recounting the experiences of some of the earlier Messengers, the Qur’ān also aims to stress that the final victory will always belong to the believers. Then, the sūrah reminds us of certain important principles concerning human life. The sūrah concludes by warning the unbelievers that they will face a severe reckoning in the Hereafter.

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

1. Prosperous indeed are the believers.
2. They are in their Prayer humble and fully submissive (being overwhelmed by the awe and majesty of God).
3. They always turn away from and avoid whatever is vain and frivolous.
4. They are in a constant effort to give alms and purify their own selves and wealth.
5. They strictly guard their private parts, and their chastity and modesty,
6. Save from their spouses, or (as a permission for men) those (bondmaids) whom their right hands possess – for with regard to them they are free from blame.
7. But whoever seeks beyond that, such are they who exceed the bounds (set by God).
8. They are faithful and true to their trusts (which either God or society or an individual places in their charge), and to their pledges (between them and God or other persons or society).
9. They are ever mindful guardians of their Prayers (including all the rites of which they are constituted).
10. Those (illustrious ones) are the inheritors,

11. Who will inherit the highest floor of Paradise. Therein they will abide forever.  

12. We created humankind (in the very beginning) from a specially sifted extract of clay.  

13. Then We made it into a fertilized ovum in a safe lodging.

14. Then We created of the fertilized ovum a clot clinging (to the womb wall), and (afterwards in sequence) We created of the clinging clot a (chew of) lump, and We created of (a chew of) lump bones, and We clothed the bones in flesh. Then We caused it to grow into another creation. So Blessed and Supreme is God, the Creator Who creates everything in the best and most appropriate form, and has the ultimate rank of creativity.  

15. Then, after all this, you are bound to die.

16. Thereafter, you will, on the Day of Resurrection, certainly be raised up.

17. Indeed, We have created above you seven heavens, one layer upon the other, and seven paths (for angels to move, God’s commands to descend, and acts of conscious beings to ascend, along). Never are We unaware of creation and what We create (with all aspects of their lives).

1. These last three verses lay down important principles concerning one’s family life:

Islam emphasizes chastity and modesty, but it never orders celibacy or monasticism. It allows people to satisfy their desires and needs in a legitimate manner.

A man must guard his private parts except from his wife and bondsmaids whom he rightfully possesses, while a woman must do the same except from her husband.

The verse, Whoever seeks beyond that, such are they who exceed the limits (set by God), forbids all forms of sexual relations, except the two specified in the previous verse, including homosexuality, and sex with animals. Imam Malik and Imam Shafi’i also consider masturbation to be a way of seeking something beyond what is lawful.

Some commentators of the Qur’an cite this verse as a proof for the prohibition of mut’ah, (temporary marriage). As a matter of fact, a mut’ah is neither a normal, lawful marriage nor a relationship with a slave-girl whom one possesses. None of the laws with regard to lawful marriage, such as divorce, the waiting period (iddah), or maintenance (nafaqah) apply to it. In mut’ah, there is no divorce; once you pay the set amount of money and the assigned time ends, there are no rights, no duties, no inheritance laws, nor a divorce process. The only law which applies in this case is that the woman should wait for a period of 45 days before entering into another mut’ah, while the man can have an immediate one, even while he is married or in another mut’ah.

Although the argument of the commentators that these verses ban mut’ah is weighty, it is recorded in the hadith collections that mut’ah was categorically and decisively forbidden in Madinah (Muslim, “Nikah,” 22). This surah was revealed during the Makkah period of the Prophet’s mission. Despite this decisive prohibition, only a few Companions, who might not have heard of its prohibition by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, continued to think it was lawful. But they confined its lawfulness to highly exceptional circumstances. Ibn ‘Abbās, who is recorded as one of those Companions, clarified himself and said: “I meant something similar to what God meant when He allowed the meat of dead animals and pork to be eaten in extreme necessity” (al-Jaṣṣāṣ, 2: 147).

Many of the Shi’ite scholars, the scholars of the sect which accepts the lawfulness of mut’ah, have contradicting opinions and re-
port divergent traditions concerning it. One of their highly authentic hadith books, Uṣul al-Kāfī, 5: 462, has a hadith that states that a mutʿah for a virgin girl is not recommend-
ed, because of the shame it will bring upon her parents. Imam Abi ʿAbdullāh (Jaʿfar al-
Ṣādiq) proclaims: “Do not enter a mutʿah with a believing woman, because you will humili-
ate her by so doing” (Kitāb at-Tadhbīḥ, 1: 253; al-Istibsār, 3: 143). In another narration, it is stated that a mutʿah can only be entered into with a believing woman (al-Kāfī, 5: 454), while in yet another it is stated that a mutʿah is not allowed with a Muslim woman, but only with Jewish or Christian women. In Bihār al-Anwār (103: 340), it is also stated that it is unlawful to enter into a mutʿah with a person who is married or able to marry.

Imam ʿAlī is one of the leading Companions who declared that mutʿah is unlawful (al-
Bukhārī, “Nikāḥ,” 31; Muslim, “Nikāḥ,” 29–31). The Shiʿite scholars also recorded that ʿAlī declared its unlawfulness, although they attributed this to taqiyyah (dissimulation) (Kitāb at-
Tadhbīḥ, 7: 253; al-Istibsār, 3: 142).

It would not be correct to say that it was ʿUmar who forbade mutʿah. What ʿUmar did was to enforce the prohibition (Ibn Mājah, “Nikāḥ,” 44: 196).

2. Verses 1–9 expound the qualities of true believers. These qualities serve as evidence in support of the claim that one is a true believer, and that the believers who have these qualities will inevitably prosper in both worlds. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: “There are ten verses that have been revealed to me that if anyone follows them, he will certainly enter Paradise.” Then he recited the first ten verses of this surah (at-Tirmidhī, “Kitāb at-Taṣfir,” 24).

3. The verse implies: We created humankind (in the very beginning) from a specially sifted extract of clay and subsequently, create each human being from mineral, vegetable and ani-
mal elements produced in extracts of clay and which constitute the sustenance to form the male sperm and female egg.

4. The literal translation of the phrase here rendered as, the Creator Who creates every-
thing in the best and most appropriate form and has the ultimate rank of creativity, is “the Best of the creators.” Phrases such as, the Best of the creators or the Most Merciful of the merciful or the Best of the providers or the Best and Most Judge of judges, do not suggest the existence of other creators or merci-
ciful ones or providers comparable with God. Rather, as Bediuzzaman Said Nursi explains, they point to the ultimate or perfect ranks of the manifestations of the attributes of cre-
ating, showing mercy, and providing. Thus, these phrases mean that He is the Majestic Creator having the ultimate rank or all-beauti-
ful degree of creating; a Merciful One having the ultimate or perfect rank of mercifulness; a Provider with the ultimate or perfect rank of providing; and a Sovereign Judge Who does absolute justice and has absolute power to put His judgment into effect.

Secondly, such phrases as, the Best of the creators do not suggest a plurality of creators. Rather, they mean that God is the Creator Who creates everything in the best and most appro-
priate fashion. Verses like, He Who makes ex-
cellent everything that He creates (sūrah 32: 7) have the same meaning.

Thirdly, such phrases as, the Best of the creators, the Best of the judges, and, the Best of the providers, do not compare the acts and Attributes of God that are manifested in the universe with those of creatures, who manifest only their shadowy reflections. Whatever beings have is a gift from God (We see because God is the All-Seeing, and hear because He is the All-Hearing.) All (relative) perfections shared by humanity, angels, and jinn are only indistinct shadows in relation to His, which are beyond compare.

People, especially the misguided, cannot have true judgment of God Almighty as His right (in being God) requires, and they are usually forgetful of Him. For example, a pri-
ivate respects his corporal, but is oblivious of the king when he thanks the corporal for any-
thing. Such a private should be warned: “The
king is greater than your corporal, so you must thank the king.” Actually, everything ultimately comes from the king; the corporal is only an envoy. The king’s majestic command cannot be compared with that of the corporal. The only purpose for the warning, which contains a comparison, is to warn the private, who prefers the corporal in gratitude against forgetting the gratitude he owes to the king.

Similarly, the means by which something is achieved, as well as nature and causes, make heedless people blind to the True Bestower of Bounties. They attribute the bounties which they receive to apparent means and nature, and give creativity to causes, as if they were the real sources or agents, and praise and thank them. This is a path to associating others with God, and so the Qur’an warns: Almighty God is much greater and a far better Creator and Provider (actually meaning that He is the sole Creator and Provider). Regard Him and thank Him.

Finally, comparisons may be made between actually existent, possible, or even imagined things. People may imagine infinite grades in the essence of the Divine Names and Attributes. Almighty God is, however, of the highest, most perfect, and most beautiful of all grades that His Names and Attributes are imagined to have. The universe bears witness to this. His description of all His Names as the best or all-beautiful, as in: *His are the All-Beautiful Names (sūrah 20: 8)*, underlines this fact (*The Words*, “The 32nd Word,” 631–632).

5. The phrase, *creation and what We create (with all aspects of their lives)*, clearly demonstrates that creation is based on absolute Knowledge, Will, and Power. So, it certainly has a purpose and meaning and bears countless messages. No so-called deities, nature, material causes, or any notions, such as coincidence and necessity, have any part in either its coming into existence or its continuance.
18. We send down from the sky water with a measure set by Us, and lodge it in the earth. We are most certainly able to withdraw it.

19. And with it, We cause to grow for you gardens of date-palms and vines, wherein are abundant, diverse fruits for you, and from which you eat and obtain some of your livelihood.

20. As well as a tree that grows from and in the lands around Mount Sinai, yielding oil and a kind of relish for all to eat.

21. And in the cattle (feeding on the grass God brings forth with the water He sends down), there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of that (milk) which is within their bodies; and you have many other benefits in them, and from them you obtain food.

22. And on them, (on land) and on the ships (in the sea) you are carried.

23. Indeed, We sent Noah to his people as Messenger, and he said: “O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Will you not, then, keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety?”

24. The leading ones who disbelieved from among his people reacted, saying (among themselves and to each other): “This is but a mortal like you. He only wishes to gain superiority over you. Had God willed (to send us a Messenger to convey His Message), He would surely have sent down angels (to communicate His Message). Further, we have never heard of anything like this in the case of our forefathers of old.

25. “He is but a man in whom there is madness, so watch him for a while (to see) whether he will recover.”

26. Noah prayed: “My Lord, help me because they have denied me!”

27. Thereupon We revealed to him: “Build the Ark (which We have described to you) under Our eyes and in accordance with Our instructions to be revealed (to you). Then finally, when Our command comes to pass and the boiler starts boiling over, take on board a pair of each kind of animal, as well as your family, except those of them against whom Our sentence (of destruction) has already been passed. Do not plead with Me for those people who have persisted in wrongdoing. They are bound to be drowned.
6. In several verses, the Qur’ān draws attention to water. This verse may be understood to mean both the seasonal rainfall and the water which God lodged in the earth during the creation of the universe. God provided the earth with water in a known, measured quantity that would suffice the needs of the earth for all time to come. The water that was so provided accumulated in the recesses of the earth, giving rise to seas, gulfs and subterranean water. It is this accumulation of water which is kept rotating through the varying seasons and with the winds. The original source of water continues to be distributed through the rain, from snow-clad mountains, rivers, springs, and wells. This very accumulation of water enters into the process of creation and into the composition of a variety of things. Then it also becomes part of the wind, and eventually, it returns to the same original water source. Thus, from the beginning of time until the present, the total quantity of water has neither increased nor decreased in the world, not by as much as a single drop.

The distribution of water through the rains is dependent on the Divine Will, and there are changes in that distribution owing to many instances of Divine Wisdom. In addition, since we cannot know exactly the time of rain before its signs appear, and rain is one of the most important embodiments of Divine mercy, the Almighty occasionally reminds us how great a blessing rain is through drought, and calls us to pray for it.

What is even more astonishing is that water is composed of two gases, namely hydrogen and oxygen, which were released only once in such a quantity and in the right proportions, allowing a vast quantity of water to be produced; this continues to fill the seas and oceans, with no fresh supply being added to it. So who is it that prevents hydrogen and oxygen from intermingling, even though both gases are found in the world? Who is it who prevents this mixture from happening, with the result being that not a drop of water has been added to the original reservoir of water? We also know that water evaporates into the air. Again, who is it that prevents the two gases from separating after this evaporation? Do atheists, materialists, and naturalists have any answers to these questions? Or can all this be satisfactorily explained by those who believe in a multiplicity of deities, who believe that there are separate deities for the wind and water, and for the heat and cold? (Extracted in part from al-Mawdūdī, 6: 90, note 17.) For another astonishing feature of water, see surah 2: 74, note 78.

7. The tree mentioned here is the olive tree. The Qur’ān mentions it as a tree growing in the lands around Mount Sinai; Mount Sinai may have been its natural habitat or the place where the best olives were produced, at least at the time when the verse was revealed.
28. “Then, when you are seated in the Ark, you and those who are with you, say: ‘All praise and gratitude are for God, Who has saved us from the wrongdoing people.’

29. “And pray: ‘My Lord, let me land in a blessed place (in peace and safety and) with blessings from You. You are the Best to cause people to land in peace and safety’.”

30. Surely in that (exemplary story) are signs (manifesting the truth); and for sure, We are ever trying (people).

31. Then, after them, We brought forth another generation.

32. In time, We sent among them a Messenger from among themselves (with the message): “Worship God alone; you have no deity other than Him. Will you not, then, keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety?”

33. The leading ones from among his people – who disbelieved, and denied the meeting of the Hereafter, and to whom We granted ease and comfort in the life of this world – said: “This is but a mortal like you, eating of what you eat of, and drinking of what you drink of.

34. “If you obey a mortal like yourselves, then you will surely be the losers.

35. “Does he promise you that, after you have died and become mere dust and bones, you will be brought forth (to a new life)?

36. “Far-fetched, utterly far-fetched, is what you are promised.

37. “There is no life beyond our present, worldly life. Some of us die (while others are born,) and so life continues; and we are not raised from the dead.

38. “He is nothing but a man, fabricating falsehood in attribution to God; and we are not (going to) to believe in him.”

39. Eventually, the Messenger invoked: “My Lord, help me because they deny me!”

40. (God) said: “In a little while, they are sure to be regretful.”

41. So, in consequence, the awful blast seized them, justly and unavoidably, and We made them like the waste of dead plants carried by a flood and left on the coast once the water recedes. So away with the wrongdoing people!

42. Then, after them, We brought forth new generations (in succession).
8. For a detailed account of the events mentioned concerning the Prophet Noah’s mission, particularly the boiling over of the boiler, and the Ark, see surah 11: 25-48 and the corresponding notes 10-14.

9. One of the most important instances of wisdom in God’s putting people to test is that human beings need to be educated, matured, and perfected, and that by developing their minds, hearts, and potential, they can rise from being potential humans to being true, perfected human beings. Through the testing of humankind, life is purified, it grows, and it is enriched. In short, through this testing, human beings reach the rank or position of being able to perform the function of vicegerency on the earth. In this testing, without the guidance of the Religion that God conveyed through the Prophets to guide humankind, success is not possible. However, the Religion is also a means of this testing.
43. (What happened to all those generations proves that) no community can ever hasten on the end of its term, nor can they delay it (once it has been decided by God because of their beliefs and lifestyles)."10

44. We sent Our Messengers one after the other (each to a generation). Whenever their Messenger came to a community, they denied him, and, in consequence, We caused each community to follow the other to its doom, and reduced them to mere tales of the past. So away with a people who do not believe!

45. After all those Messengers (sent to the past generations that are now all extinct), We sent Moses and his brother, Aaron, as Messengers with Our clear signs (miracles to support them) and a manifest authority (from Us),

46. To the Pharaoh and his chiefs. But they grew arrogant (in the face of those signs), and demonstrated that they were a haughty, self-exalting people.

47. They said: “Shall we believe in two mortals like ourselves, when their people (the people of Moses and Aaron) are serving us in humility and obedience?”

48. They denied them, and they, too, eventually became of those who were destroyed.

49. (After their destruction) We granted Moses the Book so that his people might follow the right way.

50. We made the Son of Mary and his mother a miraculous sign (of Our Lordship and Power), and We provided for them refuge on a lofty ground of comfort and security, and with a (water) spring.

51. O you Messengers! Partake of (God’s) pure and wholesome bounties, and always act righteously. I have full knowledge of all that you do.

52. This community of yours is one single community of the same faith, and I am your Lord (Who creates, sustains, and protects you), so hold Me alone in fear and keep your duty to Me in piety.

53. But people, having broken up into groups, differed among themselves as regards the Religion, each group proudly rejoicing in the portion they have.

54. So (if they, despite all the evidence We have put forth in support of the truth of the Message that you, O Messenger, are conveying to them, still refuse to accept it), leave
them alone, immersed in their ignorance and heedlessness, until an appointed time.

55. Do they think that by all the wealth and children We provide for them,

56. We but hasten to lavish on them all kinds of good? No, but they do not perceive (the reality of the matter).

57. While as for those who live in awe because of deep reverence for their Lord,

58. Who have renewed, ever-strengthening faith in their Lord’s signs and Revelations,

59. Who never associate partners with their Lord,

10. For an explanation of this verse, see sûrah 7: 34, note 10.
60. Who do whatever they do, and give whatever they give, in charity and for God’s cause, with their hearts trembling at the thought that they are bound to turn to their Lord (remaining anxious, for they are unsure whether God will accept their deeds from them and be pleased with them) –

61. It is those (illustrious ones) who hasten to do all kinds of virtuous deeds, and they are in a virtuous competition with one another in doing them.

62. (No one, especially those unbelievers, should think that there is something superhuman required of humanity. For) We do not burden any soul except within its capacity, and with Us is a record that speaks the truth (about the deeds, thoughts, and intentions of each individual). They will in no wise be wronged.

63. The fact is that the hearts of those unbelievers are utterly ignorant and heedless of all this, and apart from this, they have some evil deeds that they habitually commit (which prevent them from seeing and accepting the truth),

64. Until the time when We seize (them) with the punishment – those of them who have been lost in the pursuit of pleasures. They will then begin to groan for help.

65. “Stop groaning for help today; you are not to receive any help from Us!

66. “You know that My Revelations used to be recited to you, but you used to turn on your heels in aversion,

67. “Behaving arrogantly, and talking nonsense (about the Messenger and the Religion he conveys) in your nightly conversations.”

68. Have they ever pondered over this Word (of God), or has there come to them something (completely novel in human history) which never came to their forefathers of old?

69. Or is it that they are unaware of their Messenger, and so they disavow him?

70. Or do they say that there is madness in him? No, he has brought them the truth, but most of them are disdainful of the truth.

71. Were the truth to follow their lusts and fancies, the heavens and the earth and all those who live in them would certainly have gone to ruin. But We have brought to them whatever they must heed in life for their honor and happiness, and they turn away from that which will bring them honor and happiness.

72. Or do you (O Messenger) ask them
for any payment? Yet the reward of your Lord is the best and for everyone’s good. He is the Provider, with the ultimate rank of providing, and the Best to be sought as provider.

73. And certainly, you are calling them to a Straight Path,
74. Whereas, those who do not believe in the Hereafter are ever astray from the Path.

11. This is the state of a true believer. As stated in a hadith, a true believer prays, fasts, and pays the Zakah, and yet fears whether God will accept their deeds or not, forgive them and be pleased with them (at-Tirmidhi, “Kitāb at-Taṣīr,” 4; Ibn Majah, “Kitāb az-Zuhd,” 20). One of the best examples in this regard is ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb. Despite his great care in practicing Islam and his outstanding services in God’s cause, he said, close to the time of his death: “If I am reckoned on the Day of Judgment as one whose good and evil deeds are equal, that will be enough for me.” Hasan al-Baṣrī also says: “A believer obeys and yet remains fearful, whereas a hypocrite disobeys and is fearless” (al-Mawdūdī, 6: 108–109, note 54).

12. Almost all the unbelievers throughout history who opposed the Messengers or the truth which they brought from God did not base their opposition on any truth. For God is the Absolute Truth, and whatever He orders or establishes is the truth itself. The clearest example of this is the universe with whatever is in it.

We clearly see that as a whole, and in all its individual parts, the universe displays an evident order and an extraordinary concord. Everything in it is so exactly measured and proportioned that it announces there is no deity but God; it is He Who has set this measure and made all things in proportion and exactly commensurate with one another.

The mutual relationship between all things and the faultless artistry displayed in each, the connection among and between all things, such as, say, the eyes of a honeybee and an ant, and the sun and the solar system, demonstrate that the One Who created the sky with the stars is the same as He Who created the honeybee and the ant and their cells. In the language of all its creatures, the universe bears witness to the fact that there is no deity but God.

A compound’s minutest particles or atoms, as well as the compounds one within another, are placed according to such delicate calculations that, for example, all the atoms or particles in the eye are interrelated with the other atoms of the eye and with all bodily systems and cells. If an atom were misplaced, existence would not be possible, or an abnormality or anomaly would be the result. We know that when just a single cell in the human body, out of nearly one hundred thousand billion cells, malfunctions, as in cancer, the result can be the death of the entire body.

A species’ comprehensive disposition and the wide distribution of certain species, such as birds and fish, indicate that the Creator of one living being is the Creator of the entire species. The Pen which draws the lines of an individual’s face and thus identifies or individualizes that person has to be able to see all the faces at the same time in order to make each one unique. Otherwise, individualization would be impossible. This requires that the Creator of an individual be the Creator of the human family and the species.

Everything is measured in exact proportions. Also, for the simplest example, as the fact that almost everyone has had a glimpse or clue of the future in dreams indicates, a universal Destiny, a Determining Power with absolute Knowledge, Will, and Wisdom that predetermines everything prevails in the universe. This negates chance. Again, all seeds and fully grown plants or trees indicate this universal Destiny or Determining Power. Due to this all-inclusive Destiny, everything is perfectly ordered and serves predetermined, evident purposes according to the form, characteristics, and capacities of each thing. Consider the hu-
man body, with all its characteristics and limbs. Each one has been built and shaped according to its purpose, thus signifying the Destiny that has determined these purposes and structure. According to Destiny's plan, the Power puts into "writing" the meanings established and kept by the Knowledge. The Destiny that has preplanned all things and the Destiny that records the life-histories of all things indicate the necessary existence of Him, Whose Pen of Destiny and Decree has drawn the outlines of all things.

All these facts are only some of the innumerable universal facts that demonstrate the Existence and Unity of a single, unique Creator, Orderer, and Ruler, as well as proving that it is not possible for different hands to interfere in the universe, whether for its existence or for its maintenance. Everyone should acknowledge that it is much easier for one creator to create everything than for many creators to create one thing. The interference of many blind hands in creating something only increases the blindness. For example, if the creation of a honeybee were not attributed to the Power of a Necessarily Existent Being, everything that exists must have participated in its existence. The creation of a minute particle or a hair, if attributed to many agents, like material causes, would be as difficult as the creation of a mountain. A commander can organize and direct a military company much better than the soldiers themselves or multiple commanders could. Apparent material causes have no consciousness or will, and most are subject to nominal (not material) "laws" that are perceived only after the effects have been brought about. Compared to their causes, effects are extraordinary and display splendid artistry. For example, a cell's formation and its relation with all other cells and the body are so complex that it requires much more knowledge, skill, comprehensive will, and power to create it than can be found in all the members of creation. Only a Creator with boundless Power can be the real agent. Material causes and means are only excuses that allow human beings to contemplate that there is some space for human agency. We speak about the material causes and means because most people cannot discern the beauty and wisdom behind events, and they complain of and object to God. To divert such complaints from God, causes are placed as an intervening veil (between people and God's acts). However, those who see the real beauty and wisdom in events know the truth of what is going on. In short, God's Dignity and Grandeur require apparent causes and means to prevent complaints and to hide, from those who reason superficially, the Hand of Power's involvement in certain seemingly insignificant or vile things and affairs. At the same time, God's Unity and Glory require that these apparent causes have no part in either the creation or disposition of things. In fact, what we call "laws" are manifestations of the Divine Knowledge, Command, and Will.

Humankind is the most capable part of creation, the most eminent of causes that is equipped with consciousness and free will. However, our role, even in our own actions, is very small. This being the case, what part can inanimate objects have in creating and operating the universe?

In short, the existence and maintenance of the universe clearly show that everything is based on an absolute truth which comes from the One Who is the Absolute Truth. If the truth, which is responsible for the magnificent order, harmony, and proportion in the universe, were to follow the desires, caprices, or even the intellect of humanity, then the entire universe would long ago have gone to ruin. When humankind attempts to order life, we see that only disorder and chaos ensue, as witnessed by history. Harmony, happiness, order, and proportion require universal knowledge; this must encompass the entire universe, with all its parts and humanity, in all its aspects, down to the being of every person, as well as all of time, with the past, present, and future. It is clear that human beings cannot do this.
75. If We have mercy on them and remove from them the harm afflicting them, for sure they will persist in their rebellion, blindly wandering on.

76. For, indeed, We have seized them with the punishment (of famine); and yet, they have not bowed down to their Lord, nor do they invoke Him humbly.

77. Finally, We open to them a gate of severe punishment – and look, they are plunged into utter despair and sorrow.

78. He it is Who has made for you (the faculty of) hearing, and eyes, and hearts (for understanding, feeling, and insight).

79. He it is Who has brought forth and made you grow up on earth, and to Him you will be gathered.

80. He it is Who gives life and causes to die, and the alternation of night and day (with their periods shortening and lengthening) occurs in obedience to Him (and for the purposes He has established). Will you not, then, reason and understand (that there cannot be another deity besides God)?

81. (Instead of using their reason,) they only speak as the former (disbelieving) peoples spoke.

82. They say, “What! after we have died and become dust and bones, will we then be raised from the dead?

83. “We were already promised such things, we and our forefathers. These are no more than the fables of the ancients.”

84. Say: “To whom belongs the earth and whoever is on it? (Tell me,) if you have any knowledge?”

85. They could not help but acknowledge: “To God.” Say: “Will you not, then, reflect and be mindful?”

86. Say: “Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Supreme Throne (He Who rules the whole universe and sustains all that live in it)?”

87. They could not help but acknowledge: “These belong to God, too.” Say: “Will you not, then, keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety?”

88. Say: “In Whose Hand is the absolute ownership and dominion of all things, and He protects and grants asylum, whereas against Him no asylum is available, and Himself never needs protection? (Tell me,) if you have any knowledge.”

89. They could not help but acknowledge: “God exclusively.” Say: “How, then, can you be so deluded?”
13. As reported in al-Bukhārī (“Kitāb al-Istisghā,” 2), when God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, encountered severe and harsh opposition, he prayed to God: “O God, help me against them with a seven-year famine as You helped Joseph with a seven-year famine.” As a result, a severe famine took hold of the Makkans, to the extent that they had to eat carrion. Verses 75 and 76 refer to this famine, while verse 77 refers to death as the gate opened on or the way that leads to the severe punishment of the Hereafter.

14. Hearing and seeing are two important senses with which people perceive the outer world and from which they learn. What they receive from the outer world is made into knowledge by the heart (fuṣūd), which, in English, may also be rendered as “the mind.” The Qur’ān uses the power of hearing as a singular noun, while the power of seeing and that of the heart are plural nouns. The reason why the Qur’ān uses the singular for the power of hearing while the others are plural is that it refers to the Revelation, or God, as the source of knowledge that comes via the ears. However, the visual perceptions people have, and their way of understanding and interpreting them through the hearts or minds may differ from person to person, and the objects of seeing and the material to be used by the hearts to form knowledge are infinitely abundant.

15. Any person who is concerned with true knowledge and the power of thinking cannot help but acknowledge that the universe with whatever is in it has been created and belongs to God exclusively as His creation, unless one is prejudiced or purposefully refractory, or there are some other factors such as arrogance, wrongdoing, and self-centeredness, which prevent them from believing.

16. If it is God Who has created the earth and whoever is on it, and Who has absolute authority over them as their Master and Lord, then why will He not bring them back to life after their death if He so wills? Is the One Who has created the earth and whoever is on it, the One Who has absolute power to create something from nothing, and the One who deals death, not able to restore the dead to life?

17. At first glance, it seems as if all these questions are asked to those who have some knowledge of the One God Who creates and governs the universe, but who still associate partners with Him in ordering their lives. However, the answers demanded are dependent on knowledge. This means that true knowledge – knowledge acquired through an objective study of the universe – must inevitably conclude that there is only One God Who creates and governs the entire universe, and has absolute authority over everything. So what falls to human beings is to submit to Him in governing their lives, too. As true knowledge confirms this, anyone who listens to the message of the universe and the voice of their conscience will also acknowledge the same truth. But if they are deluded by false hopes, carnal desires, arrogance, selfishness, ignorance, or ideological or quasi-religious prejudices or predispositions, people may follow ways that mislead them instead.
90. The fact is that We have conveyed to them the truth, but for sure they are the liars (in their assertions, denial of the pillars of faith, and against their own selves).

91. God has never taken to Himself a child, nor is there any deity along with Him; otherwise, each deity would surely have sought absolute independence with his creatures under his authority, and they would surely have tried to overpower one another. All-Glorified is God, in that He is far above what they attribute to Him,

92. The Knower of the Unseen (all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm), and absolutely exalted is He above all that they associate with Him as partners.

93. Say: “My Lord, if You let me witness the fulfillment of what they have been promised (to suffer),

94. “Then, do not include me, my Lord, among those wrongdoing people!”

95. Surely We are absolutely able to let you witness the fulfillment of what We have promised them to suffer (and save you from).

96. (But whatever they may say or do) repel the evil (done to you and committed against your mission) with the best (of what you can do). We know best all that they falsely attribute to Us.

97. And say: “My Lord! I seek refuge in You from the promptings and provocations of the satans (of the jinn and human-kind, especially in my relations with people, while I am performing my mission).

98. “I seek refuge in You, O my Lord, lest they be present with me.”

99. (Those who persist in their evil ways will not cease from their false attributions to God, and from their harsh reaction to you) until when death comes to one of them, and then he implores: “O my Lord! Please, let me return to life,

100. “That I may act righteously with respect to whatever I have left undone in the world.” No, never! It is merely a word that he utters over and over again. Before those (who are dead) is an intermediate world (of the grave, where they will stay) until the Day when they will be raised up.

101. Then, when the Trumpet (of Resurrection) is blown, there will no longer be any ties of kinship among them (which will be of any avail), nor will they ask about one another (as everyone will be too engrossed in their own plight to think of others).

102. (Balances are set up,) and those whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy – they are the prosperous.
103. While those whose scales (of good deeds) are light – they will be those who have ruined their own selves, in Hell abiding.

18. As this order pertains to the way of repelling the evil done to a Muslim personally, it also pertains to how the Muslims must respond to the evils committed while they are practicing Islam and trying to communicate it to others. We cannot act with feelings of vengeance; we cannot follow our desires and act in the way we wish. Whatever we do must be for the purpose of serving the cause of Islam in the best possible way and for winning the hearts of others in its favor.

19. The grave is an intermediate world between this world and the next. The dead stay there until the Day of Resurrection. The Messenger says that the grave is either a garden from among the Gardens of Paradise or a pit from among the pits of Hell (at-Tirmidhi, “Sıfat al-Qiyāmah,” 26). The deeds of human beings take forms in the world of the grave peculiar to it, and the dead live a life resembling either Paradise or Hell, each according to their rank.

After burial, the spirit waits in the intermediate world between this one and the Hereafter. Although the body decomposes, its essential particles (called ’ājb adh-dhanab, which literally means coccyx, in a hadith) do not rot. We do not know whether ’ājb adh-dhanab is a person’s genes or something else. Regardless of this ambiguity, however, the spirit continues its relations with the body through it. God will make this part, which is formed of the body’s essential particles, atoms, or all its other particles already dispersed in the soil, conducive to eternal life during the final destruction and rebuilding of the universe. He also will use it to re-create us on the Day of Judgment.

The intermediate world is the realm where the spirit feels the “breath” of the bliss of Paradise or the punishment of Hell. If we led a virtuous life in the world, our good deeds (e.g., prayers, recitations, acts of charity) will appear as amiable fellows. Also, windows onto heavenly scenes will be opened for us, and our grave will become like a garden of Paradise. However, if some of our sins still remain unpardoned, regardless of how virtuous we were, we may suffer some punishment in the intermediate world until we become deserving of Paradise. Unbelievers who indulged in sin will be met by their deeds, which will assume the forms of bad fellows and vermin. They will see scenes of Hell, and their graves will become like a pit of Hell.

Martyrs enjoy a higher degree of life in the grave than non-martyrs who have died. Since martyrs have sacrificed their life in His way, they do not feel the pangs of death or know that they are dead. Instead, they consider themselves as having been transferred to a better world and they enjoy perfect happiness. On the other hand, the dead are aware that they are dead (although their spirits are eternal) and those who believed and did righteous deeds among them experience a lesser degree of pleasure in the intermediate life than that enjoyed by martyrs.

Death is a change of residence and a discharge from worldly duties; the spirit is set free. Death is not annihilation into non-existence. This degree of life has been established clearly by facts that have been repeatedly observed; for example, the spirits of some godly persons appear in their human (material) forms and are seen by those who have insight into hidden truths. Another proof is the deceased’s ability to communicate with us while we are dreaming or awake.

Almost everyone, with the exception of the Prophets, who are sinless, may suffer in the grave to a certain extent, because of the sins which were not forgiven while they were in the world. However, just as any suffering in the world serves as a means of forgiveness for the believers, any suffering in the grave also causes some of their sins to be forgiven. If there are still sins that have been left unpardoned, then the suffering that this person will have to experience in the other worlds of the Hereafter – such as the Supreme Gathering Place, the Balance, which is the world where the records of people’s deeds will be laid open and dealt out, the Bridge, and the Heights (see surah 7: 46, note 12) – will serve as purgatory.
105. “Were not My Revelations recited to you, and you used to deny them?”
106. They will say: “Our Lord! Our wretchedness (which we ourselves provoked upon ourselves) prevailed over us, and we were people lost in error.
107. “Our Lord! Take us out of this (suffering). Then, if we ever revert to evil, we will indeed be wrongdoers.”
108. “Away with you into it! No longer address Me!”
109. “There was among My servants a party who would pray, ‘Our Lord! We have believed, so forgive us, and have mercy on us, for You are the Best of the merciful.’
110. “You used to take them in mockery, so much so that your hostilities to them caused you to forget My remembrance, and you simply persisted in laughing at them.
111. “But look, today I have rewarded them for what they endured patiently, so that they are those who are the triumphant.”
112. (God) says: “For how many years did you stay on earth?”
113. They say: “We stayed for a day or part of a day. Ask of those who are able to keep count of this.”
114. Says He: “You stayed but for a short while, if only you had known (how short it was to be and acted accordingly)!
115. “Or did you think that We created you in vain (so that you should devote all your time to play and entertainment), and that you would not be brought back to Us?”
116. Absolutely exalted is God, the Supreme Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant. There is no deity but He, the Lord of the Supreme Throne of Nobility and Munificence.”
117. Whoever asserts the existence of another deity to worship along with God, for which it is inconceivable for him to have any evidence, will certainly be questioned by his Lord. Surely the unbelievers will not prosper.
118. Say: “O my Lord, forgive me and have mercy on me (always treat me with Your forgiveness and mercy), for You are the Best of the merciful.”

20. For the Supreme Throne, see surah 2: 28, note 28; surah 7: 54, note: 13; surah 17: 42, note 19.
**SÛRAH 24**

**AN-NÛR (THE LIGHT)**

Madinah Period

Súrat an-Nûr was revealed in the sixth year of the Hijrah after the campaign against the tribe of Banû al-Muṣṭaliq. It is composed of 64 verses. In the context of declaring the chastity and innocence of ‘A’ishah, the Prophet’s wife, in the face of an ugly campaign of slander against her, it lays down the punishments for illicit sexual intercourse and slander. The súrah also contains rules concerning relations between the sexes, and members of a family and society, as well as discussing the relationships between the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and his wives and other believers. It makes clear certain ethical values that are to be observed in social life, as well as indicating rules concerned with the apparel of women.

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

1. (This is) a súrah which We have sent down and made obligatory (the observance of the rules therein); and in it We have sent down clear explanations (of the truth about belief and unbelief) and instructions (concerning human life), so that you may reflect and be mindful.

2. The fornicatress and the fornicator\(^1\) — flog each of them with a hundred stripes;\(^2\,3\) and do not let pity for them hold you back from carrying out God's law, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day;\(^4\) and let a group of believers witness their punishment.\(^5\)

3. A fornicator (one notorious for indulgence in illicit sexual relations) is not to marry other than a fornicatress (a woman notorious for indulgence in illicit sexual relations) or an idolatress; and a fornicatress — only a fornicator or an idolater is to take her in wedlock. Acting the other way is forbidden to the believers.\(^6\)

4. Those who accuse chaste, honorable women (of illicit sexual relations) but do not produce four male witnesses (who will witness that they personally saw the act being committed): flog them with eighty stripes, and do not accept from them any testimony ever after. They are indeed transgressors,\(^5\)

5. Except those of them who repent thereafter and mend their ways. For surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.\(^7\)

6. As for those who accuse their own wives of adultery but have no witnesses except themselves, such a person must testify four times swearing by God in each oath that he is indeed speaking the truth.\(^7\)

7. And the fifth time, that God’s curse be upon him if he is lying.
8. But the punishment will be averted from the wife if she testifies four times by swearing by God in each oath that the man is surely telling a lie,

9. And the fifth time, that the wrath (condemnation) of God be upon her if the man is speaking the truth.  

10. Were it not for God's grace and favor upon you, and His mercy, and that God is One Who opens a way to repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, and All-Wise, (you could not resolve your problems justly and wisely).  

1. The Qur'an uses the same term, *zinā*, for both fornication and adultery. Whether the partners are married or unmarried, the Qur'an considers every kind of illicit sexual intercourse as being *zinā*. However, it distinguishes between the punishments to be inflicted.

Adultery and fornication are considered sins in all religions. The Bible orders the death sentence for both the adulterer and the adulteress (Leviticus, 20: 10; Deuteronomy, 22: 22). However, the Qur'ānic definition of adultery is very different from the Biblical definition. *Zinā*, according to the Qur'an, is the involvement of a man and a woman, whether married or not, in an extramarital affair. The Bible only considers the extramarital affair of a married woman to be adultery (*zinā*) (Leviticus, 20: 10; Deuteronomy, 22: 22; Proverbs, 6: 20–35; 7: 1–27).

According to the Biblical definition, if a married man sleeps with an unmarried woman, this is simply a case of fornication. A man's sleeping with an unmarried woman is not considered a crime at all, irrespective of whether the man has a wife or not. The Talmud's command related to this case is as follows:

If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married to another and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins (Exodus 22: 15-17), which is fifty shekels of silver to be paid to the virgin's father (Deuteronomy, 22: 28-29). However, if the virgin is a daughter of a priest (rabbī), the man is to be hanged until dead, whereas the girl is to be burned alive. (Everyman's Talmud, 319–320)

The Judaic commandment is almost identical with the Hindu code. But, in Hinduism, if the girl belongs to a higher caste and the man is of a lower one, the girl should be driven away from her home and the limbs of the man amputated (Dharma Sastra, ch. 8, 365–366). If the girl is a Brahmin, the punishment is to burn the man alive (Ibid., 377).

According to the Bible (Judaic Law), the crime of adultery is committed only when a man sleeps with a married woman. In this case, the man is considered an adulterer, whether he is married or not, and the woman is considered an adulteress. In short, adultery is any illicit sexual intercourse involving a married woman. The extramarital affair of a married man is not itself a crime in the Bible. The reason why this is so, according to Encyclopedia Judaica, is that the wife was considered to be the husband's possession and adultery constituted a violation of his exclusive right to her; the wife, as the husband's possession had no such rights on him (Jeffrey H. Togay, “Adultery,” Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2, col. 313. Also, see Judith Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective, 170–177.)

That is, if a man has sexual intercourse with a married woman, he is violating the property of another man and, thus, he should be punished.

To the present day in Israel, if a married man indulge in an extramarital affair with an unmarried woman, his children by that woman are considered to be legitimate. But if a married woman has an affair with another man, whether married or not, her children by that man are illegitimate and are forbidden to marry any other Jews, except converts and other such illegitimate children. This ban is handed down to the children's descendants for ten
generations, until the taint of adultery has presumably weakened (Lesley Hazleton, *Israeli Women, The Reality Behind the Myths*, 41–42). Other Biblical legal provisions pertaining to unlawful sexual relations are as follows:

If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man, but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet, they are not to be put to death, because she has not been freed. (*Leviticus*, 19: 20)

If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death – the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you. But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. (*Deuteronomy*, 22: 23–25)

In contemporary Christianity, however, although the Old Testament is accepted along with the New Testament as being canonical Scripture, if sexual relations take place between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, it is certainly a sin, but it is not considered a cognizable offence. However, if either or both of the partners are married, their sexual relations are considered as being a cognizable offence. Nonetheless, what makes the act a sin is the violation of the marriage contract, rather than the mere fact of unlawful sex. The only legal consequence of such an act is that the wife of the guilty man might secure a separation from him by charging her husband with infidelity. The same is also true of a man whose wife has engaged in sexual relations outside of her marriage covenant. In addition, the husband also has the right to claim damages from the man who subjected his wife to adultery.

Modern Western legal enactments in regard to this question are based on Christian concepts. According to these laws, fornication is regarded at most as a blemish, but not a cognizable offence unless one party has resorted to the use of force. As for having sexual intercourse with someone else’s married partner, the aggrieved party can simply file for a divorce from the offending party.

On the other hand, Islam regards the act of any unlawful sexual intercourse as a crime in itself. If such an act is committed by a married person, the offence becomes more severe. The severity is due to the fact that a married person still resorts to unlawful means to satisfy their sexual urges while they can satisfy it by lawful means, i.e. within their marriage.

Unlawful sex is viewed by Islam as a crime which, if no measures are taken to curb it, strikes at the very root of human personality, family and society. Both the survival of the human race and the continuity of human collective existence make it imperative that the sexual relations between men and women are confined to their lawful forms alone. Just as eating and drinking are not indulged in for their own sake by a healthy individual, but rather for the continuation of life, so too, the sexual urge has been granted to humankind to continue our existence on earth. Therefore, the pleasure in its satisfaction is a sort of advance payment, not the goal in itself. In order to protect humankind from the harmful effects of unlawful sex, Islam does not confine itself to legal sanctions alone. It also seeks, through the spiritual, moral, and social values it promotes and the principles it has laid down, to almost completely close the door to adultery and fornication, while leaving some room for human free will. Human beings are tried in this world so as to develop their inborn capacities and to improve the world according to the standards God has established, and thereby earn a degree of perfection worthy of the eternal life of bliss (Mostly from al-Mawduûdî, 6: 149–159).

In addition to inculcating in our hearts the love and fear of God at one and the same time, and to giving us an awareness of the eternal life, which will be lived in either Paradise or Hell, and to perfecting its followers both spiritually and morally, Islam takes every step to make marriage easy and convenient so that lin-
eages will not be confounded through unlawful sex. Also, if either party to the marriage finds the other incompatible, that party may resort to divorce.

Islam also seeks to remove factors which prompt or provoke people into illegitimate sexual relations, or which provide opportunities for engaging in it. It forbids all kinds of obscenity, as well as free mixing of the sexes, ordering women to cover themselves and forbidding them to parade their charms in public. It also orders both sexes to lower their gaze when they encounter one another.

Islam aims to purify individual persons and society. The person and society it seeks to encourage and enable is like a healthy body; one who engages in crimes like unlawful sex, murder, theft and robbery – like a gangrenous organ or a cancer in the body – is a harm and danger to individual persons and to society. Just as one seeks first prevention and then treatment for every ailment of the body, so too, Islam seeks to prevent crime, and for what has not been prevented it prescribes and applies a particular method of responding. (For a detailed discussion of Islamic penal law, see Surah 2, note 131; Surah 4, note 6.)

2. The punishment legislated for a man or woman who fornicates is a hundred stripes. The original word used for stripe is jaldah, derived from jild, which means skin. So all linguists and commentators of the Qur'an consider it to mean that the effect of flogging must be confined to the skin, and therefore not cut the flesh. The whip to be used should be an average one, neither too thick nor too thin, and the act of flogging should be of average intensity. Caliph ‘Umar, may God be pleased with him, used to direct the flogger: “Strike in such manner that your armpit is not revealed” (al-Jassāṣ, 3: 45).

Other conditions for flogging can be found in books of Islamic law.

3. As pointed out above, the punishment of a hundred lashes is given to unmarried persons who are guilty of unlawful sexual intercourse. This is evident from the relevant Qur'ānic verses, including the one discussed here. The first verses concerning unlawful sex are those found in Surah an-Nisā': Such of your women as have committed indecency (adultery), 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. When two of 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. Assuredly, God is He Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness, All-Compassionate (Surah 4: 15–16).

When these two verses were revealed, as a step toward the decisive banning and prevention of any kind of unlawful sex, Islam prescribed that the partners guilty of such acts should be scolded and beaten, and that women should be kept in their houses to prevent prostitution. The statement, or God opens some way for them, implied that new legislation would come on this subject. This new legislation was the command to lash the unmarried partners with a whip 100 times, whereas the punishment for the married partners was established by the Sunnah.

Islam has laid down certain conditions for establishing the fact of the crime of zinā (adultery and fornication), which is then liable to punishment. These conditions can also be found in relevant books. For example, see al-Mawdūdī, 6: 166–173.

4. God warns believers against any misplaced compassion that would prevent them from enforcing the punishments He has legislated. No one can ever be more compassionate toward any creature than its Creator.

It is true that everything in the universe speaks of compassion and promises compassion, and because of this, the universe can be considered to be a symphony of compassion. Human beings have a responsibility to show compassion to all beings; this is a requirement of being human. The more a person displays
compassion, the more exalted they become; while the more they resort to wrongdoing, oppression, and cruelty, the more they are disgraced and humiliated, and accrue shame.

We heard from the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, how compassion enabled a prostitute to enter the way to Paradise because, out of compassion, she gave water to a poor dog dying of thirst, whilst another woman was condemned to enter the way leading to the torments of Hell because she tormented a cat, neither feeding it nor letting it feed itself until it died of hunger (al-Bukhārī, “al-Anbiyā,” 54).

However, compassion, like everything else, must be balanced. We can see an example of how such a balance works in the water we drink. Oxygen and hydrogen, when mixed in the proper ratio, form one of the substances most vital to life. However, when this ratio changes, each element resumes its original, combustible identity. Likewise, it is of great importance to apportion the amount of compassion and to know who deserves it. Compassion for a wolf sharpens its appetite, and not being content with what it has received, it demands even more. Compassion for a rebel makes him or her more aggressive, encouraging the rebel to offend against others. It would not be appropriate to have compassion for one who takes sadistic pleasure in poisoning others. So we must place compassion in the right place and never claim to be more compassionate than the All-Compassionate One.

If someone alters God’s laws in consideration of the culprit’s social position, this is surely the very worst kind of offence. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: “O people! One of the reasons why some communities before you perished is that when a respectable person of the community committed theft, people spared him, and punished others because of their weaknesses” (al-Bukhārī, “Hudūd,” 11; Muslim, “Hudūd,” 8).

5. The punishment for zinā should be carried out publicly before at least four persons. The main advantage to doing so is that it prevents those in authority from acting with undue harshness or leniency. Such a stipulation secures the enforcement of the punishment as required by the Law. It also arouses in the culprit a feeling of shame and helps to deter them from repeating the same crime, as well as serving as a lesson for others.

6. A believing man or woman cannot marry a woman or man who is known for indulging in zinā – i.e., one who has been punished for this crime and, thereafter, has neither repented nor mended their ways, who is morally dissolute and ignores the evil involved in this crime. Acting the other way cannot be compatible with faith. So it is obvious that this injunction applies to those who persist in their evil ways, but not to those who repent and mend their ways after some lapse. Hence, if someone who committed unlawful sexual intercourse in the past later on marries, this does not mean that the relationship between the spouses is unlawful. It is dependent on whether or not the offender has truly repented and refrains from committing the same crime again.

This verse in no way suggests that a sexually deviant Muslim can marry a polytheist, or that such a marriage is legitimate. Rather, the purpose of the verse is to stress that unlawful sex is an extremely evil act and that a Muslim guilty of it is no longer worthy of having matrimonial relations with people of good character in Muslim society.

7. This commandment applies also to cases where a woman accuses a man of unlawful sex. The severity of the punishment, as well as the requirement of four witnesses, whereas two witnesses are considered sufficient in all other criminal and civil suits, shows the importance of the matter and aim at preventing idle talk and gossip about people’s honor and chastity. Islam severely condemns both unlawful sex and the ungrounded accusation of others. Even if one observes someone actually indulging in unlawful sex, one should not publicize it. This prevents corruption from spreading. If four persons observe the act, or if one (a husband or wife) can get four witnesses (to observe the act), they may report the matter to the authorities concerned, but still should not
publicize it. Islam aims at ensuring both pure persons and a pure society.

It should also be noted here that from a legal point of view, everyone is innocent until conclusive proof to the contrary has been produced; so too, must every woman be considered chaste and honorable.

If one repents and mends one's ways after having accused a chaste woman of unlawful sex without producing four witnesses to the unlawful act, then one is no longer regarded as a transgressor. However, this does not void the prescribed punishment of 80 stripes, and any testimony will not be accepted from such a person ever again.

8. This procedure is called li‘ān (oath of condemnation and mutual cursing.) When a man accuses his wife of adultery, he must testify four times and swear by God. The fifth time he must invoke God's curse upon himself if he is lying.

If a man accuses his wife or disowns the paternity of a child, the wife has the right to seek the intervention of the court and have her husband make such an oath. In this respect, her rights are the same as her husband’s.

If the husband who accused his wife of adultery refrains from taking the oaths, he will be imprisoned until he confesses that he has leveled a false charge and when he does, he will be punished with the punishment of false accusation (qadhf), which is mentioned in verse 4 above. If the wife declines to take the oaths, she is imprisoned until she takes the oaths or confesses that she has committed adultery. If she confesses, she undergoes the punishment for adultery.

9. This verse reminds us that the Religion (and law) God has chosen for us and conveyed to us through His Messenger has been based on God’s liberal Forgiveness, Bountifulness, Compassion, and Wisdom.
11. Surely those who invented and spread the slander (against 'A'ishah, the Messenger’s wife) are a band from among you. However, do not deem this incident an evil for you; rather, it is good for you. (As for the slanderers,) every one of them has accumulated sin in proportion to his share in this guilt, and he who has the greater part of it will suffer a tremendous punishment.

12. When you heard of it, why did the believing men and women not think well of one another and declare: “This is obviously a slander!”?

13. Why did they not produce four witnesses (in support of the accusation)? Now that they have not produced witnesses, it is indeed they who are the liars in God’s sight.

14. Were it not for God’s grace and favor upon you, and His mercy in the world and the Hereafter, a mighty punishment would certainly have afflicted you (who got involved in circulating rumors) on account of what you indulged in.

15. Just think how you welcomed it with your tongues from one another and uttered with your mouths something about which you had no knowledge. You deemed it a trifle whereas in God’s sight it was most grave.

16. Why did you not say, when you heard of it, “It is not for us to speak of this. All-Glorified are You (O God)! This is an awesome slander.”

17. God admonishes you lest you ever repeat anything like this, if you are (truly) believers.

18. He clearly expounds to you His instructions and the signposts of His way. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

19. Those who love that indecency should spread among those who believe, surely for them is a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter. God knows (the exact truth and nature of all matters), but you do not know.

20. Were it not for God’s grace and favor upon you, and His mercy, and that God is All-Pitying, All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants, what terrible consequences would such evils have caused in your community)!
10. By the 5th year of the Hijrah, the Islamic movement led by the Messenger had reached a point where all its opponents realized that they would no longer be able to uproot it by sheer force. The hostile tribes had formed a united front under the leadership of the Quraysh and had besieged Madīnah with a massive army at the Battle of the Trench, which took place in the 5th year of the Hijrah. When they had to retreat after a four-week siege, the Messenger declared: “From this moment on we will march upon them; they will no longer be able to attack us” (al-Bukhārī, “Maghāzī,” 29).

The Islamic movement derived its main force from its spiritual and moral values and the unblemished character of its followers. So, led in particular by the hypocrites in Madīnah, the enemy began to resort to vicious and unfair campaigns against the Muslims. Such conspiracies first manifested themselves on the occasion of the Messenger’s marriage to Zaynab bint al-Jahsh, the divorced wife of Zayd ibn Ḍārithah, who was the Messenger’s emancipated slave; this event is mentioned in Sūrat al-Ahzāb (33:36–38) and will be dealt with when that sūrah is examined. The concerted efforts to blemish the absolutely pure character of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, proved of no avail; so this time, they slandered ‘Ā’ishah, the pure and beloved wife of the Messenger.

On the return from an expedition to the Banū Musta’il in the 6th year of the Hijrah, ‘Ā’ishah, who had accompanied the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, during that expedition, was inadvertently left behind when the Muslim army moved from the place where it had camped. After having spent several hours alone, she was found by Sa‘wān ibn al-Mu‘attal, one of the Emigrants who had participated in the Battle of Badr, whose duty was to make sure that nothing and no one got left behind. ‘Ā’ishah got on his camel, and they rejoined the army at the next bivouac. This gave occasion to the enemies to raise a malicious scandal, which was led by ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the hypocrites in Madīnah.

As long as the Muslims preserve their moral and spiritual strength and solidarity, whatever the enemy does to defeat them will only end in bringing good to the Muslims. So incidents that seem to be evil in the beginning prove to be good for them. The incident of slander against ‘Ā’ishah, the Mother of Believers, proved to be an occasion on which the Muslims were once more able to realize the source of their real power, to increase their solidarity, to gain further experience and knowledge in order to lead the movement onwards, as well as coming to know what they should think of their brothers and sisters in the Religion, and how they should behave toward each other. This incident also served for many new laws to be revealed concerning the mutual relations of Muslims.

11. This refers to ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the hypocrites.

12. This expression may also be translated as “When you heard of it, why did the believing men and women not think well of their own folk?” A believer is a mirror for another believer. Since belief is a light that illuminates a believer’s mind and heart, and which shows them how to react in the face of events, it also prevents a believer from performing evil and obscene acts; thus, every believer should think well of another believer. Believers cannot think of other believers in a way that is different from how they think of themselves. All believers form a single body; every believer is an embodiment of the values represented by other believers.
21. O you who believe! Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan. Whoever follows in the footsteps of Satan, (let him know well that) Satan insistently calls to all that is indecent and shameful, and all that is evil. Were it not for God’s grace and favor upon you, and His mercy, not one of you would have ever attained purity; but God purifies whomever He wills. God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

22. Let not those among you who are favored with resources swear that they will no longer give to the kindred, the needy, and those who have emigrated in God’s cause, (even though those wealthy ones suffer harm at the hands of the latter). Rather, let them pardon and forbear. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

23. Those who falsely accuse chaste women, who are unaware of devious ways of corruption and are believers, are cursed in the world and the Hereafter, and for them is a mighty punishment.

24. On the Day when their own tongues and hands and feet will all bear witness against them in regard to what they were doing.

25. On that Day, God will pay them in full their just due, and they will come to know that God is the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant (from Whom nothing is hidden, and Who makes all truth manifest).

26. (In principle,) corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men for corrupt women; just as good, pure women are for good, pure men, and good, pure men for good, pure women. (On account of their purity and chastity coming from faith,) the latter are innocent of all that evil tongues may impute to them. For them there is forgiveness and an honorable, generous provision.

27. O you who believe! Do not enter dwellings other than your own until you have ascertained the permission of their residents and have greeted them with peace. Your doing so is what is good and appropriate for you, so that you may be mindful (of good manners and proper courtesy).
13. No one, even God’s Messengers, upon them be peace, can attain purity – purity in thought, belief, intention, and action – merely on the basis of individual abilities and efforts. At best, what a person can do is to sincerely desire purity and to work to this end. God is aware of anyone who has sincere intentions and who is trying to attain purity, and it is He Who enables people to attain purity and remain pure. Humanity is prone to evil, indecency, and error, and their carnal souls can easily be defeated by Satan. Therefore, all of us are indebted to God alone for any of our good thoughts and deeds. It is for this reason that for the fourth time in the sūrah God reminds us of the fact that, were it not for His grace, and favor, and His mercy upon us, we would have been doomed. Once the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: “No one can enter Paradise by virtue of their own deeds.” When asked if this was true for him as well, he replied that had it not been for God’s Mercy Which embraced him, he could not enter either (al-Bukhārī, “Riqāq,” 18).
28. Then, if you find no one in them, do not enter them until you have permission to enter. If you are asked to go back, then go back (without feeling offended). It is a purer way for you. God has full knowledge of all that you do.  

29. There is no blame on you if you enter dwellings that are uninhabited which are of use to you. (But always bear in mind that) God knows whatever you reveal (of acts or intentions) and whatever you keep concealed.  

30. Tell the believing men that they should restrain their gaze (from looking at the women whom it is lawful for them to marry, and from others' private parts), and guard their private parts and chastity. This is what is purer for them. God is fully aware of all that they do.  

31. And tell the believing women that they (also) should restrain their gaze (from looking at the men whom it is lawful for them to marry, and from others' private parts), and guard their private parts, and that they should not display their charms except that which is revealed of itself; and let them draw their veils over their bosoms, and (tell them) not to display their charms to any save their husbands, or their fathers (and grandfathers and both patern- nal and maternal uncles), or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands (both their own and stepsons and grandsons), or their brothers (and foster- and step-brothers), or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or the Muslim women and the women of good conduct with whom they associate, or those (slave-girls) their right hands possess, or the male attendants in their service free of sexual desire, or children that are as yet unaware of femininity. Nor should they stamp their feet (i.e. act in such a manner as to) draw attention to their charms (and arouse the passion of men). And O believers, turn to God all together in repentance that you may attain true prosperity.
14. In the pre-Islamic age of Jāhiliyyah, people would barge into each other’s houses without asking for permission and greeting the residents with peace, but only saying: “Good morning” or “Good evening!” Islam ruled that everyone has a right to privacy in their own houses, and that no one could enter another’s house without ascertaining the prior consent of the inmates. Islam also ruled that the proper way to greet one another is to say, “Peace be upon you.” One is required to ask for permission to enter even the houses of one’s relatives. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, stated that a person should ask for permission no more than three times. If there is no response, the would-be visitor should leave.

Islam also forbade peeping into the houses of others, looking into them from the outside, and reading other people’s letters without permission. It is also unlawful to listen to conversations which take place in another’s house.

15. This means not only that one should be mindful of one’s chastity, but also that they should avoid exposing their private parts. The parts of the body that are forbidden for men to expose are between the navel and the knee. A man should not expose this part of his body before anyone except his wife. He should also avoid being naked, even when he is alone, out of respect for the angels (at-Tirmidhi, “Adab,” 42).

16. A woman should not expose any part of her body other than her hands, feet, and faces before men whom she can marry. According to some scholars, she must cover her face also, except for her eyes. But she is never obliged to cover her face while performing the rites of the Hajj, or in places like court or during a marriage contract. Nor can a woman wear such thin, tight or transparent clothes that her body is exposed, revealing its shape. As for the parts of the body which she is obliged to keep covered, good character and chastity, these consist of the lower body, between the navel and the knee. She should also cover herself in the presence of women of loose morals, just as she must cover before men whom she can marry.

17. What is meant by the charms that must not be displayed are the parts of the woman’s body on which she wears ornaments, such as ears, wrists, and ankles. As these should not be displayed in the presence of others than those mentioned in the verse, especially when adorned, women should also not show any adornments which they use to make them look attractive, such as eye-catching dresses, jewelry, and cosmetics.

Scholars interpret the statement, that which is revealed of itself, to mean that women should not intentionally display their beauty and charms. But sometimes it may happen that the outer garment, for example, is blown up by the wind, causing something to be exposed. However, a believing woman must take precautions against such occasions. Some scholars hold that what is meant by this statement – that which is revealed of itself – is garments like a veil, gloves, and head-cover, and the parts of the body which a woman is allowed to keep uncovered, namely, her hands, feet and eyes, and her face, in cases of necessity, and the adornment which she wears on them.

18. In the pre-Islamic age of Jāhiliyyah, women wore head-bands to keep their tied hair up in a bun at the rear of their head, thus revealing their neck and the upper part of their bosoms. With this verse, the Qur’an ordered them to wear their hair-covering in such a way that it covered their head and bosoms. When this order was communicated to the believing women in the Messenger’s time, they immediately cast away their transparent clothes and veils and made veils of thick material, wearing them in a way that fully covered their head and bosoms (Abū Dāwūd, “Kitāb al-Libās,” 32).
32. Marry those among you who are single (whether men or women) and those of your male and female slaves that are righteous (and fit for marriage). If they are poor, God will grant them sufficiency out of His bounty. God is All-Embracing in His mercy, All-Knowing.

33. Let those who cannot afford to marry keep themselves chaste until God grants them sufficiency out of His bounty. And if any of those whom your right hands possess desire to enter into a contract with you to purchase their freedom, make this contract with them if you know that they are honest (and able to earn without begging and be good, free citizens). Help them out of God’s wealth which He has granted you. And do not compel your slave-girls to prostitution in order to seek the (fleeting) benefits of the life of this world while they desire to remain chaste. If anyone compels them to prostitution, then God will be All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate to them after they are subjected to such compulsion.

34. Indeed, We have sent down to you Revelations which show the truth clearly and illuminate your way, and examples (from the histories) of those who have passed away before you, and an instruction for the God-revering, pious.

35. God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His Light is like a niche wherein is a lamp; the lamp is in a crystal, and the crystal shining as if a pearl-like radiant star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west. The oil almost gives light of itself though no fire touches it. Light upon light. God guides to His Light whom He wills. God strikes parables for people. God has full knowledge of all things.

36. (This light can best be obtained, and those guided to it are found) in some houses (that are usually concealed from people’s eyes and) for which God has provided a way for them to be built and appreciated, and for His Name to be mentioned and invoked therein; in them glorify Him in the morning and evening,
19. This is not a compulsory order, as marriage depends on the choice of an individual. However, if a person wants to marry but cannot afford it, those responsible for them among their relatives or, in case of their being without relatives, the state should arrange their marriage.

20. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said: “O young people! Those among you who can afford to marry should do so, for it will help you to keep your gaze averted and enable you to preserve your chastity. Whoever cannot afford to marry, let him fast, for fasting blunts sexual passion” (al-Bukhārī, “Kitāb an-Nikāḥ.” 2) He also said: “There are three types of Muslims whom God binds Himself to help: he who marries to preserve his chastity; he who enters into contract to purchase his freedom and sincerely intends to pay the amount; and he who goes out on God’s way for jihād” (at-Tirmidhī, “Fadāil al-Jihād,” 20).

21. Such type of agreements also pertain to prisoners of war.

Here I deem it useful to quote from Fethullah Gülen concerning the outlining aspects of an Islamic social system:

What is of great significance in such commandments is that the duties entrusted to modern states are those that Islam refers to society and classifies, in order of importance, as “absolutely necessary, relatively necessary, and commendable to carry out.” The Qur’ān includes the following passages: O you who believe! Come in full submission to God, all of you (2: 208); O you who believe! Spend (in God’s cause) out of the pure, wholesome things you have earned and of what We have produced for you from the earth (2: 267); Such of your women as have committed indecency (adultery), you must have four male witnesses of you who (having seen them in the act) will testify against them (4: 15); 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 (4: 58); 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 (4: 135); And if they (the enemies) incline to peace, incline to it also, and place your trust in God (8: 61); O you who believe! If some transgressor brings you news (that requires taking action), verify it carefully (before you believe and act upon it), lest you harm a people in ignorance and then become regretful for what you have done (49: 6); If two parties of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them (and act promptly) (49: 9). In short, the Qur’ān addresses the entire community and assigns it almost all the duties that are entrusted to modern states.

People cooperate with one another by sharing these duties and establishing the essential institutions that are necessary to perform them. The government is composed of these institutions. Thus, Islam recommends a government that is based on a social contract. People elect the administrators and establish a council to debate common issues. Also, the society as a whole participates in auditing the administration. Particularly during the rule of the first four Caliphs (632–661), the fundamental principles of government mentioned above were fully observed. The political system was transformed into a sultanate after the death of ‘Ali, the fourth Caliph, due to internal conflicts and the global conditions of the time. Unlike during the caliphate, power in the sultanate was passed on through the sultan’s family. However, even though elections were no longer held, societies maintained the other principles.

Islam is an inclusive religion. It is based on the belief in one God as the Creator, Lord, Sustainer, and Administrator of the universe. Islam is the religion of the whole universe. That is, the entire universe obeys the laws laid down by God, so everything in the universe is “Muslim” and obeys God by submitting to His laws. Even a person who refuses to believe in God or follows another religion has perfec
Muslim as far as their physical existence is concerned. Throughout their entire life, from the embryonic stage to the body’s dissolution into dust after death, every tissue of their muscles, and every limb of their body follows the course prescribed for each by God’s law. Thus, in Islam, God, nature, and humanity are neither remote from each other nor are they alien to each other. It is God Who makes Himself known to humanity through nature and humanity itself, and nature and humanity are the two books of creation through which each word of God is known. This leads humankind to look upon everything as belonging to the same Lord, to whom it itself belongs, so that it regards nothing in the universe as alien. (A Muslim’s) sympathy, love, and service do not remain confined to the people of any particular race, color, or ethnicity. The Prophet summed this up with the command, “O servants of God, be brothers (and sisters)!”

A separate, but equally important point is that Islam recognizes the Divinely-inspired religions that predated it. It accepts all the Prophets and Books sent to different peoples in different epochs of history. Not only does it accept them, but it also regards belief in them as being an essential principle of being a Muslim. In this way, Islam acknowledges the basic unity of all religions. A Muslim is at the same time a true follower of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and of all the other Hebrew Prophets, upon them all be peace. This belief explains why both Christians and Jews enjoyed their religious rights under the rule of Islamic governments throughout history.

The Islamic social system seeks to form a virtuous society and thereby gain God’s approval. It recognizes right, not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and the pursuit of personal interests. Social education encourages people to pursue lofty ideals and to strive for perfection, not just to run after their own desires. The pursuit of what is right demands unity, virtues bring mutual support and solidarity, and belief secures brother- and sisterhood. Encouraging the soul to attain perfection brings happiness in both worlds. (A Comparative Approach, SAIS Review, vol. XXI, no. 2, 136–137)

22. This verse is one of the ambiguous, allegorical verses of the Qur’ān. It has deep meanings about which many interpretations have been made.

First, it should be remembered that the Essence of God or the Divine Being Himself cannot be known, as there is nothing comparable to Him, and He is infinitely beyond whatever we conceive of Him. Because of this, the Qur’ān presents us His acts, and creates allegories to give some “knowledge (ma’rifah)” of Him with His Attributes, and Names. The Acts lead to the Names, and the Names lead to the Attributes.

Secondly, (the) Light is one of the Names of God. All the lights in the universe are manifestations of this Name. So, the verse means that it is God Who has created light and illuminates everything in the universe.

Thirdly, as is implied at the conclusion of the verse, knowledge is light and is the source of intellectual enlightenment. All knowledge has its source in God’s Knowledge. With respect to God, His Existence and Knowledge are, in one respect, identical. Even if there were none to be aware of Him, He knows Himself. Some Muslim scholars, like Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, are of the opinion that existence ends in or issues from His Knowledge. So, as pointed out above, knowledge is light. It is also through knowledge that one can attain true faith which illuminates hearts. So true
knowledge provides guidance for people, and its main source is Revelation. True enlightenment is possible through Revelation, and any information that goes against the Revelation is darkness and causes darkness.

As mentioned above, the Essence of God cannot be known, as He is incomparable to anything in the universe, and He is infinite or unlimited. We can only obtain some knowledge of Him through His works or acts, which are manifested from behind the veil of causality or the “laws of nature,” which are, in fact, the titles of His ways of acting or executing the events of the universe, and the universe itself. So, the metaphor of the glass, lamp, and crystal stands for this veil.

The metaphor indicates modern electricity and electrical lamps; some modern interpreters of the Qur’ān, in particular, think that this verse suggests electricity. Actually, as we know, energy is comprehended through its effects, and electrical energy is used for illumination through a bulb. The glass, lamp, crystal, or pearl-like radiant star, when taken together, bring to mind the image of an electric lamp. As electric energy is seen and illuminates by means of light bulbs, the Divine Light manifests itself through its effects and by means of the veil mentioned above in the same way. Thus, energy can serve as an example of having some knowledge of the Divine Light.

In the past, light was mostly obtained from lamps lit by olive oil, and the brightest lamp was that which was lit from the oil of an olive tree that grew in an open and elevated place, receiving the rays of the sun not only in the morning, but in the afternoon and throughout the day. So, the statement, *neither of the east nor of the west*, implies the intensity of the light obtained from a lamp lit from the oil of such olive trees, as it is not restricted in any direction. It also suggests that God’s Light does not emit from matter or belong to the universe. It is meta-universal or meta-physical, and therefore glows forth of itself without needing fire to kindle it. Likewise, the Revelation as the source of knowledge and Islam, which it has formed, belong to none other than God. These are a pure light from God which illuminates the minds and hearts of humankind.
37. Men (of great distinction) whom neither commerce nor exchange (nor any other worldly preoccupations) can divert from the remembrance of God, and establishing the Prayer in conformity with all its conditions, and paying the Prescribed Purifying Alms; they are in fear of a Day on which all hearts and eyes will be overturned.  

38. God will reward them in accordance with the best of what they have ever done, and give them yet more out of His bounty (i.e., more than they deserve). God provides beyond all measure for whom He wills.  

39. As for the unbelievers, all their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty one supposes to be water until he comes up to it, only to find that it was nothing; instead, he finds God near it, and He settles his account in full. God is swift at settling the account.  

40. Or their deeds are like veils of darkness covering up an abysmal sea down into its depths, covered up by a billow, above which is a billow, above which is a cloud: veils of darkness piled one upon another, so that when he stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it. For whomever God has appointed no light, no light has He.  

41. Do you not see that all that is in the heavens and the earth, and the birds flying in patterned ranks with wings spread out glorify God. Each knows the way of its prayer and glorification. God has full knowledge of all that they do.  

42. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; and to God is the homecoming.  

43. Do you not see that God gently drives the clouds, then joins them together, (completing the formation of a circuit between them,) and then turns them into a thick mass, and consequently you see rain-drops issue out of their midst. He sends down hail out of snow-laden mountains (of clouds) from the sky, and smites with it whom He wills, and averts it from whom He wills. The flash of the lightning almost takes away the sight.  

---

23. Although many commentators of the Qur'ān have interpreted the word *houses* in verse 36 to mean mosques, understanding it to mean the houses which believers construct where they mention God, study His religion, and serve His cause is more appropriate. The term *houses* is used in the indefinite form. Mosques are not indefinite, so they are not concealed from people's eyes. Furthermore, God's providing for them a way to be built and appreciated, and for His Name to be mentioned and invoked therein, suggests that
they are or will be built at a time when the believers are closely watched and face great pressure to enjoy their Religion and serve God’s cause. In addition, believers assemble in mosques five times a day to glorify God, not only in the morning and evening. In the houses mentioned in this verse, distinguished believers dedicated to God’s cause, who are not diverted by their worldly occupations nor buying and selling from God’s remembrance, come together to glorify God and uplift His Name.

When these verses are considered in the light of what God said to Moses and Aaron in sûrah 10:87, then their true meaning will be clearer:

_We revealed to Moses and his brother: “Appoint houses for your people in Egypt (as places of refuge and coming together in God’s cause), and (as a whole community) make your homes places to turn to God, and establish the Prescribed Prayer in conformity with all its conditions. And (O Moses,) give glad tidings to the believers!”_

24. Since God is the All-Independent, the One Who does whatever He wills, He is never obliged to do anything according to people’s deeds and wishes, including rewarding good or punishing evil. However, because of His absolute Justice, He rewards people who believe and do good deeds that are acceptable by Him, and punishes the others who disbelieve and do evil deeds. In other words, He treats people as they deserve. But He is also the All-Compassionate, All-Forgiving, and All-Providing. So, He overlooks and forgives His servants many of their sins, and rewards the believers with more than they deserve. This does not mean that He treats all the believers in the same way. Believers vary in degrees, according to the depth of their faith, the multiplicity of their deeds, their sincerity in faith and their performance of good deeds, their purity of intention, their depth of devotion, and their contribution to God’s cause. As all such factors cause variations in God’s rewards to them, God is also free to reward whom He wills as He wills, once He has given to each their due.

25. The parables or comparisons presented here illustrate the state of unbelievers. Their deeds, although seeming to bring them some benefit in the world for some time, will increase them in nothing but loss and suffering both in the world and in the Hereafter. In addition, so long as there are believers whose minds and hearts have been enlightened by God’s Light and who strive for His cause sincerely, whatever the unbelievers do to try to stop them or prevent the spread of this Light, the believers will ultimately be victorious. What the unbelievers call enlightenment is only darkness upon darkness, so they are wrapped up by veils of darkness, and cannot find their way to true salvation and success.

26. For an explanation of this statement, see sûrah 15:22, note 6.

27. This verse explains the curious Divine disposals in sending rain and hail from accumulated clouds, which are among the Divine Lordship’s miracles and the most curious manifestations of His Mercy. While the cloud’s atoms are scattered in the atmosphere, they come together to form a cloud at the command of God, just like a dispersed army assembles at the sound of the trumpet. Then, like small troops coming from different directions to form an army, God joins the clouds together to enable the completion of an electric circuit between them. He causes those piled-up clouds, charged with rain or snow or hail, to pour down the water of life to all living beings on earth.

Rain does not fall by itself. Rather, it is sent down because it comes for certain purposes and according to need. When the atmosphere is clear and no clouds can be seen, the mountain-like forms of clouds, gathered like a great cloud, assemble because the One Who knows all living beings and their needs gathers them together to send down the rain. These events suggest several Divine Names: the All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Disposer of Things, All-Arranger, All-Upbringing, All-Helper, and Reviver.
44. God turns about the night and the day. Surely in that is a lesson for those who have the power of seeing.

45. God has created every living creature from water. Among them are such as move on their bellies, and such as move on two legs, and such as move on four. God creates whatever He wills. Surely God has full power over everything.

46. Assuredly We have sent down Revelations which show the truth clearly and illuminate your way. God guides whom He wills to a straight path.

47. They say, “We have believed in God and in the Messenger, and we have promised obedience (to both),” but then, after that a party among them turn away (contradicting their declaration by their attitudes and actions). Such are not believers.

48. When they are called to God and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them, see how a party among them turn away in aversion.

49. If the right be on their side, they come willingly in acceptance of it.

50. Is there a disease in their hearts (that corrupts their will and character)? Or have they fallen prey to doubts? Or do they fear that God and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? No, the truth is that they themselves are wrongdoers.

51. The only utterance of the (true) believers, when they are called to God and His Messenger so that the Messenger may judge between them, is: “We have heard and we obey.” Such are those who are the prosperous.

52. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, and is overwhelmed by awe of God and keeps from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety, such indeed are those who are the triumphant.

53. They (the hypocritical ones) swear by God most solemnly that if you should ever order them, they would most certainly go forth (to fight in God’s cause). Tell them: “Do not swear. What is expected of you is obedience of the proper kind, well-known. (So you should do what other believers do, and therefore will go forth when commanded to do so without gestures indicating exaggeration and affectation).” God is fully aware of all that you do.
28. One meaning of this verse is that the primary material in creation is something fluid—ether, hydrogen, or a large cloud, a huge nebula, or a mass of hot gas, or something else. According to this, God made ether a source of atoms from which He created all things, and He has placed everything in the “ocean” of ether. Another meaning is that water itself was caused by two gases. Its vapors rise from the ground, condense, and then return as rain to form or prepare a suitable environment for life.

For further explanations, see surah 2: 74, note 78; surah 21: 30, note 3; surah 23: 18, note 6.

29. For similar injunctions about believing in, and obeying, God and the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and wholeheartedly submitting to his judgments, see: 4: 60–65. Verse 65, in particular, is significant in this respect: But no! By your Lord, they will not (truly) believe until 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.

The Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah toward the end of the 19th century. (A painting by R. Yazdani, reproduced from a photo from the Yıldız Sarayı Archives in Istanbul.)
54. Say: “Obey God and obey the Messenger.” But (O people), if you turn away from the Messenger, (then be aware that) what rests with him is only what he has been charged with, and what rests with you is only what you have been charged with. However, if you obey, you will be guided (to the truth). What rests with the Messenger is but to convey the Message fully and clearly.

55. God has promised those of you who believe and do good, righteous deeds that He will most certainly empower them as vicegerents on the earth (in the place of those who are in power at present), even as He empowered those (of the same qualities) that preceded them, and that, assuredly, He will firmly establish for them their Religion, which He has (chosen and) approved of for them, and He will replace their present state of fear with security (so that they can practice their Religion freely and fully, and in peace). They worship Me alone, associating none with Me as partners (in belief, worship, and the authority to order their life). Whoever turns ungrateful after that, such indeed are the transgressors.

56. Establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and obey the Messenger so that you may be shown mercy (to be granted a good, virtuous life in the world and eternal happiness in the Hereafter.)

57. Do not suppose that those who disbelieve can frustrate (Our will) on the earth. Their final refuge is the Fire: how evil a destination to arrive at!

58. O you who believe! Let (even) those whom your right hands possess (as slaves), as well as those of you (your children) who have not yet reached puberty, ask for your permission (before they come into your private room) at three times (of the day) – before the Morning Prayer, and when you lay aside your garments in the middle of the day for rest, and after the Night Prayer. These are your three times of privacy. Beyond these occasions, there is no blame on you nor on them if they come in without permission – they are bound to move about you, some of you attending on others. Thus, God makes clear for you (the instructions in) the Revelations. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.
30. This statement, like similar ones (e.g., verse 47 above), establishes the Sunna as a separate source of Islamic commandments. That is, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, commands and forbids on matters other than those included in the Qur'ān, and therefore the Sunnah is as a separate source of Islamic commandments, in addition to the primary interpreter of the Qur'ān. Otherwise, the verse would have said: “Obey God and the Messenger,” without repeating the order, obey, before the Messenger. (For a detailed explanation, see surah 4: 59, note 13.)

31. Establishing the Prayer, paying the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and obeying the Messenger absolutely in all the aspects of his mission (adherence to the Sunnah) are the most important conditions to fulfill in order to deserve God’s promise mentioned in the preceding verse and to deserve the promised state.
59. And when your children reach puberty, let them ask you for permission (whenever they want to enter your private room), even as those (who have already reached the same age) before them ask for it. Thus, God makes clear for you (the instructions in) His Revelations. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

60. The women advanced in years, having passed the age of child-bearing and no longer feeling any sexual desire, incur no sin if they cast off their outer garments without making display of their charms. But even so, it is better for them to abstain from this. God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

61. There is no blame on the blind, nor any blame on the lame, nor any blame on the ill (for eating only to satisfy their need without causing any harm and waste, in the house of any healthy, well-off person), and neither on yourselves that (in case of need and without prior invitation), you eat in your spouse’s and children’s houses, or your fathers’ houses, or your mothers’ houses, or your brothers’ houses, or your sisters’ houses, or your paternal uncles’ houses, or your maternal aunts’ houses, or in the houses for which you are responsible, or the in the houses of any of your close friends (who should be happy to see you feeling free to eat at their home). There is no blame on you if you eat together or separately. But when you enter any of these houses, greet one another with a blessed, pure and good salutation appointed by God. Thus, God makes clear for you (the instructions in) His Revelations, that you may reason and understand.32

32. When thinking about this instruction, we may consider the importance Islam gives to mutual helping, solidarity, and brother/sisterhood which it seeks to establish among Muslims.
62. Only those are true believers who believe in God and His Messenger, and who, when they are with him for a collective cause, do not leave unless they have obtained his permission. Surely those who ask for your permission, it is they who truly believe in God and His Messenger. So, if they ask you for permission for some affair of their own, give permission to whomever of them you will, and ask God for forgiveness on their behalf. Surely, God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

63. Do not treat the Messenger’s summoning and praying for you as your summoning and praying for one another. Indeed, God knows well those of you who surreptitiously sneak away, taking cover behind one another. So, let those who go against the Messenger’s order beware lest a bitter trial befall them or a painful punishment afflict them.

64. Beware: to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. He knows well where you stand (and what you are about). And (to Him belongs) the Day when you are brought back to Him, then He will make them understand all that they did (in the world). God has full knowledge of everything.

33. Whenever Muslims or those among them who are concerned are summoned to a collective cause, they should never fail to respond to the call nor depart without the permission of the ruler/leader or administrator. Should any of them have a reason for departing, the reason must be a genuine, valid one, and again, they should not depart without permission. The administrator or leader is fully entitled to grant or deny the permission that has been asked for, at his discretion.

34. The trial to befall those who oppose the orders of the Messenger, and, after him, of his successors, has many forms or aspects, such as the yoke of unjust and oppressive rulers, dissension or disorder and civil war, moral degeneration, and the loss of power.
SŪRAH 25

(AL-FURQĀN)

(MAKKAH PERIOD)

This sūrah takes its name from the word al-Furqān (the Criterion) in the first of its 77 verses. The sūrah was revealed in the mid-Makkan period. It negates the doubts voiced by the Makkan polytheists concerning the Divine origin of the Qurʾān, and the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. It also propounds the moral excellence of the believers vis-à-vis their enemies, and states that the Divine Message elevates its followers intellectually, morally, and spiritually.

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

1. Blessed and Supreme is He Who sends down the Criterion (that distinguishes between truth and falsehood) in parts on His servant so that he may be a warner to all conscious beings (against the consequences of misguidance).

2. He to Whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; and He has taken to Himself no child, nor has He any partner (in His dominion or any aspect of His being God), and He creates everything and determines its destiny.¹

¹. As explained in several places in this study (sūrah 4: 79, note 18; sūrah 6: 59, note 13; sūrah 7: 173, note 43; sūrah 11: 6, note 1; sūrah 13: 39, note 13; sūrah 17: 14, note 10, and Appendix 7), there are various aspects of destiny. Here, destiny means a certain, exact measure, a form and size; and the potentials, attributes, characteristics, and functions of life-duties that are particular to a being; the limits of its growth and development, as well as all other details that pertain to it and its life.
3. Yet some choose to take, apart from God, deities that create nothing but are themselves created, and have no power to avert harm from, or bring benefit to, even themselves (so that they can give harm or bring benefit to their worshippers), and they have no power over death, nor over life, nor over resurrection.

4. Those who disbelieve say: “This (Qur’ān) is but a fabrication which he (Muḥammad) himself has invented, and some others have helped him with it, so they have produced a wrong and a falsehood.”

5. They also say: “(It consists of) only fables of the ancients which he has got written. They are being read to him in the early mornings and evenings (while people are at home).”

6. Say: “(It is a Book full of knowledge, revealing many secrets such as no human being could in any wise discover by himself:) He Who knows all the secrets contained in the heavens and the earth sends it down (to teach you some of these secrets and guide you in your life so that you may attain happiness in both worlds). He surely is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”

7. Again, they say: “What sort of Messenger is this? He eats food and goes about in market-places (like any other mortal). Why is an angel not sent down to him so that he may act as a warner in his company (and help him to persuade the people)?”

8. Or: “Why is a treasure not cast down upon him from the heaven (so that he should no longer need to go about in market-places to earn a living)?” Or: “Why does he not have a garden (granted to him miraculously) to obtain his food from?” And so these wrongdoers say (to the believers): “You are following only a man bewitched!”

9. See how strangely they invent comparisons about you. They have so strayed and are no longer able to find a way (to the truth).

10. Blessed and Supreme is He Who, if He wills, can grant you (O Messenger) better than all that (they propose) - gardens through which rivers flow - and grant you palaces.

11. But they deny the Last Hour (and this is why they invent such pretexts for their denial of your call. However,) We have prepared a Blaze for whoever denies the Last Hour.
2. All creatures, including human beings, even though they are endowed with better developed faculties and potentials than other creatures, are essentially weak. Human beings have no power to decide whether they will come into existence or not; maintain their lives; decide on their physical attributes; choose the date and place of their birth or death; decide who will be part of their families; nor determine what is harmful or beneficial to them. Neither do they have control over the operation of the heavens and the earth, not even of their own bodies, nor can they control their vital needs, such as hunger, thirst, and sleep. Even if all humans were to come together and were supported by all other beings, they would not be able to create even a blade of grass. If humankind is weak and limited to such degree, then there is no other kind of mortal being that can be either human's or its own owner, creator, or governor. Only One Who has absolute knowledge of the universe in its entirety, with whatever is in it, including the relation of everything with everything else and with the universe as a whole, and a knowledge of each being with all its particularities and needs, and Who has absolute power to create, while Himself is not created, and to give or avert harm and benefit, and to deal out death, give life and raise the dead, can be the Creator, Owner, and Governor of all beings, including humankind.

3. Such baseless allegations are no different from those which the orientalists raise against the Qurʾān. The only difference is that those who made these allegations during the Prophet's time were more honest than their contemporary counterparts. Unlike current orientalists, they never claimed that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had acquired the essence of his teaching from Bahirā, whom he met in his childhood during his travels. Nor did they assert that he was taught by the Christian or Jewish scholars during these same travels. They were well aware that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, made these journeys during his childhood and youth along with the caravans, and they also knew that those who were with him would have refuted such claims. In addition, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared his Messengership many years after his travels. Among the many false objections they raised, they also claimed that, at times when people were at home, some relatively more knowledgeable people in Makkah would secretly recite to him from some old books so that he might have these ideas written down, subsequently conveying these to other people during the day. No one ever believed these baseless allegations. Even those who fabricated them did not truly believe them, and they soon started to make many other allegations.
12. When the Blaze sees them (even) from a far-off place, they will hear it raging and roaring.4

13. And when they are flung, chained together, into a narrow place in it, they will pray there for extinction.

14. (They will then be told) “Today, you will not pray to die only once, instead, you will pray to die many times (but it will be of no avail).”

15. Say (O Messenger): “Is this or is the Garden of life everlasting, which has been promised to the God-revering, pious, better to prefer?” It will be for them a reward and a final destination.

16. For them there will be therein all that they desire, themselves abiding (in it).5 This is a promise which your Lord has bound Himself to fulfill.

17. A Day (will come) when God will gather them together (all the unbelievers) and all those whom they worship (apart from God: angels, Prophets, saints, and others, and idols), and He will ask them: “Was it you who led these servants of Mine astray, or did they themselves stray away from the right way?”

18. They will say: “All-Glorified You are! It was not for us to take for friends other than You (so they had no right to take us as such and make us objects of their worship). But (the truth is that, out of Your grace) You lavished on them and their forefathers ease in life, but they (being ungrateful) forgot all remembrance of You (and paid no heed to the warning Message Your Messengers brought to them). They were people (corrupt and) doomed to perdition.”

19. (God will say:) “So they have denied you (who falsely worship them) in all that you assert regarding them, and you can neither ward off (your due punishment) nor obtain any help (from those you falsely deified and worshipped while in the world).” (O people!) Whoever commits the greatest wrong (by associating partners with God), We will cause him to taste a great punishment.

20. (O Messenger!) We never sent any Messengers before you but they surely ate food and went about in the marketplaces (to meet their needs). We cause you (O humankind) to be a means of testing for one another. Will you show good patience and perseverance (in the face of Our decrees and remain steadfast in Our way)? Your Lord is All-Seeing.
4. Although some commentators take the phrase, *the Blaze sees them*, for a metaphorical description, it may well be literal and mean that Hell is not devoid of life and consciousness. In verse 65 of *Sūrat al-Ankabūt* (29), it is stated that *the abode of the Hereafter is truly alive*. We cannot measure that life in the terms and scales known to us in this world. For this world is the abode of Wisdom, where God operates from behind the veil of matter and causality. But the Hereafter will be the abode of Power, where God will operate without any veil.

As reported by at-Ṭabarīnī from Abū ʿUmāmah, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: “Whoever attributes to me any word which I did not say should prepare himself for his place between the two eyes of Hell.” When asked whether Hell had eyes, he recited this verse and added: “If it did not have eyes, how could it see?” (Yazīr, 5: 3576)

5. Paradise is the abode of absolute purity, and believers will enter it after attaining purity by passing through all the realms of the Hereafter. These realms will serve as a means of purification until they are fit for Paradise. So they will desire there only the things that one who is absolutely pure is expected to desire and which are to be found in Paradise in accordance with God’s approval.
21. Those who (being unbelievers) do not expect to meet Us (in the Hereafter) say: “Why are no angels sent down on us or (why) do we not see our Lord?” Assuredly they are far too arrogant of themselves (demanding what is impossible for them), and exceed all bounds (in their presumption).

22. The Day when they see the angels – there will be no good tidings on that Day for the disbelieving criminals, and they will cry out to the angels in fear: “Keep away, away from us!”

23. And We will turn to deal with all the (supposedly good) deeds that they did (in the world), and will reduce them all to dust particles scattered about.

24. Whereas the companions of Paradise will, on that Day, have appointed for them the best abode and the fairest place of repose.

25. On that Day, the heaven will split asunder with the clouds (covering it) and the angels will be made to descend in a majestic descending.

26. The sovereignty on that Day will absolutely belong to the All-Merciful, (which He will exercise then with no intermediary veil of cause and effect). It will be a hard day for the unbelievers.

27. On that Day, the wrongdoer will bite at his hands, saying (with remorse), “Oh, would that I had taken a way in the company of the Messenger.

28. “Oh, woe is me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for a friend!

29. “Indeed, he led me astray from the Reminder (the Qur’ān) once it had come to me. Satan has proved to be a betrayer of humankind.”

30. And the Messenger says: “My Lord! Surely my people have made this Qur’ān something worthy of no attention.”

31. So, for every Prophet We have made an enemy (band) from among the disbelieving criminals committed to accumulating sins. But Your Lord is sufficient as a guide (to truth and the right course of action) and a helper (against the plots and practices of your enemies).

32. Those who disbelieve say (by way of yet another false argument for unbelief): “Why has the Qur’ān not been sent down on him all at once?” (We send it down in parts) so that We may (impress it on your mind and) establish your heart with it, and We are conveying it distinctly and gradually, (one part supporting the other, and providing guidance and instruction for emerging occasions).
6. The attributive Name of God that is used in this verse and which has been translated as the All-Merciful is *ar-Raḥmān*. As explained while interpreting the *Basmalah* at the very beginning of this study, it is not possible to render *ar-Raḥmān* in its exact meaning in another language. It implies God's all-inclusive, universal manifestation throughout the universe and, although derived from *raḥmah* (mercy), and implying One Who gives life, maintains, provides, and equips all beings with the necessary capacities, it also refers to God as the All-Majestic One and is therefore the origin of God's Attributes of Majesty, such as the All-Compelling, the All-Overwhelming, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, and the One Who punishes. For this reason, His punishing is also included in His Mercy. God's pure mercy, which is required to reward, forgive, and pity, is necessitated by, or is the manifestation of, His being *ar-Rahim* (the All-Compassionate). This explains why the All-Merciful is preferred in this verse. In the Hereafter, God will manifest Himself first of all as *ar-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), the All-Majestic One Who both rewards and punishes out of mercy. As *ar-Raḥmān*, He will exercise His Will in the Hereafter without the veil of cause and effect or any law (as He exercises it in the world). For this reason, it is said that the Hereafter is the abode of Power, while the world is the abode of Wisdom.
And also, they never come to you with any (false) argument (to taunt and provoke you) but that We provide you with the truth (to counter their false arguments) and a better exposition (which enables and deepens understanding).

Those who will be gathered in Hell upon their faces: such represent the evil side in standing, and are further astray from the right way.

(Examples from history:) Assuredly We granted to Moses the Book and appointed his brother, Aaron, with him as a helper.

Then We said: “Go both of you to the people who deny Our signs (in the universe and within their own selves that demonstrate Our Existence and Oneness). Then (after they had been warned), We destroyed them utterly.

And the people of Noah – when they denied (Noah and thereby meant to deny) the Messengers, We drowned them, and made them a sign (of warning and instruction) for humankind. We have kept ready a painful punishment for the wrongdoers.

And the Ād and Thamūd, and the people of ar-Rass, and many other generations that lived between these (and the people of Noah).

To each (of them) did We explain the truth in diverse ways and with warning examples (from history), and each (of them) did We annihilate utterly.

And they (in Makkah who now persist in unbelief) have surely come across the land (of the Prophet Lot), upon which was rained a rain of evil. Have they, then, never seen it (with an eye to take heed)? No, they have no expectation of being raised after death (and so they pay no heed to any warning).

Whenever they see you (O Messenger), they take you for nothing but a mockery, (saying): “Is this the one whom God has sent as Messenger?

Indeed, he would almost have led us astray from our deities, had we not persevered in our attachment to them.” But in time, when they see the (promised) punishment, they will come to know who it was that strayed too far from the right way.

Do you ever consider him who has taken his lusts and fancies for his deity? Would you then be a guardian over him (and thereby assume responsibility for guiding him)?
7. Bediūzzaman Said Nursi explains certain inimitable aspects of the Qur’ān in the following way:

Although the Qur’ān was revealed in parts over 23 years for different needs and purposes, it has such a perfect harmony that it is as if it were revealed all at once.

Although the Qur’ān was revealed over 23 years on different occasions, its parts are so mutually supportive that it is as if it were revealed all at once.

Although the Qur’ān came in answer to different and repeated questions, its parts are so united and harmonious with each other that it is as if it were the answer to a single question.

Although the Qur’ān came to judge diverse cases and events, it displays such a perfect order and harmony 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 from 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 one degree of understanding and temperament.

Although the Qur’ān speaks to an infinite variety of people who are remote from each other in time, space, and character, it has such a simple way of explanation, pure style, and clear description that it is as if it were addressing only one homogenous group, with each different group thinking that it is being addressed uniquely and specifically.

Although the Qur’ān was revealed with various purposes for the gradual guidance of different peoples, it has such a perfect straightforwardness, sensitive balance, and such a beautiful order that it is as if it were pursuing only one purpose (The Words, “The 25th Word,” 433).

8. We have no definite knowledge about the identity of the people of ar-Rass. Ar-rass means a well. Some scholars are of the opinion that it was the name of a river. Some others point out that a town of that name exists to this day in the central Arabian province of al-Qasim. It seems to have been inhabited by descendants of the Nabataean tribe of the Thamūd (at-Tabarī) (The Message of the Qur’ān, 554, note 33). Another opinion is that those people were called the people of ar-Rass because they threw the Messenger, upon him be peace, who was sent to them down a well.

9. Deifying one’s lusts and fancies means pursuing one’s lusts and fancies at all costs and making the satisfaction of them the goal of one’s life. The greatest obstacle to believing in God or being attached to His Religion is one’s carnal soul prompting one to pursue the satisfaction of lusts whether lawfully or unlawfully. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, warned: “Of all the false deities that are worshipped under the sky, the worst in God’s sight is one’s carnal, evil-commanding soul” (at-Tabarānī, vol. 8, hadīth no: 7502).
44. Or do you think that most of them (really) hear or reason and understand? They are but like cattle, (following only their instincts). No, they are more heedless of the right way (and therefore in greater need of being led than cattle).

45. Have you considered your Lord – how He spreads the shade? If He willed, He would surely make it stationary, but We have made the sun its pilot.

46. And then (as the sun rises), We gradually draw it back up towards Us.

47. And He it is Who has made the night a garment for you, and sleep a rest. And He has made the day a time of rising to life and going about (for daily livelihood).

48. And He it is Who sends forth the (merciful) winds as glad tidings in advance of His mercy. And We cause pure water to descend from the sky,

49. So that We may revive through it a dead land and give it for drink to many beings among Our creation, beasts as well as humans.

50. Assuredly We distribute it among them (without depriving any) so that they may remember and so be mindful. But most of humankind obstinately refuse to do anything except show ingratitude.

51. Had We so willed, We could certainly have raised up a warner in every township.

52. (But We have willed, instead, that you are the last Messenger whose mission is universal.) So pay no heed to (the desires of) the unbelievers, but engage in a mighty striving against them by means of it (the Qur’ān).

53. And He it is Who has let flow forth the two large bodies of water, one sweet and palatable and the other salty and bitter; and He has set a barrier and an insurmountable, forbidding ban that keeps them apart.

54. And He it is Who from a fluid has created human and made it (a male and female and, through them,) into a population through descent and marriage. And Your Lord is All-Powerful.

55. And yet, they (the polytheists) worship, apart from God, that which can neither benefit them nor harm them. The unbeliever is ever prone to make cause (i.e., to back everyone and every movement) against his Lord.
10. These verses, up to verse 50, draw attention to God’s acts in the universe as evidence of His Existence, His Oneness, His absolute authority over creation, and the revival after death.

As we know, the lengthening and shortening of shadows depends on the movement and position of the earth in respect to the sun. If there were no shadows, or if shadows were stationary, no life or vegetation would be possible on the earth. Life on earth requires the heat and light of the sun, but constant exposure to its heat and light would destroy everything. For a further explanation about shadows, see surah 13: 15, note 7; surah 16: 49.

The statement, We gradually draw it back towards Us, expresses the fact that nothing disappears into non-existence. Every thing and every event end, “in” God or returns “to” Him.

As explained in the interpretation of the verses of surah 7: 55–58 (note 14), the Qur’ān mentions the “natural” phenomena along with sociological events and those that pertain to human spiritual life in such a way that one provides an example for the other. So, behind the apparent meaning of these verses concerning shadows and the sun as their pilot, there is the suggestion that the dark shadow of ignorance and unbelief depends on the sun of guidance in terms of lengthening and shortening.

As this sun rises, the shadows of ignorance and unbelief vanish away gradually (not abruptly). So, if Muslims desire these shadows to disappear, they should support the sun of guidance, which has appeared finally and universally in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

11. Wherever a large river flows into the sea, we can encounter the phenomenon described here. There are springs of sweet water at several locations in different seas where the sweet water remains separate from the salty water. Seydi Ali Reis, a Turkish admiral of the 16th century, mentions in his work Mirāt al-Mamālik one such place in the Persian Gulf. He writes that he found springs of sweet water under the salty water of the sea and drew drinking water from them for his fellow sailors (al-Mawdūdī, 7: 32, note 68).

The French marine-scientist Jacques Cousteau discovered that the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean have different chemical and biological constitutions. After conducting undersea investigations in the Straits of Gibraltar to study this phenomenon, he concluded that unexpected fresh water springs issue from the southern and northern coasts of Gibraltar. These waters gush forth toward each other at an angle of 45°, forming a reciprocal dam that acts like the teeth of a comb. Due to this fact, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean cannot intermingle.

In addition to this meaning, commentators on the Qur’ān also derive from this verse a meaning that is applicable to all the pairs of “seas” or realms, i.e., the spiritual and material, the figurative and actual, the realms of the human spirit and the carnal self, and of the Lordship and servanthood. Also included are the spheres of belief and unbelief, righteousness and transgression, necessity and contingency, as well as this world and the Hereafter (including this visible, corporeal world and all unseen worlds).

12. Just as sweet water can exist side by side with salty, bitter water, humankind also form a population by the combination of the two sexes – male and female. They are similar in nature and composition, but different in psychology and certain physiological features. It is by the union of these two that God has produced ties of kindred, creating love and compassion toward one another, and multiplied human populations.
56. Yet, We have not sent you (O Messenger) but as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner (you are not accountable for their straying and sinning).

57. Say: “I ask of you no wage for this (conveying of the Message to you), except that whoever so wills may take a way leading to his Lord.”

58. Put your trust in the All-Living Who does not die, and glorify Him with His praise (proclaiming that He is absolutely above having any partners, and that all praise is due to Him). He suffices as One Who is ever aware of the sins of His servants –

59. He Who has created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and then established Himself on the Supreme Throne. That is the All-Merciful (with absolute Will, Power, and Knowledge), so ask Him about it (the truth about Him and creation) as All-Aware, (and ask Him for whatever you will ask for).

60. When they are told, “Prostrate before the All-Merciful (to express your submission to Him),” they say: “What is the All-Merciful? Shall we prostrate before whatever you command us?” Your call but increases them in (their haughty) aversion.

61. Blessed and Supreme is He Who has set in the sky great constellations, and placed in it a (great, radiant) lamp and a shining moon.

62. It is He Who has appointed the night and the day to succeed one another, providing a sign for whoever desires to reflect and so be mindful, or desires to be thankful.

63. The (true) servants of the All-Merciful are they who move on the earth gently and humbly, and when the ignorant, foolish ones address them (with insolence or vulgarity as befits their ignorance and foolishness), they respond with (words of) peace, (without engaging in hostility with them);

64. And (those true servants of the All-Merciful are they) who spend (some of) the night (in worship) prostrating before their Lord and standing;

65. And who entreat (whether after the Prayers or at other times): “Our Lord! Ward off from us the punishment of Hell; its punishment is surely constant anguish: “How evil indeed it is as a final station and permanent abode!”;

67. And who, when they spend (both for their own and others’ needs), are neither wasteful nor niggardly, and (are aware that) there is a happy mean between those (two extremes);
13. One of the basic purposes for God’s sending the Prophets and Islam’s order for *jihād* and communicating Islam to people is to show people the way that leads to God and to remove the obstacles on this way or those between God and those who want to reach Him.

14. For an explanation of this sentence, see sūrah 2: 28, note 28; sūrah 7: 54, note 13; sūrah 11: 7, note 2.

15. By depicting the sun as a lamp, the Qur’ān opens a window on a specific meaning: This world is a palace, and its contents are the food and necessities of life for humanity and other living things. The sun is a lamp that illuminates this palace. By making the Maker’s magnificence and the Creator’s favors comprehensible in this way, the sentence provides a proof for God’s Unity and declares the sun (which some polytheists of that time viewed as the most significant and brightest deity) to be a lifeless object, a lamp subdued for the benefit of living beings.

Thus, this verse deals with the sun and moon not in their own name, but in the Name of their Creator, and in a way that turns our attention to the Creator’s Unity as well as His acts and His favors to humankind. The vividness and extraordinariness of the styles of the Qur’ān sometimes entranced the Bedouins with just one phrase; they would then prostrate before even becoming a Muslim. Once, the statement, *So from now on, proclaim what you are commanded to convey openly and in an emphatic manner* (15: 94), (which, in the original Arabic, consists of only 3 words), engendered this very reaction. When asked if he had become a Muslim, the man thus affected, answered: “No. I prostrate before the eloquence of the phrase” (*The Words, “The 25th Word,”* 400; al-‘Ālūsī, 14: 85).

16. Spending must be either to meet a necessity or a need, or to satisfy a desire for lawful beauty. Eating to maintain life is a necessity; eating to be full – provided that one avoids excess – is a need; eating pleasant food satisfies one’s desire for beauty. Spending in order to meet a necessity is obligatory; meeting a need is commendable, while satisfying one’s desire for beauty may be harmless, according to the general conditions of the community and one’s income. Spending in order to obtain an easy life while the majority of the Muslims are in need is wasteful.

Spending on unlawful things, no matter the amount, and over-spending on lawful things, in the sense that one spends more than one can afford or aspires to a luxurious life are also included under the idea of wastefulness. As for niggardliness, this means spending too little on the necessities and needs of oneself and one’s family, even though one has sufficient funds, and the refusal to spend on charity or for the cause of Islam.
68. And who invoke no other deity along with God, and do not kill any soul – which God has made forbidden – except by right (for just cause and after due process), and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. Whoever commits any of these will face a severe penalty.

69. His punishment will be greater on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide in it in ignominy.

70. Except he who gives up his way in repentance and believes (without associating partners with God), and does good, righteous deeds – such are those whose (past) evil deeds God will efface and record virtuous deeds in their place (and whose faculties which enabled the evil deeds He will change into enablers of virtuous deeds). God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

71. Whoever repents and does good, righteous deeds (and who has therefore shown that he has renounced his evil ways for good) – such a one has surely turned to God with true repentance.

72. And (those true servants of the All-Merciful are they) who do not take part in, and bear witness to, any vanity or falsehood, (and who will not deem anything true unless they know it to be so for certain), and when they happen to pass by anything vain and useless, pass by it with dignity;

73. And who, when they are reminded of the Revelations of their Lord (and His signs in the creation as well as in their inner world, as a basis of advice or teaching or discussion), do not remain unmoved as though deaf and blind;

74. And who say: “Our Lord! Grant us that our spouses and offspring may be a means of happiness for us, and enable us to lead others in piety (to become a means of the promotion of piety and virtue).”

75. Such (illustrious) ones will be rewarded with the loftiest mansion (in Paradise) for their steadfastness (in their obedience to God and in their cause in spite of all adversities and persecutions), and they will be met therein with a greeting of welcome and peace.

76. Therein to abide. How good it is as a final station and permanent abode.

77. Say: “My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer. Now that you have denied (His Message), the inescapable punishment will cleave to you.”
17. It is certain that God does not forgive that partners be associated with Him. He will punish eternally only those who deny Him or associate partners with Him. However, less than that He forgives to whomever He wills (whomever He has guided to repentance and righteousness by his free will) (4: 48). Killing a person unjustly and committing unlawful sexual intercourse, then, are sins that are not as grave as the association of partners with God.

Considering that this sūrah was revealed in Makkah, the penalty mentioned in verse 68 for the crimes in question may refer to their punishment in this world, rather than in the Hereafter. If He so wills, God may punish the association of partners with Him in the world in many ways, such as by sending afflictions, defeats, diseases, total destruction, and disasters. (The penalties for killing a person unjustly and that for indulging in unlawful sexual intercourse in the world were later established in Madīnah. For these punishments, see sūrah 2: 178–179, note 131; 194–95, note 140; sūrah 5: 45, note 10; sūrah 22: 60, note 16; sūrah 24: 2–3, note 1–6. However, punishment in the Hereafter for these cardinal crimes is always greater.

Repentance does not ward off the punishment inflicted by the worldly law, while God may forgive the repentant in the Hereafter.

18. Faith requires prayer as a means of attainment and perfection, and our essence desperately needs it, as explained by Said Nursi:

If people say that they pray many times, yet still their prayers go unanswered, despite the assurance given in the verse, *Pray to Me, I will answer you* (40: 60), we should point out that an answered prayer does not necessarily mean its acceptance. There is an answer for every prayer. However, accepting a prayer and giving what is requested depends upon the All-Mighty’s Wisdom. Suppose an ill child asks a doctor for a certain medicine. The doctor may give what is asked for, or prescribe something better, or nothing at all. It all depends upon how the medicine will affect the child. Similarly the All-Mighty, Who is the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing, answers His servant’s prayer and changes loneliness into the pleasure of His company. But His answer does not depend on the individual’s fancies; rather, according to His Wisdom, He gives what is requested, what is better, or nothing at all.

Moreover, prayer is a form of worship and worship is rewarded mainly in the Hereafter. In essence, prayer is not performed for worldly purposes; rather worldly purposes are the cause for prayer. For example, praying for rain is a kind of worship occasioned by the lack of rain. If rain is the prayer’s only aim, the prayer is unacceptable, for it is not sincere or intended to please God. Sunset determines the time for the evening prayer, while solar and lunar eclipses occasion two particular kinds of worship. Since such eclipses are two manifestations of the Divine Majesty, the All-Mighty calls His servants to perform a form of worship particular to these occasions. The prayer recited has nothing to do with causing the eclipse to end; the time this will occur has already been established through astronomical calculations. The same argument applies to drought and other calamities, for all such events occasion certain kinds of prayer. It is at such times that we are most aware of our innate weakness, and thus feel the need to take refuge in the high Presence of the Absolutely Powerful One through prayer and supplication. If a calamity is not alleviated, despite many prayers, we should not say that our prayer has not been accepted. Rather, we should say that the time for prayer has not yet ended. God removes the calamity because of His endless Grace and Munificence. The end of that event marks the end of that special occasion for prayer.

We must pursue God’s good pleasure through worship, affirm our innate poverty and weakness in our prayer, and seek refuge with Him through prayer. We must not try to interfere in His Lordship but rather let God do as He wills and rely on His Wisdom. In addition, we should not doubt His Mercy.
Every creature offers its own kind of praise and worship to God. What reaches the Court of God from the universe is, in fact, a kind of prayer.

Some creatures, like plants and animals, pray through the language of their potential, thus achieving a full form and then displaying and showing certain Divine Names (e.g., a plant’s seeds grow naturally into plants, and the semen and eggs of animals grow naturally into animals.) Since they have this potential, their natural disposition to mature is, in essence, a prayer. By doing so, they affirm the manifestation of such Divine Names as the All-Sustaining and the All-Forming.

Another kind of prayer is performed in the language of natural needs. All living beings ask the Absolutely Generous One to meet their vital needs, as they cannot do so alone. Yet another kind of prayer is done in the language of complete helplessness. A living creature in straitened circumstances takes refuge in its Unseen Protector with a genuine supplication, and turns to its All-Compassionate Lord. These three kinds of prayer are always acceptable, unless somehow impeded.

The fourth type of prayer is the one engaged in by human beings. This type falls into two categories: active and by disposition, and verbal and with the heart. For example, acting in accordance with causes is an active prayer. We try to gain God’s approval by complying with causes, for causes alone cannot produce the result—only God can do that. For example, plowing the soil is an active prayer, for this is nothing less than knocking at the door of the treasury of God’s Compassion. Such a prayer is usually acceptable, for it is an application to the Divine Name the All-Generous. Going to a doctor is also a prayer, as it means applying to the Divine Name, the All-Healing. It is God Who heals. We should not be content with plowing the soil or going to a doctor, but should combine our activities with verbal prayers.

The second type of prayer, recited by the tongue and the heart, is the ordinary one. This means that we ask God from the heart for something we cannot reach and put it into words. The most important aspect and finest and sweetest fruit of this type of prayer is that we know that God hears us, that He is aware of the contents of our heart, that His Power extends everywhere, that He can satisfy every desire, and that He comes to our aid out of mercy for our weakness and inadequacy.

We should never abandon prayer, for it is the key to the Treasury of Compassion and the means of obtaining access to the Infinite Power. We should hold on to It and ascend to the highest rank of humanity and, as creation’s most favored and superior member, include the prayer of the entire universe in our prayer. We should say, on behalf of all beings: From You alone do we seek help (sūrah 1: 5), and become a beautiful pattern for all of creation. (See The Words, “The 25th Word,” 333–334).
**SūRAH 26**

**ASH-SHU‘ARĀ’ (THE POETS)**

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 227 verses takes its name from the word *shu‘ārā* (poets) in verse 224. It rejects the Makkans’ claim that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was a poet and that the Qur’ān is the work of a poet (the Makkans used to associate poets with the jinn, and viewed them as akin to soothsayers). The sūrah was revealed in the mid-Makkan period, when the unbelievers launched a campaign of fierce opposition to the Divine Message, using one pretext or another. It answers these pretexts, and sets forth the signs for the truth of the Message which abound in the universe and in the history of preceding communities.

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

1. ʿTā. Ṣīn. Mīm.
2. These are the Revelations of the Book clear in itself and clearly showing the truth.
3. It may be that you (O Messenger) will torment yourself to death because they refuse to believe.
4. If We will, We can send down a (compelling) sign on them from heaven, so that they are forced to bow their necks before it (in humility).
5. Whenever a new Revelation comes to them from the All-Merciful (to warn and enlighten them), they but turn away from it in aversion.
6. So they have obstinately denied (this Message). But soon they will come to understand what it was that they were mocking.
7. Have they not considered the earth, how many of every noble kind We have caused to grow therein in pairs?
8. Surely in this there is a sign, but most of them are not believers.
9. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).
10. (Remember) when your Lord called Moses, saying, “Go to the wrongdoing people,
11. “The people of the Pharaoh. Will they not give up their way in fear of Me and take the way of piety and righteousness?”
12. Moses replied: “My Lord! I fear that they will deny me,
13. “And my breast will be constricted (so that I fail to show the necessary perseverance and tolerance), and my tongue will
not be free (to convey Your Message with the right fluency), so appoint Aaron as a Messenger beside me.

14. “They also have a charge of crime against me, so I fear that they will kill me (and not let me convey Your Message).”

15. (God) said: “Not so, indeed! Go forth, then, the two of you, with Our miraculous signs (with which I have provided you). We will surely be with you all (you and them), listening attentively (to all that is to happen between you).

16. “So go, both of you, to the Pharaoh and say: ‘We have come with a message from the Lord of the worlds (He Who has created and sustains everything):

17. ‘Let the Children of Israel go with us!’ ”

18. (When Moses delivered his message, the Pharaoh) said: “Did we not bring you up among us (in our palace) when you were a child? And you spent many years of your life among us!

19. “Then you committed that heinous deed of yours which you did,” (proving thereby that) you are indeed one of the ungrateful.”

1. If God willed, He could, for example, write His Name on the surface of the heavens with stars or, as He caused Mount Sinai to tower above the Children of Israel to compel them to keep their covenant (sūrah 2: 63), He could compel people to believe in some way. However, the signs He provides in creation and the lives of humankind, as well as through the Prophets, are perfectly sufficient for one who is not overcome by arrogance, wrongdoing, misjudgment, and carnal desires; if God were to provide a more obvious sign, this would mean negating human free will and nullifying the purpose of the tests we are put through.

God has endowed human beings with distinguishing faculties and honored us with free will. He has also created us with a disposition to believe and worship. Moreover, just as the whole universe and our physical composition provide multiple signs for the Existence and Unity of God, each human being has many experiences throughout their life that also give certainty to their conscience about this same, cardinal truth. In addition, God sent numerous Prophets throughout history, the character and life of each of whom, along with the many miracles God created at their hands, were an undeniable sign for the truth of the Message from God. In short, God opens all the doors to faith for human reason and conscience. However, He never compels human beings to believe, because this would be in contradiction to the dignity of free will. Unbelief arises not from there being a lack of sufficient signs, but rather from human arrogance, wrongdoing, misjudgment, an attachment to the world and worldly benefits, or carnal desires. This is clear in the history of many peoples who refused to believe, even when the miracle they asked their Prophet to perform had been shown to them, and who were subsequently destroyed as a result. (For example, see sūrah 7: 73–79.)

2. This verse is referring to the time (see 28: 15) when Moses, upon him be peace, accidentally killed an Egyptian, which prompted him to leave Egypt for Midian.

3. For these signs, see sūrah 7: 106–108, 130–135.

4. This is a reference to the unintentional killing, by Moses of a Copt, who had fought with an Israelite (sūrah 28: 15).
20. (Moses) said: “I committed that deed unintentionally when I did not know (it would end in the way it did).

21. “Then I fled from you when I feared (living together with) you (any longer), but (since then) my Lord has granted to me sound, wise judgment, and has made me one of His Messengers.

22. “As for that favor you taunt me with: (it is owed to the fact) that you have enslaved the Children of Israel.”

23. (The Pharaoh) said: “What (and who) is that, ‘the Lord of the worlds?’”

24. (Moses) answered: “The Lord (Creator, Sustainer, and sole Ruler) of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would but (let yourselves be) convinced!”

25. (The Pharaoh) said to those around him: “Do you not hear (what he is saying)?”

26. (Moses) continued: “Your Lord, and the Lord of your forefathers.”

27. (The Pharaoh) exclaimed: “See! This Messenger of yours who has been sent to you is assuredly a man possessed.”

28. (Moses) went on: “He is the Lord of the east and the west and all that is between them, if you would but reason and understand!”

29. (The Pharaoh) threatened: “If you, (O Moses,) take any deity other than me (to worship, to offer your prayer and sacrifices to, and to seek help from), I will most certainly make you one of those imprisoned.”

30. (Moses) said: “Even if I have brought you something clear (which demonstrates that I am speaking the truth)!”

31. (The Pharaoh) answered: “Then, produce it if you are truthful (in your claim)!”

32. Thereupon, Moses threw down his staff, and it was manifestly a serpent.

33. 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.

34. (The Pharaoh) said to the chiefs around him: “This is indeed a learned, skillful sorcerer, who seeks to drive you out from your land by his sorcery. What, then, do you advise (me to do)?”

35. They said: “Put him and his brother off for a while, and (in the meantime) send forth heralds to all cities,

36. “To bring to your presence every learned, skillful sorcerer.”

37. So the sorcerers were assembled (to contend with Moses) at the appointed time on a day (made) well-known (to all),

38. And it was said to the people: “Will you not assemble (and attend also)?
5. *Firār*, which literally means to run away from or flee, is used in Muslim Sufi literature to denote the journey from the created to the Creator, and thereby an escape from the confinement of self-adoration to “melt away” in the rays of the Truth. The verse *flee to God* (sūrah 51: 50), which points to a believer’s journeying in heart and in spirit, refers to this action of the heart, the spiritual intellect.

The further people are from the suffocating atmosphere of corporeality and the carnal dimension of their existence, the closer they are to God, and the more respect they have for themselves. Let us hear from the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, a loyal devotee at the door of the Truth, about how one fleeing to and taking shelter in God is rewarded:

*Then I fled from you when I feared (living together with) you (any longer), but (since then) my Lord has granted to me the power of judgment (and the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and to act accordingly) and has made me one of His Messengers.* The Prophet Moses states that the way to spiritual contentment and meeting with God, the way to the Divine vicegerency and nearness to Him, proceeds through a stage of fleeing.

Ordinary people flee from the tumults of life and the ugliness of sin, taking refuge in God's forgiveness and favor. They declare or ponder on the meaning of: *My Lord, always treat us with Your forgiveness and mercy, for You are the Best of the merciful* (sūrah 23: 118). They seek God’s shelter in total sincerity, saying: “I take refuge in You from the evil that I have done” (at-Tirmidhī, “Dawa’āt,” 15).

Those distinguished by their piety and nearness to God flee from their own lesser qualities to the Divine Attributes; they flee from feeling with their outward senses to discerning and observing with the heart; they flee from ceremonial worship to its innermost dimension and from carnal feelings to spiritual sensations. This is what is referred to in: “O God, I take refuge in Your approval from Your wrath, and in Your forgiveness from Your punishment” (Muslim, “Ṣalāḥ,” 222).

The most advanced in knowledge and love of God and in piety flee from the Attributes to the Divine Being or Essence, and from the Truth to the Truth Himself. They say: “I take refuge in You from You” (ibid.); and they are always in awe of God. (See Key Concepts, 1: 13-14.)

6. The Pharaoh claimed that he was the greatest lord of all those under his rule (sūrah 79: 24). He ruled over them however he wished. Yet, when the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, proclaimed that God was the Lord of all creation, including the Pharaoh himself and his men and their ancestors, the Pharaoh felt that his rule had been challenged. So, as every dictator does, he resorted to threats. Although Moses, upon him be peace, proclaimed God as the Lord (Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler) of all creation, at this point the Pharaoh claimed divinity. He must have understood that Divinity and Lordship cannot be considered separately and only one who has divinity can be lord. However, despite his claim of divinity, both the Pharaoh himself and the Copts worshipped many deities (sūrah 7: 127). So he must have used deity in the sense that he was the sole lord and master of Egypt, where he deemed himself to have absolute authority.

Lordship demands obedience, while Divinity demands worship. Since God is the Deity of all creation, One Who has absolute, perfect Knowledge, Will, and Power, and Who deserves to be worshipped exclusively, being entitled to receive all kinds of sacrificial offerings and Whose help is sought, absolute Lordship also belongs to Him. As He has supreme authority and sovereignty over the universe as its Lord (its Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler), One Who has full knowledge of the universe as a whole and of each particular thing or being, and absolute Will and Power to be able to do anything He wills, absolute sovereignty in the human realm also belongs to Him. However, while all other beings, except the jinn and humans, obey Him absolutely, because they have no free will, human beings and the jinn are allowed some space for the exercise of their free will.

7. See sūrah 20: 59.
40. “We are expecting that the sorcerers will triumph and we will follow them (in their religion).”

41. So then the sorcerers came forth (for the encounter) and said to the Pharaoh: “We shall surely have a reward, if we are the victors, shall we?”

42. (The Pharaoh) answered: “Yes, indeed. And you will then be among those near-stationed to me.”

43. Moses said to them (the sorcerers): “Throw whatever you are going to throw!”

44. So they threw their ropes and staffs, saying: “By the might and glory of Pharaoh, we will surely be the victors.”

45. Thereafter, Moses threw his staff, and behold, it swallowed up their false devices.

46. The sorcerers threw themselves down, prostrating,

47. And they said: “We have come to believe in the Lord of the worlds,

48. “The Lord of Moses and Aaron!”

49. (The Pharaoh) said: “What! Do you believe in Him before I give you permission? For sure, he is your chief who has taught you sorcery. But, in time, you will certainly come to know. I will most certainly have your hands and feet cut off alternately, and then I will most certainly have you crucified all together.”

50. They responded: “There is no hurt (in what you threaten us with). For surely, to our (true and everlasting) Lord we are bound to return.”

51. “We ardently desire that our Lord will forgive us our sins for we are the first to believe.”

52. (Events developed to the point that) We revealed to Moses: “Set forth with My servants by night; surely you will be pursued.”

53. Then the Pharaoh sent heralds to the cities (to mobilize his troops),

54. (Saying:) “Those people are indeed a paltry band;

55. “And (forgetting their lack in numbers and power), they have offended against us (and so provoked our wrath).

56. “As for us, we are assuredly a numerous host, ever on guard.”

57. Thus did We drive them out of (all that they had enjoyed of) gardens and springs,

58. And treasures, excellent dwellings, and noble status.

59. Things happened thus, and We made the Children of Israel survive them and inherit (the same kind of bounties).”

60. At sunrise, the Pharaoh set off in pursuit of them.
8. The men of the Pharaoh encouraged the sorcerers to overcome Moses, upon him be peace, with the hope of preventing Moses’ message from having any influence on people.

9. The Pharaoh’s propaganda indicates the deep-rooted fears that he was trying to hide under the guise of fearlessness. On the one hand, he was mobilizing forces from all corners of the country, and on the other, he was stating that the Children of Israel were powerless. In fact, he was trying to prevent people from seeing that a mighty king like himself was afraid of a people whom he and his forefathers had been persecuting over the ages.

10. This is a reference to the final victory of a tyrannized people – the Children of Israel – and to their founding a great state and civilization during the time of the Prophets David and Solomon, upon them be peace. While this verse refers to how events finally ended, the succeeding verses proceed to narrate the story of the Pharaoh and his army, and the Prophet Moses and his people, intended as an example for humanity.
61. When the two hosts came in view of each other, the companions of Moses said: “We are certainly overtaken!”
62. He replied: “Certainly not. My Lord is surely with me; He will guide me (to deliverance).”
63. We revealed to Moses: “Strike the sea with your staff.” Thereupon the sea split, and each part became like a towering mountain.
64. We brought the others (the Pharaoh and his host) close to the same spot.
65. And We saved Moses and all those who were with him.
66. Afterwards, We caused the others to drown.
67. Surely in that (which took place between Moses and Pharaoh), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them (the Pharaoh’s people) were not believers.
68. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).
69. Now recite to them this exemplary account of Abraham.
70. When he said to his father and his people: “What is it that you worship?”
71. They said: “We worship idols; and (even though they are made of wood and stone) we are ever devoted to them (as they are our deities).”
72. (Abraham) said: “Do they hear you when you invoke them?
73. ‘Or do they benefit you (when you worship them), or harm (you when you do not)?
74. They replied: “But we found our forefathers doing the same.”
75. (Abraham) said: “So, have you considered what you have been worshipping?
76. “You and all your forefathers that have passed (before you)?
77. “I see that they (all that you worship) are enemies to me,” but the Lord of the worlds is not.
78. “He Who has created me and so guides me (to whatever is to my benefit in both this world and the next).
79. “And He it is Who gives me food and drink;
80. “And Who, when I fall ill, heals me.
81. “And Who will cause me to die and then will give me life again.
82. “And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on Judgment Day.”
83. “My Lord! Grant me true, wise judgment, and join me with the righteous.
11. When the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, hid himself and his friend, Abū Bakr, in the Cave of Thawr during his emigration to Madīnah, those who pursued him from among the Makkans approached as close as the entrance of the cave. Worried about the life of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, Abū Bakr told him: “O Messenger of God, we have been overtaken.” The Messenger replied: *Do not grieve, God is surely with us* (sūrah 9: 40). The reactions of both God’s Last Messenger and the Prophet Moses, upon them be peace, are in essence the same, yet there are significant and subtle differences between them.

The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, spoke on his own behalf, which shows that he had absolute leadership over his community, while the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, spoke on behalf of himself and his companion. This signifies that he shared his leadership with his community. This is why the Qur’an addresses the whole community of Muslims when the matter concerns the performance of public responsibilities carried out by modern states. Sharing responsibilities, mutual help, solidarity, and consultation are essential in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad’s words also show Abū Bakr’s greatness and closeness to the Messenger.

Secondly, the Prophet Moses spoke of God as “my Lord,” which suggests that his relationship with God was particular to himself. Whereas, the Prophet Muhammad spoke of Him as God, the proper Name of the Divine Being, a Name which contains the meaning of all of His other Names. So the Prophet Muhammad’s relationship with Him was universal and representative of all conscious beings. This also shows that his mission is universal.

Thirdly, the Prophet Moses used the (near) future tense in order to express God’s expected help, but the Prophet Muhammad used the present tense, saying: *God is surely with us*. This difference implies that the Prophet Muhammad’s relationship with God and his expectations of God are eternal.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that this comparison is between two of the greatest Messengers of God, and concerns the mission and particular greatness of each.

12. For a more detailed account of the events narrated here, see sūrah 7: 103–137; sūrah 10: 75–93; sūrah 20: 9–79.

13. These last two verses refer back to verses 8 and 9, and express the same truth in the same words. They threaten those who stubbornly persist in unbelief and wrongdoing and try to prevent the spreading of God’s Message, while they console and encourage the believers. The fact that the unbelievers are usually greater in number should not mislead us. So long as the believers are steadfast in God’s cause and help His cause, the final happy end will belong to them both in this world and absolutely in the Hereafter. For nothing can prevent God from punishing whom He wills, while at the same time He is All-Compassionate towards the believers.

14. For Azar, Abraham’s father, his people, and their faith, see sūrah 6: 74, note 16; sūrah 9: 114, note 25.

15. This is typical human nature. It is really very difficult for human beings to abandon established ideas and customs. People tend not to think too much about whether or not what they are doing is rational or is based on some truth. Islam brings freedom to human thinking, saves the human mind from prejudice and blind imitation, and explains the truth in all its clarity, aiming at removing all obstacles that can be placed before free human choice. A. Cressy Morrison, former-head of the New York Academy of Sciences, draws attention to this aspect of human nature:

... all the nearly exact requirements of life could not be brought about on one planet at one time by chance. The size of the Earth, the distance from the Sun, the temperature and the life-giving rays of the Sun, the thickness of the Earth’s crust, the quantity of water, the amount of carbon dioxide, the volume of nitrogen, the emergence of man and his survival—all point to order out of chaos, to design and purpose, and to the fact that, according to the inex-
orable laws of mathematics, all these could not occur by chance simultaneously on one planet once in a billion times. When the facts are so overwhelming, and when we recognize, as we must, the attributes of our minds which are not material, is it possible to flaunt the evidence and take the one chance in a billion that we and all else are the result of chance?

There are 999,999,999 chances to one against a belief that all things happen by chance. Science will not deny the facts as stated; the mathematicians will agree that the figures are correct. Now we encounter the stubborn resistance of the human mind, which is reluctant to give up fixed ideas. The early Greeks knew the Earth was a sphere, but it took two thousand years to convince (Western) men that this fact is true.

New ideas encounter opposition, ridicule and abuse, but truth survives and is verified. (Morrison, 99–100)

16. These idols are enemies in that when one worships them, their worship brings ruin in both worlds, and they deny this worship of them and turn against that person on the Day of Judgment.

17. Everyone, even a Prophet, is in need of God's Mercy and Forgiveness. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, asked God to forgive him at least seventy times a day. It is a great characteristic of a Prophet that he regards himself as being fallible. Other people can never state that a Prophet ever sinned, because sinlessness is one of the essentials of Prophethood, but at the same time all the Prophets were notable for their humility.
84. “And grant me a most true and virtuous renown among posterity.”
85. “And make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of bounty and blessing.
86. “And forgive my father, for he is among those who have gone astray.
87. “And do not disgrace me on the Day when all people will be raised up to life.
88. “The Day when neither wealth will be of any use, nor offspring,
89. “But only he (will prosper) who comes before God with a sound heart (free of all kinds of unbelief, hypocrisy, and associating partners with God),”
90. And Paradise (on that Day) will be brought near for the God-revering, pious;
91. And the Blazing Flame will be laid open before those who rebelled (against God) and went astray.
92. They will be asked: “Where are all those (idols or revered human beings, or angels, or the jinn) that you used to worship,
93. “Apart from God? Can they be of any help to you, or even to themselves?”
94. Then they will be hurled into the Flame headlong, one upon another - they (the idols), and the rebellious (who worship them).
95. And so too. the hosts of Iblis, all together.
96. Blaming one another therein, they (the rebellious) will say (to the others):
97. “By God, assuredly, we were lost in obvious error,
98. “When we held you as equals (in worship and obedience) to the Lord of the worlds.
99. “It is none but the criminals (the leaders in associating partners with God) who led us astray.
100. “And now we have none to intercede (on our behalf),
101. “Nor any intimate friend.
102. “If only we had a second chance (in the world), so that we might be among the believers!”
103. Surely in that (which took place between Abraham and his people), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.
104. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).
105. The people of Noah denied (Noah and thereby meant to deny all) the Messengers.
106. (Recall) when their brother, Noah, said to them (by way of timely warning): “Will you not keep from disobedience to
God in reverence for Him, and seek refuge with His protection?

107. “Surely I am a Messenger to you, trustworthy.

108. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me.

109. “I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God’s Message); my wage is due only from the Lord of the worlds.”

110. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me.”

111. They responded: “Shall we believe in you, when the lowliest (among the people) follow you!”

18. The Qur’ān declares that God granted the Prophets Zachariah, John, Jesus, Abraham, Moses, and Aaron, upon them be peace, a most true and virtuous renown among people (sūrah 19: 50). This means that He made them (and all other Prophets) exceptional examples to follow in belief, thought, and conduct. The example they left continued to benefit later generations by inspiring them to do good. By virtue of this, the Prophets continue to increase their rewards, because “one who causes (enables something) is like one who does it.” God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declared: “Those who establish a good path in Islam receive the reward of those who follow it, without any decrease in their reward. Those who establish an evil path in Islam are burdened with the sins of those who follow it, without any decrease in their burden” (Muslim, “Zukāt,” 69).

19. The reason why we ask to be an inheritor of Paradise is that: (1) Inheritance is the easiest way of earning, a way which requires no labor, so asking to inherit Paradise means that we are saying, “I ask You, O my Lord, to place me in Paradise out of Your pure grace, because I cannot deserve it by my deeds.” (2) There is a place pre-assigned for everyone in both Paradise and Hell. If one dies and enters Hell, the people of Paradise inherit that person’s place.

20. The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, prayed for Azar because he had promised his father that he would pray for him (19: 47). But when God informed him that Azar was an enemy of God, condemned to eternal punishment because he had associated partners with God, Abraham, upon him be peace, stopped praying for him (sūrah 9: 114). God declared: It is not for the Prophet and those who believe to ask God for the forgiveness of those who associate partners with God even though they be near of kin, after it has become clear to them that those (polytheists) are condemned to the Blazing Flame (sūrah 9: 113).

21. Paradise and Hell are two fruits growing on the tip of a branch that extends from the Tree of Creation far into eternity, two opposite destinations along the chain of beings. These destinations are located on opposite ends of the chain: the degraded one on the lower end, and the luminous sublime one on the upper end.

Paradise and Hell are two storerooms for the flow of worldly events and the products of the earth, all made by its conscious inhabitants. They are two pools that collect the flow of two streams, one stream carrying the wicked and foul while the other carries the good and pure. Paradise is the place where Divine Favor and Mercy manifest themselves, whereas Hell is the place where Divine ‘Wrath’ and Awe are exhibited. The All-Merciful and the All-Majestic One manifests Himself (through His Names and Attributes) wherever He wills. The existence of the fruit is as evident as the existence of the branch; the existence of the destination is as evident as the existence of the chain, the existence of the storeroom is as evident as that of the product, the pool is as evident as the stream, and the place of manifestation is as evident as the existence of (Divine) Mercy and Wrath. (See The Letters, “the First Letter,” 6–8.)
22. Trustworthiness and communication of God’s Message are two of the essentials of Messengership, the others being truthfulness, intelligence, sinlessness, and freedom from all bodily and mental defects. These are present in every Messenger.

Truthfulness is the cornerstone of Messengership. No lies or deceit, whether explicit or implicit, were ever uttered by them. The second attribute of Messengership is *amānah*, an Arabic word meaning trustworthiness and which is derived from the same root as *mu'min* (believer). Being a believer implies being a trustworthy person. All Prophets were the best believers and therefore perfect exemplars of trustworthiness. To stress this principle, God summarizes the stories of five Prophets in this surah using the same statements: *Surely I am a Messenger to you, trustworthy* (107, 125, 143, 162, 178).

*Mu'min* is also a Divine Name, for God is the ultimate *Mu'min*, the source of security and reliability. We put our trust in, confide in, and rely upon Him. He distinguished the Prophets by their trustworthiness, and our connection to Him through the Prophets is based entirely on their trustworthiness and reliability.

The third attribute of Messengership is communication of the Divine Message. God manifested His Mercy and Compassion for humankind through the Messengers. They expected no reward for performing their mission. They suffered hunger, thirst, and every other hardship. Many of them were forced into exile and were made the target of many assaults and traps, and still many others were killed. They bore all of these simply for the good pleasure of God and the good of humankind.

Messengers never thought of material gain, spiritual reward, or even Paradise – they strove only for God’s good pleasure and to see humanity guided to the truth. Imam Busiri expresses in vivid language the altruism, sincerity, and patience of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: “Mountains would desire to run on either side of him in heaps of gold, but he refused.”

Those who feel responsible for serving the cause of Islam in every age must be trustworthy and communicate God’s Message without expecting any reward from others.

23. For a detailed explanation of the attitude of the leaders among the people of the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, see surah 11: 27, note 8.
112. (Noah) said: “What knowledge could I have about what they were engaged in doing (before they became believers)?

113. “Indeed their reckoning rests with none but my Lord; if only you could understand!”

114. “And it is not expected of me that I should repel the believers.

115. “I am but a plain warner (responsible for no other duty than the duty to warn).”

116. They said: “If you do not desist, O Noah, you will certainly be stoned to death in utter abjection.”

117. (After ages of struggle,) he said (in supplication): “My Lord! Indeed, my people have denied me.

118. “So judge between me and them a conclusive (and everlasting) separation, and save me and the believers in my company.”

119. So We saved him and those who were with him in the laden Ark.

120. And then, following their rescue, We caused the rest to drown.

121. Surely in that (which took place between Noah and his people) there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.

122. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

123. The ‘Ad denied (Hūd and thereby meant to deny all) the Messengers.

124. (Recall) when their brother Hūd said to them (by way of timely warning): “Will you not keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and seek refuge with His protection?

125. “Surely I am a Messenger to you, trustworthy.

126. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me.

127. “I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God’s Message); my wage is only due from the Lord of the worlds.

128. “Will you continue to build on every high spot monumental buildings for fun and show;

129. “And make for yourselves great castles, (as if) hoping that you might live for ever;

130. “And when you strike and seize (others and their goods), strike and seize in the style of tyrants?

131. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and obey me.

132. “Keep from disobedience to Him
Who has amply provided you with (all that) you are well-aware of;

133. “Amply provided you with flocks and herds and children,

134. “And gardens and springs.

135. “Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of an awesome Day.”

136. They responded: “It is all the same to us whether you preach, or are not of those who preach.

24. That is, a believer cannot be a lowly person. What the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, is saying here is: “You may regard them as the lowliest of people because of some of the deeds they had done before believing, but I cannot have any knowledge about these deeds. Furthermore, belief removes all that was left in the past. Nor can I question any of their deeds. Nor can I know whether they believe in me for some ulterior motives, such as gaining material advantages. Furthermore, I am not responsible for judging their intentions. It is God alone Who knows everybody’s intention and will take them to account.” The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, could only judge the people according to what they said, not what was truly in their hearts, nor in their past.

25. The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, remained among his people for 950 years (ṣūrah 29: 14).

26. For a detailed account of the Ark and the fate of Noah and his people, see ṣūrah 11: 25–48 and the corresponding notes 8–14.
“This (what we do) is the pattern of conduct of (all our) predecessors.

“And (so) we are not going to be subject to any punishment.”

So they denied him and, in consequence, We destroyed them. Surely in that (which took place between Hūd and his people), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.

And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

The Thamūd denied (Ṣāliḥ and thereby meant to deny all) the Messengers.

(Recall) when their brother Ṣāliḥ said to them (by way of timely warning): “Will you not keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and seek refuge with His protection?

“I am indeed a Messenger to you, trustworthy.

“So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and obey me.

“I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God’s Message); my wage is only due from the Lord of the worlds.

“(Do you think) you will be left secure forever in what is here before us, amidst gardens and springs, cornfields, and date-palms with heavy bunches (of dates); and that you will (continue to) skillfully hew dwellings out of mountains?

“So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me; and do not follow the commands of those who are wasteful (of God-given faculties) and commit excesses, those who cause disorder and corruption on the earth, without setting things right.”

They responded: “You are only one of those who are bewitched.

“You are but a mortal like us, so produce a sign if you are truthful (in your claim of Messengership).”

(Ṣāliḥ) said: “This is a she-camel;”
one day is for her to drink, and one day is for you to get water.

156. “Do not touch her with evil lest the punishment of an awesome Day should seize you.”

157. But (after a time, being unable to put up with it any longer,) they cruelly slaughtered her, and then became regretful,

158. For the (shocking) punishment seized them. Surely in that (which took place between Šāliḥ and his people), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.

159. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

27. For the she-camel, see surah 7: 73, note 17; surah 11: 64.
160. The people of Lot denied (Lot, and thereby, meant to deny all) the Messengers.

161. (Recall) when their brother, Lot, said to them (by way of timely warning): “Will you not keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and seek refuge with His protection?

162. “I am indeed a Messenger to you, trustworthy.

163. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me.

164. I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God’s Message); my wage is only due from the Lord of the worlds.

165. “What! do you, of all the world’s people, come to men (with lust),

166. “And leave aside what your Lord has created (and made lawful) for you in your wives? No, indeed! you are a people exceeding all bounds (of decency).”

167. They responded: “If you do not desist, you will most certainly be cast out (from our land).”

168. (Lot) said: “I am indeed one who abhors your practice.”

169. (And he prayed:) “My Lord! Save me and my family from (the consequences of) what they have been doing.”

170. So We saved him and his family, all of them,

171. Except an old woman, who was among those who stayed behind (and were destroyed).

172. Then We annihilated the others.

173. We poured upon them a (destructive) rain (of stones). How evil was the rain of those who had been warned!

174. Surely in that (which took place between Lot and his people), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.

175. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

176. The dwellers of al-Aykah denied (Shu’ayb and, thereby, meant to deny all) the Messengers.

177. (Recall) when Shu’ayb said to them (by way of timely warning): “Will you not keep from disobedience to God in rever-
ence for Him, and seek refuge with His protection?

178. “I am indeed a Messenger to you, trustworthy.

179. “So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, and obey me.

180. “I ask of you no wage for that (for conveying God’s Message); my wage is only due from the Lord of the worlds.

181. “Give full measure (in all your dealings) and, be not one of those who (by cheating and giving less) cause loss to others.

182. “And weigh with a true, accurate balance.

183. “Do not wrong people by depriving them of what is rightfully theirs, and do not go about acting wickedly in the land, causing disorder and corruption.

28. The Prophet Lot prayed for himself and his family only because his family had accepted his Message and submitted to God (sūrah 51: 36).

29. The verse refers to the Prophet Lot’s wife, who did not believe in him and who sided with the wicked people (sūrah 11: 81).

30. For other accounts of the Prophet Lot, upon him be peace, and his people, see sūrah 7: 80–84, note 18; sūrah 11: 77–83, note 18; sūrah 15: 61–77.

31. For the identity of the people of al-Aykah, see sūrah 15, note 15.
184. “Keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him Who has created you and all the earlier generations.”

185. They responded: “You are only one of those who are bewitched.

186. “You are but a mortal like us, and we have become convinced that you are certainly one of the liars.

187. “So cause lumps from the sky to fall down upon us, if you are truthful in your claim (of Messengership).”

188. (Shu‘ayb) said: “My Lord knows well all that you do.” (Thus, he referred their matter to God.)

189. So they denied him and in consequence, the punishment of the Day of the Overshadowing seized them. It surely was the punishment of an awesome day.

190. Surely in that (which took place between Shu‘ayb and his people), there is a sign (a great, important lesson). Most of them were not believers.

191. And surely your Lord is indeed the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to punish whoever goes against His Glory), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants).

192. This (Qur’ān) is indeed the Book of the Lord of the worlds being sent down by Him (in parts).

193. The Trustworthy Spirit brings it down

194. On your heart, so that you may be one of the warners (entrusted with the Divine Revelation),

195. In clear Arabic tongue.

196. It has certainly been (prefigured) in the previous Scriptures.

197. Is it not evidence enough for them that the scholars of the Children of Israel know it (to be so)?

198. But even if We had sent it down on any of the non-Arabs,

199. And he had recited it to them, they would still not have believed in it.

200. Thus (because of their willful persistence in unbelief and injustice) have We caused it (the Qur’an) to pass unheeded through the hearts of the disbelieving criminals:

201. (Despite irrefutable proofs of its truth,) they will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment.

202. So, it will come on them all of a sudden, when they are unaware (and incapable of awareness) of its coming.

203. Then they say: “Are we to be granted some respite (so that we might reform ourselves?”
204. (This being so,) do they still wish for Our punishment to be hastened?

205. Have you considered that, if We let them enjoy life for many (more) years (something they will desperately wish for when they face the punishment),

206. And the punishment they were promised comes upon them after that,

32. There is nowhere in the Qurʾān or the Ḥadīth that explains the identity of the Over-shadowing. It might have been a dark cloud hovering over al-Aykah and from which a “rain of calamity” poured upon them; or it might be a reference to the dark shadows which accompany volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

33. The Trustworthy Spirit is Archangel Gabriel, as explicitly stated in, Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel (should know that) it is he who brings down the Qurʾān on your heart by the leave of God (sūrah 2: 97). God mentions him here as trustworthy in order to stress that there can be no doubt about the authenticity and genuineness of the Qurʾān. As clearly seen in the verses above about the Messengers, and verses 221–226 which follow and state that the jinn or devils can never have an effect on the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, this sūrah dwells on the trustworthiness of the Messengers and the fact that there is nothing that can in any way interfere with Divine Revelation.

34. The Makkans sometimes claimed that the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, himself composed the Qurʾān. But all their assertions were only pretexts in order not to believe. Even if one of the non-Arabs had brought it in such a clear and eloquent Arabic, they would still not have believed and would have simply come up with new pretexts.

35. This refers to death for every unbeliever and a calamity in the world for some communities, and the world’s final destruction of all the unbelievers who will witness it.

36. The unbelievers did not believe that any punishment with which they were threatened would ever come upon them, so, with derision, they told the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to bring the punishment without delay.
207. It will be of no avail to them at all (that their lives of enjoyment were prolonged).

208. We have never destroyed any township except that it had warners (sent to it),

209. To remind and admonish them. We have never been unjust.

210. It is not the satans who have brought down this (Book).

211. It is neither (permitted nor proper) for them, nor is it within their power (to do that).

212. Indeed they are utterly debarred even from hearing it (during its revelation). 37

213. Hence, never take to you any other deity to invoke besides God, lest you should become of those condemned to the punishment.

214. And (O Messenger) warn your nearest kinsfolk.

215. Spread your wings (to provide care and shelter) over the believers who follow you (in practicing God’s commandments in their lives).

216. But if they disobey you (your kinsfolk, by refusing your call; or those who have newly believed, by not giving up their former way of life), then say (to them): “I am free of (responsibility for) what you do.” 38

217. And (taking no account of any earthly power in performing your mission) put your trust in the All-Glorious with irresistible might (able to do whatever He wills), the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants). 40

218. He Who sees you when you rise (in the Prayer, and in readiness to carry out Our commands),

219. As well as your strenuous efforts in prostration among those who prostrate (to be able to fulfill your duty of servanthood and help the believers to reform their lives).

220. Surely He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

221. (O people!) Shall I inform you upon whom the satans descend?

222. They descend upon everyone addicted to inventing falsehoods, addicted to sinning.

223. They (the satans) give ear eagerly (to the conversations of the angels, and whisper to every forger lost in sin, as if they received something); but they (both the satans and their sinful agents) are liars in most of their words. 41

224. As for poets, only the misguided follow them.

225. Do you not see that they roam confusedly through all the valleys (of falsehoods, thoughts, and currents).
226. And they say what they themselves do not do.42
227. Except those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, and remember God much, and vindicate themselves when they have been wronged.43 The wrongdoers will come to know by what a (great) reverse they will be overturned.

37. Whatever may be claimed about the revelation of the Qur’an, the satans were never allowed to listen to a single word of it from the moment Archangel Gabriel received the Revelation from God and conveyed it to God’s Messenger until the Messenger had fully grasped and memorized it. For further information about attempts by the satans or devils to ascend to heaven and their being expelled, see surah 15: 18, note 5; surah 67: 5, note 4.

38. That the Messenger was sinless does not mean that he was not responsible for carrying out God’s commands and avoiding His prohibitions. Moreover, there is no special consideration or dispensation for either him or his family. Rather, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is the first of those responsible for carrying out God’s commands, and avoiding His prohibitions. In addition, he always employed the members of his family and clan in the most dangerous tasks and never showed them any undue favor. This is a very important lesson and warning for Muslim leaders and administrators.

When this verse was revealed, God’s Messenger invited his nearest relatives over for a meal. ‘Ali later narrated the incident:

God’s Messenger invited his relatives to his house. After the meal, he addressed them: “God has commanded me to warn my nearest relatives. You are my tribe of the nearest kindred. I will not be able to do anything for you in the Hereafter unless you proclaim that there is no deity but God.” At the end of his speech, he asked who would support him. At that time, I was a boy with puny legs and arms. When no one responded, I put aside the pitcher in my hand and declared: “I will, O Messenger of God!” The Messenger repeated the call three times, and each time only I answered him. (Ibn Hanbal, 1: 159)

Once, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, climbed Mount Safa and, calling every clan of the Quraysh by name, conveyed to them God’s Message and warned them against His punishment (Muslim, “al-Imān,” 355).

God’s Messenger himself suffered hunger, thirst, and every other hardship. He was forced into exile and made the target of many assaults and ambushes. He bore all of these simply for the good pleasure of God and the good of humanity. Abu Hurayrah once saw him praying in a sitting position and asked if he was ill. The Messenger’s reply caused Abu Hurayrah to weep: “I am hungry, Abu Hurayrah. Hunger has left me no strength to stand up for prayer” (Muslim, “Ashribah,” 140).

Even though most of his Companions became wealthier in later years in Madinah, the Messenger and his family never changed their very simple lifestyle. Fāṭimah, his only surviving child, did all of the housework for her family herself. Once, when captives were distributed in Madinah, she asked her father for a maid. He replied:

O my daughter. I can give you nothing before I satisfy the needs of the people of the Suffah. However, let me teach you something that is better for you than having a servant. When you go to bed, say: “Glory be to God, All praise be to God, God is the Greatest” 33 times. (Some Traditions say that the last phrase should be recited 34 times.) This is better for your next life. (al-Bukhārī, “Fadā’il as-Šāhāb,” 9)

One day he saw her wearing a bracelet (or a necklace) and warned her: “O my daughter, do you want people to say of my daughter that she is wearing a ring of Hellfire? Take it off immediately!” Fāṭimah sold it and bought a slave for the money she received and emancipated him (an-Nasā’i, “Zinah,” 39).
39. The acts, lifestyles, and conduct of a leader’s family members and relatives in particular, and also those of his followers may be either in the leader’s favor or against him. Every evil action on their part makes the position of the leader difficult in the face of the masses. For this reason, a leader cannot defend their evil acts through kinship. Rather, the leader must declare being quit of their evil acts.

40. It is worth noting that this sûrah begins by declaring that God is the All-Glorious with irresistible might and the All-Compassionate (verse 9), and continues by relating the experiences of some Messengers, concluded with the pronouncement of the same two Divine Names. Once again, it mentions them and calls God’s Messenger to rely on Him Who has these Names. This implies that God is able to punish whoever goes against His Glory, while He is All-Compassionate toward the believers, and therefore protects the Messenger against his opponents. It also suggests that believers should be honored and mighty in the face of the unbelievers and compassionate toward one another.

41. Satans or the jinn try to rise to the heaven in order to eavesdrop on the conversations of the angels, but are prevented. However, they whisper some things to their agents among human beings as if they received something. In addition, since they are more refined in matter than humans, their time-dimension is different and they move much more swiftly in time and space than humans can. This is why they can acquire some information which humans cannot. They add many lies to that information and whisper them to those who can hear them – fortune-tellers, mediums, magicians, etc. – in order to deceive and mislead them and others and separate people, particularly spouses, from each other. This is expressed in a hadith recorded by al-Bukhārī in his Sahīh. When asked about magicians and fortunetellers, God’s Messenger answered that they were nothing. When he was told that they sometimes told the truth, the Messenger explained: “The jinn whisper this truth to their friends, and they forge a story out of it by adding many falsehoods to it” (al-Bukhārī, “Bād’u’l-Khalq,” 6).

42. In the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, people believed that poets had some contact with evil spirits. The Makkan polytheists sometimes claimed that God’s Messenger was one of these poets, who therefore had received the Qur’ān from these spirits. God declares that the Messenger is absolutely free of any contact with evil spirits and that the Qur’ān is entirely His Word. The Messenger was one without any sin, while those who had contact with evil spirits were people lost in sin. Like the satans who whispered to them, those who had contact with them were also liars, but the Messenger was absolutely truthful in every word he uttered. The poets who had contact with satans wandered aimlessly in every valley of (literary) trends, played with words, followed every false thought and philosophy, were dragged along by their impulses, lacked consistency, and did not observe any established true standard in their sayings, thoughts, or actions. However, just as the Messenger had nothing to do with such acts or behavior, the Qur’ān is also absolutely above having anything to do with the utterances of poets. Moreover, while it was the misguided, that is, the Makkan polytheists who opposed the Messenger, and who followed the poets, the Companions who believed in and followed the Messenger were of high character and conduct and had laudable virtues. Also, the poets related acts that they did not perform or act upon. There was no consistency between their sayings and their actions, whereas the Messenger and his Companions preached what they practiced, and practiced what they preached.

43. This verse makes four exceptions to the general condemnation of poets. The poets who (i) believe in the essentials of faith; (ii) do good, righteous deeds required by their faith; (iii) never forget God, perform their Prayers, and mention Him much; and (iv) without ever using their literary ability for sinful ends or for any goals disapproved by Islam, support truth and defend it whenever it is attacked. Whenever necessary, they use their poetic talent to defend Islam and Muslims, and oppose oppression and the oppressors.