196. “Indeed, my Guardian is God, Who sends down the Book in parts, and He befriends and protects the righteous.

197. “Whereas those you deify and invoke, apart from Him, have no power to help you, nor can they help themselves.

198. “If you call them to the guidance, they will not hear. And you see them looking at you (and may suppose that they have the power of seeing), but they do not see (having no insight or perceptiveness).”

199. (Even so, O Messenger) adopt the way of forbearance and tolerance, and enjoin what is good and right, and withdraw from the ignorant ones (do not care what they say and do).

200. And if a prompting from Satan should cause you hurt (as you carry out your mission, or during worship, or in your everyday life), seek refuge in God. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

201. Those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety: when a suggestion from Satan touches them – they are alert and remember God, and then they have clear discernment.

202. Whereas their brothers (the brothers of the satans in the form of human beings) – satans draw them deeper into error, and never relax in their efforts.

203. When you (O Messenger) do not produce for them a sign (a miracle of the kind they desire, or Revelation temporarily ceases), they say, “Were you unable to make one up?” Say: “I only follow whatever is revealed to me from my Lord. This (the Qur’ân) is the light of discernment and insight (into the truth) from your Lord, (Who creates, sustains, and protects you), and guidance and mercy for people who will believe and who will deepen in faith.”

204. And so, when the Qur’ân is recited, give ear to it and listen in silence so that you may be shown mercy.

205. Remember and mention your Lord within yourself (in the depths of your heart), most humbly and in awe, not loud of voice, at morning and evening. And do not be among the neglectful.

206. Those (angels) who are in your Lord’s Presence never turn away from His service out of pride, and they glorify Him, and prostrate before Him.
In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

1. They (the believers) ask you about the gains of war. Say: “The gains of war belong to God and the Messenger (and they distribute them as they will).” So keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and set things right among yourselves to allow no discord; and obey God and His Messenger if you are true believers.

2. The true believers are only those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble with awe, and when His Revelations are recited to them, it strengthens them in faith, and they put their trust in their Lord.

3. They establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and out of whatever We have provided for them (of wealth, knowledge, power, etc.), they spend (to provide sustenance for the needy, and in God’s cause, purely for the good pleasure of God, and without placing others under obligation).

4. Those (illustrious ones) are they who are truly believers. For them are ranks with their Lord (to be granted one after the other), and forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings), and generous, honorable provision.

5. Just so, your Lord caused you to go forth from your home for a true cause (which He had already determined would be realized); and yet a group from among the believers were averse (to the direction that developments took).

6. They argued with you concerning the truth (of the matter which God had already decided would be realized) even after it (the direction that developments would take) had been manifest, as if they...
were being driven toward death with their eyes wide open.

7. Even when God had promised you that one of the two hosts (the trade caravan and the Makkans approaching) would fall to you, you still wished that other than the powerful, armed one should fall into your hands – whereas God willed to prove the truth to be true by His decrees and make it triumphant, and uproot the unbelievers (by causing their leaders to die).

8. (He willed it so) so as to prove the truth to be true and make it triumphant, and the falsehood to be false, however hateful this might be to the disbelieving criminals.²

1. The original word anfāl translated as “gains of war” is the plural form of nafl. This word means extra, voluntary service when used in relation to a servant, and extra or additional reward when used for God. It is a reasonable opinion, then, to infer that any worldly reward which comes as the result of services rendered in God’s cause is included in this meaning. The majority of scholars are in agreement that here the reference here denotes the gains of war. However, the word ghanīmah (plural of ghanimah) is used for the gains of war in verse 41; anfāl has a more comprehensive meaning. It also includes the idea of fay (gains of war taken without fighting: 59: 6).

Believers aim only to obtain God’s approval and good pleasure in their services in His way. They have no other expectations. Even when they have to fight against God’s enemies, they only aim to obtain God’s good pleasure and uphold His Word, without expecting anything worldly. No worldly aims, such as spoils, fame, or position, can have a place in the believer’s heart. The gains of war are extra rewards that come as the result of fighting in His way, so they belong to God and the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who can distribute them as they will, and the believers must accept their distribution. It is because of this that the surah begins with orienting the believers’ hearts according to this general principle. It stresses that a believer cannot fight for the gains of war, and it teaches that if a believer has captured even a needle in war, he must hand it over to the commander or state before what has been gained is distributed.

2. These verses are concerned with the events that led up to the Battle of Badr. After the emigration to Madīnah, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, made a treaty with the Jewish tribes which gave the city the status of a multi-communal city-state. Then he organized a new market that would help to establish the economic independence of the Muslims. In Madīnah, there were powerful Jewish tribes, polytheist Arabs, and hypocrites; each posed a threat to the new Muslim community, and in the surrounding desert were polytheist tribes who recognized the Quraysh as their leaders. The Makkans threatened ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief hypocrite in Madīnah, that unless he expelled the Prophet Muhammad from Madīnah they would attack the city. They would organize sudden attacks on the suburbs of the city and plunder and shed blood. Under such adverse conditions, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, felt obliged to provide security, in order to maintain the existence of Islam, and to be able to continue to communicate the message. For this purpose, he organized military campaigns in the desert, sometimes under the leadership of his commanders, sometimes under his own leadership. He never allowed for there to be any bloodshed. With these campaigns, he also aimed to make the neighboring tribes aware of the existence of Muslims and to prevent them from gathering around the polytheist Quraysh.

The Makkans usurped whatever the emigrating Muslims had left behind. They dispatched a trade caravan to Syria, the merchan-
dise of which consisted mainly of the property of the Muslims. God’s Messenger decided to take repossession of their property while the caravan was en route to Makkah. As can be understood from these verses, God Almighty willed that the Makkans, who were extremely uneasy about the development of Islam, should be determined to guard the caravan and to undergo a military encounter with the Muslims. The events developed as God had willed. Most likely having sensed God’s will, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, consulted his army about the matter; his army was comprised of only about 310 men, most of them on foot, except for two or three mounted on horses, and about 50 on camels. Some insisted that they should march upon the caravan, as the Makkah army was very powerful, comprised of 1,000 men, 600 armored, with more than 100 horsemen. However, the speeches of Miqdad ibn ‘Amr and Sa’d ibn Mu‘ādh, who said that they would follow the Messenger wherever he led them, pleased the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and greatly encouraged the believers. In the end, the two armies came face to face at Badr, situated between Madinah and Makkah on the 17th of Ramadān (or, according to some authorities, on the 19th or 21st,) in the second year of Hijrah (624 CE).
9. When you were imploring your Lord for help (as a special mercy), and He responded to you: “I will help you with a thousand angels, coming host after host.”

10. God did that only as glad tidings (of your imminent victory), and that your hearts thereby might be at rest. For help and victory come from God alone. Surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

11. When (at the time that you most needed courage), He caused a slumber to enfold you as a reassurance from Him, and sent down water upon you from the sky, that thereby He might cleanse you (of all actual or ritual impurities, by enabling you to do the minor and major ablution), and take away from you the polluting whisperings of Satan, and through it make your hearts strong, and your steps steady.

12. When (in the meantime) your Lord revealed to the angels: “I am certainly with you, so make firm the feet of those who believe. I will cast fear into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike at their necks and strike at every finger (which holds a sword or bow).

13. “Do so because they defied God and His Messenger.” Whoever defies God and His Messenger: (let everyone know that) God is severe in retribution.

14. That is (by your deserving, O enemies of God), so taste it, and (let everyone know that) for the unbelievers, there is also the punishment of the Fire.

15. O you who believe! When you encounter in battle those who disbelieve, do not turn your backs on them in flight.

16. For whoever turns his back on them on the day of such an engagement — except that it be tactical maneuvering to fight again, or joining another troop of believers, (or taking up a position against another enemy host) — has indeed incurred God’s condemnation, and his final refuge is the Fire; how evil a destination to arrive at!
17. You (O believers) did not kill them (by yourselves in the battle), but God killed them; and when you (O Messenger) threw (dust at them at the start of the battle), it was not you who threw but God threw. (He did all this) so that He might put the believers to a test by a fair testing from Him (so that they could attain their goal and should know that victory is from God). Surely, God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

18. That is (how He treats you), and (let everyone know that) God it is Who undermines the schemes of the unbelievers.

19. If you (O unbelievers) sought a judgment (through battle to see which party is in the right), then surely a judgment has come to you. If you cease (hostilities towards the believers), it is what will be to your good. But if you revert (to hostilities), We will also revert (to what We did to you in that battle). And never will your being a great host be of any avail to you, however numerous it be, and (let everyone know) that God is with the believers.'

20. O you who believe! Obey God and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him when you are hearing (from him God's Revelations).

21. And do not be like those who say, "We hear," but in truth they do not hear.

22. Indeed the worst kind of all living creatures in God's sight are the deaf and dumb, who do not reason and understand.

23. And had God seen any good in them, He would certainly have made them hear, but (being as they are) even if He made them hear, they would surely turn away in aversion.

24. O you who believe! Respond to God and to the Messenger when the Messenger calls you (in the Name of God) to that which gives you life; and know well that surely God "intervenes" between a person and his heart (to cause his heart to swerve); and that He it is to Whom you will be gathered.

25. And beware and guard yourselves against a trial that will surely not smite exclusively those among you who are engaged in wrongdoing; and know that God is severe in retribution.
3. That is, “but for God’s plan and help, you could not have killed them and won the war.” This is a warning to those who thought with pride that they won the war by their valor and war skills.

4. This phrase refers to the occasion when the Muslim and Makkah armies stood face to face in the Battle of Badr. At that moment, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, threw a handful of dust at the enemy saying, “May their faces be scorched,” and every enemy soldier felt as if he had become blind. (Ibn Hishām, 1: 668)

5. The Muslims were very few and were persecuted in a variety of ways in Makkah. God Almighty saved them and provided them with a refuge in Madīnah. However, since they had to leave all their belongings in Makkah, they suffered great deprivations in Madīnah in the early years, despite the peerless sacrifices of the Anṣār, the Muslims of Madīnah. They were also surrounded by totally unfavorable conditions. In such circumstances, the caravan that was en route to Makkah from Syria, which contained their belongings that they had had to leave in Makkah, was a chance for them to restore some of their usurped property. Yet, God willed that they should encounter the strong Makkah army, which included all the leaders of polytheism except Abū Lahab, and which was three times greater in number than them. If we consider that around 600 of the opposing army were armored and that there were more than 100 horsemen, while the Muslim army consisted of about 310 men, and only two or three horsemen, with none of them wearing armor, and also that the battles in those days were hand-to-hand combat, it can be easily understood what a terrible position the Muslims found themselves in. They were in dire need of God’s help. The Qur’ān quite explicitly states that they won this war with God’s help; in fact God attributes to Himself the killing of the enemy soldiers, almost all of whom were the leaders of the polytheists, and also the efficacy of the dust thrown at them by the Messenger. He also sent angels to encourage the Muslims. They struck at the necks and fingers of the enemy soldiers to make it difficult for them to remain standing and to use their swords, arrows and spears. In addition to these things, as mentioned above, God helped the Muslims in many other ways. These will be revisited later, as the occasion necessitates.
26. And remember (with gratitude) when you were few and deemed weak in the land (and oppressed), fearing that people would snatch you away, how He provided you with refuge, and strengthened you with His help, and provided for you sustenance out of the pure, wholesome things, that you might give thanks (to Him from the heart and in speech, and in action by fulfilling His commandments).

27. O you who believe! Do not betray God and His Messenger, that you should not betray the trusts in your keeping while you know (what doing so means).

28. Know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and temptation, and God is He with Whom there is a tremendous reward.

29. O you who believe! If you keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He will make a criterion for you (in your hearts to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and right and wrong), and blot out from you your evil deeds, and forgive you. God is of tremendous grace and bounty.

30. And (recall, O Messenger,) how those who disbelieve schemed against you to take you captive, or kill you, or drive you away (from Makkah). Thus were they scheming, but God put His will into effect (and brought their scheme to nothing). God wills what is the best (for His believing servants) and makes His will prevail.

31. When Our Revelations are recited to them, they say: “We have heard (the like of this before many times). If we wish, we can speak the like of this; this is nothing but fables of the ancients.”

32. And when they said (even this): “O God! If this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the sky or bring upon us another painful punishment!”

33. But God would not punish them so long as you were among them; and God is not to punish them (or other people) while they implore Him for forgiveness for their sins.
6. Betraying God and His Messenger by disobeying them means self-betrayal and results in betraying trusts in one's keeping such as the confidences, lives, properties, and chastity of others, and the public affairs, duties, and posts and positions in one's care.

7. Verses 20–30 contain serious advice and reminders for the new Muslim community in Madinah and for all Muslims in all ages and places. Verse 30 is concerned with a favor granted to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and to the Muslim community through him.

The Battle of Badr proved to be a turning point and one of the greatest victories in Muslim history, perhaps even the greatest. It was won purely with God's help. As the Muslims had won after having been in such an unenviable position, it is highly likely that the victorious heroes of Badr felt some pride in their achievement. In addition, some of them had been reluctant to fight, and some began to collect booty without first routing the enemy or asking whether it was permissible to collect booty (M. Asim Köksal, 2: 146, 171–73). So, verses 20–30 contain warnings and serious advice for these people, and for all Muslims to come until Judgment Day. These warnings and advice can be summed up as follows:

- Victory and defeat are purely in the hand of God. In order to deserve victory, people must do whatever is necessary to gain it.
- Although people do whatever they can to gain or deserve victory, God is never obliged to make them victorious. As with any good that comes to people, victory is also a blessing from God. Therefore, we must always be thankful to God.
- In all His commandments, people must obey God and His Messenger. They must obey these commandments and not act as if they had not heard anything. They must obey what God and His Messenger command and sincerely carry out these orders.
- Those to whose ears God's and His Messenger's commands have not found a way, or who act as if they had not been told anything, are spiritually dead. These people, therefore, are just like lifeless objects, deaf and dumb, not able to understand or use their reason.
- There are certain things which make people deaf, dumb, and senseless in the face of Divine Revelation, such as having prejudices, indulging in vainglory and arrogance, holding the wrong viewpoint, being controlled by their carnal desires and worldly ambitions, and wrongdoing. Because of such things, people lose all their spiritual senses and faculties, and their ability to believe.
- Believers must always respond positively to the call of God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. The Messenger conveys to them God's call to the truth; this is what makes them spiritually alive. If they do not give positive responses to this call, God “intervenes” between them and their hearts, and causes their hearts to swerve, leading them to perdition and bringing about their doom in the Hereafter.
- If believers fail to respond positively to the call of God through His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, this will not only cause their doom in the Hereafter, but also give rise to an internal conflict in society. This is a decisive test, enabling them to distinguish those who are sincere from those who are not. They may lose their lives, property, and beloved ones in this conflict and, what is worse, although once being sincere brothers and sisters, they may now begin to kill each other as sworn enemies. Internal security and mutual trust may no longer exist, and public affairs and posts may be given to those who are not qualified. This may result in falling under the control of a despotic government or foreign dominion, or being subject to other kinds of calamities.
- Believers must always pursue God's good pleasure and approval and try to obtain it in all their words and actions. They must never think of gaining worldly advantages, in particular through religious acts or services.
- Whatever a person has in the world, wheth-
er it be social status, a post, smart and successful children, or wealth, it is a means of testing to determine what “carat” a person is. That is, our possessions, the things that we take pride in, are a test for us. God provides us with all our gifts, and, therefore, we must attribute them to God and give constant thanks to God from the heart, verbally and through our lifestyle. If we act in such a way, God will reward us greatly in the Hereafter and may also increase what He has provided in the world for us as well. Otherwise, whatever a person has may be a means of self-ruin for them in the other world or even in this world.

- Believers must always be God-conscious and act in piety and utmost reverence for God, fearing that they might make a mistake or commit a sin. If they do so sincerely, God will equip them with a criterion which they will feel in their hearts. By this criterion, they will be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong, and true and false, without applying to a mufti or another scholar. So long as they do whatever they must to deserve God’s protection, God will protect them against thinking and doing wrong, from internal conflicts, and from defeat by other powers.

It should also be noted here that, while the verses that were revealed after the Battle of Uhud console the believers with regard to the reverse they experienced during the second stage of the battle and even contain compliments for them to lift their wounded spirits, these verses, as they came after the victory of Badr, do not contain any congratulatory words; rather, we find warning and advice. This is important, particularly with respect to guidance and education.

8. This verse implies that so long as the religion – Islam – brought by God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, continues to be practiced and to order the life of the community in a way that is pleasing to God Almighty, and as long as people go on living in consciousness of God and imploring Him for forgiveness whenever they commit sins, God will not inflict any grievous suffering on them.
34. What plea do they have that God should not punish them, seeing that they bar (the believers) from the Sacred Mosque, although they are not qualified to own and guard it? Its qualified, rightful guardians are only the pious who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him, but most of them (those unbelievers) do not know.

35. Their Prayer at the House (in the Sacred Mosque) is nothing but whistling and hand-clapping. Then, taste the punishment because you persistently disbelieve.

36. Those who are persistent in unbelief spend their wealth in order that they may bar from God’s way. They will continue to spend it so until it becomes for them a source of sighs and anguish, and then they will be vanquished. Those who are persistent in unbelief will finally be gathered into Hell.

37. Thus does God separate the corrupt from the pure, and make all those who are corrupt into a pile one upon another, and then place them in Hell. Those are indeed the losers.

38. Tell those persistent in unbelief that if they cease (to disbelieve themselves and to prevent others from entering the fold of Islam), what is past will be forgiven them; but if they revert (to their hostilities), then it is manifest by what happened to the people of old times (what their fate must be).

39. And (if they still persist in unbelief and hostilities), fight against them until there is no longer disorder and oppression rooted in rebellion against God, and the whole of religion (the full authority to order the way of life is recognized) for God exclusively. If they cease (to persist in unbelief and continue hostilities toward the believers), then surely God sees well all that they do.

40. If they still follow their own way, know that God is your Owner and Guardian. How excellent a Guardian and an Owner He is, how excellent a Helper.
9. The punishment mentioned here is not of the kind referred to in verse 32 above, which usually follows as a "natural" calamity. It is either their defeat at the hands of the Muslims, or some social catastrophes, or Divine punishment in the Hereafter. It may, indeed, refer to all.

10. The Qur’ān mentions fitnah as being the most important reason for going to war. As also mentioned in surah 2: 191 and explained in note 138 to that surah (al-Baqarah), fitnah means unbelief, associating partners with God, hypocrisy, wrongdoing, transgression, and the chaotic atmosphere or disorder that gives rise to these or that is caused by these. It may be truer to define fitnah as corruption, including all the evils mentioned.

God Almighty wills that peace, justice, and security, as well as belief in and submission to Him, should prevail on the earth; these are the conditions that are essential to humanity. So what the believers must do is to strive to put an end to fitnah or the dominion of unbelief, the association of partners with God, and wrongdoing. This is one legitimate reason for entering a war; the other one is in the case of self-defense. Once fitnah has been eradicated, people can adopt different world-views, and the followers of other faiths such as Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Sabeanism are free to live according to their own religions. But public order should not be harmed by any of these faiths. (See also surah 2: 190–93, 256, notes 138–139.)
41. And know that whatever you take as gains of war, to God belongs one fifth of it, and to the Messenger, and the near kinsfolk, and orphans, and the destitute, and the wayfarer (one devoid of sufficient means of journeying). If you truly believe in God and what We sent down on our Servant on the day when the truth and falsehood were distinguished from each other, the day when the two hosts met in battle. God has full power over everything.

42. (Remember the day) when you were at the nearer end of the valley (of Badr on the Madinah side), and they were at the farther end and, the caravan was below you (on the coastal plain). If you had mutually made an appointment to meet for battle in such circumstances, indeed you would not have been able to hold to the appointment. But (God caused you to meet for battle in such circumstances) so that God might accomplish a thing that He had already decreed, in order that he who was to perish should perish by a clear evidence (of his deserving perishing because he followed falsehood), and he who survived might survive by a clear evidence (of his deserving survival because of his devotion to the truth). Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

43. (And recall, O Messenger) when God showed them to you in your dream as few (before the battle begins). If He had showed them to you as numerous (as they really were), you (O believers) would surely have lost heart, and would surely have disagreed with one another about the matter. But God saved (you from that). God surely has full knowledge of what lies hidden in the bosoms.

44. And when He made them appear as few in your eyes when you met them in the battle just as He lessened you in their eyes, so that God might accomplish a thing that He had already decreed. And to God are all affairs ultimately referred, (and whatever He wills occurs).

45. O you who believe! When you meet a host in battle, stand firm and remember and mention God much, that you may triumph.
11. This surah began by emphasizing the basic principle that the gains of war belong to God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and it has prepared the hearts of the believers to willingly accept the distribution that God will make. This verse describes how the gains of war will be distributed and assigns one-fifth to God first, that is, to public services; it then mentions the people who represent these services: the Messenger, his near kinsfolk, orphans, the destitute, and the wayfarer who does not have sufficient means to complete the journey. The remainder is to be distributed among the warriors.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, devoted all his life to communicating Islam to others and to the service of the people. He was not in a position to provide for the poor among his kinsfolk. In addition, there were many other places or items of expenditure for which the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had to pay as both the Messenger and the head of the state. The share assigned to him may, in some respects, be likened to the funds assigned for the special expenditures of heads of state.

It is a historical fact that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, spent his first wife Khadijah’s wealth on the cause of calling to Islam, while he, his family and his kinsfolk lived as the poorest of all Muslims. They also spent all the shares of the gains of war that were assigned to them on Islamic services and the needy.
46. And obey God and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another, or else you may lose heart and your power and energy desert you; and remain steadfast. Surely, God is with those who remain steadfast.

47. Be not like those (unbelievers) who went forth from their habitations swaggering boastfully and to show off to people, and bar (others) from God’s way. And God fully encompasses (with His Knowledge and Power) all that they do.

48. Satan decked out their deeds to be appealing to them, and said: “Today, no power among humankind can overcome you, and for sure, I am your supporter.” But when the two hosts came within sight of each other, he turned on his heels to run away and said: “Indeed I am quit of you; surely I see that which you do not see. Indeed, I fear God.” And God is severe in retribution.

49. And (remember) when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts there is a disease (that dries up the source of their spiritual life) were saying (of the believers): “Their religion has deluded those (people).” But whoever puts his trust in God, truly God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

50. If you could but see how it will be when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieve, striking them on the faces and the backs, and (saying): “Taste the punishment of the scorching Fire!

51. “This is because of (the evil deeds) that you forwarded with your own hands, for never does God do the least wrong to the servants.”

52. Just as that which happened to the clan (the court and military aristocracy) of the Pharaoh, and those before them: they disbelieved in God’s Revelations, and so God seized them for their sins. Surely God is All-Strong, severe in retribution.

12. When Satan perceived that the Muslim army was supported by angels and would defeat the polytheists, he chose to flee, as he feared receiving blows. His words “Surely I am quit of you,” and “In addition, I fear God,” are only excuses for his flight.
53. That (happened so) because God never changes a favor that He has bestowed upon a people unless they change what is in themselves (their belief, lifestyle, worldview, and devotion to God’s laws embodied in the Religion, and in life, and in the creation and operation of the universe). And God is indeed All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

54. Just as that which happened to the clan (court and military aristocracy) of the Pharaoh, and those before them: they denied the Revelations of their Lord, and so We destroyed them for their sins, and We caused the court and military aristocracy of the Pharaoh to drown. All of those peoples (destroyed in the past) were wrongdoers (in that they rebelled against their Lord, oppressed people, and so wronged themselves).

55. Indeed the worst of living creatures in God’s sight are those who are so rooted in unbelief that they cannot believe:

56. Those of them with whom you have made a treaty, and who break their treaty on every occasion without fearing God.

57. If you meet them in war, deal with them in such a manner as to deter those behind them (who follow them, and those who will come after them), so that they may reflect and be mindful.

58. If you have strong reason to fear treachery from a people (with whom you have a treaty), return it to them (i.e. publicly declare to them, before embarking on any action against them, that you have dissolved the treaty) so that both parties should be informed of its termination. Surely God does not love the treacherous. 13

59. And let not those who disbelieve ever think that they can outdo the believers, or otherwise escape Our punishment. They can never frustrate Our will.

60. (Believers:) make ready against them whatever you can of force and horses assigned (for war), that thereby you may dismay the enemies of God and your enemies and others besides them, of whom (and the nature of whose enmity) you may be unaware. God is aware of them (and of the nature of their enmity). Whatever you spend in God’s cause will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged. 14

61. And if they (the enemies) incline to peace, incline to it also, and put your trust in God. Surely He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.
13. Islam is a system of values, and all its principles are aimed at preserving these values and governing life according to them in justice. This verse lays down a basic rule of Islamic international law: when two nations have made a treaty with each other that will last for a certain period of time, both sides should remain true to the treaty until its termination. If one party contravenes the treaty, the other side should make it known to them that the treaty has been dissolved before starting any hostile actions, so that both parties will know where things stand. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says: “Whoever is bound in a treaty with a people cannot dissolve this treaty until either the term is up or until he publicly declares that it has been annulled” (Abū Dāwūd, “Jihād,” 2: 75). In another saying, he declares: “Do not be treacherous, even to him who is treacherous to you” (Abū Dāwūd, “Kitāb al-Buyūt,” 2: 75). Even today’s “civilized” nations do not comply with this principle, established fourteen centuries ago by Islam; rather they work on the principle, “Whoever launches a surprise attack first will win.”

14. This verse contains important advice and warnings for the Muslims:

- Until Doomsday there will always be enemies of belief and Islam. For this reason, Muslims must always be on the alert against any enmity and be powerful enough to deter it.
- The next verse (61) is especially important as it follows verses concerned with warfare, verses that state that a Muslim state must always be ready for war since such readiness can act as a deterrent. However, in verse 61, it is stated that Muslims are peaceful and that they must live peacefully and be representatives of universal peace. So, their acting as a deterrent in the power balance is one of the most important factors in bringing peace to the world and in preserving this peace. For this reason, if Muslims are not powerful enough to do this, and if, because of this, others shed innocent blood in the world, it is also the Muslims who will be held accountable for that blood by God.
- There are many kinds of enemies of belief and Islam. Some of them are overt enemies of God and religion, and thus display their enmity and are known. Some others maintain enmity against Islam and Muslims for other reasons, beyond their being Muslims. And there are some enemies that the Muslims may not be aware of because they are usually found among the Muslims, and they conceal their enmity. These people are hypocrites, or they live in Muslim society because they see their interests lie in so doing; sometimes, such persons may not yet have their beliefs ingrained in their hearts, and, therefore, may easily change sides, even for insignificant reasons. God knows these people well. Muslims must also take these people into account, trying to accumulate the necessary power to overwhelm them.
- Muslims must be powerful. Islam holds individuals and societies responsible for their own fate; therefore, people must be responsible for governing themselves. The Qur’ān addresses society with such phrases as: “O people!” and “O believers!” 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 perform.” Such a system causes Muslims to establish the institutions necessary to fulfill these duties. One of the ways to be powerful is that everyone should expend in God’s cause of whatever they have. This usually occurs by way of the Zakāh (Prescribed Purifying Alms), and, when necessary, by imposing new taxes in addition to the Zakāh, and, again when necessary, by way of general mobilization.
62. And if they seek (thereby only) to deceive you (O Messenger), surely God is sufficient for you. He it is Who has strengthened you with His help and with the believers.

63. He has attuned their (the believers') hearts. If you had spent all that is on the earth, you could not have attuned their hearts, but God has attuned them. Surely He is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

64. O (most illustrious) Prophet! God is sufficient for you and the believers who follow you.

65. O (most illustrious) Prophet! Rouse the believers to fighting. If there be twenty of you who are steadfast, they will vanquish two hundred; and if there be of you a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of those who disbelieve, for they (the disbelievers) are a people who do not ponder and seek to penetrate the essence of matters in order to grasp the truth.

66. For now (while you lack in necessary equipment and training), God has lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there be a hundred of you who are strong-willed and steadfast, they will vanquish two hundred; and if there be a thousand of you, they will vanquish two thousand by God's leave. God is with those who are steadfast.

67. It is not for a Prophet to have captives until he has widely exhausted the enemies in the land. You (O believers) seek the fleeting gains of the present, worldly life, but God wills that the Hereafter will be yours. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

68. Had there not been a previous decree from God (concerning that gains of war are lawful and captives can be released in return for ransom), a tremendous punishment would surely have touched you because of what you took (the gains of war, and the captives taken in expectation of ransom, before the enemies' power in the land had been sufficiently suppressed and exhausted).

69. (But since such a decree has already come) now enjoy as lawful and pure and wholesome of what you have obtained (as gains of war and ransom); and keep from disobedience to God in all your actions. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing, pious servants).
15. These last two verses should not be mis-read. When all is equal, i.e. equipment, resources, etc., then the believers can be ten times more powerful than the unbelievers, owing to their sources of power, such as their belief in God and eternal life, their fearlessness of death, their strength of will that they have acquired by regular worship, their resistance against the temptations of their carnal selves, their dependence on God, patience, and the fact that they expect the eternal bliss of Paradise and God's being pleased with them. These are things which the unbelievers do not possess. But the Muslims at that time – the time when this sûrah was revealed just after the Battle of Badr – did not have enough material power, nor did they have military training. That is why they were able to overcome an enemy that was twice as powerful as them. They won the Battle of Badr against an enemy that was more than three times as powerful as they were when they were reinforced with the help of God. However, when they had the same equipment and military training as their enemies, they were able to resist and even overcome enemies that were five, ten, twenty or even thirty times as powerful as themselves, in later years, in the Battles of Mû'tah, Yarmuk, Qadisiyah, and in many other wars. The verses here state the minimum limit.

These two verses also present some military standards. It is preferable that the smallest army unit should contain 20 soldiers when the believers are powerful and 100 soldiers when they are weak. While steadfastness and having strong will-power is one of the sources of superiority in war, penetrating and discerning the essence of matters is another source.
70. O (most illustrious) Prophet! Say to the captives in your hands: “If God knows any good in your hearts (any readiness to believe in and surrender to God), He will grant you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you.” God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially towards His servants who return to Him in repentance).

71. But if they seek to betray you (O Messenger) – well, they were treacherous to God before (and the outcome thereof is plain to see): God has given you power over them. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

72. Those who have believed and emigrated (to the home of Islam) and striven hard with their wealth and persons in God’s cause, and those who give refuge (to them) and help (them) – those (illustrious ones) are friends and protectors of one another (and can inherit from one another). But those who believe but have not emigrated – you have no duty of protection towards them until they emigrate (and inheritance is not permissible between them and you). Yet, if they ask you for help in the matter of the Religion, it is your duty to provide help except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty. God sees well all that you do.

73. Those who disbelieve – they are friends and protectors of one another (especially against you). Unless you do it also (i.e. maintain solidarity among the believers), there will be unrest on the earth and great corruption.

74. Those who have believed and emigrated (to the home of Islam) and striven (with their wealth and persons) in God’s cause, and those who give refuge (to them) and help (them) – those (illustrious ones) are the believers in truth. For them is forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings) and honorable, generous provision.

75. And those who believe after (the Prophet’s emigration) and emigrate and strive hard alongside you, they also belong to you. And those related by blood are nearer to one another according to God’s ordinance (with respect to inheritance). Surely God has full knowledge of everything.
16. When God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emigrated to Madinah with the Makkah Muslims, he established brotherhood among the Muslims of Madinah and those of Makkah. They could inherit from each other even though they had no blood relation. This continued for some until the emigrating Muslims had certain means to earn their livelihood in Madinah. Verse 75 which came later abolished this institution of formal brotherhood and restricted inheritance to blood relationships.

17. This judgment concerns, rather than all times inclusively, a time when emigration to, and settling in, the center of Islam is compulsory for all Muslims.
Islamic salutation, *Peace be upon you*, the expression, *In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate* conveys security and the giving of quarter to those addressed. However, *Sūrat al-Tawbah* begins with an ultimatum to certain polytheists in Arabia. It deals, for the most part, with a re-evaluation of the relations with the polytheists, who were frequently violating their agreements, the campaign to Tabuk, a disclosure of the intrigues of the hypocrites in Madīnah, the importance of *jihād* in God’s cause, and relationships with the People of the Book.

1. This is an ultimatum from God and His Messenger to those who associate partners with God with whom you have made a treaty.

2. (O you polytheists who always break the treaties you have entered into!) You may go about freely in the land for four months (making whatever war preparations you wish). But know that you can never escape (the Power of God, nor frustrate His will), and that God will bring disgrace upon the unbelievers.

3. And a proclamation from God and His Messenger to all people on this day of the Major Pilgrimage: that God disavows those who associate partners with Him (and break their treaty), and His Messenger likewise (disavows them). But if you repent and give up hostilities, this will be for your good; but if you turn away again, know that you will never be able to escape God and frustrate His will in any way. Give glad tidings (O Messenger) of a painful punishment to those who insist on unbelief.

4. Excepting those among the people who associate partners with God with whom you made a treaty, and who have not there-
after failed to fulfill their obligations towards you (required by the treaty), nor have backed anyone against you. Observe, then, your treaty with them until the end of the term (that you agreed with them). Surely God loves the God-revering, pious (who keep their duties to Him).

5. Then, when the (four) sacred months (of respite, during which fighting with those who associate partners with God and violate their treaties was prohibited to you,) are over, then (declare war on them and) kill them wherever you may come upon them, and seize them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place. Yet if they repent and (mending their ways) establish the Prescribed Prayer and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, let them go their way. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

6. And if any of those who associate partners with God seeks asylum of you (O Messenger), grant him asylum, so that he may hear the Word of God, and then convey him to his place of security. That (is how you should act) because they are a people who have no knowledge (of the truth about Islam).^{1}

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1. When considered together with other relevant verses of the Qur'ān, the verses present significant principles concerned with the Islamic view of war. See Appendix 3.
7. How could there be a covenant with those who associate partners with God (and recognize no laws and treaty) on the part of God and His Messenger? – excepting those with whom you made a treaty in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque: (as for the latter) so long as they remain true to you, be true to them. Surely God loves the God-revering, pious (who keep their duties to Him).

8. How (could there be a covenant with the others)? – when, if they were to prevail against you, they would observe towards you neither any bond, nor law, nor agreement. They seek to please you with their mouths, but in their hearts they are averse; and most of them are transgressors (who habitually disregard all bounds of equity).

9. (As well as breaking their treaties) they have sold God’s Revelations (concerning treaties) for a trifling price and they barred people from His way. How evil is what they do!

10. They observe neither any bond, nor law, nor agreement towards the believers. They are those who exceed all bounds.

11. Yet if they repent so as to mend their ways and establish the Prescribed Prayer and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, they are your brothers in religion. Thus We set out in detail Our Revelations (the signposts of Our way, included in the Qur’ān) for a people seeking knowledge.

12. But if they break their pledges after their treaty (with you) and assail your Religion, then fight with those leaders of unbelief – surely they have no trustworthy pledges – so that they may desist (from aggression).

13. Will you not fight against the people who have broken their pledges and have done all they could to drive the Messenger (from where he chooses to dwell), and initiated hostilities against you? Do you hold them in awe? But, assuredly God has greater right to be held in awe, if you are sincere believers.

2. The polytheists mentioned in this verse as those with whom the Muslims had made a treaty in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque are the same people mentioned in verse 4; i.e. those who did not fail to fulfill their obligations towards the Muslims as required by the treaty made between them. Both of the verses warn the Muslims not to treat those polytheists in the same way as the others, and to regard adhering to the agreement as a form of piety. It is therefore highly significant that both verses end in, Surely God loves the God-revering, pious (who keep their duties to Him).
14. Fight against them: God will punish them by your hands and humiliate them, and (know) that He will help you to victory over them, and soothe the bosoms of the believing people (oppressed and suffering at their hands, as well as at the hands of other oppressors).

15. And He will remove the wrath in their hearts (by making right and justice prevail). And God guides whomever He wills to turn to Him in repentance. God is All-Knowing (with full knowledge of him who deserves guidance), All-Wise (in Whose every decree and act there are many instances of wisdom).

16. Or did you think that you would be left (without being tried through suffering and hardship) unless God marks out those among you who really strive (in His way), and who take none as intimate friend other than God and His Messenger and the believers to seek help and solidarity? God is fully aware of all that you do.

17. It is not for those who associate partners with God to maintain God's houses of worship while they are witnesses against themselves of unbelief (and do not worship God in those houses of worship). They are those whose works have been wasted, and they will abide in the Fire.

18. Only he will maintain God's houses of worship (using them for the purposes for which they are built) who believes in God and the Last Day, and strives in God’s cause, and pays the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and stands in awe of none but God. It is hoped that such (illustrious) persons will be among the ones guided to achieve their expectations (especially in the Hereafter).

19. Do you consider providing water to the pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque as equal in value to one who believes in God and the Last Day, and strives in God’s cause? They are not equal in God’s sight. And God does not guide (to truth) the wrongdoing folk (whose measure and judgment are wrong).

20. Those who believe and have emigrated (to the home of Islam in God's cause), and strive in God's cause with their wealth and persons are greater in rank in God's sight, and those are the ones who are the triumphant.
3. The last two verses mention five secondary aims of war and draw our attention to a significant point:

- The world is the domain where God acts behind the law of causality according to His Wisdom, Which has established the order of the universe, formed the general plan, and turns the wheel of all events. Although this Wisdom considers the whole of the universe when turning its wheel, this does not mean that it neglects any one part, not even the smallest. This Wisdom requires that people should see the consequences of their actions. So, God usually punishes the oppressors at the hands of other people. The believers are required to struggle with the oppressors and, when necessary, to fight against them.
- The oppressors who act in the world in arrogance, as if they were its sole rulers and owners, and who oppress others should be humbled.
- The believers are duty-bound to make right and justice prevail in the world and, thus, they must fight against oppressors whenever necessary. God will help them and grant them victory.
- The oppressed, suffering people should be saved from the hands of the oppressors and relieved of their burdens.
- When right and justice have been made to prevail, the rage of the oppressed is removed from their hearts, and this prevents them from adopting worse ideologies or systems and going to excesses to cause greater disorder and injustice in the world, as they did (went to excesses) during some uprisings and regimes in the last century.

After mentioning these five secondary aims of war, the last verse draws our attention to the following point:

Since God never wills that any of His servants should go astray and deserve eternal punishment, He always keeps the door to repentance open; He is extremely pleased when a servant turns to Him in repentance.
21. Their Lord gives them glad tidings of mercy from Him (to bring unforeseen blessings), and His being pleased with them, and of Gardens wherein is everlasting bounty for them;

22. Therein to dwell forever. Surely, with God is a tremendous reward.

23. O you who believe! Do not take your fathers and your brothers for confidants and guardians (to whom you can entrust your affairs), if they choose unbelief in preference to belief. Whoever of you takes them for confidants and guardians, those are wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves by committing a great error).

24. Say: “If your fathers, and your children, and your brothers and sisters, and your spouses, and your kindred and clan, and the wealth you have acquired, and the commerce you fear may slacken, and the dwellings that you love to live in, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until God brings about His decree. God does not guide the transgressing people (who prefer worldly things to Him, His Messenger and striving in His cause, to truth and true happiness in both the world and the Hereafter).

25. God has already helped you on many fields, and on the day of Hunayn, when your multitude was pleasing to you, but it availed you nothing, and the earth, for all its vastness, was too narrow for you, and you turned back, retreating.

26. Then God sent down His gift of inner peace and reassurance on His Messenger and the believers, and sent (to your aid) hosts that you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. Such is the recompense of unbelievers.

4. As mentioned before, Muslims are responsible for improving this world and living here according to God's Religion, as well as being responsible for striving to communicate the Religion to others. They can demand and own worldly favors, provided they use them for this purpose and fulfill the duty of thanksgiving. They should also distribute the worldly bounties justly and, therefore, fulfill a significant role in the power balance in the world. However, there is a point to note here: worldly riches seduce people. In order to avoid this, Muslims should not demand the world from their heart, nor should they leave it to the oppressors and transgressors. Being able to establish an equilibrium between these two extremes, namely attachment to the world and renouncing it totally, and so leaving it to the oppressors, requires living a life according to the commandments of God and His Messenger, and striving for the whole of one's life to convey God's Message throughout the world.
27. Then, after all this, God guides whom He wills to repentance (turning to Islam from unbelief). God is All-Forgiving, all Compassionate (especially to His servants who turn to Him in repentance).

28. O you who believe! Those who associate partners with God are (nothing) but impure. So, after the expiry of this year, let them not approach the Sacred Mosque.

And should you fear poverty (because of the possible reduction in your income due to their not coming to Makkah in the season of the Hajj), God will enrich you out of His bounty if He so wills. Surely, God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

29. Fight against those from among the People of the Book who (despite being People of the Book) do not believe in God and the Last Day (as they should be believed in), and do not hold as unlawful that which God and His Messenger have decreed to be unlawful, and do not adopt and follow the Religion of truth, until they pay the jizyah (tax of protection and exemption from military service) with a willing hand in a state of submission.

30. And those Jews (who came to you) say (as did some Jews who lived before): “Ezra (‘Uzayr) is God’s son;” and (as a general assertion) the Christians say: “The Messiah is God’s son.” Such are merely their verbal assertions in imitation of the utterances of some unbelievers who preceded them. May God destroy them! How can they be turned away from the truth and make such assertions?

31. The Jews take their rabbis (teachers of law), and the Christians take their monks, as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, for Lords besides God (by holding as lawful or unlawful what the teachers of law and monks decree to be lawful or unlawful, as against God’s decree), whereas they were commanded to worship none but the One God. There is no deity but He. All-Glorified He is in that He is absolutely above their association of partners with Him.
5. The Arab tribes were awaiting the settlement of the conflict between the Quraysh and the Muslims before they would accept Islam, saying: “If Muhammad prevails over his people, he would indeed be a Prophet.” Consequently, when this was finally accomplished, people began to join Islam in throngs. This caused the Hawāzīn and the Thaqīf tribes in Tā’īf, who were famous for their courage and archery skills, to prepare a great expedition to Makkah. Informed of their movements, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, left Makkah with 12,000 Muslims. This was the greatest army the Muslims had ever gathered and some among the Companions were pleased and assured. However, Muslims must always rely on God, without ever forgetting that it is God Who takes one to victory. Their self-assurance cost them a setback in the first stage of the war, which took place in the valley of Hunayn between Makkah and Tā’īf. The enemy laid an ambush in which the advance guard of the Muslim forces was caught, and the rear forces fell into confusion under a shower of enemy arrows. The Prophet, as ever, was calm in his faith and wisdom in that hour of danger, and he spurred his horse forward. He cried: “Now war has been kindled. I am the Prophet; that is no lie. I am the descendant of ‘Abd al-Muttalib” (al-Bukhārī, “Jihad,” 52; Muslim, “Jihad,” 78). ‘Abbās, the Prophet’s uncle, also called out at the top of his voice to the retreating Companions to return. Thereupon, from all sides the Companions responded “Labbayk!” (at your service), and rallied to the Prophet. The enemy, who had pushed themselves into the center of the Muslim army, were surrounded on all sides. The courage, wisdom, and steadfastness of God’s Messenger snatched victory from the jaws of defeat by God’s leave. It was by God’s help that the Muslims won the day.

The routed enemy took refuge in Tā’īf. The Muslim victory persuaded the desert tribes to accept Islam, and shortly thereafter the rebel tribes and Tā’īf also surrendered and entered Islam.

6. Because of their beliefs, morals, practices, and customs, and since they do not make ablutions (wudū’) for the Prayer, nor total ablation in case of canonical impurity, those who associate partners with God are spiritually and canonically unclean. Just as those without ablation cannot perform the Prayer and read the Qur’ān, so the polytheists, who are totally unclean, cannot approach the Sacred Mosque.

Islam attaches extreme importance to cleanliness, including spiritual, moral, bodily, and material cleanliness. The source of spiritual cleanliness is true belief, sincerity, purity of heart, and wishing all well. Moral cleanliness comes from avoiding all kinds of vices, such as illicit relationships like fornication, adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality; and unlawful transactions and ways of income and expenditure; and deception, lying, slander, backbiting, etc. Bodily and all kinds of material cleanliness, such as that of clothes, dwelling places, and the environment are also important. To cite only one example, if one’s clothes or the rug or place on which one prays are fouled with any liquid dirt, such as urine, to the amount that fills the palm of one’s hand, or with any solid filth to the amount of three grams, the prayer is invalid.

7. The People of the Book are the people such as the Jews and Christians who were given a Divine Book. So, when God sent the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, with the last, universal form of Islam, the Religion of truth with which He sent all the Messengers during history, the People of the Book were expected to believe in and follow the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’ān, which was revealed to him as a consummation of the previous Divine Books, and accordingly to have true faith in God and the Last Day (and in other essentials of faith), and to hold lawful what God and His Messenger decreed to be lawful, and unlawful what they decreed to be unlawful. But when, despite their claim to belong to the People of the Book, they acted contrarily to what they were expected to do, and were hostile towards Islam and Muslims and collaborated against them with the polytheists, God allowed the Muslim state to fight against them. However, He commanded that once it had subdued them, it should
accord them full protection of all their civic rights, including the protection of life, wealth, reproduction, mental and bodily health, and religious freedom. Moreover, the People of the Book were exempted from military service and fighting enemies; this was something for which Muslim citizens were responsible. Muslim citizens also had to pay the Zakah, the prescribed alms-due. In place of the Zakah, the non-Muslim citizens of the Muslim state, who were called the ahl adh-dhimmah, the protected people, were charged with the payment of the jizyah, which was the tax of protection and exemption from military service.

Critically, it should be noted here that only a Muslim state can declare and carry out war; no Muslim individual or group has the right or authority to do this.

Muslims can eat the meat of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book, and it is permissible for a Muslim man to marry a woman from among them.

8. Being the Lord means creating, bringing up, sustaining, and giving each creature a structure and nature according to its duty in creation. It also includes the authority to determine what is (religiously) lawful and unlawful in human life. Being divine (deity) or possessing divinity means having the exclusive right to be worshipped. By mentioning divinity (being a deity) and being the Lord together, this verse explains that only One who is God can be Lord and that the One Who is the Lord is also God; therefore, belief in God as One God requires confessing that He is both Lord and God.
32. They seek (with renewed plans and stratagems) to extinguish God's light (His favor of Islam, as if by the breath issuing) from their mouths, whereas God refuses but to complete His light, however hateful this may be to the unbelievers.

33. He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth that He may make it prevail over all religions, however hateful this may be to those who associate partners with God.

34. O you who believe! Many among the rabbis and monks do indeed consume the wealth of people in legally invalid, wrongful ways (such as changing the Book's commandments in return for worldly benefit, bribery, and using religion as a means of worldly gain) and bar them from God's way. Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in God's cause (to exalt His cause and help the poor and needy): give them (O Messenger) the glad tidings of a painful punishment.

35. On that day, it (that hoarded wealth) will be heated in the fire of Hell and therewith their foreheads and their sides and their backs will be branded (and they will hear): “This is the treasure which you hoarded up for yourselves; taste now what you were busy hoarding!”

36. The number of the months, in God's sight, is twelve, as determined and decreed by God on the day when He created the heavens and the earth (and set them moving in the present conditions). Four of them are sacred (in that fighting is forbidden during them). This is the upright, ever-true Religion (the order that God has established for the operation of the universe and life of humanity). Do not, therefore, wrong yourselves with respect to these months. Nevertheless, fight all together against those who associate partners with God just as they fight against you all together; and know well that God is with the God-revering, pious who keep their duties to Him.
The last two verses give important guides to understanding Islam and its history. With all its essentials of faith, pillars of worship, standards of morality, and principles of conduct, and with its sociological, economic, and administrative teachings, Islam is a pure light that illuminates minds and hearts, indeed the whole world; with respect to the world, it is like the sun. Those who oppose this light are like those who close their ears, eyes, hearts, and minds to truth and enlightenment, or to the “sun” and He Who created it, thereby darkening their own worlds. This attitude is what is meant by “unbelief” in Islamic terminology. Those who do not believe, whether they are among those who associate partners with God, or the People of the Book (see note 7, above), or those who recognize no faith at all, have sought throughout history to extinguish this “sun” of Islam with new plans and strategies. But just as they were unable to prevent its being completed during its dawning during the Messenger’s life (see 5: 3), they have never been able to take its place or afface its splendor, even at times when they have seen it almost setting. Any plan or strategy carried out to extinguish this “sun” has no greater weight than a mere breath.

It may sometimes happen that those who identify themselves with Islam, although they are unable to represent or practice it fully in its true meaning and content, are lost to the world of unbelief. However, this never means the defeat of Islam by other religions or unbelief. By God’s mercy, Islam cannot be defeated. Even in the last centuries, when Muslims passed through the darkest period of their history and the world of Islam was uninterruptedly subjected to concerted attacks from all fronts by its opponents throughout the world, opponents equipped with the most sophisticated means, there have been few who have renounced Islam in favor of another religion, while many people have continued to convert to Islam from all other religions. In spite of the fact that the Muslims of today suffer from a multitude of deficiencies, even in their performance of the rites of worship as commanded by Islam, with a thousand mistakes and without true spiritual fulfillment, and in spite of every effort made by the opponents of Islam to distort its image, many people in the West are still affected by it, whether they are religious or not. The comments of Western observers who are aware of Islam’s dynamism and inextinguishable nature are very interesting. For example, Caesar E. Farah wrote the following on this subject:

Putting aside the obstacles it met and the infrequent cases of apostasy, Islam has always shown an unlimited ability to live and spread, even under difficult conditions. This capability can be explained by its essential hidden dynamism and flexibility that can go immediately into action when the need arises. The attractive qualities of Islam that bound great masses to its ranks in the early centuries continued to attract people to the same ranks even when it lost political power. (Ezzati, 345)

Furthermore, while other religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, have been defeated by atheistic, materialistic, and communist ideologies in several parts of the world, Islam has not lost ground. On this point the observations of E.H. Jurji are significant:

With all its consistency, self-sufficiency and realism, and its determination that gave precedence to solidarity against racial and Marxist ideologies, with its mental rigging that can show the way to Western thought, with its determined attitude against imperialism and pillage, with its brave defense based on Qur’anic faith that impedes all critical attacks and the plainness and authenticity of the message it brings to humanity that has strayed from the path, Islam appears before the modern world with a very special sense of responsibility. This sense of duty, which has not been spoiled by theological debates drowned in details, involved in confusing speculations, or fossilized under heavy layers of dogma, takes its strength from doctrines based on revelation. (Ezzati, 348)
God’s Religion can never be made a means of worldly gain; it cannot be exploited for such things as show, fame, acquiring wealth, status, or political aims. What people are commanded to do is to practice Islam purely to please God; this is the duty of His servants, and this must be done because God has commanded us to do so (Sūrah 98:5). For this reason, it is severely prohibited to attempt to use Islam for ulterior motives, i.e. to use it for reasons other than why it has been sent; this is especially pertinent to religious scholars and spiritual masters who are expected to represent and convey Islam in its purity, not to exploit it. Such leaders have a place and status in the people’s eyes, and these leaders are more liable than others to exploit this status for worldly aims. ‘Ali, the Fourth Caliph and cousin of the Messenger, says of some types of scholars, whom the Messenger had said would exploit God’s religion for their self-benefits toward the end of time: “Know, O community of brothers! The worst of people at that time are the scholars who, for the sake of worldly benefits, approve the innovations invented against the religion.” Such scholars are called the “evil scholars” in Islamic literature. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, talked about 70,000 men who would wear turbans (i.e. religious scholars) who would support the practices of the Dajjal (the man or a collective personality that is expected to appear toward the end of time and will try to eradicate Islam from the social life of Muslims) for worldly benefits.

In addition to the ways mentioned above, the scholars and spiritual masters may also exploit religion for selfish motives by distorting some rules of religion and arbitrarily interpreting some of its commandments. In whatever way they exploit religion, such attitudes on the part of religious scholars and spiritual masters cause people to grow antipathetic towards religion and prevent its being taught correctly. A scholar or spiritual master who sells religion for material gain cannot help but distort it. Holding such attitudes is what is meant by barring people from God’s way.

Hoarding up money and goods without spending them in God’s cause to promote God’s cause and to help the poor and needy is one of the major sins. The foremost duty with respect to wealth is paying the Prescribed Alms (the Zakah). Some scholars are of the opinion that any wealth out of which the Prescribed Alms is given cannot be considered hoarded wealth. However, this opinion has not received welcome from the majority of scholars. The standard by which to judge whether any accumulation of money is regarded as hoarded wealth is the general living standard of all Muslims and the conditions that affect the Islamic world. In another verse (Sūrah 59:7), the Qur‘ān openly declares that wealth should not be a means of prosperity circulated among the rich only. At a time when the majority of Muslims are poor and Islam is left without support, any wealth exceeding the limit of richness according to Islam (which is the amount out of which the Prescribed Alms should be given) and some amount of which is not spent in God’s cause, is regarded as hoarded wealth, and is the object of the threat in the verse. The verse clearly mentions hoarded wealth and the failure to spend it in God’s cause.
37. The postponement of a sacred month, and therefore making changes (for such aims as to make fighting in the Sacred Months lawful, and cause the season of the Pilgrimage to fall in the period of the year they wish) is but an increase in unbelief (for it means making the unlawful lawful and changing the nature of many lawful and unlawful acts done in those months and, therefore, recognizing no law). By doing so, those who disbelieve are (further) misled, declaring it (the month they postpone) permitted in one year and forbidden in another, in order that they may conform to the number of the months that God has declared as sacred, (without caring) that they thereby make lawful what God has made unlawful. The evil of their deeds is decked out to be appealing to them. God does not guide the disbelieving people (to truth and to the attainment of their aims).

38. O you who believe! What excuse do you have that when it is said to you: “Mobilize (for the campaign of Tabuk)" in God's cause!” you cling heavily to the earth? Are you content with the present, worldly life, rather than the Hereafter? Yet slight is the enjoyment of the worldly life as compared with the Hereafter.

39. If you do not mobilize (as you are commanded), He will punish you grievously, and instead of you, He will substitute another people, and you will in no way harm Him. God has full power over everything.

40. If you do not help him (the Messenger), yet for certain God helped him when those who disbelieve drove him out (of his home during the Hijrah), the second of the two when they were in the cave (with those in pursuit of them having reached the mouth of the cave), and he said to his companion (with utmost trust in God and no worry at all): “Do not grieve. God is surely with us.” Then God sent down His gift of inner peace and reassurance on him, supported him with hosts you could not see, and brought the word (the cause) of the unbelievers utterly low. And God’s word (His cause) is (always and inherently) supreme. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.
11. The outcome of the Muslim–Byzantine encounter in Mu`tah came as a shock to Arabia and the Middle East, for the Romans did not gain the upper hand over the Muslims, even though they outnumbered the Muslims thirty-three to one. Ultimately, thousands of people from the semi-independent Arab tribes living in Syria and the adjoining areas converted to Islam. To avenge himself for Mu`tah and to prevent the advance of Islam, the Byzantine Emperor ordered military preparations to invade Arabia.

God’s Messenger, who always kept himself abreast of developments bearing on his mission, promptly decided to challenge the Byzantines on the battlefield. Any show of Muslim weakness might have given fresh life to the dying forces of Arabian polytheism and hostility, which had received a crushing blow at Hunayn. Such a development might also have encouraged the hypocrites in and around Madīnah to cause serious damage to Islam from within. They were already in touch with the Ghassanid Christian prince and with the Byzantine Emperor, and had built a mosque, which the Qur`ān calls the Mosque of Dhirār (Dissension) (sūrah 9: 107), near Madīnah to serve as their operational base.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, publicly appealed to the Muslims to prepare for war and, contrary to his usual practice, declared that the Romans were his target.

It was mid-summer, the scorching heat was at its peak, the harvest season had just arrived, and there was a shortage of material resources. Moreover, the enemy was one of the two superpowers of the time. Despite all this, the Companions responded ardently to the Prophet’s call and commenced their war preparations, all contributing much more than their financial means warranted.

In Rajab 9 AH (after Hijrah)/631 CE, God’s Messenger and 30,000 soldiers left Madīnah and marched to Tabuk, quite close to what was then the Byzantine territory in Syria. The Byzantine Emperor, who had begun amassing a huge army, abandoned his plans and withdrew his army, for the Messenger arrived before he was expected and well before the Byzantine troop concentrations were completed (Ibn Sa`d, 2: 165–168; at-Tabari, 3: 100–111).

The Messenger stayed in Tabuk for 20 days, during which several buffer states under Byzantine hegemony agreed to pay the protection and exemption tax (jizyah) and live under his rule. Many Christian tribes embraced Islam willingly (al-Bidāyah, 5: 13). This bloodless victory also enabled the Muslims to consolidate their position before a prolonged conflict with the Byzantines, and altogether shattered the power of both the unbelievers and the Hypocrites in Arabia.

12. The verse refers to the Hijrah. The Messenger’s reliance on God made him fearless. He appeared in the heartland of a desert inhabited by one of the most uncivilized peoples of the world. Despite their harsh treatment, and the strident hostility of one of his own uncles, he challenged the whole world and, through complete trust in God, carried his mission to victory. He had only a handful of supporters, and his victory came in a very short period – an unparalleled achievement.

The Quraysh were so eager to kill him that just before his emigration to Madīnah they selected one man from each clan. These, numbering roughly 200, led by Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab, besieged his house. God’s Messenger told his cousin ‘Ali to spend the night in his bed and, throwing some dust at the 200 hostile men while reciting: And We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, and (thus) We have covered them from all sides, so that they cannot see (36: 9), he departed without being seen. He left Makkah with his closest friend, Abū Bakr, and reached the cave of Thawr, which is at the top of a steep mountain. Finding him gone, the chiefs of the Quraysh sent out search parties. One of these climbed the mountain up to the cave. Abū Bakr became anxious, fearing for the life of God’s Messenger. However, the latter comforted him by saying: “Do not grieve. God is surely with us,” and added: “What do you think of the two men beside whom God is the third?” (al-Bukhārī, “Tafsīr,” 9; Ibn Hanbal, 1: 4).
41. Mobilize whether you are equipped lightly or heavily (and whether it be easy or difficult for you); and strive with your wealth and persons in God’s cause. Doing so is what is for your good, if you but know it.

42. Had there been an immediate gain, and an easy journey, those (who stayed behind because of hypocrisy) would surely have followed you, but the difficult journey was too distant for them. Yet they will swear by God: “If only we had been able to, we would surely have gone forth with you.” They destroy their own selves, for God knows that they are truly liars.

43. May God give you grace! Why did you give them leave to stay behind until it became clear to you who was speaking the truth, and you came to know the liars? 13

44. Those who believe in God and the Last Day do not ask you for leave to be excused from striving in God’s cause with their wealth and persons. God has full knowledge of the God-revering, pious who keep their duty to Him.

45. Only they ask you for leave who do not truly believe in God and the Last Day, and whose hearts are doubting, so that in their doubting they waver between one thing and another.

46. Had they truly meant to go forth for war, they would surely have made certain preparation (demonstrating their intent). But God was averse to their rising to fight (unwillingly and without sincerity of purpose), and so He caused them to hold back, and it was decreed for them: “Stay at home with the stay-at-homes (women and children).”

47. If they had gone forth among you, they would have brought no addition to you except trouble, and would have run about in your midst seeking to stir up sedition among you. Among you were some who were prone to heed them. God has full knowledge of the wrongdoers.
13. In the statement, until it became clear to you who was speaking the truth and you came to know the liars, there are subtle points and legal principles to be noted:

- If a person known to be truthful says something, they should be believed. However, this does not remove the probability that they may have lied. But, while a verbal statement is enough to judge that a person is truthful in a matter, judging their speech as a lie must be based on certain knowledge. For this reason, while the verse uses the expression become clear for judging a person to be speaking the truth, it uses the expression to come to know to judge whether he or she is telling a lie.

- The verse uses a verb – speak – for those who spoke the truth when asking the Messenger to be excused from the war, while it uses a noun – liar – for those who did not speak the truth. A noun implies constancy and so a liar is one who habitually lies.

Therefore those who told lies in this matter were liars, and therefore the hypocrites in the community – because habitual lying is a sign of hypocrisy. However, since a single act of lying is enough to damage reliability or trustworthiness, a believer must always avoid lying, as a believer is, most of all, one reliable and trustworthy.

- The verse using a verb – speak – for those who spoke the truth but a noun – liar – for the others also implies that we cannot judge a person to be always and absolutely truthful by their saying the truth in a matter, although we cannot suspect them of being liars.

At this point, it would be useful to note that rendering such subtleties of the Qur’ān in its original language into other languages is often impossible. It is for this reason that the Qur’ān cannot be fully and exactly translated into another language, and any translation of it cannot be regarded as being the Qur’ān itself.
48. Assuredly they sought to stir up sedition before, and tried to turn things upside down to frustrate you, until the truth came and God’s decree was made evident, however hateful this was to them.

49. Among them is one who says: “Give me leave (not to participate in this campaign) and do not expose me to temptation.” Oh, but surely, they have already fallen into temptation (because of their hypocrisy and transgressions)! And surely Hell encompasses the unbelievers.

50. If something good comes to you (O Messenger), this grieves them; and if a disaster befalls you, they say, “We have taken due care of our affairs in good time,” and turn away, exultant.

51. Say: “Nothing befalls us except what God has decreed for us; He is our Guardian and Owner; and in God let the believers put all their trust”

52. Say to the hypocrites: “Or else are you expecting for us other than one of the two best things (namely, victory or martyrdom in God’s cause)? But what we expect for you is that God will inflict punishment upon you from Himself or by our hands! Wait, then, and we, too, are waiting with you.”

53. (Respond to their unwilling donation and) say: “Whether you give willingly or unwillingly, (pretending that you give in God’s cause), it will never be acceptable (to God) from you. Surely, you are a transgressing people.”

54. Nothing hinders their offerings being accepted from them, except that they disbelieve in God and His Messenger, and whenever they come to the Prescribed Prayer, they do so indolently (i.e. with reluctance), and they do not offer contributions except as averse (to doing so).
55. Let neither their wealth nor their children impress you. God only wills thereby to punish them in the life of this world, and that their souls will depart while they are unbelievers.  
56. They swear by God that they are indeed of you (belonging with the believers), yet they are not of you. They are only a people ridden by fear (and thereby pretending to be of you).
57. If they could but find a place of refuge, or any cavern, or any place to creep into to hide, they would turn about and make a bolt for it.
58. Among them is one who finds fault with you concerning (the distribution of) alms. If they are given something thereof, they are pleased; but if they are not given anything, they are consumed with rage.
59. If only they were content with what God and His Messenger give them and would say, “God is sufficient for us! God will give us more out of His grace and bounty, and so will His Messenger. Surely we are supplicants before God (seeking His good pleasure, with no right or cause of complaint).”
60. The Prescribed Purifying Alms (the Zakāh) are meant only for the poor, and the destitute (albeit, out of self-respect, they do not give the impression that they are in need), and those in charge of collecting (and administering) them, and those whose hearts are to be won over (for support of God’s cause, including those whose hostility is to be prevented), and to free those in bondage (slavery and captivity), and to help those over-burdened with debt, and in God’s cause (to exalt God’s word, to provide for the warriors and students, and to help the pilgrims), and for the wayfarer (in need of help). This is an ordinance from God. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.
61. Among them (the hypocrites) are those who hurt the Prophet and say (of him): “He is all ear (listening to everyone and disposed to believe them).” Say: “Yes, he is all ear, listening to what is best for you; he believes in God, and trusts the believers, and is a great mercy for those among you who believe.” Those who hurt God’s Messenger – for them is a painful punishment.
14. It should once more be pointed out that God does not will unbelief or punishment for anybody. He is pleased only with the belief and well-being of His servants. However, such statements mean that God has recognized a field of free movement for human free will, and whatever a person wills, He brings it into existence through that person. He is never pleased with the unbelief, hypocrisy, and/or transgression of His servants, and in order for them to find true guidance, He sent Messengers, and with them He sent down Books. After the Prophets, He creates great persons who represent His Religion and convey it to people. Despite all this, those who persist in unbelief and transgression deserve punishment in accordance with the laws God has established for human life. Wealth and children are causes of trouble and anxiety for those who do not believe in God and the Hereafter, and who assign all their efforts to this worldly life. All their lives are spent trying to earn their livelihood and bring up their children; yet they make their living without any lofty ideals. They never think of the other life and they die as they have lived, as unbelievers.
62. They swear to you by God (O believers) so that you may be pleased with them, while it is God and His Messenger Whose pleasure they should seek, if indeed they are believers.

63. Do they not know that whoever opposes God and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell to abide therein. That is the tremendous disgrace.

64. The hypocrites are afraid lest a surah should be sent down against them making plainly known what is in their hearts (while they do not hold back from mocking the Messenger and the believers). Say (to them, O Messenger): “Go on mocking. God will surely bring to light that (whose disclosure) you dread.”

65. If you ask them (about what they were saying), they will say: “We were merely jesting and being playful.” Say: “Was it God and His Revelations and His Messenger that you were mocking?”

66. Do not make excuses now! You have indeed disbelieved after your (declaration of) faith. Even if We pardon a section of you (those whose idle talk was not intended to mock God and His Messenger), We will surely punish another section of you for they have been criminals.

67. The hypocrites, both men and women, are all of a kind: enjoining and promoting what is evil, and forbidding and trying to prevent what is right and good; and they withhold their hands (from doing good and spending in God’s cause). They are oblivious of God (with respect to faith and worship and serving in His cause), and so He is oblivious of them (with respect to rewarding). Assuredly, the hypocrites are those who are the transgressors.

68. God has promised the hypocrites, both men and women, and the unbelievers, the fire of Hell, therein to abide: it is (recompense) to suffice them. God has excluded them from His mercy, and for them is a lasting punishment.
69. Just like the peoples before you (O hypocrites and unbelievers) who were greater than you in power and more abundant in wealth and children. They enjoyed their lot (in the world) for a while, and you have been enjoying your lot, just as those who preceded you enjoyed their lot; and you have plunged in self-indulgence as others who plunged. Such (hypocrites and unbelievers) are those whose works have been wasted in both this world and the Hereafter, and those – they are the losers.

70. Have there not reached them the exemplary histories of those who lived before them – the people of Noah, the Ad, the Thamud, and the people of Abraham, and the dwellers of Madyan (Midian), and the overthrow cities (of Sodom and Gomorrah)? Their Messengers came to them with the clear proofs (of the truth, in which they would not believe). It was not, then, God who wronged them but they wronged their own selves.

71. The believers, both men and women: they are guardians, confidants, and helpers of one another. They enjoin and promote what is right and good, and forbid and try to prevent the evil, and they establish the Prescribed Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Puriﬁying Alms. They obey God and His Messenger. They are the ones whom God will treat with mercy. Surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

72. God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens through which rivers ﬂow, therein to abide, and blessed dwellings in Gardens of perpetual bliss; and greater (than those) is God’s being pleased with them. That indeed is the supreme triumph.
73. O (most illustrious) Prophet! Strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites (in the way required by time and conditions), and be stern against them. Their final refuge is Hell: how evil a destination to arrive at!

74. They swear by God that they have said nothing (blasphemous), whereas they certainly did utter blasphemies (the word of unbelief), and they fell into unbelief after having entered the fold of Islam, and they purposed and attempted what they could not achieve. They are spiteful against (Islam and the Messenger) for no other reason than that God enriched them and (caused) His Messenger (to enrich them) out of His grace and bounty! Even so, if they repent, it will be to their good; but if they still turn away, God will punish them painfully in the world and the Hereafter. They have on earth no protecting guardian nor helper (against God’s punishment).

75. Among them are some who vowed to God: “Surely, if God grants us out of His grace and bounty, we will most certainly (pay the Prescribed Alms and) spend in alms for His sake, and we will most certainly be among the righteous.”

76. Then God granted them out of His grace and bounty, but they clung to it in a niggardly fashion and turned about, swerving away (from what they had vowed).

77. So, as a consequence, He has caused hypocrisy to be in their hearts (and to remain rooted therein) until the day when they will meet Him (at death), because they have broken their word to God that they promised Him, and because they were lying habitually.

78. Do they not know that God knows what they keep concealed and their private counsels and gossips, and that God has full knowledge of the whole of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception)?

79. They taunt the believers, who give for God’s sake more than they are duty-bound to give, as well as those who can find nothing to give except (what they earn through) their hard toil, and they scoff at them. God causes their scoffing to rebound on themselves, and for them is a painful punishment.
15. The expression “in the way required by time and conditions” does not exist in the original text of the verse. However, first of all, as mentioned in many other verses, the Qur’an discriminates among the opponents of Islam, and even the unbelievers, the People of the Book, and the polytheists themselves, as seen at the beginning of this surah. It never orders that all the unbelievers and hypocrites be treated in the same way. It orders that sometimes the Muslims should treat them with patience, sometimes with forgiveness, and sometimes by overlooking their ill-treatment of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and the believers. There even comes a time when the believers are ordered to converse with them in the best way possible and call them to the truth with fair exhortation and wisdom. What is important is that we should know what kinds of unbelievers and hypocrites are being discussed, and under what limited conditions the verse orders the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and, therefore, the Muslims, to strive hard and be stern against them. We should, finally, point out that the ways of striving against the unbelievers and that of striving against the hypocrites differ from one another. For example, since the hypocrites are Muslim in appearance and are regarded as such, Muslims cannot fight against them as long as they obey the government and fulfill their duties of citizenship. (See also verse 123, note 28.)

16. The verses reveal how disgusting hypocrisy is, and they warn people against it. The last verse describes a typical aspect of hypocrisy. Those who have no praiseworthy virtues taunt the worthy people because of their merits. For example, as mentioned in the verse, those who do not spend out of their wealth for the good of the community and in God’s cause, attempt to find fault with those who do give, and they taunt them with accusations that they are making a show. The hypocrites during the Messenger’s time accused the wealthy believers who donated large amounts of money of insincerity and ostentation, and scoffed at the poor believers who donated modest amounts out of their scanty earnings through their hard toil, saying, “Will the strongholds of Byzantium be destroyed with what those give?!” They derided them by making signs with their eyes and eyebrows. This was the reflection of the hypocrisy in their hearts. The attitudes, such as derision, scoffing and taunting, which some display when they see others who have merits that they do not have, demonstrate the hypocrisy in their hearts. Even though we cannot say that anyone who does this is a hypocrite, it is certain that such attitudes are, in fact, attitudes that typically belong to hypocrites.
80. Whether you (O Messenger) pray for their forgiveness or do not pray for their forgiveness, even if you pray for their forgiveness seventy times, God will not forgive them. That is because they disbelieve in God and His Messenger. God will not guide the transgressing people.

81. Those who were left behind in opposition to God's Messenger rejoiced at staying at home, and abhorred striving with their wealth and persons in God's cause. And they said: “Do not go forth to war in this heat.” Say (O Messenger): “The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat.” If only they had been able to ponder and penetrate the essence of matters to grasp the truth!

82. So let them laugh little and weep much, in recompense for what they have been earning.

83. If God brings you back (from the Campaign), and a party of them ask your leave to go forth to war with you, say to them: “Never will you go forth with me any more, nor will you fight an enemy in my company. You were content to stay at home on that first occasion, so continue to stay at home with those who are (naturally) bound to remain behind!”

84. And never do the funeral Prayer over any of them who dies, nor stand by his grave to pray for him. They surely disbelieved in God and His Messenger, and died transgressors.

85. Let neither their wealth nor their children impress you; God only wills thereby to punish them in this world, and that their souls should depart while they are unbelievers.  

86. (Indeed they are unbelievers, and never want to go forth to war in God's cause.) Whenever a surah is sent down (calling them): “Believe in God, and strive in God's cause in the company of His Messenger,” (even) those of them who are well able (to go to war) ask you to excuse them, saying: “Leave us to be with those who are to stay at home.”

17. See verse 55, note 14.
87. They are well-pleased to be with those (women and children) bound to stay behind, and a seal has been set upon their hearts, so they cannot ponder and penetrate the essence of matters to grasp the truth.

88. But the Messenger and those who believe in his company have striven in God's cause with their wealth and persons. They are those for whom is all good, and they are those who are the prosperous.

89. God has prepared for them Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide. That is the supreme triumph.

90. Some among the Bedouin Arabs having true excuses came (to the Messenger) to ask leave to stay behind, whereas those who are false to God and His Messenger (in their covenant and claim of adherence) stayed at home (without taking part in the campaign). A painful punishment will befall those of them who disbelieve.

91. There is no blame on those too weak to go forth to war, and the sick, and on those who cannot find the means (with which to equip and maintain themselves if they go forth), provided that they are true to God and His Messenger. There can be no way (of blame) against those who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them. God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

92. Nor (can there be any way to blame) those who, when they came to you to provide them with mounts, and you said, "I cannot find anything whereon to mount you," they returned, their eyes overflowing with tears in sorrow that they could not find anything to spend (to prepare themselves for the campaign).

93. The way (of blame) is open only against those who sought leave to stay behind even though they are wealthy (well able to equip themselves for the campaign). They were well-pleased to be with those (women and children) bound to stay behind. God has set a seal on their hearts, so that they do not know (the truth and what is really beneficial to them).
94. They will offer excuses to you (O believers) when you return to them. Say (to them, O Messenger): “Do not offer excuses: we will never believe you. God has informed us (of the truth) about you. And God will observe your (future) conduct, and so will His Messenger, and then you will be brought back to the Knower of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm), and He will make you understand what you used to do (and call you to account).”

95. When you return to them, they will (out of fear of punishment) swear to you in the Name of God, (repeating their excuses) so that you may leave them be. So leave them be and withdraw from them. They are loathsome, and their final refuge is Hell as a recompense for what they have been earning.

96. They will swear to you so that you may be pleased with them. But even should you be pleased with them, God will not be pleased with the transgressing people.

97. The Bedouin Arabs are (by nature) more stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy (than the city-dwellers), and more liable to be unaware of the bounds prescribed by God in what He has sent down on His Messenger. God is All-Knowing (of the nature and state of His servants), All-Wise.

98. Among the Bedouin Arabs, there are such as take what they spend (as Prescribed Alms and the contributions they are called on to make in God's cause) as a fine, and wait for some misfortune to befall you; theirs will be the evil turn. God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

99. Among the Bedouin Arabs, there are also those who believe in God and the Last Day, and take what they spend (as Prescribed Alms and the contributions they are called on to make in God's cause) as a means of drawing them near to God and of the Messenger's praying (to God for them). Indeed, it is a means for them to draw near to God. God will admit them into His mercy. Surely, God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.
18. The Bedouin Arabs were those who lived a nomadic life in the desert or in villages. As a culture, and through centuries of their particular lifestyle, they had developed general patterns of behavior whereby many of them, if not most, were rude, obstinate, and ignorant. Most could not find time to visit the Messenger and listen to him. So it was difficult for some among them to change their centuries-old world-view, beliefs, and lifestyle.

We should note here that history tells us that both the unbelievers and hypocrites who lived during the Messenger’s life were the most refractory of all times. Both the people of Makkah and Madinah, while extremely courageous, were also arrogant, merciless, and deeply devoted to their centuries-old cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles; therefore, they were extremely difficult to deal with. But the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, educated them in such a way that he raised from them the greatest, most merciful, wise, virtuous, and knowledgeable community of all times. They came to be known and respected as the Companions, and they became the teachers of all future Muslim generations. This is one of the greatest miracles of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, which is unparalleled in human history. Said Nursi writes:

Consider how he quickly eradicated his people’s fanatic attachment to their evil and savage customs and immoral qualities. See how he equipped and adorned the Peninsula’s disparate, wild, and unyielding peoples with all praiseworthy virtues and made them teachers and masters of the world, especially to the civilized nations. Moreover, this domination was not outward – he conquered and subjugated minds, spirits, hearts, and souls. He became the beloved of hearts, the teacher of minds, the trainer of souls, and the ruler of spirits.

You know that a small habit like smoking, even in a small community, can be removed permanently only by a powerful ruler and with great effort. But the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, quickly removed numerous ingrained habits from large obsessed communities with little outward power and effort. In their place, he implanted and inculcated exalted qualities that became inherent in their being. Many more such miraculous accomplishments can be credited to him. To those who refuse to see the testimony of this blessed age, let them go to the present “civilized” Arabian Peninsula with hundreds of philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists, and strive for 100 years. I wonder if they can achieve in that period even a small fraction of what the Prophet achieved in a year (The Words, “The 19th Word,” 249–250).

In viewing the Qur’anic passages about the unbelievers among the hypocrites, this point should never be forgotten.
100. The first and foremost (to embrace Islam and excel others in virtue) among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who follow them in devotion to doing good, aware that God is seeing them – God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them Gardens throughout which rivers flow, therein to abide for ever. That is the supreme triumph.¹⁹

101. Among the Bedouin Arabs who dwell around you, there are hypocrites, and among the people of Madīnah (too), there are such as have grown more artful and insidious in hypocrisy: you (O Messenger) do not know them (unless We inform you of them). We know them all (and the threat they pose). We will punish them doubly, and then they will be returned to a mighty punishment (in the Hereafter).

102. Others (there are who) have admitted their sins: they have mixed a righteous deed with an evil one. It may be that God will return their repentance with forgiveness. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

103. Take alms (prescribed or voluntary) out of their wealth so that you (O Messenger) may thereby cleanse them and cause them to grow in purity and sincerity, and pray for them. Indeed your prayer is a source of comfort for them. God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

104. Do they not know that surely God is He Who welcomes His servants’ turning to Him in repentance, and accepts what is offered as charity (prescribed or voluntary) for His sake, and that surely God is He Who accepts repentance and returns it with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants)?

105. Say: “Work, and God will see your work, and so will His Messenger and the true believers; and you will be brought back to the Knower of the Unseen (of all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm), and He will make you understand all that you were doing (and call you to account for it).

106. And yet others (there are, about whom) God’s decree is awaited: whether He will punish them or guide them to repentance to forgive them. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.
19. This verse is enough to show the merit of the Messenger’s Companions. The Muslim scholars unanimously agree that the Companions of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, are the most meritorious of all people after the Prophets. It should be noted that while the Qur’ān uses the preposition min (functioning to exclude some part from a whole) in describing the Gardens which all other believers will be admitted into, it does not do so in this verse. So, while there are rivers in other Gardens flowing through them, the Gardens into which the Companions will be admitted have rivers flowing throughout them. This means that they are richer than the others in blessings and bounties.

According to the definition of the scholars, a Companion is “a believer who saw and heard the Messenger at least once and died as a believer” (al-Asqalānī, 1: 7). Scholars have divided them into twelve ranks, according to their precedence in accepting and serving Islam, which are as described below: (Some Companions, particularly those who were the first to accept Islam, are included in many of the ranks. For example, nine of the ten who were promised Paradise while they were alive and who comprise the first rank are also included in the second. So, each rank should be considered with respect to those who are included in it particularly.)

- The four Rightly Guided Caliphs (Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘A‘ī), and the rest of the ten who were promised Paradise while still alive (Zubayr ibn al-‘Aw_Tab, Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ, ‘Abdurrahmān ibn al-‘Awīf, Talhah ibn ‘Ubaydullāh, Sa’d ibn Ahi Waqqāṣ, and Sa’d ibn Zayd).
- Those who believed prior to ‘Umar’s conversion and met secretly in Zayd ibn Arqān’s house to listen to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.
- Those who migrated to Abyssinia.
- The Helpers (Ansār) who swore their allegiance to the Messenger at al-‘Aqabah.
- The Helpers who swore their allegiance at al-‘Aqabah the following year.
- The Emigrants who joined the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, during the Ḥijrah before his arrival in Madīnah from Qūba, where he stayed for a short while.
- The Companions who fought at Badr.
- Those who emigrated to Madīnah between the Battle of Badr and the Treaty of Hudaybiyah.
- The Companions who swore allegiance under a tree during the expedition to Hudaybiyah.
- Those who converted and emigrated to Madīnah after the Treaty of Hudaybiyah.
- Those who became Muslims after the conquest of Makkah.
- Children who saw the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, any time or any place after the conquest of Makkah (al-Ḥākim, 22–24).

Some interpreters of the Qur’ān understand from the expression, The first and foremost among the Emigrants and the Helpers, to be indicating the first two or three ranks among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and the expression those who follow them in devotion to doing good aware that God is seeing them, denoting the others. But some are of the opinion that the preposition min, translated as “among,” functions here as an explanation and therefore the Emigrants and the Helpers are in apposition to the first and foremost. According to these scholars, all of the Emigrants and Helpers are the first and foremost in Islam, and those who follow them in devotion to doing good, aware that God is seeing them are the two generations which followed the Companions. The Messenger declared: “The best people are those living in my time. Then come those who follow them, and then come those who follow them. Those will be followed by a generation whose witness is sometimes true, sometimes false” (al-Bukhārī, “Fadā’il al-Aṣḥāb,” 1; Muslim, “Fadā’il al-ṣahābah,” 212).

20. There are some events which function as decisive criteria in clearly distinguishing people from one another, in helping to understand their character and values, and in judg-
ing them. The campaign to Tabuk during the Messenger’s time was one of these events. It explicitly showed that there are groups among the Muslims of different ranks.

As pointed out above in note 1 (Appendix 3), there are basically two kinds of Muslims: the real ones who believe in whatever must be believed, and the false ones who are legally Muslims or Muslim citizens of an Islamic state. If a person verbally declares faith and attends the congregational prayer, in particular the Friday Prayer, and pays the Prescribed Alms, then he or she is regarded as a Muslim. But such a person may well be a hypocrite who is inwardly an unbeliever. The campaign to Tabuk displayed the existence of three groups of Muslims:

• True believers: They took part in the campaign willingly, or if they did not take part this was because they could not, due either to lacking the necessary means or being ill or too weak. These believers always remained true to God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and made free donations each according to their capacity. Among these believers there were also ranks. Some excelled others in embracing Islam and serving it, while others followed them sincerely and in devotion to doing good.

• The believers who did not take part in the campaign but immediately repented. God forgave them.

• The believers who did not participate in the campaign and yet showed no repentance. Their case was deferred until a time when God would pass His judgment on them. They were those whom verse 118 would describe as also having repented sincerely. They were also forgiven.

• The hypocrites: They did not believe in the essentials of faith, but declared faith verbally. Even though reluctantly and lazily, they attended the congregational prayers, in particular the Friday Prayer, and, if they were wealthy enough, they paid the Prescribed Alms. But they frequently lied, never missed any opportunity to cause harm to Islam, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the believers. Some of them were more artful and insidious in their hypocrisy. But the matchless sagacity, insight and intelligence of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, as well as the fact that he was supported by Divine Revelation, prevented all their plans from being successful. However, since they did not do anything that would have legally classified them as unbelievers or apostates, they were still regarded as Muslims. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, did not disclose their identity. He only told Hudayfah ibn al-Yamān about them. After he was prohibited from performing their funeral prayer (9: 84), the Messenger did not perform the funeral prayer for any hypocrite when they died. After the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the other Companions, including ‘Umar in particular, followed the lead of Hudayfah as to whether a funeral prayer should be performed for a person, and if Hudayfah did not participate in someone’s funeral prayer, then they did not participate either.
107. Some among the hypocrites – who have adopted a mosque out of dissen- sion and unbelief, in order to cause divi- sion among the believers, and use as an outpost to collaborate with him who be- fore made war on God and His Messenger – will certainly swear: “We mean noth- ing but good (in building this mosque)”, whereas God bears witness that they are surely liars.

108. Do not stand in that mosque to do the Prayer. The mosque that was found- ed on piety and reverence for God from the very first days (in Madīnah) is wor- thy that you should stand in it for the Prayer. In it are men who love to be pu- rified (of all spiritual and moral blemish- es). God loves those who strive to purify themselves.

109. Is he better, who founded his build- ing (religion and personal world) on pi- ety and reverence for God, and the aim to please God, or he who founded his building on the edge of a water-worn, crumbling river-bank, so that it tumbles with him into the Hell-fire? God does not guide wrongdoing people.

110. The building (systems, plans, and life- styles) which the hypocrites have founded will never cease to be doubt and disquiet in their hearts (that are crushed by fear and anxieties) unless their hearts are cut in- to pieces (and they themselves die). God does not guide wrongdoing people.

111. God is All-Knowing (of their states of mind and conspiracies), All-Wise (in Whose ev- ery act and decree there are many instanc- es of wisdom).

22 God is All-Knowing (of their states of mind and conspiracies), All-Wise (in Whose ev- ery act and decree there are many instanc- es of wisdom).

23 They fight in God’s cause, and they kill or are killed. This is a prom- ise with which God has bound Himself in the Torah and in the Gospel and in the Qur’ān. Who could be more faithful to his covenant than God? So (O believers), glad tidings to you because of the bargain you have made with Him! That, indeed, is the supreme triumph.
21. This verse mentions a very important point. Despite the Qur'ān's emphatic warnings, Muslims have been unable to perceive the conspiracies of hypocrites, except during the Age of Happiness, including to a certain extent the period of the first Four Rightly Guided Caliphs; many acts of hypocrisy have been sources of the greatest danger for Muslims.

In their unceasing struggle against Islam in Madīnah, the hypocrites built a mosque. It was meant to divide the Muslim Community. They invited the Messenger to inaugurate it by leading the first prayer in it. However, the Messenger excused himself from this, as he was busy with the preparations for the campaign to Tabuk.

There was a man called Abū 'Āmir who had become a Christian before the Messenger’s emigration to Madīnah and who desired to be the chief. But, since he had not been able to realize his plans once the Messenger emigrated there, he had become the enemy of the Messenger and began to fight against him. He finally went to the Emperor of Byzantium to provoke him against the Muslims. By building the mosque, the hypocrites also intended to use it as a base to collaborate with these enemies. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who knew the real purpose for the construction of that mosque, ordered its destruction on his return from Tabuk.

Many bands of hypocrites under the guise of Islam have conspired against Muslims during the history of Islam. As well as having played a great part in the emergence of many of the heterodox sects, it has also been such bands that caused the destruction of the Ottoman State and have conspired against Muslims throughout the world since that time. Although Muslims in name, they usually belong to different faiths or are anti-religious, and are refractory enemies of Islam. Among them, some have appeared who have even built mosques and infiltrated some Muslim organizations. It is unfortunate that in recent centuries, in particular, Muslims seems to have lacked the insight to recognize these people.

22. This verse describes the inner worlds of the hypocrites in an extraordinarily figurative style. All the systems that they devise, the plans that they make, and the outposts they build to struggle with Islam are nothing but a source of disquiet and fear for them. For they feign to be Muslims while their hearts are like nests of snakes and scorpions. Since they are traitors, they are fearful. They constantly feel fear over being discovered, and of their plans being brought to light. This fear pounds in their chests. It is evident to what extent such a fear can be harmful to the heart. If the bands of hypocrites have been successful to a certain extent in their conspiracies against the Muslims, particularly in recent centuries, this is because the Muslims have fallen away from Islam and have lost the discernment that Islam provides for them. In truth, hypocrisy is a dungeon or prison for a hypocrite.

23. It is God Who has created humankind and prepared all the conditions for our life. So, He is our absolute Owner. However, He has distinguished and honored us with free will and, without leaving us to be lost in the “wasteland” of the world, He has informed us of what consequences we will meet in return for what we do.

As the very being of all humans belongs to God, His share in what they suppose to be their wealth is more than 999/1000. For example, air and water are two of the three basic essentials for human life; these belong solely to God and almost nothing of them is the property of human beings or the result of their effort. It is also God Who creates the wheat seed and Who equips it with the ability to germinate; Who creates air, water, earth, and solar light, which are essential to its growth; and Who brings about the necessary co-operation among these elements. Again, it is He Who creates human beings with the power and ability to obtain this wheat. Therefore, their share in the bread they make from it is even less than one in a thousand.

Though humans, with their very being and their wealth, belong absolutely to God, God offers them a bargain: He will buy from them what He has deposited in them in return for eternal happiness. He will also safeguard them
from being troubled because of these things. This is a bargain completely in their favor. Nevertheless, our ignorance and heedlessness can prevent us from willingly accepting such a bargain.

While the Qur’an mentions first wealth and then the person of human beings in the places where it talks about striving in God’s cause, in this verse, it gives precedence to the being or persons of human beings. This is because it is these beings themselves that will enjoy eternal happiness in Paradise (The Words, “The 6th Word,” Kur’an'dan İdrake, 1: 182–183).

24. The verse explicitly informs us of a promise to the believers, which is mentioned in the Torah, the Gospel, and in the Qur’an. However, although there are many passages in the Gospel that concern Paradise, sometimes under the title of the Kingdom of Heaven, such as in the verse “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew, 5: 10), and some times under the title of eternal life, such as in the verse, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew, 19: 29). The Torah in its present form does not contain any explicit promise of Paradise. It is shorn of the notion of life after death, of the Day of Judgment, and of Divine reward and punishment, even though belief in the Hereafter is the second pillar of faith in all God-revealed religions. Although the original Torah certainly contained passages concerning this pillar, since the present Torah is the product of a time in Jewish history when Jews tragically became too worldly, all the promises of the eternal life of Paradise were taken to mean triumph in this worldly life, and the descriptions of Paradise were interpreted as being descriptions of Palestine. For example, in the Qur’an 48: 15, Paradise is described as a place that has been promised to the pious, in which there are rivers of pure, unpolluted water, of milk, of delicious, non-intoxicant wine (fruit juice), and of pure honey. But in the present Torah, the land with milk and honey (Deuteronomy, 6: 3) has come to be taken to mean Palestine.

However, there are some Jews who regard the Resurrection and afterlife as being “the thirteenth foundation” of the Jewish religion. For example: The Thirteenth Foundation is the resurrection of the dead. The following is a translation of what the Ramba’im writes on this subject: The resurrection of the dead is a foundation from the foundations of Moshe our Teacher, may peace be upon him. There is no faith and no connection to the Jewish religion for one who does not believe this. But the resurrection is only for the righteous. And so we find the Sages teach: “The rains are for the righteous and the wicked, and the resurrection of the dead is for the righteous alone.” (http://members.aol.com/LazerA/13yesodos.html)
112. Those who return in repentance to God, and those who worship God, and those who praise God, and those who travel (with such aims as conveying God's Message or studying and making investigations for God's sake or reflecting on God's signs), and those who bow down in awe of God, and those who prostrate themselves before God in submission, and those who enjoin and promote what is right and good, and forbid and try to prevent evil, and those who keep to the bounds set by God: give glad tidings to the believers.

113. 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 they (died polytheists and, therefore,) are condemned to the Blazing Flame.

114. The prayer of Abraham for the forgiveness of his father was only because of a promise which he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he (Abraham) dissociated himself from him. Abraham was most tender-hearted, most clement.

115. It is not God's way to lead people astray after He has guided them, without having made clear to them what they should beware of (so as to guard against straying). Surely God has full knowledge of everything.

116. God is He to Whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes to die. And you have, apart from God, neither a guardian (who will protect you and to whom you can entrust your affairs) nor a helper.

117. God has assuredly turned in mercy to the Prophet, as well as to the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed him in the time of hardship, when the hearts of a party among them had well-nigh swerved but God turned (also) to them in mercy (and protected against swerving). Surely for them He is All-Pitying, All-Compionate.
25. It is a controversial matter whether Ādār, whom the Qurʾān mentions as the Prophet Abraham’s father, was his real father or foster father. The Qurʾān always uses the term *āb* for him, which can mean either real father or foster father. Abraham, upon him be peace, promised him that he would ask God for his forgiveness (sūrah 19: 47). In order to fulfill his promise, he asked for his forgiveness (sūrah 26: 86). Then it became clear to Abraham, upon him be peace, that Ādār was the enemy of God, he stopped praying for him. However, we also read in the Qurʾān that toward the end of his life when he begot both Ishmael (Ismāʿīl) and Isaac (Ishāq), upon them be peace, Abraham prayed for his parents, saying: *Our Lord! Forgive me, and my parents* (sūrah 14: 41). The Qurʾān uses here the word *wālidayn* (parents), not *ābawayn*. While *āb* may mean real father or foster father, the word *wālid* means real father. We conclude from this that Ādār was not the real father of the Prophet Abraham, upon him be God’s peace.

26. After He has guided a people, God never lets them go astray without having made fully clear to them what attitudes may result in their going astray. So, those who deviate from the right path after God has guided them to it are those whose hearts God swerves because they themselves swerve from the right path (6: 5), and who change their inner worlds, world-views, and life-styles (sūrah 13: 11).
118. And (He turned in mercy also) to the three left behind and whose cases had been deferred (because they had not taken part in the campaign of Tabuk): (they felt such remorse that) the earth was too narrow for them despite all its vastness, and their souls became utterly constricted for them, and they came to perceive fully that there is no refuge from God except in Him. Then He turned to them in mercy, that they might repent and recover their former state (in Islam). Surely God is the One Who truly returns repentance with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, the All-Compassionate (especially towards His believing servants.)

119. O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and keep the company of the truthful (those who are also faithful to their covenant with God).

120. It does not behove the people of Madīnah and the Bedouin Arabs around them to fail to follow God’s Messenger and to care for their own selves more than for him. That is because they suffer neither from thirst, nor weariness, nor hunger in God’s cause, nor take a step which enrages the unbelievers, nor win some gain from the enemy, but a righteous deed is thereby recorded for them (to their account). Indeed, God does not leave to waste the reward of those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

121. Nor do they spend any amount for God’s sake, small or great, nor do they cross a valley (while traveling in God’s cause), but it is recorded for them (to their account) so that God may repay them the best reward for what they used to do.

122. And the believers should not go forth to war all together. But why should not a party from every community of them mobilize to acquire profound, correct knowledge and understanding of the Religion, and warn their people when they return to them so that they may beware (of wrongful attitudes)?

27. Islam is a religion of perfect balance, each part of which is exactly where it should be. While exhorting the believers to mobilize against one of the two superpowers of the time, the Qur’an does not neglect an important dimension. It orders the Muslim community that there must be some among these people who are well-versed in Islam. If the warriors are victorious, they may feel proud and adopt some undesirable attitudes in the society, while if they are defeated, this may cause them to despair for the future. So they may need a warning from someone well-versed in Islam. Secondly, the army members may not have enough time to learn the commandments of the religion. All this requires that there must be a scholarly group who will teach them. The verse uses the word “tafakkuh” for the group that is to be mobilized in order to instruct in the religion. This means to penetrate the essence of a matter, to attain a deep and correct understanding and discernment. Only such people can grasp the religion accurately and these people are called faqīh.
123. O you who believe! Fight against those unbelievers who are in your vicinity (and pose an immediate threat to you and the preaching of Islam), and let them find in you sternness. Know that God is with the God-revering, pious who keep their duty to Him.

124. Whenever a sûrah is sent down, there are some among them (the hypocrites) who say: “Which of you has this strengthened in his faith?” As for those who believe, it does strengthen them in faith, and they rejoice in its being sent down and in the glad tidings (they receive thereby).

125. But as for those in whose hearts there is a disease (that dries up the source of their spiritual life, extinguishes their power of understanding, and corrupts their character), it increases them in foulness added to their foulness, and they die while they are unbelievers.

126. Do they not see that they are tried time and again every year (by coming face to face with such decisive events and situations as reveal to them their inner world and remind them that they should turn to God in repentance and mend their ways)? Yet they neither repent (and mend their ways) nor take warning (from all that befalls them).

127. Whenever a sûrah is sent down (and the Messenger is reciting it in the presence of the Muslims), they glance at each other (as though saying), “Is there anyone who sees you?” and then they slip away. God has turned their hearts away (from the truth) because they are a people who do not ponder and try to grasp the truth.

128. There has come to you (O people) a Messenger from among yourselves; extremely grievous to him is your suffering, full of concern for you is he, and for the believers full of pity and compassion.

129. Still, if they turn away from you (O Messenger), say: “God is sufficient for me; there is no deity but He. In Him have I put my trust, and He is the Lord of the Supreme Throne (as the absolute Ruler and Sustainer of the universe and all creation, Who maintains and protects it).”
28. There is a relationship between this verse and verse 73. In verse 73, it is ordered that the believers must strive hard (do *jihād*) against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be stern against them. This verse also orders fighting against the unbelievers and being stern against them. When the two verses are considered together, we understand that the unbelievers and hypocrites against whom they ordered the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and the believers to strive hard and be stern were particularly those in and around Madinah. Just as the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was ordered to begin preaching Islam with his nearest kindred (*sūrah* 26: 214), so it is natural that priority in fighting should be given to those who are in the neighborhood and pose an immediate threat. This was also required by the fact that the very center of Islam had to be secure against every attack.

While verse 73 orders doing *jihād* against both the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and being stern against them, this verse orders fighting against the unbelievers only, and being stern against them in particular. This explicitly shows the difference between *jihād* and fighting (*qitāl*). Since the hypocrites are legally regarded as Muslims, the Muslims are not allowed to fight them unless they cause disorder and dissent and rebel against public order. But the Muslims must do *jihād* against both the unbelievers and the hypocrites.

29. At first, a person usually believes in the essentials of faith superficially. But when they continue to order their life in the light of their faith, carrying out their religious duties, regularly worshiping God, reflecting on the essentials and truths of faith based on the evidence that they collect from “nature,” events, and their conscience and heart, increasing in knowledge about them, then they increasingly deepen their understanding and knowledge. Thus, the truths of faith are increasingly expanded in their mind and heart with the result that, like a bud blossoming into an elaborate flower with full-grown petals, their faith constantly develops. Imam Rabbānī Ahmad al-Fāruqī al-Sirhindī (d. 1624), one of the greatest scholars and Sufi masters in Islam, who lived in India, says: “I would prefer to make one matter of faith known in plain terms than attain thousands of spiritual pleasures and ecstasies and work wonders.” He also says: “The final station of all spiritual journeying is to attain the full perception of the truths of faith” (*The Letters*, “The 5th Letter,” 22). This knowledge and perception cause faith to grow stronger and deeper.
1. Alif. Lām. M. Rā. These are the Revelations included in the Book full of wisdom.

2. Does it seem strange to people that We reveal to a man from among them, saying: “Warn all humankind (of the consequences of the way they follow), and give those who believe the glad tidings that they have a sure footing with their Lord (on account of their belief, faithfulness, and righteous deeds)?”

3. Is it because of this that the unbelievers say: “This (man) is clearly a sorcerer?”

4. Surely your Lord is God, Who has created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established Himself on the Supreme Throne, directing all affairs (as the sole Ruler of creation). There is none to intercede with God unless after He grants leave. That is God, Your Lord, so worship Him. Will you still not reflect (on this fundamental truth) and be mindful?

5. To Him you are all bound to return: a promise from God in truth (therefore certain to happen). He originates creation, then He brings it forth anew (in another world) to the end that He may reward with equity those who believe and do good, righteous deeds. Whereas, for those who disbelieve (and die as unbelievers), there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment because they persistently disbelieve.

6. He it is Who has made the sun a radiant, illuminating light, and the moon a light reflected, and has determined for it stations, that you might know (how to compute) the number of the years and to measure (time). God has not created that but with truth (meaningfully, for a definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth). He sets out in detail the signs (and proofs of the truth) for a people seeking knowledge.

7. In the alternation of night and day (with their periods shortening and lengthening), and all that He has created in the heavens and the earth, surely there are signs (manifesting truth) for a people who keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him.
1. The initial verses of a surah disclose the main theme that will be dealt with. The first two verses of this surah indicate that it will dwell mainly on the Divine origin of the Qur‘ān and the evidence presented will be based on wisdom. The evidence to be drawn from the universe, human life, history, and events as the manifestations of the Divine Name the All-Wise, will address human intellect, thought, and power of reasoning, and present to us the instances of wisdom in the creation of humans and the universe.

2. For the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the meaning of the Supreme Throne and God’s establishing Himself thereon, see surah 2: 28, note 28-29; surah 7: 54, note 13; and surah 41, note 2.
7. Those who have no expectations to meet Us and are well-pleased with the present, worldly life, and (neither looking nor seeing beyond it) are content with it, and those who are heedless of Our Revelations and Our signs (manifested to them in their inner worlds and in the outer world):

8. Those are they whose final refuge is the Fire because of what they have been earning.

9. Surely for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief to a happy end; rivers will flow at their feet in the Gardens of bounty and blessing.

10. Therein, their invocation will be: “All-Glorified You are, O God! (You are absolutely exalted above having any defects and doing anything wrong.)” And their greeting (to each other, and from God and the angels) will be: “Peace!” And their invocation will close with “All praise and gratitude are for God, the Lord of the worlds!”

11. If God were to hasten for human beings the ill (which they have earned) in the same manner as they hasten (the coming to them of what they consider to be) the good, their term would indeed have been decreed over for them. But We leave those who do not expect to encounter Us in their rebellion, blindly wandering.

12. When affliction befalls (such) a person, he invokes Us (in every situation), lying down on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove his affliction from him, he goes his way as if he had never invoked us for an affliction that befell him. So to those wasteful ones (who have wasted their God-given faculties and committed excesses) are the things they have been doing decked out to be appealing.

13. Assuredly We destroyed many generations before you when they committed wrongs (in their deeds, in their measures and judgments, and in their response to the truth): the Messengers raised from among them came to them with the clear proofs of the truth, but it was plain that they would not believe. Thus do We recompense the disbelieving criminals committed to accumulating sins.

14. Then We made you successors after them on the earth, so that We might behold how you act.
15. When Our Revelations, clear as evidence and in meaning are recited (and conveyed) to them, those who have no expectations to meet Us say (in response to Our Messenger): “Either bring a Qur’an other than this or alter it.” Say: “It is not for me to alter it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I should rebel against my Lord, the punishment of an Awful Day.”

16. Say (also): “If God had so willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have brought it to your knowledge. I lived among you a whole lifetime before it (began to be revealed to me). Will you not reason and understand?”

17. Who is more in the wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God, or denies His Revelations and His signs (in the universe and in their own selves)? Surely the disbelieving criminals will not prosper.

18. They worship, apart from God, things or beings that can neither harm nor benefit them, and they say: “These are our intercessors with God.” Say: “Would you inform God of something in the heavens or the earth that He does not know? All-Glorified is He, and absolutely exalted above all that they associate with Him.”

19. Humankind (in the beginning) was but one community following one single way; but later, they differed and began following different ways. Had it not been for a decree already issued by your Lord (postponing the final, decisive judgment until an appointed term), it would indeed have been judged between them in respect of all that they differ on.

20. They say: “Why isn’t a miraculous sign (of a different sort) sent down on him from his Lord?” Say, then: “The Unseen belongs to God alone (He does whatever He wills, and only He knows what the future will bring); therefore, wait and see, indeed I, too, am with you among those who wait.”

3. For the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, among his people, before and during his mission, as being evidence for his Prophethood, see Appendix 5.
21. Whenever We let the (unbelieving) people taste an act of grace after a hardship which has visited them, they at once contrive some plot against Our Revelations. Say: “God is more swift in enforcing His will (and making any plot rebound on those who conceived it).” Surely Our (heavenly) envoys (angels) are recording what they are devising.

22. He it is Who conveys you on the land and the sea. And when you are in the ships, and the ships run with their voyagers with a fair breeze, and they rejoice in it – until there comes upon them a tempest, and waves surge towards them from all sides, so that they are sure that they are encompassed (by death with no way out), and they call upon God, sincerely believing in Him alone (as the only Deity, Lord, and Sovereign): “If You save us from this, we will most certainly be among the thankful.”

23. But when He has saved them, they behave rebelliously on earth, offending against all right. O humankind! Your rebellion is only against yourselves. (What you seek and get by all your offenses is only) the enjoyment of the present, worldly life; thereafter, to Us is your return, whereupon We will make you understand what you were doing (and call you to account).

24. The present, worldly life is like this: We send down water from the sky, and the earth’s vegetation, of which humans and animals eat, mingles with it, until, when the earth has taken on her ornaments and has been embellished, and its inhabitants suppose that they are its masters with a free hand over the earth, Our command comes upon it by night or day unexpectedly, and We cause it to become like a field mown down, as if it had not flourished the previous day. Thus, We set out in detail the signs (the signposts of Our way, and the relevant commands and guidance included in the Qurʾān) for a people who reflect (on them and draw the necessary lesson).

25. And God invites to the Abode of Peace (where they will enjoy perfect bliss, peace, and safety,) and He guides whomsoever He wills to a Straight Path.

4. The Qurʾān is a miracle of eloquence. This verse draws a portrait of an attractive, elaborately dressed woman, decked out in all her ornaments. In fact, the world is often compared to an alluring, unfaithful woman. By using a feminine pronoun for the earth, the Qurʾān adds a new dimension to this comparison. But the riches and beauties of the physical world, like the physical beauty of a woman, are also transient.
26. For those who do good, aware that God is seeing them, is the best (of the rewards that God has promised for good deeds), and still more. Neither stain nor ignominy will cover their faces. They are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein.

27. And for those who have earned evil deeds, the recompense of an evil deed will be the like of it; and ignominy will cover them – nor will they have anyone to defend them against God – it is as though their faces were veiled with patches of darkest night. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein.

28. On that Day, We will raise them all to life and gather them all together, and then We will order those who associated partners with God: “Get to your place, you and your (so-called) associates (of God)!” So did We distinguish between them and the believers, and separate them from their associates. Their associates say to them: “It was not us that you worshipped.

29. “God is sufficient as a witness between us and you: we were certainly unaware of your worshipping (us).”

30. There, every soul will experience what it did before (in the world). They have been returned to God, their true Owner and Master; and those that they fabricated to worship besides God have failed them.

31. Say: “Who is it that provides for you from heaven and earth, or who is it that possesses full power over (your) hearing and eyes; and Who is it that brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the whole affair (the universe)?” They will say, “It is God.” Then, say: “Will you not then keep your duty to him in reverence for Him and in fear of His punishment?”

32. That is God (Who does all these), Your rightful Lord, the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant. What is there, after the truth, but error? Then, how are you turned about (to different ways, removed from the Straight Path)?

33. Thus has the word of your Lord proved true with regard to those who transgress: that they will not believe.
5. God rewards a good deed done with sincerity at least tenfold ( sûrah 6: 160). This reward can multiply as much as 700 times ( sûrah 2: 261) or even more, according to the depth of the sincerity in doing it, how well it is done, and the conditions under which it is done. In addition to this, God gives more than that in Paradise, purely out of His grace. We cannot imagine what this surplus reward will be like because Paradise is full of the bounties of God, bounties that no eyes have ever seen, and of which no ears have ever heard, and which no minds have ever conceived. The believers will also be favored there with the vision of God, the nature of which is beyond our grasp and knowledge here in this world.

While God returns a good deed with multiple rewards, the recompense for an evil deed is only the like of it.

6. The Makkan polytheists admitted that God was the Creator and Governor of the universe, but associated partners with Him in ordering their own lives. They did not accept a power above themselves with which to order their lives. It was they who devised deities for themselves and, although they imbued their (false) deities with some power, it was not their deities that ruled them, but, rather like all other polytheists throughout history, including today, they themselves exploited their deities in their own interests.

There have been, and of course there still are, such people who will not give the answer, “It is God,” to the questions posed in this verse. But as they do not have a definite alternative answer, they will cite different things or mention some hypotheses. They will never be able to convince themselves of the truth of their answers, and their consciences will not be at rest with the hypotheses they have put forward. So many of them will take refuge in agnosticism. For this reason, even if their carnal selves attempt to give different answers to the questions asked in the verse, the answer which almost everyone’s conscience will be comfortable with, especially under the conditions mentioned in verse 22, will be, “It is God.” However, this answer emanating from the conscience, especially under particular conditions, is not faith, for faith is confirmation and conviction with the heart (and reason), willingly and knowingly.

7. The true, straight way is one, while the ways of error are almost as numerous as the people who are in error. All of the Prophets who came during human history agreed on the same essentials of faith, worship, good conduct, and the basic rules of law, and on the same worldview, the same view of things and events. They gave the same answer to the basic questions of life, questions which everyone asks themselves and which philosophers and thinkers have tried to answer, namely: “Who am I?” “What is the meaning of life and death, and what do they demand of me?” “Who has sent me to the world and for what purpose?” “Who is my guide on this earthly journey?” The fact that all of the Prophets gave the same answers to these questions demonstrates that their source is one and the same. Therefore, their answer should also be the same; indeed, the answer provided by all the Prophets is identical, yet nearly all philosophers and thinkers have given different answers to these questions. This fact demonstrates that the way of truth is one and is that which is represented by the Prophets and those who follow them, while the ways of error are numerous.
34. Say: “Is there any of your (so-called) associates (of God) who originates creation and then reproduces it, and will bring it forth anew (in another world)?” Say: “God originates creation and then reproduces it, and He will bring it forth anew. How then are you turned away from the truth and make false claims?

35. Say: “Is there any of your (so-called) associates (of God) who guides to the truth?” Say: “God alone guides to the truth. Which, then, is worthy to be followed: He Who guides to the truth or he who cannot find the true way unless he is guided? What, then, is the matter with you, and how do you judge (so wrongly)?”

36. Most of them follow only conjecture. Surely conjecture can never substitute for anything of the truth. God surely has full knowledge of all that they do.

37. And this Qur’ān is not such that it could possibly be fabricated by one in attribution to God, but it is a (Divine Book) confirming (the Divine origin of, and the truths that are still contained by,) the Revelations prior to it, and an explanation of the Essence of all Divine Books – wherein there is no doubt,” from the Lord of the worlds.

38. Or do they say that he (the Messenger) has fabricated it? Say: “(If it is possible for a mortal to fabricate it) then produce a sūrah like it, and call for help on anyone you can, apart from God, if you are truthful (in your doubt and the claim you base upon it).”

39. No (they are not truthful in their doubt and claim), but they have denied a thing (the Qur’ān) whose knowledge they could not encompass and whose exposition (through the fulfillment of its promises and threats) has not reached them. Even so did those who were before them deny (the Books sent to them). So look! how was the outcome for the wrong-doers (who judged and acted wrongly)?

40. Among them (the people of Makkah) there are such as have believed and will believe in it, just as among them there are such as have not believed and will not believe in it. Your Lord has full knowledge of those who provoke disorder and corruption.

41. If (O Messenger) they continue to deny you (regarding the Message you bring), say: “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.”

42. Among them are such as come to listen to you, but how can you make the deaf hear, if they do not use their reason to make sense of it?
8. There are no differences among the Divine Books – the Qurʾān, the Torah, the Gospel, and others – with respect to the essentials on which they are based. So, as the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, testifies that all the previous Prophets were on God’s way and carried out the missions imposed on them by God, and as the Muslim Community testifies that all those who followed the previous Prophets correctly were on the right way in the footsteps of the Prophets, so too, the Qurʾān bears witness that all the previous Divine Books are books revealed by God. So, the passages found in their present copies contrary to the basic principles of the Divine Religion on which all the missions of the Prophets and the Divine Books are based, are only interpolations and alterations made by human hands. The Prophet Muhammad, the Qurʾān, and the Muslim Community acquit all the previous Prophets, Books, and believing communities of any possible accusations arising from the incorrect understanding and practices of those who follow them and who attribute themselves to them.

Another point to cite here is that all the previous Divine Books confirm the Divine origin of the Qurʾān, and along with all the previous Prophets, the Prophethood and Messengership of the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings.
43. Among them are such as look towards you, but how can you guide the blind (to the right way), if they are lacking the power of (in)sight?  

44. Surely God does not wrong human-kind in anything; but humans wrong their own selves.  

45. On the Day when God will raise them to life and gather them together, it will seem to them that they had not tarried in the world but a short while of the day, knowing one another. Assuredly, those who deny (the truth) that they must encounter God have ruined themselves and have never been guided.  

46. Whether We let you (O Messenger) witness the fulfillment of some of what We have promised them, or We cause you to die (before it befalls them), still to Us is their return. And God is witness to all that they do.  

47. Every community has its Messenger: when their Messenger comes, (some believe in him and the others not, and) it is judged between them with absolute justice, and they are not wronged.  

48. And they say: “When will this promise be fulfilled if you (O believers) are truthful?”  

49. Say (O Messenger): “I have no power to harm or benefit myself, except by God’s will. For every community, there is an appointed term; and when the end of the term falls in, they can neither delay it by any period of time, however short, nor can they hasten it.”  

50. Say: “Have you ever considered: what (could you do) if God’s punishment should come to you by night (unexpectedly), or by day (and you saw it come)? What do the disbelieving criminals have in prospect that they wish it to be hastened?”  

51. What! Is it only when it has come to pass that you will believe in it? (That day, it will be said to you:) “What? (Do you believe in it) now, after you had (in your contemptuous unbelief) wished it to be hastened?”  

52. Then it will be said to those who wronged (themselves through unbelief and wrong judgments): “Taste the punishment everlasting! Are you recompensed for anything other than what you used to earn?”  

53. They ask you, “Is it true?” Say: “Yes, by my Lord, it is surely true; and you cannot evade it.”
9. The eyeball is of no use without the retina. In seeing the truth, the mind is like the eyeball, and the heart is the retina. The light of the heart is reflected on the mind just like the moon reflects the light of the sun. The mind without the light of the heart is left in darkness. The place of faith is the heart, and it is reflected on the mind. The doubts that attack the mind encourage people to investigate and to base their faith on established knowledge. The evidence provided by the universe and the inner and outer world of humankind, and that which is presented by the Qur’an functions as a broom to sweep away all doubts. So the mind protects the belief in the heart from being pestered by doubts coming from all directions. If the mind were to be the place of faith instead of the heart, then faith would have been exposed to a variety of attacks which would harm conviction (Sözler (“The Words”), “Lemaât,” 658).

10. Throughout human history, God sent a Messenger to every nation – i.e., a separate community that shares the same life-style and culture and that speaks the same language – to convey His Message to them. The Message was one, although tailored in some details of social and ritual practices in order to meet local cultural needs. After the Messengers, the Message was gradually forgotten or seriously distorted, and, therefore, God raised Prophets to revive the Message or restore it to its original purity, and apply it to daily life. However, the time came when almost all the world was in darkness, oblivious of God’s Message, and human beings had reached a stage when a single Messenger and Book would be sufficient for the whole of them; this was when God sent the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers along with the Qur’an.

Since the religions prior to Islam were of a national character, their followers tended to believe that they were chosen peoples. The Christians acknowledge only the Prophets of Israel, while the Jewish people reject the Prophethood of Jesus. Islam says, however, that it would be a denial of the universal providence of God to assert that Messengers and Prophets were raised for one nation only. According to the Holy Qur’an, God is the Lord and Sustainer of all the worlds. As He has not discriminated between nations in sending His Revelations, so Muslims make no distinctions between any of His Messengers in their belief in them (sūrah 2: 285).

Islam is the consummation of all Divine religions. By accepting the Prophets and Scriptures of all nations, Islam affirms the unity and universal providence of God and the universality of religious experience, and also seeks to bring together people of all races and creeds in a single all-embracing faith and brotherhood. Further, a Muslim is also the true follower of all Prophets, including Moses and Jesus, upon them be peace. Such being the case, while the term Christian means one who follows Jesus Christ, and Judaism has turned into the racial religion of the Jewish people only, Muslims totally reject the term of “Muhammadanism,” a term used only by non-Muslims to refer to them. To understand Islam as its adherents do, one should purge the word Muhammadan or Muhammadanism from one’s vocabulary. The labelling of Islam as Muhammadanism is the result of a false analogy with Christianity. Muslims do not worship Muhammad as Christians worship Christ. Muhammad was neither a god, nor an incarnation, nor the son of God. He never claimed to be anything more than a man who had received Revelations from God. He did not make Islam; he simply received the Message of Islam.

11. For the explanation of, for every community there is an appointed term; and when the end of the term falls in, they can neither delay it by any period of time, however short, nor can they hasten it, see sūrah 7: 34, note 10.
54. If every soul that has committed wrong (through unbelief and, thereby, wronged itself) possessed all that is on the earth, it would surely offer that as ransom (to be saved from the punishment); and when they see the punishment, they will even be unable to express their remorse. It is judged between them in equity, and they are not wronged.

55. Know well that to God belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Know well that God's promise is surely true, but most of them do not know.

56. He gives life and causes to die, and you are on the way to return to Him.

57. O humankind! There has come to you an instruction from your Lord, and a cure for what (of sickness or doubt) is in the breasts, and guidance and mercy for the believers.

58. Say: "In the grace and bounty of God and in His mercy – in this, then, let them rejoice. That is better than what they amass (of worldly goods and riches)."

59. Say: "Have you considered the provision God has sent down on you, and you have (of your own accord, at your own whim) made some of it lawful and some of it unlawful?" Say: "Has God given you leave, or do you (make laws of your own accord and) attribute to God falsely?"

60. What do those who falsely attribute (their own inventions) to God think will be (their situation) on the Day of Resurrection? Indeed, God is gracious and bountiful for humankind, but most of them do not give thanks.

61. Whatever your preoccupation (O Messenger), and whatever discourse from Him in this (Qur'ān) you may be reciting, and whatever work you (O people) may be doing, We are certainly witness over you while you are engaged in it. Not an atom's weight of whatever there is in the earth or in the heaven escapes your Lord, nor is there anything smaller than that, or greater, but it is (recorded) in a Manifest Book.

12. The Qur'ān, by saying, the provision God has sent down, emphasizes that the real source of all provision is God's mercy and bounty, and, therefore, it comes from a very exalted source. It also alludes to the fact that almost all the provisions by which living beings are maintained require rain, and that this rain comes from on high.

62. Know well that the friends (saintly servants) of God⁴⁴ – they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

63. They are those who believe and keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety.

64. For them are the glad tidings (of prosperity) in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. No change can there be in God's decrees. That indeed is the supreme triumph.

65. Do not let their sayings grieve you (O Messenger). Might and glory belong to God entirely. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

66. Know well that to God belongs whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth (His creatures and servants). Those who invoke, apart from God, (do not do so) because they really have found deities and lords that can be partners with God in His Divinity and Lordship, and so) follow those partners. They do but follow only conjecture (not authoritative knowledge), and they do nothing except make up suppositions.¹⁵

67. It is He Who has made for you the night so that you may rest in it, and the day, sight-giving (for you to work in). Surely in this are signs (manifesting the truth) for people who hear and pay heed (to God's Revelations, and view things and events in their light).

68. They (the polytheists) assert that God has taken to Himself a child. All-Glorified is He; He is Self-Sufficient (beyond any need of anything). To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. You have no authority, nor evidence, for this (assertion). Are you, then, saying things about God that you do not know (anything about)?

69. Say: "Surely those who fabricate falsehood in attribution to God will never prosper."

70. A brief enjoyment in the world; then to Us is their return, and then We will make them taste the severe punishment because they habitually disbelieved (in whatever truth was conveyed to them in God's Name).
14. Above all else, all the believers are friends of God, for God is the guardian and confidant of believers, as is mentioned in many verses (sūrah 2: 257; sūrah 3: 68; sūrah 5: 55; sūrah 6: 127; sūrah 7: 155; sūrah 34: 41, etc.) Likewise, Satan and the unbelievers, especially those who are more deeply rooted in unbelief, are the friends and guardians of one another. Another point to be made here is that the believers are friends and guardians of one another (sūrah 3: 28; sūrah 8: 72; sūrah 9: 71, etc.), just as in the same way some of the unbelievers and some of the People of the Book are friends and guardians of each other, especially against the believers (sūrah 5: 51; sūrah 8: 73; sūrah 45: 9, etc.).

In addition to this general meaning of God being the Guardian and Confidant of the believers, and the believers being His friends, the original word ṣaliyy (the plural of which is ṣāliyā) has another special meaning. The believers are not of the same degree in believing and doing what is required by this belief, nor are they of the same degree in nearness to God. Some among them are more advanced than the others and, accordingly, are nearer to God. In common Islamic literature, when we say ṣaliyy or ṣāliyā, this special meaning is usually what is meant. The following verse sheds light on the subject, allowing us to better understand this concept:

God is the Guardian of those who believe (to Whom they can entrust their affairs and on Whom they can rely), bringing them out from all kinds of (intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) darkness into the light, and keeping them firm therein (sūrah 2: 257).

The most manifest function of God being the confidant and guardian of the believers is that He brings them out of all the different kinds of existing darkness (intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) into the light. So, those among the believers who try their best, with utmost sincerity, so that people can be brought out of all the different kinds of darkness into the light are nearer to God and are His special friends. This is the main mission of the Messengers and the Prophets, and those who follow them in their missions. This requires that one has knowledge, and the deepest conviction of the essentials of faith, that one lives according to these essentials by sincerely worshipping God, and refraining from sins, and that one has praiseworthy qualities or virtues, while being dedicated to God’s cause (Key Concepts, 2: 60-65).

15. That is, they judge and speak according to their passing fancies, interests and personal value judgments.
71. Relate to them the exemplary history of Noah when he said to his people: “O my people! If my presence (among you) and my reminding (you) by God’s Revelations are offensive to you—well, in God have I put my trust. So, coming together, decide upon your course of action, and (call to your aid) your (so-called) associates of God; then let not your affair be a worry to you, and then carry out against me (whatever you have decided), and give me no respite!

72. “Then if you turn away (from the Message that I convey to you), then (know that it will cause me no loss, just as your accepting it will gain me nothing) I ask you for no wage; my wage is only due from God, and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims (those who have submitted to Him).”

73. And yet they denied him, and so We saved him and all who were with him in the Ark, and made them successors (to inherit the earth), while We caused to drown those who denied Our Revelations and all other signs (pointing to Our Existence and Unity). Look, then, how was the outcome for those who were warned (but never paid heed)?

74. Then, after him, We sent forth Messengers to their people; and they came to them with the clear signs of the truth, but they would not believe in that which they used to deny before. Thus do We impress a seal on the hearts of those who exceed the bounds.¹⁶

75. Then, after them, We sent forth Moses and Aaron to the Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our signs (miracles to support them), but they grew arrogant (in the face of those signs), and (demonstrated that) they were a guilty people committed to accumulating sins.

76. When the truth came to them from Us, they said: “Surely this is clearly nothing but sorcery.”

77. Moses said: “Do you speak of the truth like this when it has come to you? Is this sorcery? But sorcerers do not prosper.”

78. They said: “Have you come to us to turn us away from what we found our forefathers following, and that high authority in this land may belong to you two? Never will we believe in you two!”

¹⁶. For the exemplary histories of those Messengers, see surah 7: 65–102, and the corresponding notes.
79. And the Pharaoh said: “Bring me every learned, skillful sorcerer!”

80. When the sorcerers came, Moses said to them: “Throw down what you will throw.”

81. When they had thrown (whatever they had in their hands and produced a mighty sorcery), Moses said: “What you have brought is but sorcery. Surely God will bring it to nothing and prove it false. God never validates and sets right the work of those who cause disorder and corruption.

82. “And God proves by His decrees the truth to be true and makes it triumph, however hateful this is to the disbelieving criminals.”

83. (In the beginning,) none save a young generation among his people truly believed in and followed Moses for (they were in) fear that the Pharaoh and the chiefs among them (who collaborated with the Pharaoh in order not to lose their wealth) would subject them to persecutions. The Pharaoh was indeed a haughty tyrant in the land, and he was, indeed, one of those who commit excesses.

84. And Moses said (in earnest advice to his people): “If you believe in God, then put your trust in Him, if you are Muslims (who have wholly submitted yourselves to Him).”

85. They invoked (verbally and by their actions): “In God we put our trust. Our Lord! Do not make us a target of persecution for the wrongdoing people!

86. “And save us through Your mercy from those disbelieving people!”

87. 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 its conditions. And (O Moses,) give glad tidings to the believers!”

88. Moses prayed to God: “Our Lord! Surely You have granted the Pharaoh and his chiefs splendor and riches in the life of this world, and so, our Lord, they lead people astray from Your way. Our Lord! Destroy their riches, and press upon their hearts, for they do not believe until they see the painful punishment.”
89. God said: “The prayer of you two (O Moses and Aaron) has indeed been answered; so, (since the realization of your goals is dependent upon your way of conduct,) continue steadfastly on the Straight Path, and do not follow the way of those who have no knowledge (of right and wrong) and act in ignorance.”

90. And We brought the Children of Israel across the sea, and the Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them with vehement insolence and hostility, until (they were overwhelmed by the waters of the sea opened for Moses and his people to cross,) and when the drowning overtook the Pharaoh, he exclaimed: “I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims (those who have submitted themselves wholly to Him).”

91. Now? – (You surrender now) when before this you always rebelled and were of those engaged in causing disorder and corruption?

92. So this day (as a recompense for your belief in the state of despair which will be of no avail to you in the Hereafter), We will save only your body, that you may be a sign for those to come after you. Surely, a good many people among humankind are heedless of Our signs (full of clear warning and lessons).

93. And, indeed, We settled the Children of Israel in a proper place of dwelling, and provided them with pure, wholesome things. They did not suffer discord until after the knowledge came to them (of the way they would have to follow, and of what they would meet as a result of what they did). Your Lord will surely judge among them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that on which they used to differ.

94. If you are in doubt about the truth of what We have sent down on you (concerning what happened between Moses and the Pharaoh), then ask those who have been reading the Book (which was given to them) before you. Surely the truth has come to you from your Lord, so be not among those who feel doubt.

95. And neither be among those who deny God’s signs and Revelations, for then you will be among the losers.

96. Those for whom the truth of your Lord’s decree (that they will die unbelievers and go to Hell) has been confirmed – they will not believe,

97. Even though every proof should come to them, until they see the painful punishment.
17. With this verse about the Pharaoh’s drowning, the Qur’an suggests the following: All the Pharaohs believed in reincarnation, therefore, they mummified their bodies in the hopes of eternalizing themselves. Thus, their bodies have survived to the present day. Although not mummified, the body of the Pharaoh who lived during the time of Moses, upon him be peace, and drowned while pursuing Moses with his army was found prostrate beside the Nile in the final years of the nineteenth century. This is an explicit Qur’anic miracle, which was foretold centuries before in the above verse (The Words, “The 25th Word,” 420; al-Mawdūdī, 2, note 92).

18. The Qur’an mentions the story of the Children of Israel, which, for the most part, is based mainly on the mission of Moses, in many of its sūrah as this story is a rounded exemplary history for the progress of all nations and provides an indication of the importance of the place the Children of Israel hold in human history. The Qur’an deals with their story every time in relation to the main themes of the sūrah in which it is recounted. For example, in this sūrah, while the story of the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, is described with the challenge he gave to his people, his deep reliance on God and his confidence in his mission, and with God’s saving him and the believers in his company while destroying all of the unbelievers; and while the stories of the Messengers, Hūd, Šālih, Lot, and Shu’ayb, upon them be peace, are referred to only in one verse, with their end and the reason why that end occurred, the story of the Children of Israel is narrated in its aspect of the basic dimension of Moses’ message, the intellectual and final material defeat of the Pharaoh and his chiefs, who were opposed to that message, as well as in the final triumph of the Children of Israel and the main factor that led to that triumph. The main idea behind all the stories mentioned in this sūrah is as follows:

All of the Messengers came with the same fundamental message, based on Divine Oneness, and God equipped them with miracles and other manifest signs or evidence to prove that they were God’s Messengers. Those who opposed them had nothing valid in their hands to justify their opposition; rather their opposition was out of sheer ignorance, based on prejudices governed by their worldly interests and carnal desires, as well as their arrogance and incorrect viewpoints. They persecuted the Messengers and the believers in their company, but the latter endured all their persecutions, relying solely on God. In the end, the Messengers and their followers were saved and triumphed while their opponents were defeated and ruined themselves. The believers will enjoy eternal happiness in Paradise in the other world but the unbelievers will suffer unending punishment in Hell.

Mentioning these stories from this perspective in this sūrah, God consoles the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and his followers, confirming them in their belief, strengthening their patience, reminding them of the main characteristic of the way they are destined to follow, and, finally, giving them a mild warning against any discord which may break out among themselves after their final victory against their enemies.

19. These verses do not mean that the Messenger had any doubts concerning his mission, the Revelation he received, or the stories of the previous Messengers narrated in the Qur’an.

When the verses are considered in the light of the context in which they exist, the meaning is clear, as follows:

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was very grieved in the face of the persecutions and derisions he suffered at the hands of the unbelievers who persisted in unbelief. He told the people who were obstinate in their rejection of the truth, who knew nothing of Revelation and Messengership, and who were confined to this world with all their being, about the realms beyond the sensed world, the Divine Revelation, contact with God, Who is beyond all conceptions and other metaphysical realities, as well as of the histories of bygone peoples about whom he had neither read nor heard anything substantial before. It is clear what kind of reaction he faced. It was not easy to talk about such matters, to challenge forni-
dable, stubborn enemies and to claim that the future would belong to the believers at a time when they were so few and weak. But he related all these with utmost confidence in his mission and without any doubts.

It was essential that the believers should also believe with unwavering certainty in whatever he said and in whatever news he gave, so that they should be reinforced, increasing their endurance. So, in addressing the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the Almighty consoled and reinforced the believers, and in addressing one who had absolute certainty in what he had received from God and conveyed to others, He was also warning the believers that they should feel no doubts about their faith, nor should they be influenced by the opposition of the unbelievers. He also reminded the Messenger and the believers of the fact that all that had occurred indicated that the way they were going was the same way that had been trodden by previous nations.

The meaning of what God says here is: "Just as the Pharaoh, one of the most refractory tyrants of history (and his chiefs) did not believe, yet had to believe when he saw one of many of God’s earthly punishments at a time when believing was of no use, so too, will all those who resist God’s Message – in the way that the Pharaoh and previous peoples did – have to declare faith, even if it will be of no use to them. So, their unbelief should not discourage you or cause you to waver in your faith. Besides, as believers, you will not be discouraged by the resistance and power of your enemies. For God is the All-Powerful and will make you triumphant so long as you continue your way without wavering."
98. If only there had been a community that believed (just when God’s decree of punishment was issued) and profited by their belief – there was none except the people of Jonah. When they came to believe We withdrew from them the punishment of disgrace in the life of this world, and We allowed them to enjoy life for a term.

99. If your Lord had so willed (and, denying them free will, compelled humankind to believe), all who are on the earth would surely have believed, all of them. Would you, then, force people until they become believers?

100. It is not for any person to believe save by God’s leave. God sets those who do not use their reason in a mire of uncleanness.

101. Say: “Consider what there is (and what happens) in the heavens and on the earth.” But all such signs (of the truth of the essentials of faith) and the warnings cannot avail a people who will not believe.

102. For what do they watch and wait but the like of the days of punishment which befell those (unbelievers) who passed away before them? Say: “Then watch and wait, and I will be with you watching and waiting.”

103. Then We save Our Messengers and those who believe (as We always did before). We have bound Ourselves to save the believers.

104. Say: “O humankind! If you are in doubt about my religion, then (know that) I do not worship those whom you worship apart from God, but I worship God alone, Who causes you all to die. I have been commanded to be of the believers.

105. “(I have also been commanded:) Set all your being exclusively to the true Religion as one with pure faith (free from unbelief and hypocrisy), and never be among those who associate partners with God.

106. “And do not invoke, apart from God, that which can neither benefit you nor harm you; if you did so, then you would be of the wrongdoers (who wrong themselves by committing the greatest wrong of associating partners with God).”
20. As has been pointed out several times before, as God is beyond all time and space, His (pre-) ordaining means His knowing all things and events beforehand. Therefore, a people are not compelled to do something against their own free will. (We feel obliged to use expressions such as “pre-ordaining” and “beforehand,” which denote time, since we have to bring the concepts of Divinity within our understanding, which is constrained by time and space.) For this reason, Islam does not recognize determinism in human history. If we talk about determinism established by God, it is that God has determined what consequence people will meet in return for what they do. Causality is a law established by God. He has explicitly informed people of this through the Messengers He has sent and the Books He has revealed.

Another important “law” concerning God’s way of acting and the way He has established for people to follow, according to their own free will, is that He may withdraw His decree for a person or people. This law is called the law of God’s special grace or sparing. This is like raging rapids suddenly taking someone on a different course so that after fear and near-drowning, there is safety and mercy whereas there would have been great destruction on the riverway one had originally chosen to paddle on. God sometimes informs a person or people of what will befall them, either through true dreams or pre-sentiments, or in some other way. If that person or people can understand this warning and implore God for forgiveness, give in charity, and mend their ways, then God may spare them. Many peoples throughout history, such as those of the ‘Ad, the Thamúd, and the Pharaoh’s people, deserved to be destroyed because of their persistence in associating partners with God, dissolute lifestyles, and the injustices and atrocities they inflicted on others despite all the warnings made to them. However, the Prophet Jonah’s people, upon him be peace, turned to God with utmost sincerity and deep repentance, and morally reformed themselves after they saw the signs of impending destruction. As a result, God spared them the penalty of disgrace in the worldly life, and allowed them to enjoy life for a term. Emphasizing this point, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said: “Fear does not prevent misfortunes, rather prayer and charity do” (al-Hindī, hadīth no. 3123).

The Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace, lived about eight centuries before the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, and was sent to Nineveh during the early years of the second Assyrian Empire. Despite his years of preaching God’s Message, his people persisted in their association of partners with God, and despairing of his people’s ability to ever believe, he left them without having been ordered to do so by God, believing that God would always guard and provide him wherever he was (sūrah 21: 87). According to what we conclude from the Qur’ān (sūrah 37: 140), the ship he had boarded was about to sink in a storm because of the weight of its load, and the sailors felt constrained to lighten it. They cast lots to decide who should be thrown into the sea and the lot fell to Jonah. So, they cast him into the sea. A large fish swallowed him. Jonah, upon him be peace, was a beloved servant of God who had always glorified Him. He glorified God in the fish also, and asked for His forgiveness. In the end, by God’s leave, the fish threw him out on the shore. When Jonah, upon him be peace, left his people and the signs of God’s impending punishment appeared, they implored Him for forgiveness for days, and God withdrew His decree of punishment. Jonah returned to his people, and more than 100,000 people believed in his message (37: 137–148). Jonah’s suffering must have had a share in the sparing of his people. For God sends misfortune upon believers either to guide them to better conditions, or enable them to develop their potentialities, or warn them against any possible destructive faults and sins, or so that it serves as a means of perfection for them. Misfortune sometimes comes as a result of a sin committed or fault made. When believers ask God for forgiveness for those sins or faults, this serves as a means of two rewards, one coming immediately, and the other later on.

Some people who approach the Qur’ān and the miracles of the Prophets purely from a ra-
Even if we relate all these to the heart, or each to a different faculty, the way to keep these alive is to refrain from being pre-conditioned, and to avoid prejudices, incorrect viewpoints, evil intentions, sins, wrongdoing, arrogance, and selfishness. These are the vices which prevent one from believing. The last two verses both complement and also give a mild warning to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, because he wished for all people to believe; in fact, this was such a strong desire in him that he would torment himself nearly to death with grief if they would not believe (18: 6). This verse also relates belief to God’s leave, which He relates to whether or not people’s intellectual faculties are alive. Those who do not use their intellectual faculties or those who use them in improper ways, are devoid of God’s leave to believe.
107. If God touches you with affliction, there is none who can remove it but He; and if He wills any good for you, then there is none who can hold back His bounty. He causes it to reach whomever He wills of His servants. He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate.”

108. Say: “O humankind! Assuredly there has come to you the truth from your Lord. Whoever, therefore, chooses the right way, follows it but for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray, goes astray but to his own harm. I am not one appointed as a guardian over you to assume responsibility for you.”

109. And follow what is revealed to you, and remain patient and steadfast in your way until God gives His judgment. And He is the best in giving judgment.

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

1. Alif. Lām. Rā. A Book whose Revelations in verses have been made firm (absolutely free of doubt, alteration, or annulment) and full of wisdom, and arranged in sequence and distinctly detailed. It is from One All-Wise, All-Aware.

2. So that you worship none but God. (Say, O Messenger:) “Surely I am a warner for you (O people, against the evil consequences of all kinds of misguidance), and a bearer of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness).”

3. And that you ask your Lord for forgiveness (for the sins you have so far committed), then turn to Him repentant and sincerely, so that He may enable for you a
good life for a term appointed, and bestow
His grace and bounty more abundantly on whoever is more advanced in virtue
and devotion. But if you turn away, then,
surely I fear for you the punishment of a
mighty Day.
4. To God is your final return. He has full
power over everything.
5. Beware! surely they (who associate
partners with God) lean over their breasts
(as if in respect for you, but in reality they
are) seeking to hide (from God the unbe-
lief and hostility) in their hearts. Beware!
at the very time that they cover themselves
with their garments (or hide themselves in
their houses behind shut doors and cur-
tained windows), God knows well all that
they keep concealed as well as all that they
disclose. Surely God has full knowledge of
what lies hidden in the bosoms.
6. No living creature is there moving on the earth but its provision depends on God, and He knows its every lodging and disposition (every stage of its life), and the duration of its stay and the moment of its transition therefrom. All is in a Manifest Book.

7. He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in six days – His Supreme Throne was upon the water – that He might make trial of you to manifest which of you is best in conduct. Yet, if you say (to people), “Your proper abode is the Hereafter, where you will be either in bliss or suffering according to your conduct in the world. That is why) you are bound to be raised after death,” those who persist in unbelief will say: “This is clearly nothing but an enchanting delusion.”

8. Seeing that We postpone the punishment (with which We threaten them) until an appointed term, they are sure to say (in mockery): “What detains it that it does not come?” Beware! on the Day when it befalls them, it will not be averted from them, and that which they have been mocking at will overwhelm them.

9. If We let human taste some mercy from Us, and then take it away from him, he becomes hopeless, and thankless (forgetting all Our favors to him).

10. And if We let him taste ease and plenty after some hardship has visited him, he says: “Gone is all affliction from me!” Surely he is prone to vain exultation and self-glorifying.

11. Except those who are persevering and patient (neither despairing in affliction, nor exultant and self-glorifying in success), and do good, righteous deeds; it is they for whom is forgiveness and a great reward.

12. Now it may be that you (O Messenger) are drawn to abandon some part of what is revealed to you (such as the verses concerning your Messengership), and your breast is constricted thereby, on account of their saying: “Why has a treasure not been sent down upon him, or an angel accompanying him (visible to us)?” But you are only a warner. It is God Who has everything in His care and under His control.
1. God has (pre-)ordained the provision each living being will consume during the life which He has appointed for it, and He has bound Himself to supply it. The plants have no power to move from one place to another; in other words, they are wholly submitted to God, their provision being ready beneath their feet. Animals labor to find their provision which has been (pre-)assigned for them, and when they are too young to do this, they are fed by their mothers. As for newborn human beings, their provision is likewise sent to them through the breasts of their mothers by the Hand of Mercy. From the time when they begin to feel strong enough to find their own provision, they labor to procure it. No living being can obtain more than what was assigned for them by the All-Providing, nor do they die without having consumed it all.

It is a fact that one who works gains, while another who is lazy suffers deprivation. But this is not contrary to God's (pre-)assignment of every being's provision. For Destiny takes the cause and effect into consideration together. That is, God destines that a particular effect will come into being as a result of a particular cause. In any case, God has bound Himself to provide the essential, vital provision for every being.

It is also important to point out that although the explanations for Destiny and human free will are enough to convince human reason, the matter of Destiny and provision are not purely rational or scientific. This matter has a deep dimension of mystery relating to the Divine Being which cannot be perceived by reason. One can catch some glimpses of it only after having a certain degree of knowledge of God (ma'rifah) and spiritual experiences. Destiny and human free will mark the farthest point of perfect belief and submission, and relate to the inner experiences and spiritual states of the believers. Humanity has not been given the equipment with which to perceive every matter concerning the Divine Essence. If this had been the case, then the line between Divinity and humanity, or between the Creator and the created, would not have existed. So such matters as Destiny and provision have dimensions that pertain solely to God as two of His mysteries, and human beings can have knowledge about them only to the extent that is needed to convince their reason.

2. For the creation of the heavens and the earth and the nature of the Supreme Throne, see surah 2: 28, note 28; surah 7: 54, note 13.

The statement, His Supreme Throne was upon the water, is either a continuation of He has created the heavens and the earth in six days, or adds an additional meaning to it, or it has both functions, which seems to be more befitting of the Qur'an's matchless eloquence. In the first case, the meaning is: He has created the heavens and the earth in six days and His Supreme Throne was upon the water. When considered together with, We have made every living thing from water (21: 30), this verse is indicating the stage where the heavens and the earth were created and the earth was made ready for life, denoting that it is water which lies at the essence of every thing and being. As is known, the main element in all things, including solid objects, is water. In a prayer recited by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, it is said: “All-Glorified is He Who has laid soil upon a fluid solidified.” This means that rocks and mountains were formed as a result of this solidification and their crumbling into parts over time has formed the stratum of soil.

In the second case, the meaning is: He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in six days while His Supreme Throne was upon the water. This denotes that there was water before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Considering that the Qur'an sometimes uses the word mā (water) to mean fluid and liquid, the water here may mean a fluid substance which was the origin of both the heavens and the earth. According to some physicists, this substance is ether. The Prophetic Tradition, “God's Will and Favoring was upon amā both below and above of which there was no air,” (at-Tirmidhi, “Tafsîr Hûd,” HN: 3108) clarifies this point. It is possible that amā may be ether (Tereddütler 1: 219).

3. God wills good for humankind, but humankind incurs evil. For an explanation, see Appendix 7.
13. Or they say (about the Messenger): "He fabricates it (the Qur’an)? Say (to them): “Then produce ten invented surahs like it (in eloquence, meaningfulness and truth), and call to your aid whomever you can, apart from God, if you are truthful (in your claim, not deluded or just making up excuses to justify your unbelief)."

14. “If they (whom you call to your aid) cannot answer your call, then know that it (the Qur’an) is sent down based on God’s Knowledge, and that there is no deity save Him. Will you, then, submit to God as Muslims?”

15. Whoever desires the present, worldly life and its outward shows, We recompense them for all that they do therein, and they are not deprived of their just due therein.

16. It is they for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire. All that they produced in it (this world) has come to nothing, and all that they were doing is fruitless, vain.

17. So, (how can you compare others with) one who stands on a clear evidence from his Lord (the Qur’an), and is supported by a witness guided by Him, and there was (revealed) before it the Book of Moses (confirming it) as a guide and mercy? Those (who make and understand the comparison) believe in it (the Qur’an); while whoever from the diverse parties (belonging to different nations and faiths, knowingly) disbelieves in it – the Fire will be their promised place. And so you should not have the least doubt of it (being revealed by God). Surely, it is the truth from your Lord, though most of the people do not believe.

18. Who is greater in doing wrong than he who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God? Such will be brought before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, “Those are they who lied in attribution to God. Surely it is the due of the wrongdoers that God has excluded them from His mercy.”

19. The ones who bar people from God’s way and seek to make it crooked (wishing they could distort it); and they, they are those who persistently disbelieve in the Hereafter.
4. At a time in history when eloquence was most highly prized, the Qur’ān of miraculous exposition was revealed. Just as God Almighty had endowed Moses and Jesus, upon them be peace, with the miracles which were most suitable to their times, He used eloquence as the most notable aspect of the Qur’ān, the chief miracle of Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. At the time that the Qur’ān was revealed, it first challenged the literary figures of the Arabian peninsula, and then all people throughout the ages, at every level of knowledge and understanding, until Judgment Day. For more detail about the challenges issued and some aspects of its miraculousness, see Appendix 6.

5. Although there have been different views concerning the evidence and the witness, what is meant by “evidence,” may be said to be the Qur’ān and what is meant by “witness” may be said to be person or persons who are learned in the Divine Books. Verse 3: 18, which states that God, the angels, and those possessed of knowledge bear witness that there is no deity but He, and verse 46: 10, which states that a witness – ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām – from among the Children of Israel bears witness to Muhammad’s Prophethood and the Divine origin of the Qur’ān, corroborate this meaning.

This meaning is also corroborated by the verse to come. It mentions the witnesses who testify against the unbelievers on Judgment Day. Verse 4: 41 also mentions such witnesses: 

How, then, will it be (with people on the Day of Judgment) when We bring forward a witness from every community (to testify against them and that God’s Religion was communicated to them), and bring you (O Messenger) as a witness against all those (whom your Message may have reached)? Although the witnesses mentioned here may be the individual Messengers sent to their respective people, it also confirms the general meaning that any witness mentioned in the Qur’ān with such import is a learned one, whether he is a Prophet or not.

6. The word translated as “disbelieving” is kufr, which means to cover. So, kufr in Islamic terminology means covering the truth knowingly; that is, covering the truth while under the influence of different factors, such as carnal desires, personal interests, prejudices, incorrect viewpoints, incorrect judgments, arrogance, ill intentions, and wrongdoing. Secondly, in order to judge someone as a kāfir (unbeliever), the truths of faith should have been conveyed to this person to the extent that, left to their (carnal) soul and conscience, they can make a free choice between belief and unbelief, or this person should be in such a position that they can make the necessary investigations, thereby becoming aware of belief and unbelief. The Islamic term for this action of conveying the truths of faith is tablīgh, meaning conveying a message fully and as clearly as possible. Those whom the Qur’ān condemns as unbelievers and the eternal inhabitants of the Fire are the people to whom the truths of faith have been thoroughly conveyed, to the extent that they have been convinced, yet they still prefer unbelief freely, being under the kinds of influences mentioned above.

7. God’s way is a straight path that has been established by Him. What human beings must do is to know this path well in all its aspects and principles, and to infer new rules in the secondary matters of law, which are subject to change in parallel with the change of time and place, according to the main, unchangeable principles of this path. But those who do not believe in it, and the hypocrites, have always wished that this path were crooked, in accordance with their desires, and in order to serve their interests. So, to attempt to make changes in this path (Islam) or to make it appear different from what it really is so that its enemies may approve of it – such attempts, however intensive or extensive, have always been in vain – amounts only to a betrayal of the path.
20. Those can never frustrate on earth (whatever God wills for it), nor can they find any guardians, apart from God, able to protect them against God. For them, the punishment will be doubled (in the Hereafter). (Having wasted the faculties of hearing and seeing that God granted them), they have no longer been able to listen to (the revealed truths), nor have they any longer had sight to see.

21. Such are they who have ruined their selves, and all that they fabricated (by way of false deities to worship besides God) have failed them.

22. Without doubt, in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers.

23. As for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, and have humbled themselves before their Lord, they are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein.

24. These two classes of people are like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Can they be likened to each other? Will you not, then, reflect and be mindful?

25. And assuredly We sent Noah to his people as Messenger (with the same message that he preached): “Surely, I am for you a plain warner (advising you for your good):

26. “That you worship none but God. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a painful Day!”

27. The leading ones who disbelieved from among his people said: “We do not see you but as a mortal like ourselves, and we do not see that any follow you save those who are but the lowliest of us, without an opinion worthy of consideration; and we do not see you (and your followers) having any superiority over us; rather, we consider that you are liars.”

28. Noah said: “O my people! What do you think – if I stand on a clear evidence from my Lord, and He has granted me a mercy from His Presence to which you have remained blind – can we force you to accept it when you are averse to it?

8. Throughout history it has been typical of all disbelieving opponents of the Divine Religion that they have always seen the believers as being devoid of knowledge and thought, while they have acclaimed themselves as being intelligent and knowledgeable. This is partly because of their arrogance and self-pride, which, is in fact, a reflection of an inferiority complex from which they have never been able to escape, and partly because the viewpoint of the unbelievers, based on material goods, personal interests, and this fleeting world, has always been different from that of the believers, which is established by God and based on be-
belief in, and worship of, One God, and belief in the Unseen and the other pillars of faith, and universal moral values. The status of such unbelievers, as derives from their posts, positions, and wealth, as well as their worldly interests, have blinded them to the Divine truths, and they have always acted vainly and in arrogance that arises from their riches and positions. For such people, superiority lies in wealth, higher position, race, color, or physical constitution. However, in the end it has always been clear that it is the believers who hold the true viewpoint, who think correctly, and who are truly superior to the others; for them, superiority lies in consciousness of God, true knowledge, and moral values.

In order to make a brief comparison between the civilizations set up by the believers and unbelievers, the following points need to be focused on:

The civilization of unbelievers is mostly founded upon five negative principles: it is based upon power, and power is inclined toward oppression; it seeks to realize individual self-interest, even though this causes people to rush about madly trying to earn possessions; it considers life as a struggle, which causes internal and external conflict; it unifies through national and/or racial separatism, and feeds this selfish solidarity by swallowing the resources and territories of “others,” both of which engender terrible conflict; and it strives to satisfy novel caprices or aroused desires (whether the satisfaction is real or not), and so brutalizes people’s tastes and aspirations.

Islamic civilization rests upon right (not power), which requires justice and balance; it encourages virtue, which spurs mutual affection and love; it considers life as consisting of mutual help, which leads to unity and solidarity; it unifies people through a common religion in a common state, leading them to internal peace, and brotherhood and sisterhood, and it creates a willing self-defense against external enemies, guiding people to the truth. It elevates people, through knowledge and moral perfection, to higher ranks of humanity.

If we compare a believer with an unbeliever, the following additional points come to our attention:

Haughty, refractory unbelievers, such as those (we see) opposing the Messengers are usually Pharaoh-like tyrants, yet they abuse themselves by bowing in worship before the meanest things if they perceive it to be in their interest to do so. They are stubborn, misleading, and unyielding, but so wretched that they accept endless degradation for the attainment of one pleasure; they are unbending, but so mean as to kiss the feet of evil people for a base advantage. They are conceited and domineering, but unable to find any point of support in their hearts, are utterly impotent and vainglorious tyrants. Such people are nothing less than self-centered egoists who strive to gratify their material and carnal desires, pursuers of personal interests and certain national interests.

On the other hand, the sincere believers are worshipping servants of God, but they do not degrade themselves by bowing in worship before even the greatest of the created. They are dignified servants who do not worship in order to obtain a benefit, even Paradise. They are modest, mild, and gentle, but only lower themselves voluntarily before their Creator, never exceeding what He has permitted. They are aware of their innate weaknesses and needs as created beings, but are independent because the Munificent Owner provides them with wealth. Relying on their Master’s infinite Power, they are powerful. They act and strive purely for the sake and pleasure of God, and so as to be graced with virtue (The Words, “The 12th Word,” 147).

9. Evidence here means the things which confirm the Divine Messengership, such as the Divine Book, miracles, and the Messengers’ laudable morals, and the special mercy granted to them. The special mercy granted to them constitutes Messengership, with all its attributes, such as absolute certainty in belief, truthfulness, trustworthiness, intelligence, knowledge, receiving Revelation, and being free from all kinds of intellectual and bodily defects.
29. “O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it (for conveying the Message to you); my wage is due only from God. I will not drive away those who believe; they are destined to meet their Lord, (Who will treat them as they should be treated) – whereas I see you as a people acting in ignorance.

30. “O my people! Who could help me against God were I to drive them away? Will you not then reflect and be mindful?

31. “And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of God, nor do I know the Unseen (what is stored in the future), nor do I say that I am an angel, nor do I say of those, whom your eyes hold in contempt, that God will not grant them some good. God knows best whatever is in their bosoms (what kind of people they are in their inner worlds). (If I drove them away or spoke ill of them,) then I would indeed be among the wrongdoers.”

32. They said: “O Noah! You have argued with us and have prolonged your arguments; so stop arguing with us and, if you are telling the truth, bring upon us what you have been threatening us with!”

33. Noah said: “Only God can bring it upon you, if He wills; and you can never be frustraters (of His will).

34. “My counsel – much as I would counsel you – will not benefit you, if God has willed that you be and remain misguided. He is your Lord, (Who created you, and nurtures, sustains and protects you,) and you are on the way to return to Him.”

35. Do they (the idolaters) say (of you, O Messenger): “He has fabricated it (invented all those stories and the Qur’ān containing them)?” Say: “If indeed I fabricate it, then upon me falls my sin, but (as you are slandering me to excuse your own willful persistence in unbelief, know that) I am free of the sins you have been committing.”

36. And it was revealed to Noah (by Us): “Never will any of your people believe except those who have already believed. Then, do not be distressed because of what they have been doing.

37. “Build the Ark (which We have described to you) under Our eyes, and in accordance with Our instructions to be revealed (to you), and do not plead with Me for those who have persisted in wrongdoing. They are bound to be drowned.”
38. And so Noah set to building the Ark. And every time the leading ones among his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said: “Now you are mocking us, but (a day will come when) we mock you just as you mock us.

39. “And so shall you know upon whom will come a punishment which will disgrace him, and upon whom will alight a lasting punishment (in the Hereafter).”

40. (And so it went on) until the time when Our command came and the boiler started boiling over. We said (to Noah): “Embark in it a pair of each kind (of living creature), and your family, except those against whom Our sentence has already been passed, and those who believe.” And those who believed with him were few.

41. Noah said, “Board it!” (and all the people and the pairs of creatures God willed should be saved were settled in the Ark). “In God's Name be its course and its mooring. Surely my Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”

42. So the Ark floated with them amid waves like mountains, and Noah cried out to a son of his who was standing apart: “Embark with us, my son, and do not be with the unbelievers!”

43. He said: “I will betake myself to a mountain that will protect me from the waters!” He (Noah) said: “Today there is no protection from God's judgment except for him on whom He has mercy.” And the waves came between them, and he (the son) was among the drowned.

44. And it was said: “O earth, swallow up your waters! And, O sky, cease (your rain)! And the waters were made to subside, and (by God's will) the affair was accomplished. Then the Ark came to rest on al-jūdī, and it was said: “Away with the wrongdoing people!”

45. Noah called out to his Lord, saying: “O my Lord, my son was of my family (as a believer), and Your promise is surely true (for my believing family members), and You are the Most Just of judges.”
10. Different comments have been made on fāra l-tannūr, which literally means “the oven spurted out (of water).” Some commentators such as Ibn Jarir at-Tabari and Ibn al-Kathīr are of the opinion that since tannūr also means the surface of the earth, the expression literally means that water gushed over the face of the earth. According to Ibn Kathīr, the gushing waters turned the earth into springs. Elmahfı̄lı Hamdi Yazır, a great Turkish interpreter of the twentieth century, deals with all such views from a linguistic viewpoint and concludes that fāra l-tannūr marks the start of the Flood and, therefore, means that the oven or kiln of the Ark was heated to run the Ark.

This expression alludes to the notion that Noah’s Ark was powered by steam. It is this point which leads some modern commentators to think that fāra l-tannūr cannot mean that the oven (functioning as a boiler) boiled over. They assert that it is impossible that a steam-powered ship was built at the time of Noah, upon him be peace. Modern historians and scientists tend to see the Flood as a legend, although this is contrary to the modern concept of science. Science requires that it should be investigated. In addition, an ark, which could accommodate one or two pairs from all animals, or at least from all domesticated animals, as well as Noah’s family and the believers, however few they were, and which was able to sail among mountain-like waves, as will be mentioned in verse 42 below, could not be a mere sailboat or a simple vessel. According to some who base their theory on the fulk, the original word for Ark, also means fleet; therefore, Noah’s Ark may have been, in actual fact, a fleet. It was built under God’s “Eyes” and in accordance with His revealed instructions. Although it was Noah’s miracle, it also shows to what extent science and technology, especially engineering, had advanced during the time of this Prophet, upon him be peace.

11. This response is typical of a materialist or naturalist who does not believe in God and His supreme dominion over the entire universe, and displays the characteristic of Noah’s people with regards to the kind of unbelievers they were.

12. A word should be considered from the perspectives, “Who said it?” To whom it was said?” and “Why was it said?” The one who can order the earth “O earth, swallow up your waters!” and the sky, “O sky, cease (your rain)!” can only be one who has absolute dominion over both the sky and the earth. This one can only be God. Such orders given by any other than God would be absurd. Both the sky and the earth are under God’s dominion and since they obey Him alone and work under His absolute rule, they continue to exist in order and balance. Even if they sometimes are set to move, the extent of the sins and wrongs committed has not yet reached the point of their destruction. When wrong, unbelief, and rebellion come to the point where they completely destroy the order and balance on earth, then it will be Doomsday.

The verse emphasizes that it was the sky which sent the rain and the earth which caused the waters to gush. Such a style is meaningful from two perspectives: one is that the entire universe obeys God as if it were a conscious being. The other is that the sky and the earth or, rather, the angels that represent these things before God and who are in charge of them, and other spirit beings that inhabit the heavens became angry at the unbelief and rebellion of human beings. Verse 44: 29 states that neither the heaven nor the earth shed tears over the drowning of the Pharaoh and his army. It may also be that the sky and the earth, together with whatever there is in them, are affected in some way by the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and actions of conscious beings living on the earth.
46. (God) said: “O Noah! He (being an unbeliever) is not of your family. He is one of unrighteous conduct (which embodied his unbelief). So do not ask of Me what you have no knowledge of. I admonish you so that you do not behave as one among the ignorant.”

47. (Noah) said: “O my Lord! I seek refuge in You, lest I should ask of You what I have no knowledge of. And unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I will indeed be among the losers.”

48. He was told: “O Noah! Get you down in peace and safety from Us, and with blessings upon you and upon the communities (of believers) who are with you (and those to descend from you and them). (There will also be other) communities (of unbelievers) – We will provide for them to enjoy themselves for a term, and then there will visit them from Us a painful punishment.”

49. Those are accounts of some exemplary events of the unseen (a time and realm beyond the reach of sense-perception) that We reveal to you, (O Messenger). Neither you nor your people knew them before this. Then (seeing that there is no substantial difference between the conditions in which the Messengers carried out their missions, and the reactions they encountered) be patient (with their reactions and their persistence in unbelief). The (final, happy) outcome is in favor of the God-revering, pious.

50. And to (the people of) ‘Ad, We sent their brother Hūd. He said: “O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. You are only fabricators of falsehood (in attributing partners to Him).

51. “O my people! I ask of you no wage for it (for conveying the Message to you); my wage is due from only Him Who originated me with a unique individuality. Will you not reason and understand?

52. “O my people! Implore your Lord to forgive you (for the sins you have so far committed), and turn to Him repentant that He may cause the sky to pour down upon you abundant rain, and add strength to your strength. So, do not turn your backs (on this message that I convey to you), as disbelieving criminals!”

53. “O Hūd!” they said: “You have brought us no clear sign (~ a miracle to prove your Messengership). We are not going to forsake our deities on your mere saying so, the more so as we do not believe you.
13. The Prophet Noah, upon him be God's peace, is one of the five greatest Messengers mentioned in the Qur'an (sūrah 42: 13). He prayed to God to forgive him, his parents, and those who believed among his family, and all believers, men and women (sūrah 71: 28). Just before the Flood started, as mentioned above (verse: 40), God ordered him to take into the Ark those who believed among his family and other believers. He saw one of his sons standing aloof and he invited him to embark. He thought his son was a believer because he had not seen any signs of unbelief in him. We understand from his prayer that he was aware that there were some among his family who were not believers. For this reason, he essentially was praying not for all of his family; but for only those who believed among them. It can easily be concluded from his prayer and his statement that, “My son was of my family,” that he thought of his son as a believer. His son was obviously a believer in appearance, but not in truth. He did not display any sign of unbelief which he had concealed in his heart; that is, he was a hypocrite. This is also evident from the Almighty’s answer, “what you have no knowledge of.” In the original of Noah’s statement which has been translated as “O my Lord, my son was of my family (as a believer), and Your promise is surely true (for my believing family members), and You are the Most Just of judges,” the parenthetical phrases (as a believer) and (for my believing family members) are not there, but they are implied. So his purpose for calling out in this way was to discover the Divine purpose for, or wisdom in, the drowning of a person whom he thought to be a believer. God Almighty informed him of the fact that his son was not a believer, and forewarned him against making any requests on behalf of a disbelieving one.

Though a miracle of eloquence, the reason why such a detail in the story of Noah should be included in the Qur’an must be sought in its purpose for narrating the exemplary phases of the Messengers’ missions. When this sūrah was revealed, many families in Makkah were divided into believers and unbelievers. However important a blood relationship is with respect to certain mutual rights and matters of law, such as guardianship and inheritance, the relationship that emanates from faith is more important. Although it has no part in legal matters, such as inheritance, it forms the basic foundation upon which the relationship among believers is based. The blood relationship should provide a support for it. In addition, a difference in faith invalidates the legal rights or responsibilities, such as guardianship and inheritance. A disbelieving child cannot inherit from believing parents. And any disbelieving member of a family cannot be preferred over any believing one, even though the latter does not belong to that family (sūrah 58: 22).

14. It is controversial whether the Flood stretched throughout the earth or it was localized. As far as we can understand from this verse, the Flood took place in the inhabited part of the world and encompassed all the existing people.

It has been pointed out before (sūrah 7, note 15) that the Flood took place in Iraq and neighboring regions. However, there are some differences of opinion about the mountain upon which the Ark came to rest. According to the Bible, it was Mt. Ararat. The Qur’an names it as al-Judī. Al-Judī means the heights, and this does not contradict the statement that it was Mt. Ararat. On the other hand, there is a mountain located south of Lake Van in Turkey that rises to a height of 7,700 feet which is known as Mount Judi. The local tribesmen there maintain that the Ark drifted to a high point on the Judi mountain chain and that the remains of it are still located at the top.

Mt. Judi overlooks the all-important Mesopotamian plain and is notable for the many archaeological ruins found in and around it. There are also many references to this mountain in ancient history. Sennacherib (700 BC), the Assyrian king, carved reliefs of himself in the rock on the side of the mountain. The Nestorians (a Christian sect) built several monasteries around the mountain, including one at the summit, known as “The Cloister of the Ark.” It was destroyed by lightning in 766.
AD. In 1910, Gertrude Bell explored the area and found a stone structure still at the summit in the shape of a ship, which was known by the locals as “Sefine-i Nabi Nuh” (The Ship of Noah). Bell also reported that on September 14 every year, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sabaeans, and Yezidis gathered on the mountain to commemorate Noah’s sacrifice. As late as 1949, two Turkish journalists claimed to have seen the Ark on this mountain, a ship measuring 500 feet in length!

There is also another mountain in Turkey called Judi, which is located 32 kilometers from Mount Ararat. In the January 16, 1994 issue, The Observer (London) published the news that a team of scientists had found Noah’s Ark on that mountain. Some investigators, both Muslims and Christians, are of the opinion that the Ararat mentioned in the Bible is the name of, not a mountain, but the region where Mount Ararat is located, and, therefore, the Ark having come to rest upon al-Judi or on Ararat, is not contradictory (www.arksearch.com/najudi/htm; www.trustthebible.com/ark.htm).

15. From one perspective, the Qur’ān presents a lot of history of bygone nations and predictions about the near or distant future. Some of its predictions are explicit while some others are implicit, or alluded to. It is impossible to contradict its accounts of historical events, therefore, whatever it predicts either has come true or will come true when its time is due. What researchers should do is to carry out studies in the light of the Qur’ān.

As pointed out in the verse, it was impossible for God’s Messenger to know the histories of the Prophets and their peoples. But, based on Divine Revelation and with utmost confidence in his mission, he conveyed both the histories of bygone nations and many predictions concerning future important events. This is a challenge to all ages and peoples, including historians and other researchers, and is one of the undeniable proofs of His Prophethood.
54. “We say only that some of our deities have possessed you with evil.” Hūd said: “Surely I call God to witness, and you too, be witnesses, that I am free of what you associate (with God as partners with Him),

55. “Apart from Him (I only take Him as Deity and Lord). So, scheme against me all together, and then give me no respite!

56. “I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. No living creature is there but He holds it by its forelock and keeps it under His complete control. Surely my Lord is on a straight path (He governs all that exists, and carries out His decrees rightly and with absolute justice).

57. “If you turn your backs (on the Message I convey to you, know that) I have conveyed to you what I was sent with to you. My Lord will (if you continue in your rejection) cause another people to take your place, whereas you cannot harm Him in the least. Surely my Lord keeps watch and record of all things.”

58. And when Our judgment came to pass (because the people of ‘Ād did continue in their rejection), We saved Hūd and those who believed with him out of a mercy from Us (because of their faith, righteousness and patience): We saved them from a harsh punishment.

59. Such were the ‘Ād. They obstinately rejected the Revelations of their Lord (the signs and miracles proving His Oneness and all other essentials of faith), and they rebelled against His Messengers (by rejecting the Messenger – Hūd – sent to them), and followed every stubborn tyrant.

60. And a curse was made to pursue them in this world and on the Day of Resurrection. Beware! the ‘Ād disbelieved in their Lord with ingratitude; so away with the ‘Ād, the people of Hūd!

61. And to (the people of) Thamūd, (We sent) their brother Šāliḥ (as Messenger to convey the same message): “O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. He has raised you from the earth and settled you in it, enabling your dignity and prosperity. So, ask forgiveness of Him (for the sins you have so far committed), and turn to Him repentant. Assuredly my Lord is All-Near, All-Responsive (to the call of all beings that call upon Him).”

62. They said: “O Šāliḥ! Before this, you were a source of hope among us. Would you now seek to prevent us from worshipping what our forefathers used to worship? Indeed we are in real doubt concerning what you call us to.”
63. He said: “O my people! What do you think – if I stand on a clear evidence from my Lord, and He has granted me a mercy from Himself – who could help me against God were I to disobey Him? You would add to me nothing but ruin.

64. “O my people! This is the she-camel from God as a sign for you (of the kind you demand to see before you believe). So leave her alone to pasture on God’s earth, and touch her with no evil lest an imminent punishment should seize you.”

65. But (unable to bear to see her as evidence of the truth of Šāliḥ’s message,) they cruelly slaughtered her. Then he (Šāliḥ) said: “Enjoy the life in your habitations three days more, (then will be your ruin). This is a threat that will not be proved false.”

66. So when Our judgment came to pass, We saved Šāliḥ and those who believed with him out of mercy from Us (because of their faith, righteousness, and patience), from the ignominy of that day. Surely your Lord is the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious with irresistible might.

67. And the awful blast seized those who committed the greatest wrong (by associating partners with God), so that they lay prostrate lifeless in their very dwellings, As though they had never lived there in prosperity. Beware! The Thamūd disbelieved in their Lord (and were ungrateful for His favors), so away with the Thamūd!

69. And Our (heavenly) envoys came (in human form) to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, “Peace!”, and he (returning the greeting) said, “Peace!” Without delay, he brought them a roasted calf.

70. But when he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he was doubtful of them (deeming their conduct strange) and became apprehensive of them. They said: “Do not fear! We have been sent to the people of Lot.”

71. Meanwhile his (old, infertile) wife, standing by, felt she was menstruating (and smiled);17 and We gave her the glad tidings of (the birth of) Isaac and, after Isaac, of (his son) Jacob.

16. According to the existing traditions where the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, lived, if a guest held back from eating food that was offered, it meant that that person had an evil intention. That is why the Prophet Abraham became apprehensive of the guests.

17. The verse used (DaHīQa) means both menstruating and smiling. So, Fethullah Gülen and (a)Tahātabāi, two renowned contemporary scholars, opine that since, despite her old age, she felt menstruating, she smiled in shyness. (Kur'ān'tān İdrake, 1: 196)
72. She said: “Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child, now that I am an old woman, and this, my husband, is an old man? That would be a strange thing indeed!”

73. They (the envoys) said: “Are you surprised at God's command? The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O people of the house! Surely He is All-Praiseworthy (as the Lord, Who meets all needs of His servants), All-Sublime.”

74. So when the apprehension left Abraham and the glad tiding were conveyed to him, he began to argue with Our envoys to plead with Us on behalf of the people of Lot.

75. Abraham was, indeed, most clement, tender-hearted, ever-turning to God with all his heart.

76. “O Abraham! Cease from this! For sure, the command of your Lord has already gone forth; and there is coming upon them a punishment not to be turned back.”

77. And when Our envoys came to Lot, he was troubled on their account and felt himself powerless to protect them, and he said: “This is a distressful day.”

78. His people came rushing to him, driven by their perverted desire, as they had before that been committing such abominations. Lot said: “O my people! Here are my daughters; they are utterly clean for you (to satisfy your desires in wedlock). Have fear of God, and do not disgrace me in respect of my guests. Is there not among you one right-minded man?”

79. They said: “You know well that we have no claim on your daughters; and you surely know well what we desire.”

80. He said: “O! would that I had power to resist you, or that I could lean upon some strong support!”

81. They (the envoys) said: “O Lot! We are envoys of your Lord. They will not reach you. So, set out with your family in a part of the night, and let no one among you turn round – all save your wife, for that which is to befall them will befall her as well.”

Their appointed time is the morning. Is the morning not near?”
18. While narrating some important episodes from the earlier Prophets’ lives in connection with the main themes of this sūrah, the Qur’ān of miraculous expression includes this episode from the life of Abraham, upon him be God’s peace. This hints that even amid the greatest destruction, there is always a hope for the future of faith, like a seed destined to grow into a great tree. While many peoples were destroyed because of their stubborn unbelief, evil deeds, and immoralities, and the unrest and corruption they caused on earth, Abraham, upon him be peace, begot two sons – Ishmael and Isaac, upon them be peace – from whom two branches would issue bearing Messengers, and by whose grace human history would enter a completely new phase. So, with this episode from the life of Abraham, the father of all the great Messengers to come after him, the Qur’ān both consoles the Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and his friends, all of whom suffered great persecutions at the hands of the Makkāni polytheists, and gives glad tiding of a new seed which had already germinated under the earth to grow into a magnificent tree. This is true for all similar periods until the Day of Resurrection.

19. Noah’s son and Lot’s wife were among the unbelievers who were destroyed. This is an extremely significant warning for all people. In order to be saved, we must always seek refuge in God and implore Him to protect our hearts from all kinds of deviation from the Straight Path.
82. So when Our judgment came to pass, We overturned (those sinful towns), and rained down on them stones of baked clay one after another,

83. (Each stone) marked out by your Lord (for a particular individual). And they are never far from wrongdoers (in all times and places).

84. And (to the people of) Midian (We sent as Messenger) their brother Shu‘ayb. He said (conveying the same message): “O my people! Worship God: you have no deity other than Him. Do not give short measure and weight (in your dealings). Surely I see you affluent (in wealth which you have gained in unlawful ways), and I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing Day.

85. “O my people! Give full measure and weight, with perfect equity, and 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.

86. “What God leaves with you (as lawful profit) is better for you, if you are believers.

87. They said: “O Shu‘ayb! Does your Prayer-rite command you that we should forsake all that our forefathers used to worship, or that we should cease doing whatever we wish with our property? Surely you are one mild-mannered, and one right-minded.”

88. He answered: “O my people! What do you think – if I stand on a clear evidence from my Lord, and out of His provision He provides for me? I do not (in hope of worldly gain and provoking disorder) act in opposition to you (myself doing) what I ask you to avoid. What I seek is only to set things right so far as I am able. My success in my task depends on God alone. In Him have I put my trust, and to Him do I always turn with all my heart.

20. The Qur’anic presentation of the destruction of ancient peoples, especially those of Lot, points to calamities which we today label as “natural” and which we think we understand and attribute to nature. It seems as if the people of Lot were destroyed by a terrible volcanic eruption, probably in conjunction with a severe earthquake. The land where those people lived sank into the earth; it could be said that the site was wiped clean. Whatever the calamity was with which they were destroyed, it is God Who judged their destruction and Who brought it about. But since the world is the realm of wisdom and human beings are equipped with free will, God acts behind the veil of causes. Angels represent His acts in the world and act as His “officials.” Every occurrence in “nature” is connected with an angel, to the extent that even a rain drop falls with the angel in charge of it. Nothing can be attributed to chance, for God’s all-inclusive Will prevails. It is He Who
creates everything, and nothing occurs without His control or permission.

One of the reasons why God acts in this world behind the veil of causes or causes-and-effects is that human reason cannot see the ultimate beauty in some happenings, such as death, illnesses, and misfortunes. If God were directly involved in such happenings, people might attribute to Him the apparent ugliness inherent in them, and, therefore, more readily commit great sins. But, as God has mercy on us, He has put causes between Him and the happenings and saved us from falling into such error. People ascribe to certain causes such seemingly ugly happenings as death, illness, and misfortune. But this should not prevent us from searching for the Divine purpose behind all these happenings in order to ask God for forgiveness for our sins and pray to Him to receive blessings.

As with the peoples mentioned in the Qur’ān, if an evil encompasses all people, God may destroy them. However, in many cases we see that, rather than the unbelievers, it is the believers who are subjected to Divine punishment that arises in the form of what we wrongly call natural disasters. This is because major cases and great crimes are referred to and tried and judged by high courts, while minor ones are decided in ordinary ones. Similarly, the punishment for the greater part of the sins of unbelievers has been postponed to the Last, Supreme Judgment, while the believers are mostly punished in this world as an atonement for their sins and failures in following God’s laws of the Religion and life. However, as with the peoples mentioned in the Qur’ān, if the sins and crimes committed exceed certain limits, God may punish the unbelievers in this world as well.

God does not usually choose between the good and the evil, or the innocent and guilty, in disasters that result from the wrongdoing of the majority, in such calamities as earthquakes or floods that come as a form of destruction. Such calamities befall everyone, for they are part of the tests and trials prepared for us. We are tested in this world, where God opens the door to reason in order for us to know and believe in Him but, since He has given free will to humankind, He never acts in a way that would compel us to believe. If He were to choose between the believers and unbelievers in every calamity, this would be as if He had written His Name in the sky with the stars, and everyone would feel obliged to believe. But it is very important that everyone should believe of their own free will.

In return for undergoing such calamities, good and innocent people will receive a great reward in the Hereafter. For them, there is another kind of mercy: just as the lost property of the innocent becomes like alms given to the poor and, thereby, gains permanence, their death in a disaster may be regarded as a kind of martyrdom and, therefore, will gain them an eternal life of happiness. For this reason, having gained for them a great and perpetual profit from a relatively trivial and temporary difficulty or torment, such calamities are, for them, an instance of Divine mercy hidden within wrath. Nevertheless, it should also be stressed that sometimes God uses such calamities to punish people because they have not tried to enjoin what is good and prevent what is evil. In addition, most people may have participated in some of the sinful actions of the sinful majority, either actively or by giving them direct or indirect support, or in some other way.

In connection with the exemplary history of Lot’s people, we should also indicate that as a sinless Messenger of God, Lot was free of all sins, major or minor. The misconduct attributed to Lot in the Bible (Genesis, 19: 30–38) are monstrous absurdities, and contradicted by what the same text recounts – that he and his daughters, precisely because they were exemplary in their conduct, were saved from the destruction that befell the people on account of their sexual immorality.

21. Islam determines the lawful and the unlawful to order relationships among people. It is extremely careful of dealings between people, of not wronging others, gaining by lawful ways, and of absolutely refraining from gaining through unlawful ways such as by deception, interest, lying, and all other kinds of corrupt practices. Although, in general terms, Islam allows prices to be determined by free and lawful marketing, it does not permit selling goods for a price grossly in excess of the normal market price. It strictly forbids any deception, or the giving of deficient measure or weight. Although people may think that they are profiting by gaining in such unlawful ways, in truth, they are in loss. Only one who acts in conformity with God’s laws has an advantage, and, therefore, it is better for everybody to be honest in their dealings.
89. “O my people! Let your dissent from me not cause you to sin so that there befall you the like of what befell the people of Noah, or the people of Hūd, or the people of Sālih. And the people of Lot (who were subjected to the same doom) did not live far from you.

90. “Implore your Lord to forgive you (for the sins you have so far committed), and turn to Him repentant. Surely my Lord is All-Compassionate (especially towards His servants who turn to Him), All-Loving.”

91. “O Shu‘ayb!” they said: “We do not understand much of what you say, and we see you indeed as a weak one among us. And, were it not for your tribe (esteemed among us), we would most certainly have stoned you to death. Know well that we do not hold you in esteem as having power over us.”

92. He replied: “O my people! Do you hold my tribe in greater esteem than God, that you take Him as something to cast behind you and forget? But surely my Lord encompasses (with His Knowledge and Power) all that you do.

93. “O my people! Do, then, all that may be within your power, while I am at work (doing my task). In time, you will come to see and know who it is that will be visited by a punishment to disgrace him, and who it is that speaks falsehood and will be contradicted in his speech. Wait and watch, then, and I am watching with you!”

94. And so, when Our judgment came to pass, We saved Shu‘ayb and those who believed in his company out of a mercy from Us (because of their faith, righteousness, and patience), and the awful blast seized those who acted wrongly to their own ruin, so that they lay prostrate lifeless in their own dwellings,

95. As though they had never lived there in affluence. So, away with the (people of) Midian, just as the Thamūd have been done away with!

96. And We indeed sent Moses with Our clear signs (miracles to support him), and a manifest authority (from Us),

97. To the Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they (his chiefs, his own people, and many among the Children of Israel) followed the rule of the Pharaoh; and the rule of the Pharaoh was by no means a guide right and just (and no tyrant in the mould of the Pharaoh has ever done differently).22

22. The subtle meaning discovered by the great Turkish interpreter of the Qur’ān, Elmahili Hamdi Yazır, is quite beautiful. Since the title “the Pharaoh” is used in the first part of the verse, the pronoun “he” in reference to him is expected in the second part. But we see that the title “the Pharaoh” is repeated. So, the first mention of “the Pharaoh” refers to the Egyptian tyrant, to whom Moses was sent, while the second mention of “the Pharaoh” is, rather than a proper name, a denomination referring to all Pharaoh-like tyrants and their administrations.
98. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them to the Fire (as cattle are led to water)! How evil a "watering-place" to be led to!

99. And a curse was made to pursue them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection. How evil is the gift offered!

100. That is something of the accounts of some townships (that were destroyed in the past). We relate it to you (O Messenger). Among them are some still standing, and some extinct like a mown field.

101. We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. When the judgment of your Lord came to pass, their deities which they used to invoke apart from God proved of no avail to them, and they increased them not save in ruin.

102. That is how your Lord seizes the towns when He seizes them when they are wrongdoers. His seizing is indeed painful, severe.

103. Surely in that is a sign (lesson and warning) for those who fear the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a Day when all humankind will be gathered together, and that is a Day bound to be witnessed (experienced by all living creatures in their whole being).

104. We do not postpone it beyond a term already appointed (by Us).

105. On the Day when it comes, no one will speak unless by His leave. Among those (gathered together), some are wretched and some happy.

106. As for those who will be wretched (on that Day, on account of the deeds they have earned), they will be in the Fire, wherein moaning and wailing will be their lot,

107. Abiding there so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Surely your Lord is the Sovereign Doer of what He wills.

108. And as for those who are happy (having been blessed by God with faith and good deeds), they will be in Paradise, abiding there so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills — as a gift unceasing.
23. The verse compares the Pharaoh to a blind cowherd, and those who followed him blindly to cattle, and, thereby, warns us against blind imitation and not using our reason and free will to find and follow the right path. See also surah 7: 179.

24. The expression, *except as your Lord wills*, is included in the last two verses especially in order to stress that God is a (sovereign) Doer of whatever He wills, as mentioned in verse 107. No one can compel Him, nor is He Himself obliged to do anything. He does whatever He wills. If there is enduring bliss in Paradise, this is because God has willed it so; if there is enduring punishment in Hell, again, this is because God has willed it so.

As for the statement, *so long as the heavens and the earth endure*, this is an idiomatic statement in Arabic denoting eternity. On Doomsday, the earth will be transformed into another earth peculiar to the other world, and there will also be heavens there (surah 14: 48).
109. So do not be in doubt of anything that those (misguided people) worship. They but worship as their forefathers worshipped in times past; and We will most certainly pay them their due in full, undiminished.

110. And, indeed, We granted Moses the Book, and discord arose about it, (just as your people, O Messenger, differ concerning the Book We are revealing to you. So do not be grieved). Had it not been for a decree already issued by your Lord (postponing the final, decisive judgment until an appointed term), it would indeed have been judged between them. They (your people) are surely in serious doubt, truly uncertain, concerning it (the Qur’ān).

111. And surely for each of them – your Lord will certainly pay them in full for their deeds. He is indeed fully aware of all that they do.

112. Pursue, then, what is exactly right (in every matter of the Religion) as you are commanded (by God), and those who, along with you, have turned (to God with faith, repenting their former ways, let them do likewise); and do not rebel against the bounds of the Straight Path (O believers)! He indeed sees well all that you do.

113. And do not incline towards those who do wrong (against God by associating partners with Him or transgressing against His commands, or against people by violating their rights), or the Fire will touch you. For you have no guardians and true friends apart from God; (but if you should incline towards those who do wrong,) you will not be helped (by Him).

114. Establish the Prayer (O Messenger) at the beginning and the end of the day, and in the watches of the night near to the day. Surely good deeds wipe out evil deeds. This is advice and a reminder for the mindful who reflect.

115. And be patient, persevering (in doing good, avoiding mistakes, and against all kinds of persecution you are made to suffer in God’s cause), for surely God never leaves to waste the reward of those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.
116. If only there had been among the generations before you (of whom some We destroyed) people with lasting qualities (such as faith, knowledge, virtue, and good deeds, whose goal was what is lasting with God, the eternal life of the Hereafter, and) who would warn against disorder and corruption on earth! Among them only a few, included among those whom We saved, did this. But those who did wrong (against God by associating partners with Him, or transgressing against His commands, or against people by violating their rights), were lost in the pursuit of pleasures without scruples, and were criminals committed to accumulating sins.

117. And it has never been the way of your Lord to destroy the townships unjustly while their people were righteous, dedicated to continuous self-reform and setting things right in the society.

25. This decree is that there will be for humankind on the earth, where they have been appointed as vicegerent to improve it, a habitation and provision until the Day of Resurrection (sūrah 2: 36), and that recompense for obedience or disobedience to the Religion is generally deferred to the Hereafter.

26. In one respect, this verse circumscribes the five prescribed Prayers, although it does specify the exact time of each.

The Prayers to be established at the beginning and end of the day may be seen as the Noon and Afternoon Prayers. If so, what is meant by day is broad daylight. The original word for “watches of the night near to the day” is zulef, which is in the plural. In Arabic the plural must include at least three things, so it can be concluded that the word zulef refers to the three Prayers to be established during the night; i.e. the Evening, Late Evening and Dawn or Morning Prayers. Although this is the apparent meaning of the verse, which indicates five times for Prayer in a day, these times may not be the exact times of the daily Prescribed Prayers.

Praying five times a day was prescribed for the Muslims during the Messenger’s Ascension in the eleventh year of his mission. Therefore, the five times mentioned in the verse may be only for the Messenger, and one of the three times in the night may be the time of Tahajjud, the Late Night Prayer which was prescribed for the Messenger, not the time of dawn or early morning.

The Prescribed Prayer is the pillar of the Religion and the best of good deeds. One who does not perform the Prescribed Prayer cannot construct the building of the Religion on the foundation of faith. A foundation on which a building has not been built is easily removed. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, taught that the Prayer is like a river running by one’s house. One who bathes in it five times a day is cleaned of all dirt (which may have attached to them during the intervening periods). He also taught that the Prescribed Prayers can serve as atonement for the minor sins committed between the times (Muslim, “Tahārah,” 16). The Qur’ān declares that the Prescribed Prayer prevents one from committing indecencies and other kinds of evil deeds (29: 45). Also, it serves as repentance and a means of asking God for forgiveness. Similarly, any good deed done just after an evil one may cause the evil one to be forgiven. So it is highly advisable that one should do good immediately after any evil committed. Of course, this does not mean that we may willfully do evil so long as we pray immediately afterwards. Rather, like the Prescribed Prayer, the doing of a good deed after an evil one is intended to train and restrain one from committing further evil. This is what is indicated to in the sentence Surely good deeds wipe out evil deeds, in the verse.
27. God, as the All-Just, and more than that, the All-Merciful Whose Mercy encompasses everything, never wrongs His creatures, nor discriminates between them. Rather, He always wishes good for them. What we must do is to use our free will on the right course. Some virtues, such as truthfulness, modesty, humility, altruism, generosity, being free of prejudices, and keeping from such evils as lying, deception, wronging others, illicit sexual relations, and the like, are petitions presented to God for faith and salvation. On the other hand, vices such as wrongdoing, arrogance, being prejudiced, selfishness, miserliness, and indulgence in pleasures are obstacles before faith and salvation. God’s Messenger replied to one of his Companions who asked him about whether people would benefit from the good deeds they had done in the period of jihāliyyah (pre-Islamic era), saying: “Why else do you think God has guided you to Islam?” (al-Bukhārī, “Zakāh,” 24).

For the conflicts among humankind, their meaning, and place in human life and history, and the Divine wisdom contained in them, see: 2: 213, note 143; 3: 19, note 4; 5: 48, note 11; 10: 93, note 14. 28. This word has already been given in 7: 18 with reference to Satan’s followers: He (God) said: ‘Go away from there, disgraced and disowned! Those of them that follow you, surely I will fill Hell with you all!’” God will fill Hell with Satan and his followers among the jinn and humankind who have ultimately become “satanic.” Time has demonstrated that Paradise is not easy to deserve, nor is Hell useless.
Sūrah 12

Yūsuf (Joseph)

Makkah Period

This sūrah, revealed toward the end of the Makkkan period of Islam and comprising 111 verses, takes its name from the Prophet Joseph, whose life and mission it recounts. Unlike the accounts of other Messengers, different elements and aspects of which are related in different sūrah, the life-history of Joseph, upon him be God's peace, is narrated in this sūrah only, in full and in chronological order. This sūrah, which also tells us of the truth contained in dreams, presents many principles of how to serve Islam by relating the life-history of a Messenger, who became the most renowned and respected figure in the country to which he had been sold as a slave.

1. The Qur’ān – the word qur‘ān literally means recitation, something to be recited, or a discourse – was revealed in Arabic. Being a universal religion, Islam addresses all people, regardless of differences in race, color, and language, and embraces whoever accepts it, whatever background or language a person has. But, naturally, it must have a language itself, and the language of Arabic was chosen. However, this in no way means that those who enter the fold of Islam from other languages must learn Arabic in order to be Muslims. Knowing a language is a scientific matter, and is different from speaking it and reading books written in it. The instructions in the Qur’ān make it necessary for us to recite the Qur’ān; thus, it is imperative to learn the daily prayers in Arabic, for any translation cannot be taken as the actual recitation. Every Muslim had better be encouraged to be able to read (i.e. phonetically pronounce the words) the Qur’ān, and they can learn to read it within a month, which is one of the miraculous aspects of the Qur’ān. However, knowing Arabic to study and understand the Qur’ān is a scientific matter. Just as a native English speaker who speaks English does not necessarily know the grammar rules of English, or the English that is studied in schools as a branch of science, so too, not every native Arabic speaker is thought to know Arabic well enough to understand the Qur’ān. Likewise, just as every one who knows English well is not expected to have learned physics or chemistry or medicine merely by reading books that were written in English, or even to be able to understand books about them written in English, so too, someone who knows Arabic well does not necessarily know or understand the Qur’ān; understanding and knowing the Qur’ān is a scientific matter that involves many other sciences. Just as everyone cannot be a physicist, chemist or historian, and just as each branch of science requires special study, so too, it is an obvious fact that there will be scholars of the Qur’ān who must instruct others in it.

God sent every Messenger with the language he and his people spoke. So, one of the primary reasons why the Qur’ān was revealed in Arabic is that God’s Messenger appeared among the Arabs and the people to whom the Qur’ān first addressed itself were the Arabs.
There must also be other reasons, some of which we can know, while others we cannot. One of these other reasons may be that Arabic is the most appropriate language in human realm for a Divine discourse. God calls people to reflect on the fact that the Qur’ān was revealed in Arabic, and its being in Arabic is an essential dimension of the Qur’ān.

2. Sūrah Yūsuf (Joseph) exhibits its beauty from the very beginning. We can understand why it is called the best of narratives in this way:

- Only the Qur’ān can tell these events in the best way. That is, it tells them most comprehensively and concisely, and presents the full historical, psychological, moral and spiritual meaning of those events and how they unfolded.
- It cannot be told so beautifully in any book other than in this Arabic Qur’ān because of the unique beauties and felicities of the Qur’ānic Arabic.
- The best of the narratives concerning the lives of the previous Messengers which consoled the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and his Companions in Makkah, and also enlightened their way, is the one that is presented in this sūrah.
- While almost all of the other narratives contain elements of destruction, all the persons involved in the events described in this sūrah come to understand their mistakes and find the truth in the end.
- While all other narratives are scattered throughout different sūrah’s, the narrative in Sūrah Yūsuf is given in one sūrah in its entirety, and in greater detail.
- In this narrative, it is possible to find an anatomy of the character of humanity, with both its negative and positive aspects. We are also presented with how the complete process of the overall reformation of a country from within is possible. This process is one which will enlighten the ways of believers until the Resurrection Day.
- The mission of Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, marks the appearance and first development in history of the descendents of Isaac, son of Abraham, upon him be peace. This mission opened the way for the Children of Israel, descending from Jacob, Isaac’s son and Joseph’s father, upon them all be peace, to settle in Egypt and rise to a leading position there. This history descends from Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, who stood at the starting point of their history, and then enters a new phase with Prophet Moses, rising to its zenith with David and Solomon, upon them all be peace.
- The spiritual beauty of Joseph, upon him be peace, reflected in his physical beauty and his representation of such important virtues as chastity and devotion to doing good, add to the beauty of the narrative of his life and mission.
- It was impossible for God’s Messenger Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who was unlettered, to know of Joseph’s life, especially in the particular detail recounted in the Qur’ān. So, among the histories of the lives and missions of the Messengers, the completeness and perfection of the narrative in this sūrah is among the greatest proofs of Muḥammad’s Messengership.

3. The original word for “stars” — kawkab — also means “planets.” From this, we may conclude that if the earth is included, there are actually twelve planets, although as yet, only nine or ten of them have been discovered. In the dream, Joseph is symbolized by the earth, which, due to the significance it possesses as the habitat for humankind, is the “spiritual” center of the solar system. It is explicitly stated in the Qur’ān several times that whatever there is in the heavens and the earth, including the sun and the moon, has been made subservient to God’s laws for the benefit of human beings (sūrah 13: 33; sūrah 16: 12; sūrah 31: 20).

4. While you sleep with your eyes closed, your ears deaf, your tongue silent, and your arms and legs at rest, how do you travel, meet people, and do many things in a few minutes, or even sec-
When you get up in the morning, you feel deeply influenced by that few seconds’ adventure. Although Freud and his followers attribute dreams to the workings of the subconscious mind, to thoughts and desires, or impulses and past experiences, how can this explain dreams that inform of a future event with which one has had no contact or even thought about?

When we sleep, our spirit enters the world of ideal forms or symbols where, to some extent, past, present, and future are combined, without completely breaking its connection to the body. It continues this connection through a cord. As a result, it may experience a past event or witness a future one. However, since things in that world exist in ideal forms or symbols, the spirit usually receives symbols that require interpretation. For example, clear water in that world may correspond to knowledge in this world. The metaphors, similes, and parables found in the Qur’an and the Prophetic sayings may provide significant keys to interpret dreams. However, some dreams are so clear that no interpretation is needed.

Dreams are of three kinds. Two are included in the category of “jumbled dreams” (the Qur’anic expression in 12: 44). In these dreams, either the imagination gives form to the deviations of a bad temper, or the mind remembers an exciting event which happened some time ago, and produces it in a new and different form, and the dreams that a person has in such moods are “jumbled ones,” as will be mentioned in verses 43–44, 47–49 of this surah. Despite being jumbled, some of these dreams may also have some significant meaning, but they need to be interpreted.

The other type of dream has nothing to do with the subconscious self. Such dreams carry important messages: either they are glad tidings from God, which encourage us to do good things and guide us, or warnings concerning the evils we have done or will do. Those dreams, which we call true dreams, are very clear and unforgettable. In an authenticated narration, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says that true dreams are one of the forty-six aspects of Prophethood. (That is, since God’s Messenger had true dreams in the initial six months of his twenty-three years of Prophethood, true dreams are a type of Divine inspiration.) This means that true dreams contain elements of truth.

Several scientific or technological discoveries were first seen in dreams. Elias Howe, while trying to figure out how to thread a sewing machine, dreamed that he was being held prisoner by a tribe who were thrusting spears at him. Puzzled and in mortal fear, he suddenly saw holes at the top end of his captors’ spears. He woke up and made a little “spear” with a hole at the sharp end of the needle, and thus made sewing by machine possible. Niels Bohr, who was studying atomic structures, dreamed of planets connected to the sun with threads that were spinning around it. When he woke up, he conceived of a resemblance between what he had dreamed of and atomic structures.
5. He (Jacob) said: “O my son! Do not relate your dream to your brothers, lest (out of envy) they devise a scheme against you. For Satan is a manifest enemy to humankind, (and can incite them to do such a thing).

6. “So will your Lord choose you and impart to you some knowledge of the inner meaning of all happenings (including dreams), and complete His favor upon you and upon the family of Jacob, as He completed it formerly upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac." Surely, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

7. Assuredly, in (this account of) Joseph and his brothers, there are many signs (messages) for seekers of truth.

8. When they (the brothers addressing one another) said: “Joseph and his brother are indeed more loved by our father than we are, even though we are a powerful band (of greater use to him). Surely our father is manifestly mistaken.”

9. (One of them said:) “Kill Joseph, or cast him out in some distant land, so that your father’s attention should turn only to you, and after that you may again become righteous people.”

10. Another of them, putting forward his view, said: “Do not kill Joseph, but rather, cast him into the depth of the well (that you know of), that some caravan may pick him up – (do that) if you are seriously intending to take action.”

11. They said (having agreed on this) to their father: “Our father! Why will you not trust Joseph with us, while we are his sincere well-wishers?

12. “Let him go out with us tomorrow, that he may enjoy himself and play; surely we will take good care of him.”

13. He (Jacob) said: “Indeed, it grieves me that you should take him with you, and I fear lest a wolf should devour him while you are inattentive of him.”

14. They said: “If a wolf should devour him when we are so strong a company, then we should surely be lost!”
5. Every thing and event has a substantial inner meaning in the general context of the universe. Nothing exists or happens by chance. Every thing and event is a knot or weft in the general fabric of things and events. Moreover, God has an ultimate purpose for the existence of every thing and every happening, so no thing and no event is meaningless. Each bears messages for conscious beings – humankind, angels, and the jinn. Although all the Prophets, and even some distinguished saintly people, can have knowledge of the meaning and messages of events and what they are intended for, the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, has a special place among them.

6. As in the Bible, the Qur'ān shows that the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, understood the meaning of the dream with all its deeper implications, with the eleven stars symbolizing his brothers, and the sun and the moon his parents. But the Bible relates that the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, assumed that Joseph’s dream was the outcome of wishful thinking and rebuked Joseph, upon him be peace, for having had such a dream (Genesis, 37: 10). Moreover, there are other serious differences between the account of the Prophet Joseph’s life in the Qur’ān and that of the Bible.

It is unfortunate that the Bible contains many such grave accusations against the Prophets; some are even worse than the one given above. For example, see: Genesis, 19: 30–38; 27: 25–31; II Samuel 11; and I Kings 11.

If the Qur’ān had not been revealed, we could not be sure whether the other Prophets really had been sincere, devout, and thankful servants of God. So, all the previous Prophets, the Books which were sent through some of them, and the religion they brought, are greatly indebted to the Qur’ān, to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and to the Islam he brought.

7. The verse concluding with God’s being All-Knowing and All-Wise shows that this surah is based mainly on these two Names and that the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, was favored with them. He was a particularly wise, knowledgeable Prophet.

8. As a matter of fact, the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, did not discriminate in showing his sons love, but as he discerned the potential in Joseph, upon him be peace, and what kind of mission he was destined for, he, therefore, paid greater attention to him.
15. And so they went away with him, and decided to put Joseph in the depth of the well, (which they did). We revealed to him: “You will most certainly remind them of this deed of theirs while they are unaware (neither knowing nor understanding all that has transpired).”
16. And at nightfall, they returned to their father, weeping.
17. They said: “Our father! We went off racing with one another, and left Joseph behind by our things, then a wolf devoured him. But we know that you will not believe us, even though we speak the truth.”
18. They had brought his shirt back with false blood on it. Jacob said: “Rather, your (evil-commanding) souls have tempted you to do something evil. So (the proper recourse for me is) a becoming patience (a patience that endures without complaint).” God it is Whose help is sought against (the situation) that you have described.”
19. And there came a caravan, and they sent forth one among them to fetch water. He let down his bucket (into the well). “Good luck!” he exclaimed: “(There is) a youth here!” So they hid and preserved him as merchandise to sell. God had full knowledge of what they were doing.
20. And they sold him for a paltry price – a few silver coins – so little did they value him.
21. The man who bought him in Egypt said to his wife: “Give him honorable, good lodging. It may be that he will prove useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son.”
22. When Joseph reached his full manhood, We granted him authority with sound, wise judgment, and special knowledge. Thus, do We reward those devoted to doing good as if seeing God.

9. While reflecting on the reasons for which the Qur’an was sent down in Arabic, we should also be mindful of the fact that, more than any other language, the pronunciation of the words in Arabic is in accord with their meaning. In other words, the pronunciation of the words and the conjugation of the verbs call to mind the meaning. For example, in the Qur’anic statement, O earth, swallow up your waters! (sūrah 11: 44), the word translated as “swallow” is abli’, a word associated with the act of swallowing. Similarly the word here translated as “depth,” ghayabah, calls to mind a disappearance in depth by its sound, and the word translated as “well,” jubb, calls to mind the sound made when one falls into a well. It is possible to find many other examples of this linguistic feature in the Qur’an.
10. It is worth noting that Jacob, upon him be peace, as a Prophet of God, never complained to or of God when he had apparently lost Joseph. He did not shout, nor did he chide his sons, but only hinted that he did not believe them. He reacted with utmost serenity and referred the matter to God in perfect reliance on Him as the true Helper of His servants.

Both being Messengers raised among the same community, the attitudes of Jacob and Moses are worth noting. As mentioned before (7:150), Moses, having received the Tablets and learned that his people had adopted a calf to worship, returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, and rebuked them, saying: ‘Evil is the course you have followed after me! Have you forsaken your Lord’s commandment so hastily to hasten your destruction?’ (ṣūrah 7:150). And then he threw down the Tablets, and laid hold of his brother’s head, dragging him toward himself. The great difference between these two attitudes should be sought in the ‘misfortune’ each faced. It appeared as if the Prophet Jacob had lost his son. It was God who gave him this son as a gift and it was God Who could take him back. What a father should do in such a case is to show the proper patience, which the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, did in the best way. By contrast, Moses, upon him be peace, faced apostasy after many years during which God’s favors had poured down upon the people, and at a time when he hoped he could apply God’s laws in his community. So, both of the Messengers did what they were expected to do, and they taught us important lessons.

11. Jacob’s sons were the first ancestors of the Children of Israel. Although being sons of a great Prophet, as human beings, they had some traits requiring education. But we should point out that, later on, under the education of their father, they were able to transform their negative traits into virtues.

God has equipped humankind with three major powers: lust for the opposite sex, offspring, money, earning, and the comforts of life; the power of anger to protect oneself and one’s values and intellect. Moreover, they are, by nature, fallible, forgetful, neglectful, fond of disputing, obstinate, selfish, and envious, among many other negative traits. Since human beings are distinguished from other conscious beings, like angels, by being endowed with free will, these powers, faculties, and apparently negative qualities have not been restricted in creation. However, in order to attain happiness as social beings, both in their individual and collective life, in the world and in the Hereafter, and to rise to higher and higher ranks of humanity, they should either discipline these traits according to certain precepts or channel them into virtues. For example, obstinacy can be channeled into steadiness in right and truth, and envy into a feeling of competition to do good things. The happiness and perfection of all people lie in their struggling against the negative aspects of their nature and restricting these aspects, or channeling them into virtues, and in acquiring a distinction with their good qualities, thus becoming good, worshipping servants of God, and useful members of society. The Last Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, said: “I have been sent to perfect the standards and beauties of good morals” (at-Ṭabarānī, 7:74).

12. While describing events, the Qur’ān displays the characters of the kind of people involved. As we see from verses 19 and 20, the Qur’ān’s complaint about the members of the caravan, who were apparently low, rough people lacking in discernment, and so unaware of the true value things and persons have; this verse, through contrast, shows the nobility of the man who bought Joseph, upon him be peace, in Egypt.

13. The original words, hukm and ‘ilm, which we translate here as “sound, wise judgment” and “special knowledge” respectively, are used in the indefinite form. This implies that the judgment and knowledge given to the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, as well as to other Prophets, are of a special kind peculiar to the Prophets which cannot be acquired through studying. Some people may acquire a portion of this through self-purification of their sins and by spiritual contact with God through worship and reflection, as the conclusion of the verse, Thus do We reward those devoted to doing good as if seeing God, suggests.
23. And the woman in whose house he was living sought to enjoy herself by him. She bolted the doors and said, “Come, please!” He said: “God forbid! My lord (your husband) has given me honorable, good lodging. Assuredly, wrongdoers never prosper.”

24. Certainly, she was burning with desire for him; and he would have desired her had it not been that he had already seen the argument and proof of his Lord (concerning chastity and good conduct, and so was anxious only about how to escape her). We did it in that way (We showed to him Our argument and proof) so that We might avert from him an evil and indecency. For he was one of Our servants endowed with perfect sincerity and purity of intention in faith and practicing the Religion.

25. So they raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back, and they met her master (husband) by the door. She cried: “What should be the recompense for him who purposes evil against your household – except imprisonment or a grievous punishment?”

26. He (Joseph) said: “She it was who sought to enjoy herself by me.” And one of those present, a member of her household, said: “If his shirt has been torn from the front, she is telling the truth, and he is a liar.

27. “But if it is torn from the back, then she is lying, and he is truthful.”

28. So when he (her husband) saw that his shirt was torn from the back, he (turned to his wife and) said: “This is from the guile of you women; for sure, your guile is great.”

29. (To Joseph) he said “Do not mention this (to anyone).” (To his wife) he said: “Ask forgiveness for your sin; for surely you have committed a sin.”

30. Women (gossiping) in the city said: “The minister’s wife has sought to enjoy herself by her slave-boy. Certainly it (her desire for him) has pierced her heart with love. We see that she has plainly lost her wits and her way.”
14. When God excluded Satan from His mercy eternally, he took permission from God to come upon human beings, claiming that he would lead astray all except those endowed with sincerity in faith and practicing the Religion ( sûrah 15: 40; sûrah 38: 83). It is true that the Qur’ân mentions only the pure and sincere ones as being those whose salvation is guaranteed, and these are only the Prophets ( sûrah 37: 40, 74, 128). However, this does not mean that everybody else will go astray under the influence of Satan and perish. But everybody other than a Prophet is at risk and can be seduced by Satan. So we must continuously be on the alert against Satan’s seduction, and whenever we feel driven by Satan, we must immediately turn to God in repentance. The Prophets are, however, sinless and exempt from Satan’s influence. Having overcome their carnal selves eternally by always using their free will in the right direction, they are secured by God against any deviation.

God orders sincerity, that is, believing and practicing the Religion only for His sake. Whatever God has ordered us to do we must do it because God wants us to do it and in order to obtain His approval. Those who act so, who seek devotion to God in purity of intention and sincerity, are the mukhlîs, those who always seek sincerity. As for the Prophets, they are the mukhlîs, those whom God has favored with purity of intention and sincerity. Since they always sought His good pleasure and used their free will in the direction that would please God, God established them on the peak of sincerity. The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, was among those servants, one whom the Qur’ân mentions as a person who was endowed with sincerity in faith and practicing the Religion (mukhlîs) and who was devoted to doing good as if seeing God (muḥsin).

15. In Arabic, when the subject is feminine, the verb is in feminine form. Another grammatical rule is that any noun that is in the plural is regarded as being feminine. However, in this verse, although the subject – women – is feminine and it is also in the plural – that is, although the subject is doubly in the feminine form, the verb in the original text is in the masculine. This means that when there is a strong solidarity in a community or group – even though this is a group of women – that group or community acquires power traditionally held by men (Lem’alar [“The Gleams”], 161). This usage in the verse implies that there was a strong society of women which had dominance in the capital of Egypt while Joseph was a slave there.
31. When she heard of their sly whispers, she sent for them, and prepared for them a place of reclining for a sumptuous meal. She gave to each one of them a knife and said (to Joseph): “Come out before them!” When they saw him, they were so stricken with admiration of him that they cut their hands, exclaiming: “God save us! This is no human mortal; he is but a noble angel!”

32. She said: “This is the one about whom you have been taunting me. And, indeed, I did seek to enjoy myself by him, but he was resolute in his chastity. Yet, if he continues to refuse what I command him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and shall certainly find himself among the humbled!”

33. He (imploring God) said: “My Lord! Prison is dearer to me than what they bid me to. If You do not avert their guile from me, I might incline towards them and become one of the ignorant (those who succumb to such temptations).”

34. So his Lord answered him and averted from him their guile. Surely He it is Who is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

35. It occurred to them (the noblemen and his household), even after they had seen the signs (of Joseph’s innocence), that they should imprison him for a time.

36. And there entered the prison with him two young men. One of them said (to Joseph one day): “I dreamed that I was pressing grapes for wine.” The other said: “I dreamed that I was carrying bread up-on my head, of which birds were eating.” “Inform us of their meaning. For sure, we see that you are of those endowed with the best qualities.”

37. He said: “There does not come to you any food that you will be given but I can inform you of what kind of food it is before it comes to you. This is of the knowledge that my Lord has taught me. Surely I have totally rejected the way of a people who do not have faith in God (as they ought to have faith), and who do not believe in the Hereafter.”
16. These verses show clearly what the Egyptian community was like. There were shadowy remnants of the Divine Religion, and those in authority could talk about sin and asking forgiveness. But this was no more than a habit. Even though they knew about God and had some belief in Him, they associated partners with Him. Like their counterparts in the present in many countries, the ruling class and the high society of the Capital were morally corrupt. Men were lost in the quest for power and riches, the preference for reputation over truth, faulty judgment, utilitarianism, and forgetfulness. While the women indulged in gossip, giving banquets, arranging amusements, and competing for worldly things. They enjoyed control in their houses, and husbands could react to their improper behavior only by giving advice. Laws were ignored in favor of the interest of the ruling class and there was injustice throughout society.

It is in such circumstances that the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, succeeded in all the tests to which he was put. Though a slave in the palace, he rejected the invitation of noble, rich, and beautiful women. He willingly preferred imprisonment to committing sin. In the end, the ruling class had to admit his innocence, wisdom, knowledge, ability to judge in all affairs, and his performance of good deeds.

17. The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, like all the other Messengers of God, lost no opportunity to convey his message to those around him. He teaches us that we should use all convenient opportunities to do the same.
38. “I have followed the way of my fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is not for us to associate anything with God as partner. This (His teaching and calling us to belief in Him without associating any partners with Him) is from God’s grace and bounty on us and on all people, but most people do not give thanks (in return, by believing firmly in His Oneness and worshipping Him alone).

39. “O my two fellow-prisoners! Are many diverse lords more reasonable and better (to attribute creation to and believe in and obey), or God, the One, the All-Overwhelming (holding absolute sway over all that exists)?

40. “What you worship apart from Him is nothing but names that you and your forefathers made up for them. (In the absolute sense) judgment and authority rest with none but God alone: He has commanded that you worship none but Him alone. This is the upright, ever-true Religion, but most people do not know (and they act from their ignorance).

41. “(As for your dreams:) O my fellow-prisoners! One of you will again give his lord (the king) wine to drink. As to the other, he will be hanged, and birds will peck at his head. The matter about which you inquired has already been decided.”

42. He said to the one of the two whom he deemed would be delivered: “Mention me in the presence of your lord.” But Satan caused him to forget to mention him to his lord, and so he (Joseph) remained in prison some more years.

43. And the king said one day: “I saw in a dream seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven green ears of grain and another (seven) dry. O you courtiers! Enlighten me about my dream, if you know how to interpret dreams.”
18. For the Existence and Unity of God and having this belief, see Appendix 8.

19. The interpreters of the Qur‘ān have inferred from the verse that the second person did not have a dream, but rather that he had lied. When he heard the meaning of his dream, he admitted that he had not had a dream, but had invented it. However, this was of no avail concerning its result; the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, concluded: “The matter about which you inquired has already been decided.”

Inventing dreams is a two-fold lie and is a grave sin. For we do not dream by our free will; rather, God causes us to dream, so inventing dreams means attributing a lie to God. When someone with exact knowledge about the meaning of dreams has interpreted a dream – particularly if that person is a Prophet or another one near to God although not a Prophet – it is expected that this dream will come true. So we should relate our dreams to those who have exact knowledge of their meaning and refrain from relating our “evil” dreams. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, advises us that when we have an evil dream, we should pray to God to save us from any evil likely to befall us, and that we should give something in charity.

20. This king was most probably one of the Hyksos rulers who ruled Egypt from about 1700 to 1550 BC. They were a northwestern Arab or mixed Arab-Asiatic people who entered Egypt sometime between 1720 and 1710 BC, and subdued the Middle Kingdom. They used Avaris-Tanis in the Nile delta as their capital rather than the Egyptian capital of Thebes. Under their hegemony, which lasted over a century, they established a powerful kingdom that included Syria and Palestine, and maintained peace and prosperity in their territories, to which the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, must have made the greatest contribution. They introduced the horse-drawn chariot and the composite bow, and their successful conquests were furthered by a type of rectangular fortification of beaten earth used as a fortress; archaeologists have uncovered examples of these mounds at Jericho, Shechem, and Lachish. The Hyksos were crushed by Amasis I at the battle of Tanis in 1550 BC.
44. They said: “Jumbles of dream images. And we are not knowledgeable in the interpretation of dream images.”

45. Now after all that time, of the two prisoners the one who had been delivered remembered (what Joseph had asked him to remember), and he said: “I will inform you of its meaning, so send me forth!”

46. (Coming to Joseph in the prison, he said): “Joseph, O man of truth! Enlighten us about seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven green ears of grain and another (seven) dry – so that I can return to the people (of the court). And it may be that (after I have told them your interpretation of the dreams) they will come to know (what manner of man you are and the injustice done to you).”

47. He said: “You shall sow for seven years as usual, but that which you have harvested, leave it in the ear, all save a little which you eat.

48. “Then will come after that seven hard years, which will consume what you have laid up for them, all but a little you should keep in store (to use as seed stock).

49. “And, thereafter, will come a year in which the people will be relieved (with abundance in place of scarcity), and in which they will press (fruit for drink and oil, and milk from their cattle).”

50. (Informed of the meaning of his dream,) the king said, “Bring him to me!” When the messenger (of the king) came to him, Joseph said: “Go back to your lord and ask him to find out the facts of the case about the women who cut their hands. For sure, my Lord has full knowledge of their guile (and my innocence).”

51. (The king had the woman assembled before him, and) he said: “What happened (between you and Joseph) when you sought to enjoy yourselves by him?” They said: “God save us! We perceived no evil at all on his part!” And the wife of the minister said: “Now the truth has come to light. It was I who sought to enjoy myself by him. He was indeed truthful (in all he said and true to his lord).”

52. (Joseph was informed of the women’s confessions and the declaration of his innocence. He explained why he had asked for the inquiry:) “This was so that he (my former lord) should know that I did not betray him in his absence, and that God never guides the schemes of the treacherous (to success).

21. Dreams should be narrated exactly as they were, and the words used to narrate them are of great importance with respect to their meaning and interpretation. For this reason, the Qur’an mentions the dream of the king in exactly the same words in two different places where it quotes it from the king himself and his cupbearer.
Yet I do not claim myself free of error, for assuredly the human carnal soul always commands evil, except that my Lord has mercy (which saves us from committing evil acts). Surely my Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing servants).

The king said: “Bring him to me, so that I may appoint him to myself (as my personal counselor).” And when he had conversed with him, he said: “From this day you shall be of high standing with us, established and trusted.”

He (Joseph) said: “Place me in charge over the store-houses of the land, for I am a good custodian, a knowledgeable one.”

Thus We established Joseph in the land (of Egypt) with authority. He was fully accepted therein, able to go and execute his authority wherever he willed. We visit with Our mercy whomever We will. We do not leave to waste the reward of those devoted to doing good as if seeing God.

However, certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety.

And (after some years), Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt and presented themselves before him: he knew them (at once), but they did not recognize him.

When he provided them with their provisions, he said: “Bring me (when you come next time) that (step) brother of yours by your father. Do you not see that I fill up the measure and I am the best of hosts?”

“But if you do not bring him, I will no longer have any measure of provisions to give you, and you shall not be given leave to come near me.”

They said: “We will try to win him from his father; indeed, we will do our utmost.”

He (Joseph) said to his servants: “Put back their merchandise (with which they had bartered) into their saddlebags, so that they may find it there when they have returned home, and hence will (be more eager to) return.”

So when they went back to their father, they said: “O our father! We will be denied any measure (of provisions unless we take our brother), so send our brother with us that we may obtain our measure. For we will surely take every care of him.”
22. These words display the deep devotion of a Prophet to God Almighty, and his announcement that it is not possible for a person to find the right way and be steadfast on it without God’s special succor. These words of the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, may be considered along with those of the Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: “No one can enter Paradise by virtue of his or her own deeds. Nor do I. However, my Lord has embraced me in His mercy” (al-Bukhari, “Riqâq,” 18).

23. The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, teaches us very important lessons. He had a lofty ideal, which was to convey God’s Eternal Message to the people wherever he was. He had the opportunity to convey it to his fellow-prisoners after they came to know how perfect a man he was. Now, in order to convey it to all people, he first wanted his innocence and trustworthiness to be openly acknowledged by them. Secondly, he asked for a job about which he had the best and most expert knowledge. Thirdly, he asked for the job, not for its own sake or for the sake of worldly advantages, but in order to be able to convey his message in the best and most influential way possible. Innocence, virtue, wishing the best for all and doing good for them, trustworthiness, truthfulness, and special knowledge are all essential to Prophethood; and those who are in a position to convey God’s Message in every age and place should try to equip themselves with these characteristics as much as possible.
64. He said: “Shall I entrust him to you as I once entrusted his brother to you before? However, God is the Best as protector, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

65. Then, when they opened their packs, they found that their merchandise had been returned to them. “Father,” they said, “What more should we ask for? Here is our merchandise returned to us. So we will again be able to get provisions for our family! We will guard our brother and (his being with us), and we will have an additional camel-load. That will be an easy gain.”

66. He said: “Never will I send him with you until you give me a solemn pledge in God’s Name that you will indeed bring him back to me, unless you are (in some insurmountable way) overwhelmed. Then, when they gave him their solemn pledge, he said: “God is witness to, and watcher over, all that we say (and only on Him can we rely to fulfill our pledges).”

67. He said (by way of advice at the time of their departure): “O my sons! Do not enter the city by one gate (in a single company), but enter by different gates. Yet I can be of no avail whatever to you against anything God wills. Judgment and authority rest with none but God alone. In Him have I put my trust, and whoever would entrust themselves should put their trust in Him.”

68. They entered the city in the manner their father had enjoined on them, although this would have proved of no avail whatever to them against anything God had willed; it was but a need in Jacob’s soul, which he thus satisfied. For he was possessed of knowledge because We had taught it to him, but most people do not know (nor do they act according to the knowledge from God).

69. And when they presented themselves before Joseph, he welcomed his brother to himself, and (having taken him aside) said: “Surely it is I – I am your brother, so do not grieve over what they did.”
24. We do not know what Destiny has in store for us, so we must behave according to the apparent conditions. If we behave according to the Divine rules, we will have behaved in accordance with Destiny.

Jacob's sons were well-built and good-looking. Their entering the capital of a foreign state all together might have attracted the attention of both the people and the government. Therefore, they might have been exposed to some harm. For this reason, the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, advised them to enter the city through different gates in order not to draw attention to themselves. This was what he had to do as a precaution. However, in order to remind us of God's absolute sovereignty and of the fact that if He wills something, no one can prevent it from taking place, God stresses the dominion of His Will while approving of Jacob's attitude. As a Messenger of God, Jacob, upon him be peace, was well aware of the relationship between human free will and willed actions and God's absolute sovereignty and Destiny.
70. Then, when he had provided them with their provisions, he put the drinking-cup (belonging to him) in his brother’s saddlebag (as a gift). Then (as they had just departed on their return), a herald called out: “O you people of the caravan! You are surely thieves!”

71. They said, turning towards them (the herald and his companions): “What is it that you are missing?”

72. They said: “We are missing the king’s goblet, and whoever brings it shall receive a camel-load (as reward).” (And the herald added:) “I have pledged myself to recovering it.”

73. They (the brothers) said: “By God! Certainly you know well that we did not come to provoke disorder and corruption in this land, and we have never been thieves!”

74. They said: “What, then, shall be the penalty for it if you are proved liars?”

75. They said: “The penalty for it is this: the (freedom of the) one in whose saddlebag it is found is the penalty for it. That is how we recompense the wrongdoers (who steal).”

76. (So they were brought back before Joseph to be searched.) He began with their sacks before his brother’s sack; and then he brought the drinking-cup out of his brother’s sack. In this way, We made an arrangement for Joseph. Under the king’s law, he could not have detained his brother, had not God so willed. Whomsoever We will, We raise in ranks. Above every owner of knowledge, there is (always) one more knowledgeable (until God, Who is the All-Knowing).

77. They (the other brothers) said: “If he has stolen – well, a brother of his stole before.” But Joseph (endured their false accusation in silence and) held it secret in his soul, and did not disclose it to them. He said (to himself): “You are indeed in a bad situation (now and say so). God has full knowledge of (the truth of) what you allege.”

78. “O minister!” they said: “He has a father, a very old man; so take one of us in his place. We see that you are indeed of those devoted to selfless kindness.”
25. This verse contains numerous lessons, such as the following:

- Muslims must not cause corruption and unrest where they stay, especially when they are given accommodation.
- The original word used for law in the phrase, “under the king’s law,” is din – religion. This means that din (‘religion’ in Islam) includes the laws ordering human worldly life.
- No one should claim to have the final say in a matter about which they do not have full, verified knowledge, and they should always consider that there may be one who is more knowledgeable. There are degrees of knowledge, reaching up until God’s all-encompassing Knowledge. A Prophet’s knowledge is based on God’s Knowledge and teaching.
- By saying, Above every owner of knowledge there is one more knowledgeable, not “Above every scholar,” the verse differentiates between those who have some (piece of) knowledge and those who are scholars or well-versed in knowledge. This difference is like the difference between one who teaches science at a school and a scientist. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi says: “Any piece of knowledge that has not been fully digested should not be taught. A true, guiding scholar acts like a sheep, not like a bird. A sheep feeds its lambs on its milk, a fully-digested and processed substance, whereas a bird feeds its chicks on what it has half-chewed and then regurgitated” (Sözler, [“The Words”], 658).

26. Different comments have been made on the arrangement mentioned in these verses. The gist of the matter must be as follows:

The Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace, who enjoyed full authority on behalf of the king, put the drinking-cup which was known to belong to the king, but which Joseph himself used or might have been given as a present, in the saddle-bag of his brother as a gift. The courtiers noticed that the cup was missing and, without finding it despite searching, promised a camel-load of grain to whoever could bring it. When it could not be found in the court, those who set out to find it with the hope of receiving the reward which was promised, became suspicious of the caravans that had come to buy wheat.

When the sacks of Jacob’s sons were searched, the goblet was found in the sack of Joseph’s brother. As explicitly stated in verse 76, this was the arrangement of God, not Joseph, so that he could retain his brother with himself. Although Joseph, upon him be peace, knew that his brother was innocent, the result was in both his own and his brother’s favor, and would serve for his cause. Joseph’s brother would have to endure the accusation only for a while, just as Joseph had endured a great slander and imprisonment for a long time.

Destiny always wills good for believers. On the way to the good or the desired result He has ordained for them, God may subject believers to the stones of Destiny because of the crimes they have committed. Such stones cause their crimes to be forgiven, if they repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. Joseph’s brothers paid for the wrong they had done to Joseph by being accused of theft and having to leave their brother in Egypt, despite the pledge they had given to their father. The following verse (77) shows that they still nurtured bad feelings for Joseph, thus proving that they deserved a stone from Destiny. However, in the end, everything turned to be good for them, because it caused them to see the truth, to understand why their father was more concerned for Joseph, and to submit to God’s judgment for them and their brother Joseph, allowing their sin to be forgiven. They would settle in Egypt, occupying high positions (sūrah 5: 20), and God’s Religion would prevail there for a certain time. It was Jacob and Joseph, upon them be peace, who had to bear the greatest sufferings to that end, as they were God’s Messengers charged with that great, lofty mission.
79. He said: “God forbid that we take any other but him with whom we found our merchandise; (if we did otherwise,) then surely we (too) would be wrongdoers.”

80. So, when they lost hope of moving him, they withdrew to take counsel among themselves. The eldest of them said: “Do you not know how your father took a solemn pledge from you in God's Name, and how, before that, you failed with regard to Joseph? Never will I depart from this land, until my father gives me leave, or God judges for me (by ending my life or enabling me to win back my brother). And He is the Best of judges.

81. “Return to your father, and say: ‘Our father! Your son stole. We do not testify (to anything) except what we know; and we are not keepers of the Unseen.’

82. ‘Inquire in the township where we were, and the caravan with whom we traveled hither. We are certainly telling the truth.’ ”

83. (When they had returned to their father and made that speech to him) he said: “No! Rather, your (evil-commanding) souls have tempted you to something. So (the proper recourse for me now is, again), a becoming patience (a patience that endures without complaint). It may be that God will bring them back to me all together. He it is Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

84. He turned away from them and said: “Alas, my grief for Joseph!” And his eyes turned white because of the grief. And he was restraining (any resentment toward his other sons, never displaying it to them).

85. They said: “By God! You will not cease mentioning Joseph until you are consumed, or you perish!”

86. He said: “I only disclose my anguish and sorrow to God, and I know from God what you do not know.”

27. That is, we only judge according to what we see. We could not have known what would happen when we had promised you to protect him, and we make no claim about anything that we have not witnessed.

28. As a Messenger of God with deep insight and sagacity, the Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace, felt that there was a Divine mystery in all that took place, and events were advancing to a good end. When events start to worsen, this means, for the believers who follow God’s way without deviation and with pure intention, that the happy end is approaching. The final end of darkness is the dawn of light.

29. What the Prophet Jacob felt deeply for his son Joseph was fatherly affection. Affection is keen, pure, and sublime. It enables one to manifest the Divine Name of the All-Compassionate. It is so comprehensive that people’s affection for their own children makes them feel some affection for all children and all living beings. They can become comprehensive mirrors
in which the Divine Name, the All-Compassionate manifests Itself.

Also, affection is a sincere feeling with no ulterior motive and seeks no return. Even the lowest type of sincere affection (such as that felt by animals for their young) proves that affection does not demand any return. It directs us to the Divine Names, the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate and shows that the way of affection leads to Divine Compassion. These two great Divine Names seem to own a light so comprehensive and splendid that it envelops the universe, satisfying everyone’s needs forever, securing them against all hostility. They can enlighten people if they understand their poverty and helplessness vis-à-vis God’s Riches and Power and, in return, thank Him for His limitless Compassion and Mercy. This is the way of sincere devotion to God and humility.

The remedy for the ailments of affection is the truth expressed in the concept that God is the Best as protector and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful (12: 64) (The Letters, “The 8th Letter,” 1: 33–34).

30. Those enduring great suffering find the remedy for it in the suffering itself. They say, “I used to seek a remedy for my suffering, and I came to know that the remedy for my suffering is my suffering itself.” Muhammad Lüt-fi Efendi of Alvar expresses his similar feelings as follows:

I used to seek a remedy for my inward suffering, until they said:

“The remedy for your suffering is your suffering itself.”

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi is one of those who have written the most on this topic. While he was in exile in Barla, a village in the south-western Turkey, he felt inward, acute pain when he found himself in exile in a mountain, especially in the evenings, in autumn, and in his old age; he suffered separation from all his beloved ones and felt his heart groan out the following:

O Lord, I am a stranger; I am lonely and weak, Impotent, old, and ill, and I have no choices. O God, I beg Your mercy, ask Your forgiveness, And I cry for help from Your Throne of Grace!

At just that point, the light of faith, the Qur’an’s effusive grace, and the All-Gracious Being’s favor came to his aid and changed five kinds of separation into five circles of warm companionship. As he recited: God is sufficient for us; and how excellent a Guardian He is (surah 3: 173), his heart recited: If they turn away from you, say: ‘God is sufficient for me; there is no deity but He. In Him have I put my trust, and He is the Lord of the Supreme Throne (as the absolute Ruler and Sustainer of the universe and all creation, Who maintains and protects it)” (surah 99: 129).

Also his soul, weeping and wailing in its fearful sorrow, was persuaded by his intellect, which told it:

O helpless one, give up wailing and trust God, For this wailing is an error that causes many troubles; If you have found the One Who makes you suffer, then This suffering changes into a gift bringing peace and happiness. So thank God instead of complaining; for know that Nightingales are happy with the happiness of roses. But if you do not find Him, then the whole world Is a place of suffering and misfortune. When you suffer from a world-wide responsibility, Why are you wailing over an insignificant misfortune? Come, put your trust in God and smile at the face of misfortune So that it may also smile, for as it smiles, it lessens and changes.

After that, Bediüzzaman quotes from Jalālu’d-Dīn ar-Rūmī,

He asked: “Am I not (your Lord)?” And you responded: “Yes!” How can one thank Him for that “yes”? By suffering misfortune! What is the mystery of that “yes”? That you say: “I am the leader of the circle of dervishes In the lodge of poverty and perishing.” and then, from ‘Ata’ullāh al-Iskandarānī:

What has he found who has lost God? And what has he lost who has found God? (The Letters, “The 6th Letter,” 1: 26–27)
87. (He said when once more seeing off his sons): “O my sons! Go forth and seek earnestly for Joseph and his brother; and do not despair of God’s Mercy, for none ever despairs of God’s Mercy, except people who disbelieve in Him.”

88. They (went back to Egypt and once more) presented themselves before Joseph, saying: “O minister! Hardship has visited us and our family, and we have brought only merchandise of scant worth; but fill up for us the measure and be charitable to us. Surely God rewards the charitable.”

89. He said: “Do you know what you did to Joseph and his brother at that time when you acted as if ignorant (of right and wrong)?”

90. They said: “Is it indeed you who are Joseph?” He said: “I am Joseph, and this is my brother. God has indeed been gracious to us. Surely whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and is patient – surely God will not leave to waste the reward of those devoted to doing good as if seeing God.”

91. “By God,” they responded, “God has indeed preferred you above us, and certainly we were sinful.”

92. He said: “No reproach this day shall be on you. May God forgive you; indeed, He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

93. “Go with this shirt of mine, and lay it over my father’s face, and he shall recover his sight; and come to me with all your people.”

94. At the time that the (brothers’) caravan set out, their father said (to those around him): “Surely I sense the fragrance of Joseph, unless you would consider me a dotard.”

95. “By God,” they said, “you are indeed still lost in your old error.”
31. Based on this confession of Joseph’s brothers, Ziya Pasha, a famous Turkish poet and politician who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century, said:

A day certainly comes when the Power of God causes the wrongdoers to confess:

“God has indeed preferred you above us!”

32. It is possible to see the manners of a Prophet in all the words and actions of Joseph, upon him be peace. His response to those who acknowledged their wrongdoing to him was to pardon them; he did not reproach them, nor did he leave them feeling guilty. This attitude, which is the manifestation of adopting the way God acts, was manifested by the Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in the greatest, most perfect degree. After 21 years of persecution by the Makkan polytheists – the most stubborn unbelievers in history, who subjected him to derision, slander, boycotting, and all kinds of harsh treatment, attempting to kill him, compelling him to leave his homeland, waging wars on him many times, and killing many of his most beloved friends – he conquered Makkah without bloodshed. To his die-hard enemies who awaited his judgment on the day of the conquest, he said: “Today I will say to you what Joseph said to his brothers: No reproach this day shall be on you. May God forgive you; indeed He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

Muslim conquerors usually displayed this same attitude, which they inherited from the Prophets, toward the conquered people. It was Mehmed II who displayed the most striking example of this nobility when he conquered Istanbul and repeated the same words to the Byzantine people who were gathered in Hagia Sophia. He provided them with the security of life and property, and the freedom to live according to their own religion. This is the way of Islam.

The Qur’an teaches important lessons through this narrative, which is the best of the narratives concerning the past. Having been revealed in Makkah at a time when the Muslims were suffering the most at the hands of the Makkan polytheists, this sûrah, in addition to giving the Muslims the glad tidings of the final victory, informed the Makkan polytheists that the result of their brutal resistance to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, would not differ from the result of the matter between Joseph and his brothers. It reminded both sides that the Makkans would be obliged to acknowledge their error and reassured them that there was no reason to fear the punishment of the Prophet Muhammad if he were to be finally victorious; his treatment would not be any different from that of the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace.

33. As has been mentioned before, the miracles of the Prophets mark the final point of scientific progress. It was stated that the Prophet Jacob’s eyes had turned white, i.e. that he was suffering from cataracts. We can conclude from these last two verses that there is a substance which removes cataract-like obstacles from the eye, and that like images and sounds, scent can also be transmitted. Thus, The Qur’an encourages humankind to find that substance and to try to transmit scent.

Said Nursi answers a possible question which may arise concerning Jacob’s perception of Joseph’s scent from far away:

The Prophet Ya’qūb (Jacob) was asked why he had not seen Yusuf (Joseph) in a nearby well in Canaan, although the fragrance of his shirt reached him from Egypt. He replied:

Our state, especially with regard to miracle-working, is like lightning that is sometimes visible and, at other times, hidden. Sometimes it is as if we were sitting on the highest point with the whole universe spread out before us, but at other times we cannot see what lies just ahead of us (The Letters, “The 15th Letter,” 1: 72).

It is God Who creates the miracles at the hand of the Prophets. Therefore, without His leave, even Prophets cannot work miracles whenever they wish.
96. But when the bearer of the good tidings came (with Joseph’s shirt), Jacob laid it over his face and he regained his sight. (Soon the caravan of the brothers reached home.) Jacob said: “Did I not tell you that I know from God what you do not know?”

97. (Jacob’s sons confessed what they had done.) They said: “O our father! Ask God to forgive us our sins; surely we have been sinful.”

98. He said: “I will ask my Lord to forgive you.” Surely He it is Who is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate.”

99. (When Jacob’s family reached Egypt,) they presented themselves before Joseph, (who had come out to welcome them). He embraced his parents,” and said (addressing all those who came): “Enter Egypt by God's will in security (free from fear of privation or grief)!”

100. He raised his parents on the throne, and they all bowed down before Joseph (as a sign of loyalty to him). He said: “O my father! This is the meaning of my dream of long ago; my Lord has made it come true. He has indeed been gracious to me: He freed me from prison, and He brought you all from the desert after Satan had sown discord between me and my brothers. Truly, my Lord is subtly kind in the way He brings about whatever He wills. Surely He it is Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

101. “My Lord! You have indeed granted me some important part of the rule and imparted to me some knowledge of the inner meaning of all happenings (including dreams). O You, Originator of the heavens and the earth each with particular features! You are my Owner and Guardian in this world and in the Hereafter. Take my soul to You as a Muslim, and join me with the righteous.”

102. That is an account of some exemplary events of the unseen (a realm and time beyond the reach of sense-perception) that We reveal to you, (O Messenger). You were not with them when those agreed upon their plans, and then were scheming (against Joseph).

103. Yet, be you ever so eager, most people will not believe.

34. It is usually the fate of great persons like Prophets that those around them usually are not aware of them, nor can they understand them, and thus they suffer remoteness in parallel with their physical nearness. The physical nearness and the familiarity produced by it is like a veil over their eyes and hearts.

35. Concerning the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and his community, the Qur’ān declares: If, when they wronged themselves (by committing a sin), they but came to you and implored God to forgive them – with the Messenger praying to God for their forgiveness – they would find that God is One
Who returns the repentance of His servants with acceptance and additional reward, and All-Compassionate (4: 64). It also says: (O Messenger!... Pray for them. Indeed your prayer is a source of comfort for them. God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (9: 103). It is of great importance that a Prophet prays for his community and asks God to forgive their sins. First of all, his prayer is more acceptable to God. Secondly, his prayer for his community and asking God to forgive their sins mean that he is pleased with them. God is pleased with those with whom a Prophet is pleased, and He does not reject a prayer for those with whom a Prophet is pleased. It is for this reason that Jacob’s sons asked their father to pray to God to forgive their sins. However, this does not mean that they themselves did not need to ask for God’s forgiveness. Rather, every believer should pray to God themselves and ask Him to forgive their sins. However, one’s sincere admission of one’s sins, and showing remorse for them, in addition to calling for another who is regarded as being nearer to God to ask for God’s forgiveness for them, especially if that one is a Prophet, means repentance.

It is worth noting that the Prophet Jacob postponed asking God to forgive the sins of his sons. This might be because a Prophet does not pray and ask for God’s forgiveness for even his children without God’s leave and without being fully aware of their inner state. As mentioned before (sūrah 9: 144; sūrah 11: 46), God forbade Noah and Abraham to ask for forgiveness for their nearest relatives since those relatives were unbelievers. So, in order to wait for both God’s leave and to observe his sons, the Prophet Jacob postponed asking for God’s forgiveness.

36. The interpreters of the Qur’ān are of the opinion that the mother mentioned in this sūrah was Joseph’s step-mother. The use here of abawayn not wālidayn (for the difference between these two expressions, see sūrah 9, note 24) for parents may indicate this.

37. The phrase, Make me die a Muslim (one wholly submitted to You), and join me with the righteous marks the end of the story of the Prophet Joseph, upon him be peace. This contains, in a vivid fashion, the following significant truth concerning human life and glad tidings:

Every Prophet was sent with an important mission, conveying God’s Message, and when he had fulfilled this mission, he asked for death since there was no further meaning in, or purpose for, living. When his dream came true, the Prophet Joseph thought that his mission was over. Similarly, when some jinn believed in him in Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, also thought that his mission was over and that his death was near because some among both humankind and the jinn believed in him. God has a purpose for the creation of every being and He has created humankind and the jinn to worship Him. Moreover, every believer has some part in the mission of the Prophets, and they must order their lives according to this vital purpose of their lives. When there is no longer anything to do for this purpose, it means that no important meaning in remaining alive has been left. (See The Messenger of God, 25–26, 75.)

As for the glad tidings, Said Nursi writes:

The pleasure received from a happy story ends in deep sorrow because of final separation or death. Or, it arouses more sorrow when we learn that the people involved encounter separation or death just after finding ease and happiness. But the verse quoted above, even if it contemplates Joseph’s death when he became Egypt’s ‘Azīz (grand vizier or chancellor), and was then reunited with his parents and brothers (the happiest moment in his life), shows it in a different light. It declares: “To receive a far greater happiness, Joseph asked God for death.” This means that a more attractive and pleasure-giving bliss than the greatest happiness of this world waits on the other side of the grave. Knowing this, Joseph asked for death, by all appearances an unpleasant thing, while he was enjoying the world’s greatest happiness.

Another benefit of such an ending is that it encourages us to strive for the other side of the grave, where we will find real happiness and pleasure. It also shows Joseph’s exalted truthfulness and announces that even the most joyful and brightest condition of the worldly life could not captivate him; rather, it led him to ask for death and the other life (The Letters, “The 23rd Letter,” 2: 86–87).
104. You do not ask them any wage for it (for conveying the Qur'an to them). It is but a message and reminder to all conscious beings.

105. How many a sign there is in the heavens and earth that they pass by, being unmindful of the signs and giving no consideration to them.

106. And most of them do not even believe in God without associating partners with Him.

107. Do they deem themselves secure that there will not come upon them an overwhelming punishment of God, which will envelop them thoroughly, or that the Last Hour will not come upon them all of a sudden, without their being aware (of its coming)?

108. Say (to them, O Messenger): “This is my way: I call to God on clear evidence and with sure knowledge – I and those who follow me. All-Glorified is God (in that He is absolutely above having any partners) – and I am not one of those who associate partners with Him.”

109. We did not send before you as Messengers any but men to whom We revealed, from amongst the people of the townships (where We raised them). Have they never traveled about the earth and beheld how was the outcome for those who came before them (those who persisted in associating partners with Him and in wrongdoing and transgression)? Assuredly, the abode of the Hereafter is best for those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Will you not, then, reason and understand?

110. So far so that when they (the earlier Messengers who all had to suffer much persecution for a long time) nearly lost hope and were convinced that they were denied, Our help came to them. And whoever We willed was saved. But Our mighty punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people committed to accumulating sins.

111. Indeed, in their exemplary life-stories, there is a significant lesson for people of discernment. It (the Qur’an, which contains them) is not a discourse fabricated, but (a Divine Book revealed as) a confirmation of (the Divine authorship of, and the truths still contained by,) the Revelations prior to it, and an explanation of everything, and a guidance and mercy for people who will and do believe.
38. The Qur’ān regards associating partners with God as the greatest wrongdoing (sūrah 3: 13), and belief in God without associating partners with Him as a means of the ultimate salvation (sūrah 6: 82). It is not easy to remain free from associating partners with God Almighty. It has many forms and types, such as the following:

- Accepting another creator besides God, or associating helpers with Him in creation;
- admitting any part in the creation and administration of the universe to persons, or some nominal principles called natural laws, or to nature and so-called natural forces, or to matter, or to spirit, or to something else;
- associating partners with Him in the government of human life;
- recognizing some powers other than He as the absolute authority to make things lawful or unlawful;
- ascribing to Him certain attributes essential to created beings, such as begetting or being begotten;
- believing that He takes the form of any created being (Incarnation), or that any mortal can join Him and become one with Him (Union);
- ascribing to any mortal being the qualities belonging to Him exclusively, such as creating, taking the soul, having no beginning and end, self-sufficiency, absolute sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, etc.;
- supposing that He may have some deficiencies, such as impotence and need;
- supposing Him to be a spirit permeating the universe, or the universe as being His outward manifestation (Monism and Pantheism);

In short, having no true judgment of Him, and ascribing to Him attributes that are not befitting for Him, means associating partners with Him. In addition, the following false beliefs also amount to attributing partners to God:

- Worshipping other than Him;
- regarding any beings other than Him as having the absolute power to give benefit or harm to themselves or others without His leave and enabling, and bowing before them in a way that indicates adoration or worship;
- praying to another being or power;
- intending to please other than He in any act of worship, or in the practice of any rule or principle of the Religion;
- using the Religion for worldly benefits or personal purposes, such as being well-known, admired, or praised.

So, there are many people who claim faith, but cannot free themselves from associating partners with God. This is a very subtle and important point that requires great care.
sent down on you from your Lord is the truth – yet most people do not believe.

2. God it is Who has raised the heavens without pillars you can see, then He established Himself on the Supreme Throne; and He made the sun and the moon subservient to His command, each running its course for a term appointed by Him. He directs all affairs (as the sole Ruler of creation); He sets out in detail the signs of the truth and the relevant Revelations included in the Book, that you may have certainty in the meeting with your Lord (on Judgment Day).

3. And it is He Who has spread the earth wide and set therein firm mountains and rivers, and of fruit of every kind He has made mated pairs. He covers the day with the night. Surely in that are signs (manifesting the truth) for a people who reflect.

4. And on the earth are tracts close by one another (and yet different from one another), and gardens of vines, and cultivated fields, and date-palms growing in clusters from one root but standing alone, (all) watered with the same water, and yet as sustenance We have made some preferable to others (in certain respects). Surely in that are signs of truth for a people who reason and understand.

5. If there is something for you to find strange, how strange their saying is: “What! After we have become dust, will we indeed be (raised up again) in a new creation?” Those are they who disbelieve in their Lord, and around whose necks are fetters (by which they are being dragged into the Fire). They are the companions of the Fire.
allow this to happen is yet another instance of universal obedience to His Word. Modern science explains this as a balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces. What is of far greater importance for us, however, is that we focus our minds on that obedience and on the Divine Mercy that holds the universe in its reliable motion, rather than deciding to follow Newton’s or Einstein’s theories about the mechanical and mathematical terms of that obedience (The Essentials, 244).

2. For the meaning of the Supreme Throne and God’s establishing Himself thereon, see surah 2: 28, note 29; surah 7: 54, note 11.

3. By using therein in the meaning of “in the earth,” the verse indicates that the mountains have roots within the earth. And all the rivers gushing out of the mountains show how wonderfully and miraculously rocks are susceptible and subjugated to the Divine commands of creation. To awakened, attentive hearts, this means:

   The mountains cannot be the actual source of such mighty rivers, for even if they were formed completely of water, they could supply such a river for only a few months. To cite a single example, even if all the mountains on earth were to be formed of water, they could not supply even just the Nile, a river which is more than 3,000 miles long and which has been flowing from time immemorial through the deserts. Also rain, which can penetrate only about a meter underground, cannot be a sufficient source for such high expenditure. No ordinary reason, natural cause, or chance can explain the sources of these rivers and their flow. The All-Majestic Creator makes them flow forth in truly wonderful fashion from an unseen “treasury.”

   A source of one of the Nile’s main branches is found in the Mountains of the Moon in Rwanda, while the Tigris’ main branch starts in a cave in eastern Turkey, and one of the main streams of the Euphrates rises in the foothills of a mountain in Diyadin, Turkey. It is scientifically established that mountains are rocks solidified from liquid matter. One of the Prophet’s glorifications – All-Glorified is He Who has laid soil on a fluid solidified – testifies that the original formation of the earth is as follows: Some liquid matter solidified at Divine command and became rock, and then the rock became soil. In other words, the liquid matter was too soft to settle on, and the rock was too hard to benefit from. Therefore, the All-Wise and Compassionate One spread soil over the rock and made it a place of habitation for living beings.

   (For further meanings of such expressions, see 2: 74, note 78; 50: 6-11; 78: 6-8, notes 2-3.)

4. Look at the seal God has put on life, through which one thing is made into many, and many things are made into one. He transforms the water we drink into a means for forming innumerable animal organs and systems. Through His command, a single entity becomes “many.” Conversely, He changes varieties of foods into a particular body or skin, a whole system or subsystem. Thus “many” things become, by God’s command, a single entity. Whoever has an intellect, a consciousness, and a heart must conclude that making a single, simple entity from many things, and using a single entity to make many things is a seal unique to the Creator of all things.

   On the surface of the earth, we observe acts of ever-original and purposeful creation. These occur in infinite abundance, together with beautiful and perfect artistry; with absolute ease and in perfect order and arrangement; at incredible speed with no loss of proportion, firmness, or substantiality; and in an infinite distribution of species together with the infinite beauty of each individual. These acts occur with the greatest economy or at the lowest cost imaginable, yet every individual is priceless and unique while there is the highest correspondence and similarity between and among species, despite vast distances of time and space. They are in balance with an absolute variety, a perfect individualization of characters and features though generated from similar, or even the same materials, structural principles, and organization.

   Perfect artistry despite abundance, perfect order despite absolute ease, perfect measure, proportion, and firmness despite incredible speed, perfect individualization despite worldwide distribution, the highest price and value despite the greatest economy, and perfect distinguishing despite absolute mixedness and similarity point to the One, Single Creator. (See Mathnawi an-Nūriyah, 51.)
6. They challenge you to hasten the coming upon them of the evil instead of the good, although there have indeed come to pass before them many exemplary punishments. Your Lord is indeed rich in forgiveness for humankind despite their wrongdoing, and your Lord is indeed severe in retribution.

7. Those who disbelieve say: “Why is not a miraculous sign (of the kind we desire) sent down on him from his Lord?” You are (O Messenger) but a warner, and for each people there is a guide (appointed by God).

8. God knows what any female bears (in her womb with all its traits from her conception of it until delivery, and the future awaiting it), and what the wombs diminish and what they increase, (and by how much they may fall short in gestation, and by how much they may increase the average period), and everything with Him is by a determined measure.

9. The Knower of the Unseen (all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm), the All-Great, the All-Transcending.

10. (To Him) the one who holds his opinion in secret and the one who declares it are the same, and the one who hides himself (and his plans) under cover of night and the one who sallies out in the daylight.

11. (Every person advances through varying states before and after, and) by God’s command attendant angels succeeding one another accompany him before and after him to guard him (and record his deeds). God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves. When God wills evil for a people (in consequence of their own evil deeds), it cannot be averted, and apart from Him, they have no protector.

12. He it is Who displays before you the lightning, giving rise to both fear (of being struck) and hopeful expectation (of rain), and builds the clouds heavy (with rain).

13. The thunder glorifies Him with His praise (in that He is absolutely above having any partners, and that all praise belongs to Him exclusively), and so do the angels, in awe of Him. And He lets loose the thunderbolts and strikes with them whom He wills. Yet they stubbornly argue about God, (notwithstanding all evidence that) He is severe in repelling and retribution.
5. Almost all of the nineteenth and even twentieth-century Western philosophies of history, including dialectical materialism and historicism, were based on these notions:

- Whether along a line or in cycles, humanity is progressing continually toward a definite end.
- This progress depends on history’s deterministic and irresistible laws, all of which are completely independent of us. All that we can do is to discover and obey them, for if we do not we will be eliminated.
- All stages (e.g., primitive, feudal, or capitalistic) through which we inevitably pass should not be criticized, for we have no choice but to pass through them.

Such philosophies of history imply that the present socio-economic and even political conditions are inevitable, because they have been dictated by nature and history, which decree the survival of the most powerful. If this reality favors the West, communities that choose to survive must concede to Western dominion.

Although post-modernist philosophies of history and historicism give precedence to relativism in parallel to developments in physics, most modern theories still emphasize the linear, irreversible laws of history.

The Qur’ān views history from completely different perspectives. First of all, it views it from the perspective of unchanging principles, while all of the other philosophies mentioned interpret past events and present situations in order to build their theories. Secondly, contrary to the determinism of those philosophies, the Qur’ān stresses the individual’s free choice and moral responsibility.

According to the Qur’ān, we sow the field of this world or the present time in order to harvest in the near (this world) and far future (the next world or eternal life). Given this, history is made up of our own choices and not laid out by a compelling will.

Islam considers a society to be composed of conscious individuals who are equipped with free will and who have a responsibility toward both themselves and others (God and other living and non-living beings). It sees humanity as the “motor” of history. Just as, without excluding God’s forgiveness, mercy, and extra aids, every individual’s will and behavior determine the outcome of their life in this world and in the Hereafter, a society’s progress or decline is determined by the will, world-view, and lifestyle of its members. The verse means God will not change the state of a people unless they change themselves (with respect to their beliefs, world-view, and lifestyle). In other words, each society holds the reins of its fate in its own hands. A Prophetic Tradition emphasizes this idea: “You will be ruled according to how you are (how you believe, live, and behave).”

6. Even if we may sometimes see an apparent interruption in the Qur’ānic verses, the actual fact is that there is a deep, fundamental relevance and continuity between them. Reflection on this verse and the preceding and succeeding ones in the light of the explanations in sūrah 7, note 14, reveals what a beautiful, meaningful, and deep relation exists among them.
14. To Him alone is made the call of truth and the prayer of truth addressed). Those to whom they pray and call others (to pray), apart from Him, cannot answer them in any way – (so that he who prays to them is) but like one who stretches out his hands to water (praying) that it may come to his mouth, but it never comes to it. The prayer of the unbelievers is but destined to go to waste.

15. To God prostrate all that are in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the mornings and the evenings.

16. Say: “Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?” Say: “God.” Say (also): “Do you then take for guardians, apart from Him, such as have no power to bring benefit to or avert harm from even themselves?” Say: “Are the blind and the seeing equal, or are the depths of darkness and the light equal?” Or have they assigned to God partners who create the like of His creation, so that the creation (that they make and God’s creation) seem alike to them (that they cannot distinguish the true Creator?) Say: “God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-Overwhelming.”

17. He sends down water from the sky, and the valleys flow (in abundance) each according to its measure, and the flood carries a swelling foam (on its surface). And out of what they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils, there rises a scum like it. Thus does God strike a parable to illustrate truth and falsehood. For, as for the scum, it vanishes as does all dross, but that which is of use to people abides on earth. In this way does God strike parables.\footnote{4}

18. For those who respond to (the call of) their Lord there is the fairest reward; and those who do not respond to Him – even if they possessed all that is on earth and its like besides, they would offer it as ransom (to be spared the punishment). Such are those whose is the most evil reckoning, and their final refuge is Hell: how evil a resting-place!
7. The lengths of the shadow varying according to the position of the sun in relation to the earth – the shadow’s lengthening and contraction – is a very beautiful and meaningful image of how creation prostrates in submission to its Creator.

Everything is assigned a place in the grand scheme of the universe, which works in a magnificent harmony and interconnectedness. The sun, the moon, stars, and all heavenly bodies are knit together in a splendid system, following an unalterable law, and never deviating from their ordained course. Everything in the world, from electrons to nebulae, follows its own laws. The birth of a human, its growth and life, and all the bodily organs, from small tissues to the heart and brain, are also governed by the laws prescribed for them. (Once more, we should remember that what we call laws are but certain principles which we have deduced by observing “natural” events. They are, in fact, designations for God’s executions of His commands or acts.)

This is why we say that Islam is the religion of the universe, for Islam is nothing other than obedience and submission to God, the Lord of the universe. The sun, the moon, the earth, and all (other) heavenly bodies are Muslim, 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 Muslim, in so far as their bodily existence is concerned, for each part of their body follows the course God established for it, from birth until death and dissolution. In this meaning, whatever and whoever – whether a believer or an unbeliever – is in the heavens and the earth prostrates before God or submits to Him willingly or unwillingly; this is obligatory, and there is no choice.

Secondly, as pointed out before in several places (sūrah 4: 79, note 18; sūrah 5: 40, note 8; sūrah 6: 38, note 8), God has absolute sovereignty over everything. He decrees however He wills. Although we are endowed with free will, and meet the results of our intentions and deeds, since it is He Who established the law of causality in this corporeal world, and since it is He Who determined which cause brings about which effect or result, then His absolute Will is the sole authority in our actions as well. It is God Who established which cause (thought, belief, or action) brings about which result, and humankind cannot escape this framework. It is also in this meaning that whatever and whoever is in the heavens and the earth prostrates to Him.

8. The comparisons and expressions in this verse and in verses 12 and 13 are like those found in sūrah 7: 54–58. Water or rain symbolizes Divine Revelation and the valleys represent the minds and hearts, which differ in their capacity to receive and benefit from the Revelation. Just as minds and hearts or human souls are like the valleys or river-beds that receive rain and flow each according to its measure, so too, are people like raw materials or metal to be worked. Those who convey the Divine Revelation and educate people based on it work upon human souls to refine and make them silver, gold, diamond, or platinum, each according to its capacity. In both cases, that is, on the water that is carried by floods and on the metal worked in the fire, there rises a scum, which symbolizes any useless attribute or undesirable thing that is innate in the human soul; these things must be eliminated through education. Scum exists on the surface and usually obscures the water flowing beneath. Falsehood is like this scum. This is why people think that it dominates over truth. But this is only so in appearance and is deceitful, for, just like the scum, falsehood is destined and bound to vanish when the truth comes (sūrah 17: 81). Truth is lasting and is like the water which flows beneath the scum and which carries life wherever it reaches.
19. Is the one who knows that what is sent down to you from your Lord is the truth – is that one like him who is blind? Surely only people of discernment reflect and be mindful.

20. Those who fulfill God's covenant (responsible for the order in the universe, and able to establish the peace, order and harmony in human life) and do not break the pledge (that they shall worship none save God, and fulfill all other obligations resulting from believing in and worshipping only One God);

21. And those who unite the bonds God has commanded to be joined (among kin as a requirement of blood relationship, and among people as required by human social interdependence), and stand in awe of their Lord, and fearful of (facing) the most evil reckoning:

22. And those who endure patiently (all adversities they face in God's cause) in pursuit of where God's good, eternal pleasure lies, and they establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and spend of whatever We provide for them secretly and openly, and repel the evil with good. Such are those for whom there is the ultimate (everlasting) abode:

23. Gardens of perpetual bliss which they will enter, along with all who are righteous from among their ancestors, their spouses, and their descendants; and the angels will come to them from every gate, (saying):

24. “Peace be upon you, for that you endured patiently. How excellent is the ultimate (everlasting) abode!”

25. But those who break God's covenant after its solemn binding, and sever the bonds God commanded to be joined, and cause disorder and corruption on the earth - such are those for whom there is curse (exclusion from God's Mercy), and for them there is the most evil abode.

26. God enlarges provision for whom He wills, and straitens it (for whom He wills). They (the unbelievers who have indulged in the present, worldly life oblivious of God and the Hereafter) rejoice in the present, worldly life, whereas the present, worldly life is but a fleeting enjoyment as compared with the Hereafter.

27. Those who disbelieve say: “Why is not a miraculous sign (of the kind we desire) sent down on him from his Lord?” Say: “Surely God leads astray whomever He wills, and guides to Himself all who turn (to Him whole-heartedly).”

28. Those who have believed (and become established in faith), and whose hearts find rest and contentment in remembrance of, and whole-hearted devotion, to God. Be aware that it is in the remembrance of, and whole-hearted devotion to God, that hearts find rest and contentment.
9. This last phrase has several meanings:

- Whatever evil people have done, or whatever sin they have committed, they repel (its effect) immediately by repentance.
- Whatever evil they have done, they immediately do a good deed in atonement for it.
- They repel the evil done to them by doing good to those who did evil to them.
- “When they are deprived (of anything), they give; and when they are wronged, they forgive.”

The respected Turkish scholar, Fethullah Gülen, writes vividly about this matter:

Return good for evil, and disregard discourteous treatment. An individual’s character is reflected in his or her behavior. Choose tolerance, and be magnanimous toward the ill-mannered.

The most distinctive feature of a soul overflowing with faith is to love all types of love that are expressed in deeds, and to feel enmity for all deeds in which enmity is expressed. To hate everything is a sign of insanity or of infatuation with Satan.

Accept how God treats you. Make it the measure by which you treat others, so that you may represent the truth among them, and be free from the fear of loneliness in either world (Pearls of Wisdom, 75–76).

He also writes about the reflection of this praiseworthy quality in education:

Improving a community is possible only by elevating the young generations to the rank of humanity, not by obliterating the bad ones. Unless a seed composed of religion, tradition, and historical consciousness is germinated throughout the country, new evil elements will appear and grow in the place of each eradicated bad one (Ibid., 39).

10. For God’s leading whomever He wills astray, see surah 2, note 10; 26-27, note 23; surah 6: 39, note 9.
29. Those (whose hearts have attained to rest and contentment,) who have believed and do good, righteous deeds – for them is the greatest happiness and the most beautiful of destinations.

30. For that end We have raised you as Messenger among a community before whom other (similar) communities have come and gone, that you may recite (and convey) to them what We reveal to you, whereas (in their ignorance) they disbelieve in the All-Merciful. Say: "He is my Lord. There is no deity save Him. In Him I have put my trust, and to Him is my recourse."

31. If at all through a Divine Book mountains were moved, or the earth were torn apart, or the dead were made to speak, (all would be only through this Qur'ān so that the unbelievers would be compelled, having no choice but, to believe). No, but to God belongs the whole command (to decide what shall be and how it shall be). Do not yet those who believe know that, if God had so willed, He would indeed have guided all humankind (to faith)? Those who disbelieve will not cease to be struck by severe blows for what they have been contriving, or these will alight close to their homes (to afflict them), until God's promise (of the final victory of Islam or Judgment Day) is fulfilled. Surely God does not fail to keep the promise.

32. Messengers were certainly mocked before you. Yet (despite all that they did), I gave respite to those who disbelieved, but then I seized them (with terrible destructions). Then, (see) how was My retribution!

33. Is He Who watches over every soul and whatever it earns (to be denied or disobeyed)? Yet they associate partners with God. Say: "Name them (if anything can be a deity merely by calling it so)! Do you (presume to) inform Him of something (existent) on earth that He does not know? Or are you just uttering mere words (with neither meaning nor reference to anything existent and real)? No, but their own fictions are decked out to be appealing to those who disbelieve, and they are kept away from the right way. Whoever God leads astray, for him there is no guide.

34. For them is punishment in the life of this world, but the punishment of the Hereafter is yet more grievous, and they have none to guard them against God.
11. This expression is highly significant for understanding many important events in human history. In rejection of the truth and God’s true way, the unbelievers continue to contrive new ways and produce new things to satisfy their selfish desires. The verb used to express their contrivances, ṢaNe‘A, is also the root word of ṣana‘yi’, meaning industry. Although what the Qur’ān primarily means here by those who disbelieve is the Makkan unbelievers, it is also referring to all of the unbelievers to come until Judgment Day. Unbelievers have never ceased to contrive new ways to struggle against Islam or to develop new devices to satisfy their carnal appetites and exploit the natural resources of wealth throughout the world; they have struggled until they have built up gigantic industries, including the weapons industry. However, they have also never ceased to be visited by severe blows from all sides, like wars, including especially the two world wars. Just as the Makkan unbelievers did not cease to be visited by blows until their final defeat and surrender to Islam, the contemporary unbelievers will not cease to be struck by blows until they accept the dominion of God over their lives and surrender to God completely. Otherwise, in the end, the Last Day will seize them severely.
35. The Paradise promised to the God-revering, pious ones can be likened to a garden through which rivers flow. Its produce is everlasting, and so its shade. That is the ultimate outcome for those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, just as the ultimate outcome for the unbelievers is the Fire.

36. Those to whom We granted the Book before rejoice in what is sent down to you. (Some do so because they believe that it is the expected final Revelation, and some because it contains passages confirming their Books and Prophets.) Yet among those parties (responding to the Book), some deny some of it (because it discloses their interpolations in their Books, and does not serve their interests). Say (O Messenger): “I have only been commanded to worship God and not to associate any partners with Him. To Him I call (all people), and to Him is my destined return.”

37. And so (as a Book, whose message is founded on faith in, and worship of, One God, and which should, therefore, be accepted by all who were given the Book before) We have sent down (this Qur’ān) as a final judgment in the Arabic tongue. And, indeed, if you were to follow their lusts and fancies after what has come to you of the Knowledge, you would have none to defend and protect you against God.

38. Most certainly, We sent Messengers before you, and (like every other man) appointed wives and children for them. It was not (the way) for a Messenger to work a miracle (as a sign of his being a Messenger) except by God’s leave. Every appointed term has its own Revelation and law.

39. God effaces what He wills (of things and events He has created, and laws He has established), and He confirms and establishes (what He wills): with Him is the Mother of the Book.

40. Whether We let you (O Messenger) witness the fulfillment of some of what We have promised them, or whether We cause you to die (before it happens), still yours (by way of duty and command from Us) is only to convey the Message, and Ours is the reckoning.

41. Do they not see how We deal with the earth, reducing it of its outlying parts? God judges, and (when He has judged) there is none to revise His judgment. And He is swift at reckoning.

42. Those who were before them schemed (just as their descendants now do), but all schemes are owned by God, (Who brings them to nothing and enforces His own will). He knows what every soul earns (by its intentions and deeds). So the unbelievers will know whose is the ultimate, everlasting abode.
12. As pointed out in the Qur’ān in such verses as sūrah 7: 159, sūrah 28: 52, and sūrah 46: 10, there were some People of the Book who believed in Islam in the Makkan period and in the early years of the Hijrah, for example, some Christians in Abyssinia and a few Jews in Madinah. There were also some others who welcomed only some passages of the Qur’ān because they confirmed their Books as being of Divine origin and their Prophets. This verse refers to them.

13. The origins, sources, and seeds from which God Almighty shapes things and/or beings with perfect order and art show that they are arranged according to a “book of principles” contained in Divine Knowledge. The seeds contain the plans and programs of beings or things that will come into existence. To give a more concrete example, a seed contains or even constitutes the plan and program according to which a tree may be formed and, furthermore, is a miniature embodiment of the Divine principles that cause the tree to come into existence and determine this plan and program. This archetypal plan and program of the Tree of Creation as a whole, which spreads its branches through the past and future and into the World of the Unseen, is called the Manifest Record, and the Divine principles that determine this plan and program constitute what the Qur’ān calls the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet that is contained in Divine Knowledge (see also sūrah 6: 59, note 13).

The life-history of, for example, a plant or tree from its germination under soil until it yields fruit, is the developed form of its seed, and this complete life-history with all its cycles is summed up in its fruit, rather in each seed within its fruits. We call this active life-history of a living thing or being its Destiny Practical or Manifest Book. With everything and event in it, the universe has its own “universal” Destiny Practical, which is the “universal” Manifest Book. The Manifest Record, which is written by Divine Knowledge, relates to the origins of things or beings, while the Manifest Book relates to their entire life-histories and is a notebook written by the Divine Power.

Through the dictates of the Manifest Record, that is, through the decree and instruction of the Divine Destiny, the Divine Power uses atoms to create or manifest the chain of beings, each link of which is His sign, on the metaphorical page of time, which is called the Tablet of Effacement (Canceling) and Confirmation. Thus, atoms are set to move so that beings may be transferred from the World of the Unseen to the material, visible world, from (the Realm of) Knowledge to the (Realm of) Power.

The Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation is the Tablet on which events and things or/and beings are inscribed and then removed or effaced according to the dictates of the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet contained in Divine Eternal Knowledge. Therefore, it displays continuous change. The Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation constitutes the essence of time. Time, a mighty river which flows through existence, has its essence in the Divine Power’s inscription of beings and in the “ink” It uses.

Similarly, God also has archetypal principles for human social life, all of which are called the Mother of the Book. He lays down these principles as commandments or laws during human history as suited to the particular needs of the time and the people concerned. For this reason, every age or appointed term has its own Revelation and laws. God sent them down with succeeding Messengers in a way that culminated in the Qur’ān as the final form of the Divine Message.

So, with regard to legislation, Islam as the final message and the consummation of all the Divine messages followed three principal ways:

- It retained the commandments that existed in the previous Books or prevailed in the community in which they appeared and that were not contradictory to its essential principles.
- It corrected or amended those that were not in conformity with its principles.
- It made new legislation.

In making new legislation, it considered both the unchanging, essential aspects of life
and those that change over the course of time. With respect to the changing aspects of life, it laid down rulings that were open to revision in the light of both new conditions and its essentials of faith, worship, and morality, as well as establishing legal principles to maintain this process (see surah 2, note 95).

The same procedure was also followed in the time of the Prophet himself, during which the Qur'ān was revealed. Some verses were abrogated or annulled by God Himself, either in terms of the injunctions they contained, with their wording being preserved; or they were totally effaced from the Qur'ān. This process was called *naskh*, and the verses abrogated are known as *mansūkh*, with the new ones that substituted the previous ones as *nāsikh*.

14. This expression has several meanings and connotations suggested by interpreters of the Qur'ān. It means:

- We are visiting with Our punishment the lands of the unbelievers, gradually curtailing them from all sides. It suggests that Arabia is gradually being conquered by the Muslims. It also prophesies the subsequent conquests of the Muslims, as well as the final victory of devout surrender to God, throughout the world.
- We make destruction follow prosperity on the earth, death after life, humiliation after glory, poverty after richness, fall after rise... So no one, no nation can be sure that God will not change their prosperity into abjection.
- God gradually deprives a land, especially toward the time of its destruction, of the best among people – the scholars, spiritual guides, thinkers, good rulers, and great leaders, and so on.
- The earth is gradually being compressed at the poles.
- Lands and mountainous areas are being eroded by the wind and rain, and coastal areas by the sea; agricultural land is gradually becoming desert.
43. Those who disbelieve say: “You are not a Messenger sent by God.” Say (to them): “God suffices for a witness between me and you, and (as witnesses) those who have true knowledge of the Book.”

SŪRAH 14

IBRĀḤĪM (ABRAHAM)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 52 verses was revealed in the closing years of the Makkān period of Islam. Taking its name from the Prophet Abraham, whose prayer concerning Makkah and its future people is mentioned in verses 35-41. In verse 5 Moses’ mission is mentioned as leading his people out of the depths of darkness into the light, while in its initial verse it declares that the Qur’ān was sent to the Prophet Muhammad to lead humankind out of the depths of darkness into the light, thus stressing the universality of his mission.

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

1. Alif. Lām. Rā. (This is) a Book which We have sent down to you so that you may lead humankind, by their Lord’s leave, out of all kinds of (intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) darkness into the light, to the Path of the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Praiseworthy (Who provides for them and all other beings and meets all their needs),

2. God, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; and woe to the unbelievers because of a severe punishment.

3. They choose the present, worldly life in preference to the Hereafter, and bar (people) from God’s way, and seek to make it appear crooked – those have indeed gone far astray.

4. We have sent no Messenger save with the tongue of his people, that he might make (the Message) clear to them. Then God leads whomever He wills astray, and He guides whomever He wills. He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

5. And, certainly, We sent Moses as a Messenger with Our Revelations and signs (miracles to support him), saying: “Lead your people from all kinds of darkness into the light, and remind them (thereby preaching Our Message) of the Days of God.” Surely in that are signs for all who are greatly patient and persevering (in God’s cause) and greatly thankful (to God).

1. For God’s leading whomever He wills astray, and guiding whomever He wills, see sūrah 2, note 10; verses 26-27, note 23; sūrah 6: 39, note 9.

2. The phrase Days of God refers to momentous historical events, such as destructions of previous communities, turning-points in history, and eschatological events.
6. And (recall) when Moses said to his people: “Remember God's favor upon you when He saved you from the clan of the Pharaoh, who were afflicting you with the most evil suffering (by enslaving you to such laborious tasks as construction, transportation and farming), slaughtering your sons and letting live your womenfolk (for further humiliation and suffering). In that was a grievous trial from your Lord.

7. And (remember also) when your Lord proclaimed: “If you are thankful (for My favors), I will most certainly give you more; but if you are ungrateful, surely My punishment is severe.”

8. And Moses said: “Even if you and whoever else is on the earth were unbelieving and ungrateful, surely God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (as Owner of everything, so independent of all creation), All-Praiseworthy (to Whom belong all praise and gratitude).”

9. Has any account not reached you of the exemplary histories of those who lived before you – the people of Noah, and the ‘Ad and Thamūd – and those who came after them? None save God has true knowledge about them. Their Messengers came to them with clear signs of the truth, but they thrust their hands into their mouths (in derision and anger, frustrated by their inability to refute them), and said: “We certainly disbelieve in what you have been sent, and indeed we are in serious doubt about that to which you call us.”

10. Their Messengers said: “Can there be any doubt about (the Existence, Oneness, and absolute Sovereignty of) God, the Originator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you so that He may forgive you your sins and grant you respite until a term appointed by Him (not destroying you because of your sins).” But they said: “You are but mortals like us; you desire to bar us from what our forefathers used to worship: well, then, bring us some clear authority.”

3. For an explanation of this verse, see surah 2: 49, notes 56–58.

4. See surah 1: 2, note 6.

5. For God’s sparing and reprieving a people to a term appointed by God, see surah 10: 98, note 20. This shows that neither an individual nor a people are subject to some sort of absolute determinism. God Almighty judges them, their lives and the conditions surrounding them as to their own choices, lifestyles, and deeds.
11. Their Messengers said to them: “We are indeed only mortals like yourselves, but God has been specially gracious to whom He wills of His servants. It is not for us to bring you some authority (for our mission), unless it be by God’s leave; and so it is in God that the believers must put their trust.

12. “What reason do we have that we should not put our trust in God, seeing that He has guided us to our ways (that we follow)? So, we will surely endure patiently whatever hurt you may do us; and let all those who entrust themselves put their trust in God.”

13. Those who disbelieve said to their Messengers: “Assuredly we will banish you from our land, unless you return to our faith and way of life.” Then their Lord revealed to the Messengers: “Most certainly, We will destroy the wrongdoers,

14. “And, most certainly, We will make you dwell in the land after them. That is (My promise) for him who fears Me as (the All-Majestic, All-Powerful) God, and who fears My threat.”

15. They (both the Messengers and unbelievers) sought a judgment (through test of right and might), and in the end, every stubborn tyrant was frustrated (made to fail),

16. And Hell is awaiting him, and he is made to drink of oozing pus.⁶

17. Sipping it little by little, yet hardly able to swallow it, and death besets him from every side though he cannot die, and a still harsher punishment lies ahead of him.

18. The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord: all their works are as ashes on which the wind blows fiercely on a stormy day (and so scatters). They have no control of anything that they have earned (to benefit from). That indeed is utmost error and failure.
6. In particular, some modern commentators tend to take almost all the expressions describing the other world metaphorically. For example, they render ooze pus as “water of most bitter distress.” This is due to the presupposition that the other life is a “spiritual” one which will be experienced by the spirit only. But the truth is otherwise. That is, humankind will be both bodily and spiritually resurrected and experience the other life both bodily and spiritually. It is not possible for us to be able to perceive the exact nature of that life according to this life, so the Qur'ān presents that life with the familiar expressions we use in this life. Ibn ‘Abbās when interpreting the Qur’ānic expression, Every time they are provided with fruits (of different color, shape, taste, and fragrance and that are constantly renewed) therefrom, they say, “This is what we were provided with before.” For they are given to them in resemblance (to what was given to them both in the world, and just before in the Gardens, familiar in shape and color so that they may not be unattractive because unknown) (2: 25), says that all the provisions of Paradise resemble those in the world, but they are completely different. For example, there are all kinds of drink and food in Paradise (which are fitting for it), including water, milk, honey, fruit, etc., with which we are provided here in this world, but they are completely unique to the other world, and we cannot perceive their exact nature. We will taste them both bodily and spiritually in our existence that is purely unique to the other world.

Similarly, in Hell, there will be ooze pus and boiling water and other elements of punishment mentioned in the Qur'ān, but they will also be unique to the other world. For this reason, rendering the rewards of Paradise and forms of punishment of Hell strictly figuratively or metaphorically is not correct. It means “pursuing that which we have no knowledge of,” which is forbidden in the Qur'ān (sūrah 17: 36), and forgetting that “the hearing, the sight, and the heart will be called to account for it.”
19. Do you not see that God has created the heavens and the earth with truth (meaningfully, for a definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth)? If He so wills (for the fulfillment of His purpose in creation), He can put you away and bring another generation (of humankind in your place).

20. And that is surely no great matter for God.

21. They will appear before God all together. Then those who were weak (in the world and followed the arrogant oppressors in their misguidance) will say to those who were arrogant and oppressed others: “We used to follow your lead: can you now avert from us anything of God’s punishment?” The others will answer: “If God had guided us (to the way to be saved), we would indeed have guided you to it. It is all the same for us now whether we are anguished (about it) or endure with patience; there is no escape for us!”

22. And Satan will say when the matter is decided: “Surely God promised you something that was bound to come true; I too promised but I failed you. And I had no power over you, except that I appealed to you, and you answered me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot respond to your cry for help. I reject your associating me as a partner with God (in belief or worship) in the past.” Surely, for the wrongdoers (who have wronged and ruined themselves by denying God or associating partners with Him), there is a painful punishment.

23. But those who believed and did good, righteous deeds are admitted to the Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide by their Lord’s leave. Their greeting therein (among themselves and from God and the angels) will be “Peace!”

24. Do you not see how God strikes a parable of a good word: (a good word is) like a good tree – its roots holding firm (in the ground) and its branches in heaven;
25. It yields its fruit in every season due by its Lord's leave. So God strikes parables for human beings in order that they may reflect on them and infer the necessary lessons.

26. And the parable of a corrupt word is that of a corrupt tree uprooted from upon the earth, having no constancy.

27. God keeps firm those who believe by the true, firm word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter; and God leads the wrongdoers astray. And God does whatever He wills.

28. Do you ever consider those who exchanged God's blessing (of thankfulness and faith) for ingratitude and unbelief, and caused their people to settle in the abode of ruin -

29. Hell – wherein they land to be roasted? How evil a place to settle in!

30. They have set up rivals to God (as deities, lords, and objects of worship), and so they have led (themselves and other people) astray from His way. Say: “Enjoy yourselves (in this world). Your journey’s end is the Fire.”

31. Tell those of My servants who believe that they must establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and spend out of what We have provided for them (of wealth, power, and knowledge, etc.) secretly and openly (and in God’s cause and for the needy), before there comes a Day when there will be no trading nor friendship (that will bring any benefit).

32. God is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, and sends down water from the sky with which He brings forth fruits for your provision. And He has made the ships serviceable for you, so that they run upon the sea by His command; and He has made the rivers serviceable for you; And He has made the sun and the moon constant in their courses, (and so) serviceable for you; and He has made the night and the day of service to you.
7. The good word is any word uttered and/or any action done purely for God’s sake and in compliance with His commandments. The best of words is the declaration of faith, which is *La ilēha īlla-lēh* (“There is no deity but God”).

It is the seed of Islam planted in the believer’s heart, as well as in the ground. This tree of faith grows elaborate through practice, so that it has its branches in “celestial worlds.” It continuously yields its produce of virtue and laudable works, and causes the blossoming of a magnificent civilization, for the heart which is connected to the higher worlds is always receiving the influx of Divine gifts.

The good word or faith is the truth and, therefore, cannot be uprooted from the world. It is well-established and lasting. Like water flowing beneath the scum (*sūrah* 13: 17), it causes life wherever it passes and is of great use to people.

The good word, besides its metaphorical meaning, is also used in its first, literal meaning. Every good word, in particular when accompanied by good deeds, causes the growth of good “trees” in hearts (*sūrah* 35: 10).

What is meant by the true, firm word is also the truth of faith. It is established and unchanging. Therefore, believers are firm in their belief and conduct. They do not waver amidst different currents, and they are also firm and persevering in their endeavors on God’s way. On the other hand, wrongdoers are those who do wrong in their deeds, who waver in their thoughts and stray from true belief. Any “wind” is enough to bend or even uproot them.
34. He has granted you from all that you ask Him. Were you to attempt to count God's blessings, you could not compute them. But for sure, humankind is much prone to wrongdoing (sins and errors of judgment) and to ingratitude.

35. And (remember) when Abraham prayed: "O my Lord! Make this land (Makkah) secure, and preserve me and my children (my sons and their descendants) from ever worshipping idols."

36. "My Lord! They have indeed caused many among humankind to go astray. So, he who follows me is truly of me; while he who disobeys me, surely You are All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate."

37. "O our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring (Ishmael and his descendants) in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House, so that, our Lord, they may establish the Prayer; so make the hearts of people incline towards them, and provide them with the produce of earth (by such means as trade), so that they may give thanks (constantly from the heart and in speech, and in action by fulfilling Your commandments)."

38. "O our Lord! Surely You know all that we keep secret as well as all that we disclose; nothing whatever, whether it be on earth or in heaven, is hidden from God.

39. "All praise and gratitude are for God, Who has granted me, despite my old age, Ishmael and Isaac. Indeed, my Lord is the Hearer of prayer.

40. "O my Lord! Make me one who establishes the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and (likewise) from my offspring (those who are not wrongdoers), Our Lord, and accept my prayer!

41. "O our Lord! Forgive me, and my parents, and all the believers, on the Day on which the Reckoning will be established."

42. Never reckon that God is unaware of what the wrongdoers are doing. He only defers them to a day when their eyes will stare (in terror);
8. For a similar prayer of the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, see 5: 118, note 25.

9. While Abraham, upon him be peace, says in verse 35 of this sûrah Make this land secure, he says in 2: 126: Make this (untilled valley) a land of security. This shows that he made the prayer in 2: 126, before the one found in this sûrah. As can be understood from the relevant verses, he settled Hagar and his son, Ishmael, in Makkah upon God’s order, and then he returned to Palestine. He came back a while later, and upon seeing that some people had already settled in the valley of Makkah, which was on its way to growing into a settled land, he prayed: My Lord! Make this (untilled valley) a land of security, and provide its people with the produce of earth, such of them as believe in God and the Last Day (2: 126). Then he came once more to Makkah and built the Ka’bah with Ishmael and made the prayers mentioned in 2: 127–129. After that, he paid a last visit to Makkah toward the end of his life and saw that it had already grown into a land of residence and said the prayers and supplications mentioned in this sûrah, verses 35–41. Either he observed idol-worshipping among some of the people or he was worried that idol-worshipping might appear there, and he prayed to God to save him and his progeny from it. It seems as if these prayers and supplications are the last prayers he made in Makkah. The Prophet Ishmael and his children had already made a home there and had begun to grow in number. This is explicit in that the verb “establish” in establishing the Prayer is plural, which in Arabic indicates that the subject is at least three people.

10. See sûrah 2: 124, note 106.

11. This prayer of the Prophet Abraham, as one of the five greatest Messengers and one whom God praises as a community (16: 120) because of his consideration for all people, and as the forefather of the Prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, upon them all be peace, has been fully accepted by God Almighty. Some significant points in his prayer merit special attention:

- He lays much stress on the daily Prescribed Prayer as one of the most important forms of worship, and he regards it as the bedrock of servanthood to God and the purpose for life. This is because the Prayer is, in the words of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, the pillar of Islam, without which the building of Islam cannot be erected (al-Bayhaqī, Shu‘ab al-Imān, 3: 39).
- He sees provision, or being provided by God, as the reason for thankfulness to Him. That is, God wills thankfulness in people when He provides for them. Thankfulness is both the door that opens on faith and its main token. Thankfulness means seeing the source of all that one has and attributing it to its real Owner. This shatters the idol of self-worship and leads one to believe in God and worship Him. The pleasure God has placed in provision – food, drink, clothes, and other things – serves to arouse thankfulness to God in people.

The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, cannot include all of his offspring in his prayer for God to make them of those who establish the Prayer; rather he says, from my offspring. As referred to in note 10 above, this is an allusion to sûrah 2: 124, which says: Remember that his Lord tested Abraham with commands and ordeals (such as his being thrown into a fire, the destruction of the people of his kinsman, Lot, and his being ordered to sacrifice his son Ishmael), and he fulfilled them thoroughly. He said: “Indeed I will make you an imām for all people.” He (Abraham) pleaded: “(Will You appoint imāms) also from my offspring?” He (his Lord) answered: “(I will appoint from among those who merit it. But) My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.” Abraham knew that all of his offspring would not be able to be righteous and establish the Prayer. This shows that being a descendant of a righteous one, even if that one be a great Messenger, is not enough to make one of the virtuous; none can claim to belong to a chosen people. This was also explicit in his prayer, “Our Lord! Make us Muslims, submissive to You, and of our offspring a community Muslim, submissive to You” (sûrah 2: 128).
43. Hurrying on in fear, with necks outstretched and heads upraised, and their eyes are fixed on a point from which they are unable to look away, and their hearts are void (as if filled with air).

44. And warn humans of the Day when the punishment will come upon them; and those who did wrong (by associating partners with God and other grave sins) will say: "Our Lord! Grant us respite for a short while – we will answer your call and follow the Messengers!" (And their entreaty will get the response:) "Did you not use to swear before that there would be no decline and fall for you?"

45. “And you dwelt in the dwelling-places of those who wronged themselves (by associating partners with God and other grave sins), and it became clear to you how We had dealt with them, and We made examples for you (to enable you to grasp the truth and mend your ways).”

46. They contrived their schemes, but their schemes were in God’s disposition (entirely encompassed by His Knowledge and Power), even though their schemes were such as to shock mountains.

47. So do not reckon that God will fail to keep His promise to His Messengers. Surely God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, Ever-Able to Requite (all wrongs).

48. On the Day when the earth is changed into another earth, and the heavens (also), they all appear before God, the One, the All-Overwhelming.

49. On that Day, you will see all the disbelieving criminals linked together in shackles,

50. Clothed in garments of pitch and their faces covered by the Fire,

51. That God may recompense every soul for what it has earned. God is indeed swift at reckoning.

52. This is a clear message for humankind that they may be warned by it, and that they should know that He is One God, and that people of discernment may reflect and be mindful.
Sūrah 15
AL-HIJR
Makkah Period

This sūrah, consisting of 99 verses, was revealed in Makkah. Its main theme is the evidence of God's Existence and Oneness, and the Divine authorship of the Qur'an. It mentions some of the exemplary events of previous peoples. It derives its name from the name of the Arabian region mentioned in verse 80, al-Ḥijr, where the people of the Prophet Šāliḥ lived.

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

1. Alif. Lām. Rā. These are the Revelations of the Book, a Qur'ān clear in itself and clearly showing the truth.
2. Again and again will those who disbelieve wish that they had been Muslims.
3. Leave them that they may continue to eat and enjoy themselves, and (let) that hope (for a long, easy life) distract them (from considering their main duty in life and considering their end). In time, they will come to know (the truth).
4. And We did not destroy any township unless it had a known and recorded decree.¹
5. No community can ever hasten on the end of its term, nor can they delay it.²
6. They say: “O you, on whom the Reminder (the Book of advice, warning, and instructions) is sent down, truly you are a man possessed.
7. “Why do you not bring down the angels to us if you are truthful (in your claim)!”
8. We do not send down the angels save with the truth (for a just reason and with wisdom, not to satisfy vain caprice or curiosity, and once the angels are sent down, the matter is decided, and) then they are allowed no (further) respite.
9. Indeed it is We, We Who send down the Reminder in parts, and it is indeed We Who are its Guardian.³
10. Certainly We sent Messengers before you among the communities of old.
11. And there never came to them a Messenger but they did mock him.
12. Just so, We cause it (the Qur'ān) to pass unheeded through the hearts of the disbelieving criminals:
13. They do not believe in it: for certain, the pattern of life of the (sinful) peoples of old has already passed.
14. Even if (as a miracle of the kind they desire) We opened to them a gate in heaven and they kept ascending through it all the while,
15. They would say, “Our eyes are but spell-bound; rather, we have been bewitched!”⁴
1. That is, its people were made well aware of what they would meet in consequence of the way they chose to follow, and the period of respite allowed them was determined and laid down by God.

2. For an explanation of this verse, see 7: 34, note 10.

3. The text of the Qur’ān was preserved in four different ways during the lifetime of the Messenger of God himself, upon him be peace and blessings:

- The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, had the whole text of the Divine Messages, from the beginning to the end, committed to writing by the scribes of Revelations.
- Many of the Companions learned the whole text of the Qur’ān, every syllable, by heart.
- All the illustrious Companions, without exception, had memorized at least some portions of the Holy Qur’ān, for the simple reason that it was obligatory for them to recite it during worship.
- A considerable number of the literate Companions kept a private record of the text of the Qur’ān and satisfied themselves as to the purity of their record by reading it out to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

There are many incidents during the Messenger’s life-time that prove that there were also copies of the parts of the Qur’ān that had been revealed up until the time of the recording. For example, the Prophet provided visitors to Madīnah, who came to learn about Islam, with copies of chapters of the Qur’ān to read and learn. To cite just one example, a Tradition from Sahih Muslim (“Kitāb al-‘Imārah,” 24) states that Ibn ‘Umar was asked by the Prophet not to take the Qur’ān on a journey with him, for he was afraid that it might fall into the hands of the enemy.

Following the death of the Prophet, when numerous memorizers of the Qur’ān were martyred at the Battle of Yamāmah, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb made a request to the Caliph Abū Bakr that they should have an “official” collection of the Qur’ān, since the memorizers of the Qur’ān were being martyred in the battles. Zayd ibn Thābit, one of the leading scholars and memorizers of the Qur’ān at that time, was chosen for this task. After meticulous work, Zayd prepared the official collection, which was called the Mushaf.

During the time of ‘Uthmān, the 3rd Caliph, some Companions appealed to him to have new copies of the Mushaf produced so that they might be sent to the provinces. So ‘Uthmān ordered Zayd ibn Thābit, ‘Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr, Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Abdurrāḥmān ibn Hārith ibn Hishām to produce new copies of the Mushaf.

According to Jalālu’d-Dīn as-Suyūtī, a fifteenth-century scholar of Egypt, five copies of the Qur’ān were made at the time of ‘Uthmān. This excludes the copy that ‘Uthmān kept for himself. The cities of Makkah, Damascus, Kūfah, Basrah, and Madinah each received a copy.

Al-Kindī (d. around 236/850) wrote in the early third century that the copy sent to Damascus was still kept at his time in Malatya, Turkey. Ibn Baṭṭutah (779/1377) said that he had seen copies made from the copies of the Qur’ān prepared under ‘Uthmān in Granada, Marrakesh, Basrah, and other cities.

Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) saw the Madinah manuscript in the Mosque of Madinah in the year 580/1184. It remained in Madinah until the Turks took it from there in 1334/1915. It has been reported that this copy was removed by the Turkish authorities to Istanbul, from whence it went to Berlin during World War I. The Treaty of Versailles, which concluded that war, contains the following clause:

Article 246: Within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty, Germany will restore to His Majesty, King of Hedjaz, the original Koran of Caliph ‘Uthman, which was removed from Madinah by the Turkish authorities and is stated to have been presented to the ex-Emperor William II (Israel, Fred L. [ed.]: Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, New York, Chelsea House Pub., 2: 1418).

As for the “Imām” Manuscript, which is...
the name used for the copy which ‘Uthmān kept himself, and which he was reading when he was killed, the Umayyads took it to Andalusia, from where it went to Morocco and, according to Ibn Batṭutah, it was there in the eighth century after the Hijrah, with traces of blood still on it. From Morocco, it might have found its way to Samarqand. There is presently a copy in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). It may be the Imām Manuscript, or one of the other copies made at the time of ‘Uthmān.

This copy came to Samarqand in 890 Hijrah (1485) and remained there until 1868. Then it was taken to St. Petersburg by the Russians in 1869, where it remained until 1917. A Russian orientalist gave a detailed description of it, saying that many pages were damaged and some were missing. Some 50 facsimiles of this muṣḥaf were produced by S. Pisareff in 1905.

A copy was sent to the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid, to the Shah of Iran, to the Amir of Bukhārah, to Afghanistan, to Morocco and to some other important Muslim personalities. One copy can now be found in the Columbia University Library (U.S.A.) (The Muslim World, vol. 30 [1940], pp. 357–358).

The manuscript was afterwards returned to its former place and reached Tashkent in 1924, where it has remained ever since. Apparently, the Soviet authorities made further copies, which are presented from time to time to visiting Muslim heads of state and other important personalities. In 1980, photocopies of such a facsimile were produced in the United States, with a two-page foreword by M. Hamidullah. Makhdūm, the writer of the History of the Mushaf of ‘Uthmān in Tashkent, gives a number of reasons that support the authenticity of this manuscript. They are, excluding various historical reports which suggest this, as follows:

- The fact that the muṣḥaf is written in the script that was used in the first half of the first century of the Hijrah.
- The fact that it is written on parchment made from gazelle, while later copies of the Qur’ān were written on paper-like sheets.
- The fact that it does not have any diacritical marks, which were introduced around the eighth decade of the first century; hence, the manuscript must have been written before that.
- The fact that it does not have the vowel symbols introduced by Abu’l-Aswad ad-Du’ali, who died in 68 Hijrah; hence, it is earlier than this. (http://www.muhammad.net/quran/ulumulQuran/004.htm)

In other words: two of the copies of the Qur’ān which were originally prepared in the time of Caliph ‘Uthmān are still available to us today, and their text and arrangement can be compared, by anyone who cares to, with any other copy of the Qur’ān, be it in print or manuscript, from any place or period of time. They will be found to be identical.

To sum up, God Almighty has guarded the Qur’ān against any corruption. The Qur’ān that we have now, anywhere in the world, has remained exactly the same over the last fourteen centuries, and there is not the slightest difference between the one that was recited during the earliest period of Islam and any other one which is printed and recited now in any part of the Muslim world. (For the preservation of the Qur’ān, also see Foreword, “The Recording of the Qur’ān and Its Preservation.”)

4. As we have pointed out in some places of this commentary (sūrah 2: 7, note 7; 2: 22, note 16; sūrah 5: 115, note 24), the main reasons for unbelief are conceit, self-pride, wrongdoing, misjudgment, incorrect viewpoints, deviation in thought and action, and indulgence in carnal appetites. Demanding different kinds of miracles from the Messengers is only an excuse for persistence in unbelief. Instead of presenting the miracles to view, the Qur’ān, as will be mentioned below, draws attention to God’s works and acts in the universe, each of which means more than a miracle for one who has “eyes” to see with, “ears” to hear with, and “hearts” to perceive and believe with.

For another explanation of unbelief and the cardinal reasons for it, and for the arguments in favor of faith in the Qur’ān, see 6: 73, note 15.
16. (As evidence for a people open to faith) We have assuredly set in the heaven great constellations, and We have made it (the heaven) beautiful for those beholding;

17. And We have made it secure against every accursed Satan rejected (from God’s mercy),

18. Excepting one who listens by stealth; but it is immediately pursued (and destroyed) by a shooting-star clear to see.

19. And the earth – We have spread it out and set therein firm mountains, and caused to grow therein of every kind in balance and proportion (and in a measured quantity);

20. And We have provided means of livelihood therein for you, and for those for whom you do not provide (such as beasts, birds, and fish).

21. There is not a thing but the stores (for its life and sustenance) are with Us, and We do not send it down except in due, determined measure.

22. And We send the winds to fertilize, and so We send down water from the sky, and give it to you to drink (and use in other ways); it is not you who are the keepers of its stores (under earth).

23. Surely it is also We, We Who give life and cause to die, and We are the Inheritors (it is We Who remain after all others have passed away).

24. And well do We know those of you who have gone before and those who are to come later.

25. And your Lord – He will surely raise to life and gather them together (on Judgment Day). He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.

26. Assuredly We have created human-kind from dried, sounding clay, from molded dark mud.

27. And the jinn We had created before, from smokeless, scorching fire penetrating through the skin.

28. And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: “I am creating a mortal from dried, sounding clay, from molded dark mud.

29. “When I have fashioned him in due proportions and breathed into him out of My Spirit, then fall down prostrating before him (as a token of respect for him and his superiority).”

30. So the angels prostrated, all of them together,

31. But Iblis did not; he refused to be among those who prostrated.
5. The original of constellation – *burj* – means stronghold, citadel, or tower. It also means the constellations, which are the names of some fixed star-groups. During its annual revolution around the sun, the earth passes through this belt of constellations (familiarly called the “Zodiac”). It has been widely accepted from ancient times that this has some effect upon the world and those living in it. Although there may be some truth in this claim, it has been carried to such a point that fortune-telling has arisen from this belief. The misuse of astrology has also contributed to such beliefs.

In some types of fortune-telling, the contact between fortune-tellers and the jinn and/or satans (devils) has a certain place. The jinn and/or satans sometimes attempt to rise to the heavens to eavesdrop on the angels’ conversations about human beings and their future. But they have never succeeded in doing this. Rather, they whisper some things to those who have contact with them as if they had been able to overhear the conversation of the angels, and as if they had some information about the future. Yet God never allows them to steal information from the heavens. For a detailed explanation of this point and of these jinn and satans being repelled with meteors, see 67:5 and the corresponding note.

We should add here that the jinn live much longer than human beings. Also, due to the refinement of the matter of which they are created, they can move much more speedily and communicate to those who are in contact with them some information about history and what is taking place in other parts of the world. This is also true for mediums and similar types of people. But neither the jinn nor medium-like people can ever be trusted; the unbelieving jinn set out to deceive people. For every truth they utter, they tell hundreds of lies. None of them have any true knowledge about the future.

6. Some interpreters of the Qur’ān hold that winds fertilize plants by carrying and spreading pollen. This is true. However, it is clearer in the verse that the winds fertilize through their action on the clouds, that is, through their role in the formation of rain. Ibn Jarir at-Tabari (244/859–310/923), one of the most outstanding figures in Islamic jurisprudence, history, and Qur’ānic interpretation, mentioned this and wrote about how the winds fertilize the clouds so that rain falls.

Scientists recently discovered that clouds are charged with electricity, and that rain forms only when the positive and negative poles in the clouds form a circuit, which is brought about by means of the winds.

God causes rain to be held in reservoirs or water sources under the earth. It is cleaned by passing through salts and soil, and is then presented to living beings to drink and use in other ways.

7. The Qur’ān has many references to the creation of humankind out of clay or earth, both of which signify the lowly material of our origin, as well as the fact that the human body is composed of elements that are derived from the earth, air, and water. This in part implies that the true value of humankind lies in the immaterial dimension of their existence. As for the jinn, beings that resemble humankind in that they have free will and powers of intellect, anger, and lust, their origin is mentioned in the Qur’ān as being smokeless fire that penetrates through the skin. Some interpret this fire as something that resembles energy or X-rays, or the high-temperature fire that fuses things together (ṣūrah 55:16). The jinn are the beings which caused sedition and bloodshed on the earth before the creation of humanity.

The following reflections, written by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi at the beginning of the 1930s, give us much insight into the origin and creation of angels, the jinn, and humankind:

Life perfects a thing’s existence, for life is the real basis and light of existence. Consciousness, in turn, is the light of life.... Since life and consciousness are so important, and a perfect harmony prevails over all creation, the universe displays a firm cohesion. As our small rotating planet is full of countless living and intelligent beings, those heavenly castles and
lofty constellations must have conscious living inhabitants unique to themselves. Just as fish live in water, those spirit beings may exist in the heat of the sun. Fire does not consume light; rather, fire makes light brighter. We observe that the Eternal Power creates countless living beings from inert, solid substances, and transforms the densest matter into subtle living compounds with life. Thus, It radiates the light of life everywhere in great abundance, and furnishes most things with the light of consciousness.

From this, we can conclude that the All-Powerful, All-Wise One would not make such subtle forms of matter as light and ether, which are close to and fitting for the spirit, without life and consciousness. He creates countless animate and conscious beings from light and darkness, ether and air, and even from meanings (conceived) and words (uttered). As He creates numerous animal species, He also creates different spirit creatures from subtle forms of matter. Some of these are angels, various spirit beings, and the jinn (The Words, “The 29th Word,” 528).

Half a century later, nearly 300 animal species, almost all of them previously unknown, were discovered living around the hydrothermal vents that form when sea-water leaks through the ocean floor where the spreading ridges are heated by the underlying magma which rushes into the cold ocean. Verena Tunnicliffe writes:

All life requires energy, and nearly all life on the earth looks to the sun as the source. But solar energy is not the only kind of energy available on the earth. Consider the energy that drives the movement and eruption of the planet’s crust. When you look at an active volcano, you are witnessing the escape of heat that has been produced by radioactive decay in the earth’s interior and is finally reaching the surface. Why should there not be biological communities associated with the same nuclear energy that moves continents and makes mountains? And why could not whole communities be fuelled by chemical, rather than, solar energy?

... Most of us associate the escape of heat from the interior of the earth with violent events and unstable physical conditions, with extreme high temperatures and the release of toxic gases—circumstances that are hardly conducive to life. The notion that biologic communities might spring up in a geologically active environment once seemed fantastic. And until recently, few organisms were known to survive without a direct or indirect way to tap the sun’s energy. But such communities do exist, and they represent one of the most startling discoveries of 20th-century biology. They live in the deep ocean, under conditions that are both severe and variable (American Scientist, 1995).

This startling discovery contains clues to other realities that science should consider. The Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, states that angels are created from light. We read in the Qur’an that God created human from dried clay, and then made them khalīfah (vicegerent: one who comes after [to rule according to God’s commandments]) for this planet. Many interpreters of the Qur’an have concluded from this that the jinn once ruled the earth and were succeeded by human beings.

Starting from the clues above, it should be possible to conduct formal studies to determine the worth of such conclusions as the following:

God first created light (in the meaning of nūr in the Qur’an), and He created living beings from it. The process of creation followed a gradual, regular accumulation of identities and/or a saltational sequence of abrupt leaps. Fire followed light in the “kneading” of the universe, and then came water and soil when it was the turn of the earth to come into being. God spread one existence through another, compounding and interweaving, and created living beings appropriate for each phase of creation. When the earth was in a state of smokeless fire, He created appropriate life forms, which the Qur’an calls the jinn. When the soil became suitable for life, He created (appropriate) plants, animals, and humanity. He adorned every part and phase.
of the universe with creatures, including living ones, appropriate for that part and phase. Here it should be noted that even though the conscious beings were brought into existence at different phases of creation, no kind of those conscious beings, namely angels, other spiritual beings, the jinn, and the humankind, has been annihilated ever since, but all of the creatures populate concurrently and some even sharing the same space/environment but different dimension like humankind and the jinn.

Finally, just as He created innumerable beings from light, ether, air, fire, water, and soil, and He creates innumerable beings from words spoken, and even from meanings, so too, does He create our stations or mansions in Paradise or Hell out of each of our words and deeds. In other words, just as He causes a tree to grow from a tiny seed through particles of soil, air, and water, so too, will He build the other world out of the material of this world, including Paradise and Hell, by adapting or transforming it for the other world during the convulsions of the Day of Judgment. (See also surah 2: 30, notes 31-32.)

8. As mentioned before, the honor of humankind lies in our spiritual potential; this is what causes us to have the greatest rank among all created beings. God attributes it to Himself by saying, “My Spirit.” The spirit is the source of both material and spiritual life, and, therefore, is not something material; rather, it is directly from God. Just as God mentions such ordinary things as earth, clay, and mud as being the material origin of humankind, and draws attention to the baseness of the material dimension of their existence, in order to present to view where the real value of humanity lies, He mentions spirit and attributes it to Himself. This also means, as Bediuzzaman Said Nursi said, that the Almighty drew, so to speak, an allegorical line before all His Names and created humanity. That is, all of God’s Names which have given existence to the whole universe are manifested in humanity to certain, varying degrees. This is why, unlike animals, human beings have consciousness, will-power, conscience, a well-developed power of learning, complex feelings, intellect, a power of reasoning, an ego and ego-consciousness, and the feeling of freedom and independence.

Human beings also have, unlike the angels, a carnal soul and the capacity for spiritual progress as a result of the struggle they undergo. In short, it is humankind that is the most polished and perfect mirror to God. It is for this reason that God expresses this dimension of the existence of humanity as His breathing into it out of His spirit. This point is clear in surah 2: 31–34; (notes 32–34). This expression can in no way be interpreted to mean that God has a body and a spirit. God addresses Himself to the understanding capacity of human beings, therefore He describes the most subtle matters and abstract truths through parables, metaphors, similes, and personification and the like. But in its descriptions, the Qur’ān sets forth for God’s Names and Attributes the most beautiful and highest parables and comparisons (surah 16: 60), and we must never forget that nothing is like Him (surah 42: 11), for He is absolutely different from everything else.

9. Iblīs is not among the angels; he belongs to the jinn. For a detailed explanation, see surah 2: 34, note 36.
32. (God) said: “O Iblis! What is the matter with you that you are not among those who have prostrated?”

33. (Iblis) said: “I am not one to prostrate before a mortal, whom You have created from dried, sounding clay, from molded dark mud.”

34. (God) said: “Then get you down out of it; surely You are one rejected (from My mercy).

35. “And cursing is upon you until the Day of Judgment (as recompense for you in the world).”

36. (Iblis) said: “Then, my Lord, grant me respite till the Day when they will all be raised from the dead!”

37. He (God) said: “You are of the ones granted respite,

38. “(But) until the Day of the appointed time known (to Me) (i.e. the Last Day).”

39. (Iblis said:) “My Lord! Because You have allowed me to rebel and go astray, I will indeed deck out to be appealing to them on the earth (the worldly, material dimension of human existence and the path of error), and I will surely cause them all to rebel and go astray,

40. “Except Your servants from among them, endowed with sincerity in faith and Your worship.”

41. (God) said: “This (path of sincerity in faith) is a straight path that I have taken upon Myself (to lead to Me).

42. “My servants – you shall have no authority over any of them, unless it be such as follow you being rebellious (against Me, as you are).”

43. And for all such (rebellious people), Hell is the promised place.

44. It has seven gates, with an appointed group of them for each gate.

45. The God-revering, pious ones are surely in Gardens and water-springs,

46. (And it is said to them): “Enter you here in peace, perfectly secure!”

47. We strip away whatever there is in their bosoms of rancor and jealousy (which they may have felt against each other while in the world). As brothers face to face, (they take their ease) on couches raised.

48. No sense of fatigue ever touches them, nor are they ever asked to leave.

49. Inform, (O Messenger,) My servants that I surely am the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate,

50. And that My punishment – it is indeed the painful punishment.

51. Inform them about the guests of Abraham.
10. The obstinate unbelief of Satan is of great significance. He knows God and he knows that it is He Who creates, nourishes, maintains, and rears His creatures. He also knows that a Day will come when all conscious, responsible beings will be ordered to account for what they have done in the world. However, his knowledge does not suffice for him to overcome his ego, haughtiness, and obstinacy, so as to believe in God and to submit to His commands.

11. The Qur’ān describes this event regarding the ontological nature of humankind, in considerably different words and expressions, and from various viewpoints, in many of its sūrah. This is done because what is important in an event is its meaning and the lessons it teaches. This is why the Qur’ān presents the characters and the essence of the event in all the aspects that are fitting for the context of each chapter. This is why different words and expressions are required.

For other accounts of this event, similar in some ways while differing in others, see sūrah 2: 30–34, notes 30–36; sūrah 7: 11–18, notes 2–3.

12. The Qur’ān uses seven different names for the places or types of punishment in the Hereafter: Jahannam (Hell), Nār (Fire), Saʿr (Blaze), Jāḥīm (Blazing Flame), Ḥutamah (Consuming Fire), Saqar (Scorching Fire), and Lazā (Raging Flame). Most probably, these are the levels or degrees of punishment, each prepared for those who deserve it and each having a gate.
52. They presented themselves before him and bade him peace. Abraham said: “We are apprehensive of you.”

53. They said: “Do not be apprehensive. We have brought you the glad tidings of a boy to be endowed with profound knowledge.”

54. He said: “Do you bring me glad tidings when old age has overtaken me, then how can you bring me such glad tidings?”

55. They said: “We have brought you the glad tidings with truth, so be not of those who despair.”

56. He said: “Who would despair of his Lord’s mercy, other than those who are astray?”

57. He said: “Then (after that), what is your concern, O you (heavenly) envoys?”

58. They said: “Indeed, we have been sent to a people who are all criminals,

59. “Except for the family of Lot – we are surely to save them all,

60. “Except his wife – about her God has decreed that she shall be among those who stay behind (and are destroyed).”

61. And when the envoys came to the family of Lot,

62. He said: “You are people unknown (here).”

63. They said: “No (do not be afraid)! We have come to you concerning that which they have persistently disputed (the inevitable consequence of their way of life).

64. “We have brought you the truth, and we are most certainly speaking the truth.

65. “So, set forth with your family in a part of the night, with yourself following them in the rear, and let no one among you turn round, but proceed whither you are ordered.”

66. We made clear to him that decisive decree, that the root of those (sinful people) was to be cut off in the morning.

67. The people of the city came rejoicing at the news (that some handsome guests had arrived).

68. Lot said: “They are my guests; so do not put me to shame.

69. “Have fear of God, and do not disgrace me!”

70. They said: “Have we not forbidden you to offer protection and intercede for anyone in the world?”
13. As the Qur’an mentions (11: 75), and as indicated elsewhere (5, note 25), the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, was exceptionally clement and tender-hearted, and constantly turning to God with all his heart. By saying, “Who would despair of his Lord’s mercy, other than those who are astray?” he stresses God’s particular mercy and favor for each of His creatures. As a manifestation of His being ar-Rabbu’r-Rahman (the All-Merciful Lord), He embraces all of His creatures together; but being ar-Rabbu’r-Rahim (the All-Compassionate Lord) He has particular mercy and favor for each of them. Everyone has their own particular relationship with God, and according to the nature and depth of this relationship, God favorably inclines towards each person and shows special mercy for him or her. As the All-Compassionate Lord (Sustainer, Upbringer, Protector) of each one, God is always nearer to His creatures than they are to themselves. Everyone can build a special relationship with God and turn to Him without needing any intermediary, and no one needs to feel that God is like a “father.” He is infinitely more compassionate toward His servants than their fathers, and perceiving Him to be like a father means reducing God to a mortal, helpless, material, needy being, while He is infinite in all His Attributes, All-Powerful, and eternal. He is One Who has no needs at all, and Who is exalted above having any human deficiencies.
71. Lot said: “Here are my daughters (whom you might lawfully take in marriage), if you have to be doing (something of that sort)!"

72. By your life (O Muhammad), they moved blindly and wildly in their delirium (of perversion).

73. The awful blast seized them at the sunrise,

74. And We turned them (the sinful towns) upside down, and rained down on them stones of baked clay.

75. Surely in this there are signs (lessons and messages) for those who can read the signs (so as to understand the inner meaning of things and events).

76. They (the traces of those destroyed towns) stand by a road that still exists.

77. Surely in that there is a manifest sign for the believers (for the truth of God’s decree, and the way He enjoins, and the call to it).14

78. And the people of al-Aykah were also wrongdoers (who associated partners with God).15

79. So We inflicted Our retribution on them (which they deserved), and both (of these sinful communities) lived by a highway plain to see.

80. And most certainly the people of al-Hijr denied the Messengers (by denying the Messenger sent to them).

81. So We presented to them Our signs (including miracles, and sent Our Revelations), but they turned away from them in aversion.

82. They hewed out dwellings in the mountains, feeling themselves secure (against any calamity).

83. But the awful blast seized them in the morning.

84. All (the wealth and power) that they acquired was of no avail to them.16

85. We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them save with truth (meaningfully, for a definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth); and the Last Hour is surely bound to come.17 So, overlook (the faults of the people, O Messenger) with a gracious forbearance.18

86. Surely, your Lord is He Who is the Supreme Creator, the All-Knowing.

87. And, indeed We have granted you the Seven Doubly-Repeated (Verses) and, (built on it), the Grand Qur’ān.19

88. Do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some groups among them (the unbelievers) to enjoy (in the life of
this world), nor grieve over them (because of their attitude toward your mission); and lower your wings (of compassion and protection) for the believers.

89. And say (to those coming to Makkah from neighboring towns): “Surely I, I am the plain warner (against a punishment to be sent down).”

90. – Just as We have sent down on those who make divisions;

14. The Qur'ān narrates historical events from different perspectives, in all its different aspects, according to the purpose it pursues in narrating them, and within the framework of the context. For the accounts of the heavenly envos' visit to the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, and the destruction of Lot’s people, both of which have already been mentioned, see surah 7: 80–84, note 18; and 11: 69–83, notes 16–19.

15. Some commentators are of the opinion that the people of al-Aykah and the people of Midian were the names of the same people to whom the Prophet Shu'ayb, upon him be peace, was sent as Messenger, and about whom information was given in 7: 85–93 (see note 19) and 11: 84–95. However, the Qur'an uses the phrase “their brother” for the Messengers sent to their people, meaning that both they and their people were of the same tribe. It uses the same phrase while recounting Shu'ayb's experience with the people of Midian (7: 85), but while narrating his experience with the people of al-Aykah, it does not (26: 177). The punishment that the peoples of Midian and al-Aykah were subjected to also seems to be different (7: 91; 11: 94; 26: 189). Based on these differences, other commentators are of the opinion that the people of Midian and al-Aykah were two separate branches of the same tribe. The territory of Madyan (Midian) lay to the north-west of Hijaz and south of Palestine on the coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of 'Aqabah, with part of the territory stretching to the northern border of the Sinai Peninsula. Midian was the capital of the territory, and al-Aykah was located a five-day journey from it. It is highly possible that al-Aykah was located in the present day 'Aqabah. Its people bore the same characteristics and committed the same crimes as the people of Midian. So Shu'ayb's experiences here were almost identical to what took place between him and the Midianites. For a further account of the people of al-Aykah, see surah 26: 176–191.

16. For a more detailed account of the people of the Prophet Sālih, upon him be peace, see surah 7: 73–79, note 17; surah 11: 61–68.

17. God has definite purposes for the creation of the heavens and the earth. This is also true of the destruction that must take place in order to build the other world. In this world, humankind and the jinn, the two kinds of conscious beings that have willpower and who are, therefore, responsible for their deeds, will be called to account for their worldly lives. So God's purposes for the creation of the heavens and the earth will be fulfilled completely only in the Hereafter.

The Majestic Lord and Ruler of this world has infinite Munificence and Mercy, and infinite Splendor and Majesty. His Munificence requires infinite giving, His Mercy requires favoring worthy of Itself, and His Majesty and Splendor require chastising those who disrespect them. As only a minute fraction of the manifestations of such Attributes is established and manifested in this impermanent world and passing life, there must be a blessed realm where these manifestations can be fulfilled fully. Denying such a realm means denying the Mercy so evident to us; this is no different from denying the existence of the sun, which enlightens every day. Death without resurrection would turn compassion into torment, love into the affliction of separation, blessing into a vengeful curse, reason into an instrument of wretchedness, and pleasure into pain. Such events would cause Divine Mercy to vanish.

The Majestic Being, Who manifests the
sovereignty of His being Lord in the universe’s order, purpose, justice, and balance, will certainly show His favor to believers who seek the protection of His being their Lord and Sovereign, who believe in His Wisdom and Justice, and who act in conformity with these through faith and worship. There also must be a realm of punishment suitable for the Almighty’s Majesty and Glory. This world’s oppressors die with their oppressive power intact, while the oppressed die still subjected to humiliation. Such wrongs are necessarily deferred to a supreme tribunal; they are never ignored. Indeed, punishment is sometimes enacted even in this world. The torments endured by earlier disobedient and rebellious peoples show that we cannot escape whatever punishment God Almighty’s Splendor and Majesty choose to apply.

The world is adorned with so many beautiful objects; the sun and the moon serve as its lamps, and the planet’s surface teems with the finest varieties of sustenance – an overflowing feast of plenty, trees bearing fruit like so many dishes and renewed several times every year. All of this shows the existence of a great generosity and liberality.

Such inexhaustible treasures of Mercy require an everlasting abode of blissful repose that contains all desirable objects. They also require that those who enjoy them should dwell there eternally, without suffering the pain of cessation and separation. The end of pain is a sort of pleasure, and the end of pleasure is a sort of pain. As unlimited Generosity cannot allow such a thing, Paradise must be eternal and its inhabitants must live therein eternally. Unlimited Generosity and Liberty desire to bestow infinite bounty and kindness, which require infinite gratitude. Thus, those who are to receive the blessings and give continual thanks for this ongoing bestowal of bounty must live forever. A slight contentment, spoiled by its brevity or cessation, is incompatible with unlimited Generosity and Liberty.

The Lord of infinite compassion and mercy, Who most compassionately fulfills the least need of even His lowliest creatures in the most unexpected fashion, Who answers the faintest cry of help of even His most obscure creature, and Who responds to all petitions, will never ignore the greatest desire and petition of the foremost among His creatures. The tender solicitude manifested in nurturing weak, young animals shows that the Sovereign Lord of the universe exercises His being Lord with infinite mercy. Is it conceivable that such Compassion and Mercy in the exercise of Lordship would refuse the prayer of the most valuable of all creation? Humankind petitions for so universal a need – immortality and an eternal life of bliss – that all inhabitants of creation share in it and silently affirm: “Accept that prayer, O Lord, because we also desire it.”

We see how the records of the lives of all spring flowers and fruits, the laws of their formation, and images of their forms are all inscribed within their minute seeds and preserved there. The following spring, those records are opened – a bringing to account as appropriate for them – and another vast world of spring emerges with absolute orderliness and wisdom. This shows the powerful and comprehensive exercise of the Divine Attribute of All-Preserving. Considering that the issue of such transient, commonplace, and insignificant things is preserved, how could our deeds not be preserved and recorded as a matter of high significance? God, Who is the All-Preserving and protects within absolute orderliness and equilibrium everything that exists, and sifts and takes account of their consequences, has the acts of His servants recorded, and He will not allow those acts of His noble vicegerent, who bears the Supreme Trust, to go unsifted, unaccounted, and unweighed in the balance of justice, unpunished or unrewarded as befits.

18. Based on this Islamic attitude, Fethullah Gülen writes:

Be so tolerant that your heart becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love for others. Offer a hand to those in trouble, and be concerned about everyone.
Applaud the good for their goodness, appreciate those who have believing hearts, and be kind to believers. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred melt away. Like a Messiah, revive people with your breath.

Remember that you travel the best road and follow an exalted guide, upon him be peace and blessings. Be mindful that you have his guidance through the most perfect and expressive Revelation. Be fair-minded and balanced in your judgment, for many people do not enjoy these blessings.

Return good for evil, and disregard discourteous treatment. An individual's character is reflected in his or her behavior. Choose tolerance, and be magnanimous toward the ill-mannered.

The most distinctive feature of a soul overflowing with faith is to love all types of love that are expressed in deeds, and to feel enmity for all deeds in which enmity is expressed. To hate everything is a sign of insanity or of infatuation with Satan.

Accept how God treats you. Make it the measure by which you treat others, so that you may represent the truth among them and be free from the fear of loneliness in either world.

Only those who do not use their reason, or who have succumbed to plain stupidity and desires of the flesh, are convinced that believing men and women might harm them. Apply to a spiritual master to stir up your heart, and fill your eyes with tears.

Judge your worth in the Creator’s sight by how much space He occupies in your heart and your worth in people’s eyes by how you treat them. Do not neglect the Truth even for a moment. And yet, “Be a man or woman among other men or women!”

Take note of, and be attentive to, any behavior that causes you to love others. Then remind yourself that behaving in the same way will cause them to love you. Always behave decently, and be alert.

Do not allow your carnal soul to be a referee in any contention, for it will always rule that everyone but you is sinful and unfortunate. Such a judgment, according to the saying of the most truthful, upon him be peace and blessings, signifies your destruction. Be strict and implacable with your carnal soul, and be relenting and lenient toward others.

In sum: In order to preserve your credit, honor, and love, love for the sake of the Truth, hate for the sake of the Truth, and be open-hearted toward the Truth. (Pearls of Wisdom, 75–76)

19. The recitation of al-Fātihah (the first, opening chapter of the Qur’ān, which consists of seven verses) in all Prayers except the Funeral Prayer is obligatory; without it, the Prayer is not valid. It is obligatory in the first two rakāhs of the Prescribed Prayers. It is also narrated that it was revealed twice, unlike other sûrah. That is, it is a revealed, repeated recitation.

Al-Fātihah is like the seed of the Qur’ān or its essence. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, described it as the Mother of the Book (al-Bukhārī, “Kitāb at-Tafsīr,” I). Like a seed which contains all that a tree will grow into in an encapsulated form, this sûrah alludes to all the principles set forth in the Qur’ān (Iṣārāt 1–Fīqār, 14).

The Qur’ān is so wonderfully comprehensive in style and meaning that a single sûrah may contain the whole ocean of the Qur’ān, in which the universe is contained. One verse may comprehend that sûrah’s treasury, as if most of the verses are really small sûrah and most sûrah are little Qur’āns. This miraculous conciseness is a great gift of Divine Grace with respect to guidance and easiness, for although everyone always needs the Qur’ān, not all people can read it at all times. So that they are not deprived of its blessings, each sûrah may substitute for a small Qur’ān and each long verse for a short sûrah. This also serves to relate the meaning of some Prophetic Traditions, for example, the fact that reciting Sūrat al-Ikhlās three times or Sūrat al-Kāfūrān four times may gain one the merit of having recited the whole of the Qur’ān. Moreover, scholars agree that the Qur’ān is contained in Sūrat al-Fātihah, which is itself contained in the Bas-
malāḥ (In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate).

The Qur'ān contains references to all the knowledge needed by humanity, such as explanations, aspects, and varieties of true knowledge, commands and prohibitions, promises and threats, encouragement and deterrence, restraint and guidance, stories and parables, Divine Knowledge and commands, “natural” sciences, and the rules and conditions of our personal, family, social, economic, spiritual, and otherworldly lives. Moreover, it gives people whatever they need, so that the phrase: “Take from the Qur'ān whatever you wish for whatever need you have,” has been widely circulated among truth-seeking scholars. Its verses are so comprehensive that the cure for any ailment and the answer for any need can be found therein. This must be so, for the Book that is the absolute guide of all perfected people, who move forward each day on the way of God, must be of that quality (The Words, “The 25th Word,” 413–416). What is important is to know how to approach and understand it and how to benefit from it.

20. The life of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was so simple that once ‘Umar, upon seeing him lying on a rough mat, could not help but weep and say: “O Messenger of God, kings sleep in soft, feather beds, while you lie on a rough mat. You are the Messenger of God and thereby deserve an easy life more than anyone else.” God’s Messenger answered: “Do you not agree that the luxuries of the world should be theirs and those of the Hereafter ours?” (al-Bukhārī, “Tafsīr,” 287; Muslim, “Talaq,” 31)

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, like all Prophets, expected no reward for performing his mission. He suffered hunger, thirst, and every other hardship and persecutions. He was forced into exile, and he was made the target of many assaults and traps both from within and without when he had emigrated. He bore all of these simply for the good pleasure of God and the good of humanity. Abū Hurayrah once saw him performing the Prayer in a seated position and asked if he was ill. The Messenger’s reply caused Abū Hurayah to cry: “I am hungry, Abū Hurayrah. Hunger has left me no strength to stand up for the Prayer” (Abū Nu‘aym, 7: 107; al-Hindi, 1: 199).

Even though most of his Companions became wealthier in later years, the Messenger and his family never changed their very simple lifestyle.

In addition to receiving no worldly benefit, as mentioned above, God’s Messenger underwent much torture. He was beaten many times and left on the ground covered with dust, and only Fāṭimah, his daughter, ran to his aid. Once he was being beaten at the Ka’bah; Abū Bakr ran to help him, shouting to those beating him: “Will you kill a man because he says: ‘My Lord is God?’ ” (al-Bukhārī, “Fadā’il as-Ṣahābah,” 5; Ibn Hanbal, 2: 205) (The Messenger of God, 89–90).

So, the meanings of such statements as Do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some groups among them (the unbelievers) to enjoy (in the life of this world), signify for the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings: We know that you never do so; rather, these verses address a warning to other believers. By “some groups” (azwa’j), the verse actually refers to the social classes and class differences in non-Islamic societies.
91. Those who have broken the Qur’ān into fragments (as they please).  
92. So, by your Lord, We will surely question them all  
93. About what they have been doing.  
94. So, from now on, proclaim what you are commanded to convey openly and in an emphatic manner, and do not care (whatever) those who associate partners with God (say and do).  
95. We suffice you against all those who mock,  
96. Those who adopt some deity along with God. In time, they will come to know.  
97. We certainly know that your breast is constricted by the (blasphemous) things that they say.  
98. But glorify your Lord with His praise (proclaim that He is absolutely above having any partners, and that all praise belongs to Him exclusively) and be one of those who prostrate before Him (regularly in the Prayer).  
99. And (continue to) worship your Lord until what is certain (death) comes to you.

21. People used to come to Makkah for several reasons such as Pilgrimage and trade. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, conveyed his Message to them also. Hoping to prevent them from believing, some Makkan unbelievers took clay tablets of the Qur’ānic verses which they regarded as product of magic or poetry, and delivered them to those people.  
22. Until this order came, the Messenger had been communicating the Divine Message secretly and privately. When this order came, he began to proclaim it openly and insistently. Constant striving is an essential feature of the delivering of the Message, as well as an important element of the Prophetic method. A Prophet is, so to speak, obsessed with how to perform his duty. With that goal always uppermost in mind, he considers all circumstances and does everything permitted. Throughout his life, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, grieved for the misfortunes of humankind. He ceaselessly called people to God’s way. During his years in Makkah, he walked the streets and visited the nearby annual fairs, always hoping to help a few people to convert. Insults, derision, and torture did not deter him even once.
SŪRAH 16

AN-NAḤL (THE BEE)

Makkah Period

Revealed in Makkah, this sūrah consists of 128 verses. Its name is derived from verse 68, where bees are mentioned as another miraculous sign of God’s Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom. It mentions many bounties of God. It concentrates on the essentials of faith, the rejection of unbelief and the association of partners with God, with many proofs in favor of faith, and encouragement to realize certain virtues, such as justice, doing good, and generous deeds, as well as forbidding evil and vices.

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

1. God’s command (for the calamity to strike the unbelievers, and their final destruction at the end of time) is bound to come, so (O unbelievers) do not wish it to be hastened (by asking the Messenger to bring it immediately in order only to deride and cast doubt on it). All-Glorified is He, and absolutely exalted above all that they associate with Him.

2. He sends down the angels with the Spirit (the life-giving Revelation) from His (absolutely pure, immaterial realm of) commands upon whom He wills of His servants (saying): “Warn people that there is no deity save Me, so keep from disobedience to Me in reverence for Me and piety.”

3. He has created the heavens and the earth in truth (meaningfully, for a definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth). Absolutely exalted is He above all that they associate (with Him).

4. He has created human from (so slight a beginning as) a mere drop of (seminal) fluid; and yet, he turns into an open, fierce adversary (selfishly disputing against the truth).

5. And the cattle He has created, from which you get warmth (of clothing) and other uses, and from them you get (food) to eat.

6. And in them there is beauty for you when you drive them home (in the evening), and when you take them out to pasture (in the morning).
1. Humans, who have followed many so-called guides or leaders only to be led astray, have received true guidance through the Prophets. These servants of God were created for a special mission. Their lives resemble a beautiful symphony, perfectly harmonious and balanced. Their words are like sweet melodies that penetrate the soul. All of existence, be it animate or inanimate, listens to them. Trees and rocks would greet the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, just before and during his Prophethood, and he would answer them.

In his well-known *Qaṣīdat al-Barāh*, Busiri says: “Trees answered his call, prostrating.” When he called them, trees came to him. It was understood that the whole creation, animate or inanimate, has a definite meaning and purpose. Through his advent, existence became a “cosmos” out of “chaos,” and each thing was perceived to become a voice that glorified God with praise. The extraordinary harmony in the universe displays God’s Existence and Unity. Nothing is created in vain or without purpose (*The Messenger of God*, 31).
7. They carry your loads to many a land
which (otherwise) you would be unable to
reach except with great hardship to your-
selves. Indeed, your Lord is All-Pitying,
All-Compassionate.

8. And horses, mules and donkeys (has
He created for you) to ride, as well as for
ornament (the loveliness they add to your
world); and (besides all that you see and
know of,) He creates what you have no
knowledge of.

9. With God (being your Creator) rests
the goal of the way (to which He will
guide and which you must follow). And
some (ways) are crooked (misleading those
who follow them). But if God had willed
(to impose His guidance without granting
people freedom of choice), He would surely
have guided you all together (on His way).

10. He it is Who sends down from the
sky water; you drink thereof, and thereof
(drink) the shrubs on which you pasture
your cattle.

11. With it, He causes to grow for you
the crops, the olives, the date-palms, the
grapes, and all (other) kinds of fruit. Surely
in this is a sign (manifesting the truth) for
people who reflect.

12. He has made the night and the day
and the sun and the moon to be of service
to you, and the stars are made subservient
by His command. Surely in that are signs
for people who reason and understand.

13. And whatsoever He has created for
you on earth of varying colors (and diverse
forms and qualities): surely in that is a sign
for people who reflect and are mindful.

14. And He it is Who has made the sea
to be of service (to you) so that you eat
from it fresh meat, and draw out from it
ornaments that you wear. And you see
the ships plowing their course through it
so that you may go forth in quest of His
bounty and give thanks (to Him Who has
created all this).

2. In parallel with the development of life, God
creates new things for the use of humankind
and to contribute to our life, ornamenting and
enriching it. These include both plants and
animals of which we are not aware at this
time, but which may be discovered in later
times, as well as the inventions and production
of humankind, which God creates through
our hands. This verse also implies that besides
their many uses to human beings, plants and
animals also serve them by arousing their
sense of wonder and their capacity to appreci-
ate beauty. The utility and beauty of the natu-
ral world should awaken the strongest feelings
of dependence and indebtedness, which are
elements of the gratitude human beings owe
to the Creator of themselves and the world
around them.
15. And He has cast firm mountains on the earth lest it should shake with you (with its movement), and rivers, and roads, so that you may find your way;

16. And (other) way-marks, and they (people) find their way by the stars.

17. Is He then Who creates to be likened to him who does not create? Will you not reflect and be mindful?

18. And should you attempt to count God’s blessings, you could not compute them. God is indeed All-Forgiving, All-compassionate (Who continues to provide for His servants despite their sins and even their denial of Him).

19. God knows whatever you keep concealed and whatever you disclose.

20. But those whom they invoke, apart from God, create nothing, rather they are themselves created.\(^3\)

21. Dead (they are), not living (nor can they give life, being themselves in need of it). And they do not know when they will be raised to life.\(^4\)

22. Your God is the One God, but those who disbelieve in the Hereafter – their hearts are in denial (of this most evident and essential truth, and the many other truths based on it): they are (too) arrogant (to accept dependence on the Supreme Being, and to be answerable to Him).\(^5\)

23. Without doubt, God knows whatever they keep concealed and whatever they disclose; He does not love the arrogant.

24. When it is said to them: “What is it that your Lord, (Who sustains, protects, and raises you) has sent down (on the Messenger)?” They say: “Fables of the ancients.”

25. Hence, they will bear their own burdens (of sin) in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they, devoid of true knowledge, caused to go astray. Look now! How evil is the burden they load upon themselves!\(^6\)

26. Those before them (like them, persistent in unbelief, wrongdoing, and evil) schemed (against the Messengers and the Divine Message they brought), so God struck what they built at its foundations, and the roof fell in upon them from above, and the doom came upon them without their having perceived whence it came.
3. The arguments that the Qur‘ān puts forth are apparently straightforward, but have profound meanings. Since the Qur‘ān aims at guiding people to God’s way and since the overwhelming majority of people are always of average capacity, it addresses itself to their level of understanding. However, it never deprives the most knowledgeable and intellectual. This is one of the miraculous aspects of the Qur‘ān.

Only one who can create can be a deity worthy of worship. We can clearly see that everything in the world is in flux, contained in time and space, and changeable, and that all things have a beginning. The universe itself is also in a flux in time and space, and changeable dependent on certain laws. Therefore, anything with such attributes can only be created and must owe its existence to something other than itself. Something created cannot be a creator; rather it must have a creator. The creator obviously cannot be of the same kind as the created, nor can it be contained in time and space; therefore it must be eternal.

By means of the intellectual capacity God has granted us, human beings have been able to make great discoveries and inventions, yet we cannot create even a blade of grass. If human-kind, despite being the most intelligent, knowledgeable, and powerful of all creations, due to the advantages with which we have been provided, cannot create even a blade of grass, and if we cannot give existence to an atom or element, then there is nothing that is contained in the universe that can be the creator. Therefore, something that is created, be it a human being, like Jesus, or an angel, or a “natural” force, or a spirit, or an idol, or anything else, cannot be a deity worthy of adoration and invocation.

Apart from this significant fact, we openly witness that whatever we are provided with in “nature” is created and granted to us, for almost nothing. Yet, as stated above, even if all the human beings in the world were to come together and unite their power, knowledge, and wealth, they would not be able to create even a single seed of wheat. And in order for that seed to grow into wheat, the sun, the soil, air, water, and the seed itself, as well as countless other conditions, must work together in a measured way. This means that the existence of something, no matter how small, depends on the existence of the whole universe. So, even though we have been granted everything for almost nothing, the price of every thing in the universe is nearly equal to that of the universe itself. Yet, still God gives all of these to us, for almost nothing. The more we need something, the more abundantly and more cheaply God grants it to us. He grants us air for nothing and also water; these are the two things that we need most in life. All these facts, so simple in appearance, yet so meaningful, decisively demonstrate the Existence and Oneness of God with all of His many Attributes and Names.

4. Whether a living being or not, anything deified other than God can only be dead when by itself; i.e. it is in need of another power in order to exist. In another place, God declares: Do they associate as partners with Him those who create nothing and themselves are created, and who have no power to give them any help, nor can help themselves? And if you call them in the direction of guidance, they do not follow you: it is the same for you whether you call to them or remain silent. Those whom you deify and call upon apart from God are subservient beings created by God just like yourselves. (If you think and claim otherwise) then call on them and let them answer you, if you are truthful! (7: 191–194, and see the corresponding note 46).

In addition, the verse also refers to the persons such as the Prophets, saints, heroes, and other respected ones whom the polytheists deified. Many idols that the Makkan polytheists and earlier peoples worshipped, such as al-Lāt, al-Manāt, al-‘Uzzā, Wad, Suwā, and Yaghūṣ, etc. were erected in memory of persons who had these names and who had once lived and been respected by their contemporaries. Later, these people came to be sanctified and worshipped. The verse emphasizes that, however great they are in reality or in people’s sight, even such persons, who are now dead and do not know when they will be raised to life, can in no wise be deities worthy of worship.
5. Denial of the Hereafter comes either from denial of the existence of the metaphysical realms beyond the reach of human senses, which usually arises from a person’s arrogant confidence in their capacity of understanding and knowledge, or from an arrogant refusal to give account of their life before a superior being. This means a denial of the Hereafter usually entails a denial of the Supreme Being. The opposite is also true; that is, a denial of the Supreme Being entails the denial of the Hereafter. This indicates an important fact; the essentials of faith are in need of one another. Accepting one requires the acceptance of the others.

6. Every soul earns only to its own account; and no burdened soul bears (and is made to bear) the burden of another (6: 164), is a fundamental principle in Islamic law and tradition. This means that no one is responsible for another’s sin or crime if he or she has nothing to do with it. However, according to the principle, The one who causes is like the one who does it, one who causes something good or bad has a responsibility and acquires a reward or punishment in accordance with his or her share in the deed. In this respect, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, pronounces the principle: “The one who establishes a good path in Islam receives the reward of those who follow it, without any decrease in their reward. Another who establishes an evil path in Islam is burdened with the sins of those who follow it, without any decrease in their burden” (Muslim, “Zakāh,” 69; Ibn Mājah, “Muqaddimah,” 203).
27. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, He will disgrace them and will say: “Where are (those beings whom you claimed) as partners with Me and for whose sake you used to oppose (the believers), defying and disobeying (My guidance)?” Those who (in their lifetime) were endowed with the Knowledge declare: “Disgrace and evil are, this day, on the unbelievers:"

28. Those whose souls the angels take while they are still wronging themselves (by falsely associating partners with God and committing evils). (When they see the punishment), they offer full submission, (saying in an attempt to excuse themselves): “We did not (mean to) do any evil.” (But they are answered): “No! Surely God has full knowledge of what you were doing (and your intentions therein).

29. “So, go in through the gates of Hell to abide therein.” How evil, indeed, is the dwelling of the arrogant (those too haughty to accept God’s guidance).

30. Whereas it is said to those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety: “What is it that your Lord has sent down (on the Messenger)?” They answer: “That which is purely good and to our benefit (in both worlds).” For those devoted to doing good in this world, aware that God is seeing them, there is good, and the abode of the Hereafter is indeed better. How excellent, indeed, is the abode of the God-revering, pious!

31. Gardens of perpetual bliss which they will enter, through which rivers flow. Therein they will have whatever they may desire. Thus, does God reward the God-revering, pious –

32. Those whose souls the angels take whilst they are in a pious state (free of evil, and worshipping none but God alone), saying: “Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you have been doing.”

33. Are they (the unbelievers and/or those who associate partners with God) but waiting for the angels to come to them (to take their souls or bring them a disaster), or for your Lord’s command (to judge them and open Hell for them)? Even so did those before them. God did not wrong them but they did wrong themselves.

34. Then the evil consequences of what they used to do fell upon them, and that which they were mocking overwhelmed them.
7. As mentioned in many previous verses (surah 2: 120, 145; surah 3: 7, 61, 66; surah 4: 157; surah 6: 100, 119, 144; surah 11: 46; surah 12: 68; surah 16: 25), unbelief and the association of partners with God are in no way connected to knowledge, while knowledge necessitates belief. Therefore, we should also point out that knowledge (al-'ilm) and having some information are different from each other. Knowledge is a product, like milk, that is the result of many processes in the mind, like imagination, conceptualization, reasoning, inquiry, verification, judging, adoption, conviction, and certainty. There is a kind of knowledge which is absolutely certain: it is the knowledge taught by the Divine Revelation. Islam accepts Revelation, intelligence (reason), sound sense, and scientific inquiry as being the means of knowledge.

A scholar should provide guidance for others in the way that a sheep feeds its young not in the way a bird does. A sheep feeds its lambs on milk, a fully-digested and processed substance, whereas a bird feeds its chicks on what it has half-chewed and then regurgitated. (For a quotation from Said Nursi, see surah 12, note 25.)
35. Those who associate partners with God say: “Had God so willed, we would not have worshipped anything other than Him, neither we nor our forefathers; nor would we have declared anything unlawful without (a commandment from) Him.” Even so did those who lived before them (and associated partners with God like them). But, then, is any duty laid upon the Messengers except to convey the Message clearly?

36. And assuredly, We have raised within every community a Messenger (to convey the primordial Message): Worship God alone, and keep away from false deities and powers of evil (who institute patterns of faith and rule in defiance of God). Among them (past generations) were people whom God guided, just as there were among them those for whom straying was their just due. Go about, then, on the earth and look! How was the outcome for those who denied (God's manifest signs and His Messengers)?

37. Though you long ardently for them (all humankind) to be rightly guided, God surely does not guide those whom He has led astray (as their just due). And they have no helpers (to defend them against God).

38. And by God they swear their most solemn oaths, “God will never raise from the dead anyone who has died!” No! but it is a promise (that He has laid) upon Himself in truth, but most people do not know (being ignorant and lacking desire for knowledge of the truth).

39. (He will indeed fulfill that promise and resurrect them,) so that He will make clear to people the truth about what they differ on, and so that those who disbelieve will know that they were liars.

40. (Raising the dead to life, like giving them life in the first place, is easy for Us:) Our word for a thing when We will it is simply Our saying to it, “Be!” and it is.

41. Those who emigrate (to another land) for God’s cause after they have been oppressed on account of their faith, We will surely give them goodly residence in the world, and their reward in the Hereafter is certainly greater. If only they (all people) knew (how great that reward is)!

42. Those (they are) who have persevered in patience (through all adversities), and it is in their Lord that they put their trust.
8. The last two verses explicitly state that guidance is a gift from God, while misguidance is a person’s due. God does not will misguidance for anybody, but people prefer misguidance under the influence of their carnal souls. So, such expressions should be viewed in the light of the following verses: God leads the wrongdoers astray (sūrah 14: 27); He thereby leads none astray save the transgressors (sūrah 2: 26); Surely those who disbelieve and do wrong (to people by barring them from God’s way, and to God and His Messengers and angels, and to all believers and all creatures bearing witness to the truth, and to their own conscience, by accusing them of lying and deception) – God will indeed not forgive them nor will He guide them to a road, except the road of Hell, to abide therein forever; and that is easy for God (sūrah 4: 168–169).

9. For the meaning of this and similar expressions, see sūrah 2: 117, note 101; and sūrah 3: 47.

Here, we would add the following:
The Absolutely Powerful One creates things with absolute ease and speed and with no physical contact. He creates with a mere command. Moreover, although the All-Powerful Maker is infinitely near to creatures, they are infinitely distant from Him. Furthermore, despite His infinite Grandeur, He does not exclude even the most insignificant thing from the importance He attaches in designing and fashioning creation, nor does He deprive it of the beauty of His art. The perfect order which is observed in creation, despite the absolute facility witnessed in its being called into existence, testifies to this Qur’ānic truth. The following comparison explains how this is possible and serves to make it more easily comprehensible.
The sun, like a dense, solid mirror for the Divine Name of Light, is infinitely near to all things on earth; rather, it is nearer to them than their own selves, and has an effect on them in numerous ways, such as through its light and heat. By contrast, these things are millions of miles away, and they have no effect on the sun in any way, nor can they claim any nearness to it. The presence of the sun with its light, heat, and image flooding in every transparent object, big or small, and its reflection in opaque, translucent things, the heat and color it gives to each, and how it affects things all go to prove this fact. The extent of its luminosity, i.e., the degree of its brightness, increases the capacity and comprehensiveness of its penetration. It is because of the greatness of its luminosity that even the tiniest things cannot hide or escape it. This means that the sun’s immensity and “grandeur” do not exclude even the most insignificant particles, the tiniest things, from the sphere of its comprehension; rather, everything is included in it. The sun manifests itself by God’s leave in all things, from atoms to the planets, from droplets to the surface of vast oceans, with such ease and speed and over so comprehensive an area that if, supposing the impossible, we were to imagine that the sun could act of its own free will, then we would have to suppose that it performed all this with a mere command. An atom and a planet are equal before its manifestation. The heat and the light that it spreads over the entire surface of a vast ocean are also given with perfect order to the finest atom, in accordance with its capacity.

Thus, we can clearly see that the sun, which is a light-giving “bubble” in the “ocean” of the heavens, and a small, solid mirror to the manifestation of the Absolutely Powerful One’s Name of Light, displays examples of the principles of this truth. So, we believe, and everyone should believe, with complete certainty as though they have witnessed it, that the All-Majestic One, Who is the Light of Lights, the Illuminator of Light, the Determiner of Light, is all-present and all-seeing and infinitely near to all things through His Knowledge and Power, and other Attributes, and that things are infinitely distant from Him, and that He does things so easily and with no preparation. He creates with a mere command, and nothing, big or small, particular or universal, is excluded from the sphere of His Power, and His Greatness encompasses all things.
43. We did not send before you (O Muhammad) any but men to whom We revealed — and if you (O people) do not know, then ask the people of expert knowledge (those who have knowledge of the Divine Revelations) —

44. (We sent them with) clear proofs of the truth and Scriptures. And on you We have sent down the Reminder (the Qur’ān) so that you may make clear to humankind whatever is sent down to them (through you of the truth concerning their present and next life), and that they may reflect.

45. Do they, who (in defiance of God’s grace) devise evil schemes, feel safe and secure that God will not cause the earth to swallow them, or that the punishment will not come upon them without their perceiving whence it has come?

46. Or that He will not seize them in the midst of their strutting about (the land in pomp and show of dominion), and they are helpless to frustrate Him?

47. Or that He will not seize them with gradual wasting (of wealth and health giving them time to mend their ways)? For surely your Lord is All-Pitying, All-Compassionate.

48. Do they not see the things that God has created, how their shadows bend to the right and to the left, making prostration before God, and that in the humblest manner?

49. Before God prostrates itself whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth of living creatures, and the angels (likewise, for) they are not arrogant.

50. They (the angels) fear their Lord high above them (i.e., Who has absolute power over them), and they do what they are commanded.

51. God has said: “Do not take two (or more) deities: He is but One God. So be in awe of Me and Me alone, (and be saved from other fears bringing disgrace upon you).”

52. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth, and to Him alone absolute obedience is always due. Will you, then, fear and obey in piety and due reverence other than God?

53. Whatever blessing you have, it is from God; and when harm touches you, it is to Him that you cry for help.

54. When thereafter He removes the harm from you, a party of you attribute partners to their Lord (Who alone sustains and provides for you, and saves you from misfortunes);

10. For the motion of the shadow and beings’ prostration before God Almighty, see 13: 15, note 7.
55. And so deny with ingratitude the favors God has granted them. So enjoy (O polytheists, the favors We grant you) - in time, you will come to know (the truth).

56. They assign, out of what We provide for them, a portion to the things (non-existent deities, misunderstood “causes,” the real nature of) which they have no sure knowledge. By God, you will certainly be questioned about what you used to fabricate.

57. And they assign daughters to God - All-Glorified is He (above having children) - and to themselves what they desire (sons)!

58. When any of them is given news of the birth of a girl, his face becomes overcast, and he is (as if choking inwardly) with suppressed anger.

59. He hides himself from the people because of the evil (as he wrongly supposes it) of what he has had news of. (So he debates within himself:) Shall he keep her with dishonor or bury her in earth? Look now! how evil is the judgment they make (concerning God, and how evil is the decision they debate)!

60. To those who do not believe in the Hereafter applies the most evil of attributes, and to God applies the most sublime attribute, and He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

61. If God were to take people immediately to task for their wrongdoings, He would not leave on it (the earth) any living creature (as the wrongdoings of humankind would make the earth uninhabitable). But He grants them reprieve to a term appointed (by Him). When their term has come, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they bring it forward.

62. They assign to God that which they dislike (for themselves); and all the while their tongues utter the falsehood that (“if there would be another life as the Messenger claims,”) the best reward (Paradise) would be theirs. No doubt theirs is (on the contrary, only) the Fire, and they will be hastened on into it.

63. By God, We certainly sent Messengers to the communities before you (O Messenger), but Satan decked out their deeds to be appealing to (the unbelievers among) them. And this day (too, when the Qur’ān is being revealed), he is their close friend, and theirs is a painful punishment (on Judgment Day).

64. And We have not sent down the Book on you except that you may explain to them all (the questions of faith and law) on which they differ, and as guidance and mercy for people who will believe and who have already believed.
11. This verse has several meanings:

- So as to order their lives, some people ascribe creativity and the authority to things or beings which they assume to have (Divine) power, such as idols, persons, institutions, celestial bodies, spirits, and so on.
- They ascribe authority to make lawful what is unlawful or unlawful what is lawful concerning their livelihood to powers other than God; yet their livelihood has been granted to them by God.
- They assign to God, of the produce and cattle that He has created, a portion, and they say: “This is God’s” – so they assert – “and this (the rest) is for the partners that we associate with God” (ṣūrah 6: 136).
65. God sends down from the sky water and therewith revives the earth after its death. Surely in that there is a sign (manifesting the truth) for people ready to hear (and understand the discourses of the “Book of Creation” and the Revelation).  

66. And surely in the cattle (feeding on the pastures of the revived earth), there is a lesson for you: We give you from that which is within their bodies, (marvelously distinguished from) between the waste and blood, milk that is pure and palatable to those who drink.  

67. And there are (among the produce that God brings forth as nourishment for you on the revived earth) the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes: you derive from them intoxicants and good, wholesome nourishment. Surely in this is a sign for people who reason and understand.  

68. And your Lord inspired the (female) bee:  

69. “Take for yourself dwelling-place in the mountains, and in the trees, and in what they (human beings) may build and weave.  

70. “Then eat of all the fruits, and returning with your loads, follow the ways your Lord has made easy for you.” There comes forth from their bellies a fluid of varying color, wherein is health for human beings. Surely in this there is a sign for people who reflect.  

71. God has created you, then He takes your souls to Him. And among you are those who are deferred to the age of senility so they do not know, of what they once knew, anything at all. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.  

72. God has favored some of you above others in provision. And yet (while it is We Who provide them), those who are more favored do not consent to share their provision with those (slaves) whom their right hands possess so that they might be equal with them in this respect. How then do they deny God's grace and bounty, (and associate partners with Him)?  

73. God has made for you, from your selves, mates (spouses), and has made for you children and grandchildren from your mates, and has provided you with good, wholesome things. Do they, then, believe in falsehood and deny the blessings of God?
12. It is God Who revives this vast earth when it is dead and dry, and therein manifests His Power by creating hundreds of thousands of species, each as extraordinary as human-kind; these creatures manifest His all-embracing Knowledge in its infinite variations, within a complex intermingling of all their distinct forms. The dried, ossified roots and trunks of trees and plants, as also hibernating animals, are revived and restored exactly as they were. Animals, such as flies, and plants, flowers, and grass, which die leaving behind many seeds, are “recreated” in a form so similar as to be nearly identical to the original. The seeds, which outwardly appear so alike, grow over a short period, distinct and differentiated, and are brought to full vigor with extraordinary rapidity and facility, in absolute orderliness and harmony. Indeed, the Almighty Disposer of this world’s affairs creates at every moment of time, on the finite, transient surface and in the depths of the earth, numerous signs, examples, and indications of revival after death, the Supreme Gathering and the Plain of Resurrection.

It is God Who, in addition to creating at every moment numerous signs, examples, and indications of the Resurrection and life after death, turns our attention toward everlasting happiness, assuring us of Resurrection in all of His heavenly decrees. So, both in these decrees and by causing “nature” to speak in numerous languages, He addresses our power of hearing as well. He shows the importance He attaches to humankind by creating us as the most comprehensive and subtle, the worthiest and most valued fruit on the Tree of Creation; He addresses humans, allowing them to get in touch with Him whenever and wherever they wish and without any intermediary.

13. The Qur’an narrates the process of the production of milk in remarkable detail: the part-digestion of what is ingested as food, the absorption of it, and then a second process and refinement in the glands. Milk is a wholesome and agreeable product for living beings, yet it is a secretion, like other secretions, and it is non-essential for the life of the mother. Despite being a secretion produced from between the dung in the bowels and the blood in the veins, it is one of the most vital and useful foods for living beings. The Qur’an’s narration of the process of its production fourteen centuries ago is one of the countless proofs of its Divine origin.

14. This verse was revealed long before the prohibition of intoxicants (See surah 5: 90–91, note 18). However, by using the phrase of good, wholesome nourishment after intoxicants, the fact that an intoxicant is not good, wholesome nourishment is implied. Coming after the verse describing milk and how it is produced, the Qur’an refers to intoxicants in correspondence to excrement and blood, while the phrase good, wholesome nourishment corresponds to milk, thereby preparing the minds for the prohibition of intoxicants. By calling on people to use their reason concerning this matter, it encourages them to think, and to be sensible and reasonable when choosing their food and drink.

15. Almost from the very moment an animal is born, it seems to have been sent to this world having been trained in another, perfected in all its faculties. Within a few hours or days or months, it comes into full possession of its natural capacity to lead its life according to particular rules and conditions. A sparrow or a bee, for example, acquires, or, rather, is inspired with, the skill and ability to integrate into its environment in a matter of 20 days; for a human to achieve the same level of skill requires 20 years. This means that the basic obligation upon animals, i.e., their essential role, does not include seeking perfection through learning or progress through scientific knowledge; nor does it include “conscious” prayer and the petitioning for help by displaying their impotence. Their obligation or role in creation is to act within the bounds of their innate faculties, which is the mode of worship specified for them.

A human being, by contrast, is born with no knowledge of life or his or her environment, and with a need to learn everything. Unable to entirely complete the conditions of
life, even after 20 years, a human being needs to continue learning until the end of his or her life. Each one appears to have been sent to the world with much weakness and inability; it may take someone as long as two years to learn just how to walk. Only after 15 years can a person distinguish between good and evil, and by virtue of living in a society, attain a point where he or she can choose between what is beneficial and what is harmful to them.

Thus, the essential duty of human beings, the one intrinsic to their existence, is to seek perfection through learning and to proclaim their worship of God, and their servanthood to Him, through prayer and supplication. They should look for the answer to such questions as, “Through whose compassion is my life so wisely administered? Through whose generosity am I being so affectionately trained? Through whose favors and benevolence am I being so solicitously nourished?” They should then pray and petition The Provider of Needs in humble awareness of their needs, even one in a thousand of which they are unable to satisfy unassisted. Their understanding and confession of their impotence and poverty will then become two wings on which to fly to the highest of ranks, that is, being a servant of God. (See The Words, “The 23rd Word,” 331–332.)

16. For the diary of a honeybee, see Appendix 9.
73. And do they worship, apart from God, what has no ownership of any provision in the heavens and the earth with which to provide for them, nor have they (whom they falsely worship) any capacity (to take on, still less, discharge such a task)?

74. So do not invent similitudes for God (do not liken Him to others to associate partners with Him, for there is nothing similar to Him). Surely God knows and you do not know (the exact truth about Him and the exact nature of things).

75. God strikes a parable (of two men so that you may understand that true freedom lies in the service of God, because it frees from servitude to all else): a man enslaved, unable to do anything of his own will, and a (free) man whom We have provided with a fair provision from Us, and he spends thereof secretly and openly. Are the two equal? All praise and gratitude are for God (for to Him alone belongs absolute ownership and disposition of the universe); but most of them do not know.

76. And God strikes a parable of two (other) men: one of them dumb, unable to control anything (unable to answer any call, unable to decide any matter or meet any need). He is a burden upon his master; wherever he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal with one who enjoins right and justice and is himself on a straight path?

77. And to God belongs (absolute dominion and full knowledge of) the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and the matter of the Hour (of Doom) is (in relation with the Divine Power) but the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker. Surely God has full power over everything.\(^\text{17}\)

78. God brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing, and (in order that you might be perfected through learning) appointed for you hearing, and eyes, and hearts, that you may give thanks (from the heart and in speech, and in action by fulfilling His commandments).

79. Do they not consider the birds flying in the air subservient to God's command? None holds them but God, (Who has endowed them with the power of flight). Surely in that there are signs (manifesting the truth) for people who will believe and who will deepen in faith.

\(^{17}\) The Divine Power is infinite, and an indispensable Attribute of the Supreme Being. It operates like a law, having the same relationship with everything, large or small, few or many, and directly upon the inner dimension of things, or the metaphysical domain, which is free of all obstacles and of particular differences. This domain is in direct contact with the Divine Power. Something big is as easy for the Divine Power to create as something small, and, therefore, it will be no more difficult for this Power to destroy the world in an instant and re-build it in a new form on the Last Day than it is for It to revive an insect in the spring.
80. And (among His blessings on you): God has made for you of your houses places of dwelling and rest; and He has made for you, from the hides of cattle, (another kind of) dwellings that you find light when you travel and when you stop to camp; and in their wool, fur, and hair (He has provided you with means for) furnishings and enjoyable comforts for an (appointed, transient) term.

81. And (among countless other blessings of His) He has made for you, out of the things He has created, shelter from the sun, and given you refuges in the mountains, and made (the means whereby you make) garments to protect you from heat (or cold), and garments (such as coats-of-mail) to protect you from your (mutual) violence. In this way He completes His favors on you so that you may submit to Him (and thereby receive the greatest favor of all).

82. Then, if they (despite these blessings of God and His completing His favors upon them through this Revelation) turn away, what rests with you, (O Messenger,) is only to convey the Message fully and clearly.

83. They are fully aware of God’s favors, but they refuse to acknowledge them (as such), and most of them are obstinate unbelievers (willfully and stubbornly associating partners with Him in belief and worship).

84. But a Day (will come) when We raise up a witness from among every community (to testify against them that God’s Religion was communicated to them), then those who were unbelievers will not be allowed (to speak their excuses), nor will they be allowed (it then being too late) to make amends.

85. When those who persist in wrongdoing (by associating partners with God and committing evils) see the punishment, it will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.

86. And when those who associate partners with God see their associate-deities (such as Prophets, saints, and heroes, whom they hold as partners with God in worship and absolute obedience), they will say “Our Lord! Those are our associate-deities whom we (held as partners with You, and) used to invoke apart from You. (They are the ones who led us astray.)” Whereupon (those beings) fling at them the retort: “You are indeed liars!”

87. On that Day, they (those who associated partners with God) have offered submission to God, (which, out of arrogance, they used to withhold), and what they used to fabricate (by way of false deities to worship besides God) has failed them.
88. Those who (themselves) disbelieved and barred (other) people from God’s way – We add punishment to their punishment because they used to spread disorder and corruption.

89. And on that Day, We will raise up within every community a witness from among themselves (to testify) against them (that God’s Religion was communicated to them), and We will bring you (O Messenger) as a witness against those (whom your Message has reached). We have sent down on you the Book as an exposition of everything (that pertains to guidance and error, and to the knowledge of good and evil, and to happiness and misery in both worlds), and guidance and mercy and glad tidings for the Muslims (those who have submitted themselves wholly to God).

90. God enjoins justice (and right judgment in all matters), and devotion to doing good, and generosity towards relatives; and He forbids you indecency, wickedness, and vile conduct (all offenses against the Religion, life, personal property, chastity, and health of mind and body). He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you may reflect and be mindful!

91. And fulfill God’s covenant when you have made the covenant (and any commitment that you made among yourselves in God’s Name), and do not break your oaths after having confirmed them; indeed, you have made God your guarantor. Surely God knows all that you do.

92. And do not be like her who destroys her yarn that she herself made strong, betraying (thereby her own effort) – by making your oaths a means of deception among yourselves in order that you may be a community greater in numbers (in power and other worldly things) than another community. In this, God is only testing you, and on the Day of Resurrection, He will certainly make clear to you all that on which you used to differ.

93. Had God so willed, He would have made you all one single community (with the same faith and religion), but He (has granted you free will with the result that He) leads astray whomsoever He wills, and guides whomsoever He wills. You will certainly be called to account for what you used to do.
18. This verse refers to the leaders of unbelief, particularly those who both disbelieve and lead others to disbelieve, while also trying their hardest to prevent others from believing and following God’s way. So, they also cause unrest and corruption in the society. It is because of this that in addition to punishment for their unbelief, they will also suffer punishment for barring others from God’s way and causing unrest and corruption.

19. Any covenant which is made in God’s Name means God’s covenant. God’s covenant consists of a “rope” of light woven from the threads of Divine Will, Wisdom, and Favoring, and functions as that which is responsible for order in the universe, and is able to establish peace, order, and harmony in the human life. It refers to the spiritual, moral, and social obligations that arise from one’s belief in and worship of God (see surah 2: 27, note 24; surah 40, notes 47–48, surah 13: 20), and to all pledges or promises a person gives to another by naming God. It is aimed at justice, good judgment, devotion to doing good, and mutual help in society, as well as the eradication of all evil, indecency and all shameful deeds – such as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and all similar vices – including, too, insolence and offenses against one another. So, making a covenant with God calls for fulfilling all these obligations that arise from faith in Him, and fulfilling these obligations is a sign of true guidance, while breaking this covenant means misguidance and transgression.

In social life, individuals, communities, and nations or states enter into different treaties with one another on certain conditions, and God Almighty orders loyalty to them. No individual or community, relying on its power or material superiority, should be able to break the treaties and betray the conditions. We are strictly forbidden from making our religion merely a means to take advantage of others in our relations and agreements. It is interesting to note that during the Prophet’s time, the Quraysh were prone to break their treaties with other tribes when a more powerful party offered them an alliance. Such vices are almost the norm in international affairs today. Islam commands more rigorous ethical and moral standards; a covenant is binding before both humankind and God.

20. For God’s leading whomever He wills astray, and guiding whomever He wills, see surah 2, note 10; 26-27, note 23; and surah 6: 39, note 8.
94. Do not make your oaths a means of deception and wrongdoing among yourselves, lest feet should slip (from the way of guidance) after having been firm (on it, and that others, too, may be misled by your misconduct); and you should taste the evil (consequences) of your barring from God's way. And (in the Hereafter) there is a mighty punishment for you.

95. And do not sell God's covenant for a trifling price (such as status and other worldly gains). Surely what is with God is the best for you, if you but knew.

96. Whatever is with you wastes away, but that which is with God is permanent. We will most certainly pay those who are persevering and patient (in fulfilling God's commandments, refraining from sins, and all the adversities in God's cause) their reward in accordance with the best of what they used to do.

97. Whoever does good, righteous deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer, most certainly We will make him (or her) live a good life, and most certainly We will pay such as these their reward in accordance with the best of what they used to do.

98. So when you recite the Qur'ān (as a good, righteous deed), seek refuge in God from Satan rejected (from God's Mercy, because of his evil suggestions and whisperings during the recitation).

99. Surely he has no power over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

100. His power is only over those who make a confidant of him (seeking and heeding his suggestions and direction), and those who associate partners with God (in worship and obedience).

101. When We put a Revelation in place of another Revelation (in the course of perfecting the Religion and completing Our favor upon you), – and God knows best what He sends down – they say: “You are but a forger!” No, rather, most of them do not know.

102. Say (to them, O Messenger): “(My Lord affirms): ‘The Spirit of Holiness brings it down in parts from your Lord with truth (embodying the truth and with nothing false in it), that it may confirm those who believe (strengthening them in their faith and adherence to God's way), and as guidance, and glad tidings for the Muslims (those who have submitted themselves wholly to God).’”
21. For the doctrine of abrogation (naskh) referred to in this verse, see surah 2: 106, note 95; and surah 13: 39, note 13.

22. For the Spirit of Holiness, see 2: 87, note 86. This most probably refers to Archangel Gabriel here, as Gabriel brought the Qur’ān from God to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. His being mentioned as the Spirit of Holiness alludes to his purity from any blemish, and the Qur’ān’s being absolutely free from any defects or doubt.
103. Certainly, We know that they say, “It is but a human being that teaches him.” But the tongue of him to whom they falsely hint is outlandish, while this (Qur’ān) is in clear Arabic tongue.23

104. Surely, those who do not believe in God’s Revelations (and therefore persist in wrongdoing) – God does not guide them (to the way of true prosperity), and for them is a painful punishment.

105. Only those fabricate lies who do not believe in God’s Revelations; and those are the liars.

106. Whoever disbelieves in God after having believed – not he who is under duress, while his heart is firm in and content with faith, but the one who willingly opens up his heart to unbelief – upon them falls God’s anger (His condemnation of them), and for them is a mighty punishment.

107. That is because they have chosen the present, worldly life in preference to the Hereafter, and because God does not guide the people of unbelief (to the way of true prosperity and Paradise).

108. Those are they upon whose hearts, hearing, and eyes God has set a seal, and those are they who are unmindful, heedless.

109. No doubt, in the Hereafter they will be the utter losers.

110. Yet surely your Lord turns with favor to those who emigrate after they have been subjected to persecutions (because of their faith) and, thereafter, exert themselves in God’s cause, and endure with patience (whatever befalls them) – indeed, in return for such (good deeds), your Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

23. In order to invent excuses, no matter how false they were, for their rejection of the Divine Message which the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, brought, the Makkani polytheists sometimes attributed the Qur’ān to the Messenger himself, and sometimes to some other person whom they claimed had imparted it to the Messenger. But their claim was so baseless that not only did they contradict their own claim that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had invented the Qur’ān himself, but also they did not take into consideration the simple fact that that other person to whom they were referring was not an Arab, and spoke another language. This has been the same throughout human history: those who have rejected the Divine Message constantly invent false and contradictory excuses for their rejection, and only manage to make themselves appear ridiculous.
111. (Be ever mindful of) the Day when every soul will come pleading for itself, and every soul will be repaid in full for what it did, and none of them will be wronged.

112. God strikes a parable of a township which was secure and at ease, with its provision coming to it in abundance from all quarters. But it showed ingratitude to God (its people disbelieved, and attributed their apparent well-being to other than God, and so fell into the habit of making up partners with Him in belief and worship, and daily life); and so, God caused it to taste the garment of famine and fear because of what they habitually contrived.

113. For sure, a Messenger from among themselves had come to them, but they denied him, and in consequence, the punishment seized them while they were doing wrong.

114. So (O people) partake as pure, lawful, and wholesome of what God has provided you, and give thanks for His bounty, if it is indeed Him that you worship.

115. He has made unlawful to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that (the animal) which is offered in the name of other than God. Yet whoever is constrained by dire necessity to eat of them, provided he does not covet (what is forbidden), and does not exceed (the bounds of necessity), (then no sin shall be on him,) for surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

116. And do not pronounce for what your tongues falsely describe: “This is lawful and this is forbidden,” so that you fabricate falsehood in attribution to God. Surely those who fabricate falsehood in attribution to God do not prosper.

117. (Their lot is) a brief enjoyment (in this world), and theirs is a painful punishment (in the Hereafter).

118. And for those who are Jews, We made unlawful what We have already related to you. We have never wronged them, but they did habitually wrong themselves.²⁴

²⁴. This verse has a connection with verse 114 above and the verses below; it explains why God forbade some pure, wholesome things to the Jews, even though they were believers. It refers to surah 4, verses 160–161, and surah 6, verses 146. So, see 4: 160–161; and 6: 146, notes 31–32.
119. Then indeed your Lord is – to those who do evil due to ignorance (an instance of defeat to the evil-commanding soul), and after that repent (soon as they realize what they have done is wrong), and mend their ways and conduct – indeed your Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (with special mercy toward His penitent servants).

120. Abraham was an exemplary leader, (whose self-dedication to the good of his community made him) as if a community, sincerely obedient to God as a man of pure faith (free from unbelief and hypocrisy), and he was not of those who associate partners with God.

121. Always thankful for His favors. He (God) chose him, and guided him to a straight path (to follow himself, and to guide others).

122. We granted him good in the world, and he is surely among the righteous in the Hereafter.

123. Thereafter, We have revealed to you (O Messenger): Follow the way of Abraham as one of pure faith (free from unbelief and hypocrisy), and he was never of those who associate partners with God.

124. The Sabbath was ordained only for those who differed about it (not for all the communities that were to follow the way of Abraham).

125. Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and argue with them in the best way possible. Your Lord surely knows best who has gone astray from His way, and He knows best who are the rightly guided.

126. If you have to respond to any wrong, respond (only) to the measure of the wrong done to you; but if you endure patiently, it is indeed better for the patient.

127. Endure patiently; your endurance is only for God's sake and by His help; and do not grieve for them (because of their attitude toward your mission), nor be distressed because of what they scheme.

128. Surely God is with those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.
25. In addition to being the father of the great Messengers, including the Prophet Moses and the Prophet Jesus after him, upon them be peace, the Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, was also the father of the Quraysh through his son Ishmael, upon him be peace. Like the Jews and some Christians who claim that he was a Jew or Christian, respectively, the Quraysh sometimes asserted that they were following the way of Abraham, upon him be peace. The Qur’ān categorically rejects all such assertions. The Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, was neither a Jew, nor a Christian, nor a polytheist. He was a Messenger of God who absolutely believed in and preached His Oneness. He was extremely tender-hearted, and he was devoted to, and desired intensely, the guidance of all people. Having appeared among a polytheist nation, he alone revolted against all kinds of polytheism and proclaimed God’s Existence, Oneness, and His absolute dominion of all the heavens and earth with whomever and whatever is in them. As a single individual, he preached the Divine Religion based on God’s absolute Oneness and represented it. With all such aspects of his person and mission, and in particular with his wish for the good and guidance of all people, God Almighty appreciates him as being like a whole community. Bediüz- zaman Said Nursi remarks: “One who aims at and endeavors for the good of their whole nation, is a nation.”

26. For an exposition of the matters mentioned in these last four verses, see sūrah 2: 124–135 and corresponding notes 102–111.

27. For the Sabbath and its breakers, see sūrah 2: 65; sūrah 4: 47, and sūrah 7: 163–166 and corresponding notes.

28. The Almighty orders His Messenger to follow three ways in preaching His Message: calling to His way with wisdom, calling with fair exhortation, and arguing in the best way possible. As either or all of these three ways may be required to call everybody to God’s way, either may be preferred in calling certain people. People are usually of three groups: those who have knowledge and can think; the commonalty, who usually follow their “nature” and pursue their individual interests; and others who persist in unbelief. A preacher should call the first group with wisdom, addressing their intellect and explaining the evidence; advise the second group and exhort them to God’s way in the best way possible; and argue with the third group mildly to win their hearts, trying not to increase them in unbelief and enmity.

29. For an exposition of responding to the extent of the wrong done, see sūrah 5: 45, note 10.
lievers and asks them to take a lesson from the history of the Children of Israel and other communities, explaining what leads to happiness and what leads to perdition. It states certain broad principles of morality and good conduct as the foundations of the laws which were to be legislated in Madīnah for the individual and collective life of the Muslims. The sūrah advises God’s Messenger and the believers to endure patiently all that they encounter on God’s way.

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

1. All-Glorified is He Who took His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque the environs of which We have blessed, so that We might show him some of Our signs (of the truths concerning Our Divinity and Lordship). Surely He is the One Who hears and sees.

2. We granted Moses the Book and made it a guidance for the Children of Israel, (commanding them): “Take, apart from Me, no guardian (one to rely on and to Whom affairs should be entrusted).”

3. (They were among) the descendants of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah. He surely was a servant greatly thankful.

4. We decreed in the Book for the Children of Israel (as a consequence of their ingratitude and disobedience to the Book): “You will most certainly cause corruption and disorder in the land twice, and (elated with extreme arrogance) you will act with great insolence.”

5. Hence, when the time of the first of the two came, We roused and sent against you some servants of Ours of great might (chosen by Us to punish you), and they ravaged the land, ransacking your homes. That was a promise to be executed.

SŪRAH 17
AL-ISRĀ’
(THE NIGHT JOURNEY)
Makkah Period

This sūrah consists of 111 verses. It derives its name from the first verse, where the Messenger’s miraculous Night Journey from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to the Masjid al-Aqṣā in Quds (Jerusalem) is related. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was taken from there through the heavenly dimensions of existence and observed the greatest signs of God; this journey is known as al-Mīrāj (the Ascension). Some commentators call this Sūrah Bānū Isrā’il (The Children of Israel) because it mentions the Children of Israel in verses 2–8 and 101–104. It was revealed in Makkah at the time of the Mīrāj, toward the end of the Makkan period. It warns the unbe-
6. Then We gave the turn back to you to prevail over them, and strengthened you with resources and children, and made you the more numerous in human power (than before).

7. If you do good (aware that God is seeing you), you do good to your own selves; and if you do evil, it is likewise to your own selves. And so, when the time (for the fulfillment) of the second decree comes, (We rouse new enemies against you) to disgrace you utterly and to enter the Temple as the others entered it before, and to destroy entirely all that they conquer.”

1. The initial verse of this surah is concerned with the miraculous night journey of God’s Messenger from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to the Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem. The Messenger was taken from there through the dimensions of existence, reaching as high as the Presence of God. This second part of the journey is called the Ascension (Mi’raj). For an explanation, see Appendix 10.

2. The reason why the Qur’ān mentions the Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem as Masjid al-Aqṣā (The Farthest Mosque) is at least partially because at the time of the Revelation, it was the farthest (sacred) mosque for the Muslims in Madinah. The Muslims regard three mosques in the world as sacred, and may desire and travel to perform worship in these mosques because of the special reward involved in such a journey. They are Masjid al-Ḥarām (The Sacred Mosque in Makkah, in which the Ka’bah is situated), Masjid an-Nabī (The Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah), and Bayt al-Maqdis (Masjid al-Aqṣā) in Jerusalem. These mosques are the fountainheads of the Divine Religion that is based on the absolute Oneness of God and was primarily preached and represented by the greatest Messengers of God, namely Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, upon them all be peace. The word “farthest” also signifies greatness in degree. This surah was revealed in Makkah at a time when the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah had not yet been built and the Ka’bah was full of idols; therefore the Muslims turned to that Masjid in Jerusalem for their prayers.

3. The pronoun in the expression, Surely He is the One Who hears and sees, which alludes to the furthest point of the Ascension indicated by the relevant verses from Sūrah an-Najm (53), refers either to Almighty God or to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings.

   If it refers to the Prophet, (without capitalizing the initial letters in the words, “One” and “Who” – Surely he is the one who hears and sees,) according to the rules of eloquence and the relationship between the pronoun and its antecedent, the meaning is this: This journey, which is apparently particular, is in reality so comprehensive and signifies such a universal ascent that the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, heard and saw during it the greatest truths and signs of God’s Divinity and Lordship in the universal degree; no other mortal had ever been able to do this nor would any mortal ever be able to attain this level. He perceived these, by sight and by hearing, as results of the manifestations of Divine Names in universal degrees as far as the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary and the distance between the strings of two bows (put adjacent to each other) or even nearer (for the meaning of these expressions, see Sūrah 53: 9, 14 and the corresponding notes 4 and 6). Thus, through its conclusive phrase, the verse describes that particular journey as the key to understanding a (higher) journey that is universal and full of extraordinary events.

   If, on the other hand, the pronoun in the expression (capitalizing the initial letters in the words, “One” and “Who”), Surely he is the One Who hears and sees) refers to God Almighty, then the meaning is this: In order to call a servant of His on a journey to His Presence and entrust him with a duty, after sending him from Masjid al-Ḥarām to Masjid
al-Aqṣā, which is where the Prophets gather, and causing him to meet with them and showing that he is the absolute, indisputable heir of the principles of the religions of all the Prophets. He took that servant through both the external and inner dimensions of His dominion as far as the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary and the distance between the strings of two bows (put adjacent to each other) or even nearer.

The Prophet Muḥammad, God's most beloved servant, upon him be peace and blessings, was certainly a servant, and that journey was a unique ascension. However, since he was given a Trust which is connected to the whole of the universe, and was accorded a light which would change the color of the universe, and since he also had with him a key which would open the door to eternal happiness, Almighty God describes Himself as the One Who hears and sees all things so that His world-embracing, comprehensive, and all-encompassing wisdom in the Trust, the light, and the key might be observed and understood.

4. The transition from a mention of the Ascension to observations about the history of the Children of Israel is made here to underline the significant correspondence between their fate and the history of other communities. Since the history of the Children of Israel, from their appearance on the earth to their rise and their subsequent decline, is a complete history, constituting a complete example for all other communities, the Qur'ān frequently refers to it. Another reason why the Qur'ān frequently refers to the history of the Children of Israel is that they will continue to play important parts in the history of humankind, and that the Muslims, in particular, will have dealings with them until the end of time.

The Ascension is especially significant with respect to the mission of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. As expounded in note 1 above, the Messenger met with many previous Messengers during the Ascension, including the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, and in addition to observing the greatest signs of God concerning His Divinity and Lordship, he also proved to be His greatest sign for all the dimensions of existence. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was also shown to be heir to the missions of all previous Prophets. Among the previous communities, it is primarily upon the Children of Israel, Moses' people, that God completed His favor, therefore from the perspective of the mission of Messengership, Moses most closely resembled the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. This is clear in the following verses of the Old Testament and the Qur'ān, respectively:

The Lord said unto me (Moses): “What they have spoken is good. I will raise them up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which he speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy, 18: 17–19)

It is clear from this verse that what is meant by “a Prophet like you from among their brethren” is a Prophet who will come from the line of Ishmael, since Ishmael is the brother of Isaac, the forefather of the Children of Israel. The only Prophet who came after the Prophet Moses and resembled him in many ways, for example, in the bringing of a new law and fighting with his enemies, is the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. The Qur'ān points to the same fact: Surely We have sent to you (O people) a Messenger, a witness against you, just as We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh (sūrah 73: 15).

5. By connecting the Children of Israel to the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace and blessings, whom it mentions as a greatly thankful servant, the verse implies that Noah's being a thankful servant has a part in the Children of Israel being given the Book as a source of guidance. Thankfulness and efforts exerted in God's cause purely for His sake never go without return. It also warns that a community honored with God's Book as a source of guidance in life, which will also secure the afterlife, requires thankfulness; primarily, this
means that it is God Who grants all the blessings one has in life, and therefore one must believe in Him without associating any partners with Him, as well as worshipping Him alone. Thankfulness in no way benefits God, nor does ingratitude cause Him any loss. But thankfulness is indispensably important for a person and community to realize true humanity. As long as people thank God, He increases His favors on them. By contrast, if they become ungrateful, then God punishes them. This punishment is the natural consequence of ingratitude, as it means corruption in both individual and collective life.


For example, Isaiah 1: 4–5 writes about the corruption and its consequences:

Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.

Jeremiah 5: 1, 7–9 reads:

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, see now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks truth, and I will pardon her... “How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me, and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions, everyone neighed after his neighbor’s wife. Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the Lord. “And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?”

Jeremiah 5: 15–17 and 7: 33–34 tell about the people God would send against Israel and the extent of the destruction:

Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel,” says the Lord. “It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; they shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword.

The corpses of these people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beast of the earth. And no one will frighten them away. Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate.

During the time of the Prophet Samuel, upon him be peace, around 1020 BC, the Children of Israel were able to establish a unified state, under King Saul (Ṭālūt) (The Qur’ān, 2: 247–51) and during the time of the Prophets David and Solomon, upon them be peace, they reached the zenith of their power and magnificence. This lasted nearly one century, but after Solomon, upon him be God’s peace, dissension and feuding broke out with the result that the state divided into two kingdoms: one, Israel, with Samaria as its capital, comprising the northern part of Palestine and Transjordan; and the other, Judah, comprising the southern part of Palestine and Edom with Jerusalem as its capital.

Polytheistic beliefs and moral corruption affected the kingdom of Israel more than Judah, and, despite the warnings of the Prophets and their great efforts at reformation, the people did not mend their ways. Eventually, the Assyrians launched a series of attacks, and the ruthless Assyrian king Sargon put an end to the kingdom of Israel in 721 BC.

The kingdom of Judah was able to sur-
vive as an Assyrian tributary. However, the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, carried out a devastating attack on the kingdom in 586 BC and razed all the towns of the kingdom, sending the Jews into exile. Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon were totally destroyed.

Some people in Judah continued to adhere to righteousness and did not cease to call others to it. Eventually, out of compassion and mercy, God came to their rescue and the Babylonian Empire collapsed. In 539 BC, the Persian Emperor Cyrus conquered Babylonia, and the following year, he allowed the Children of Israel to return and settle once again in their homeland. This resulted in the reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon after great effort and the re-compilation and publication of the five books of the Old Testament by Ezra. While these occurred in the south and Jerusalem was restored, becoming once again the focal point of Judaic religion and culture, the Children of Israel of northern Palestine and Samaria did not benefit from Ezra’s reform efforts. As a whole, the Children of Israel were not able to recover the magnificence of the reigns of David and Solomon, upon them be peace.

They suffered serious setbacks through a succession of events, and endured several invasions by Alexander the Great during the rise of the Greeks. But, deeply imbued with the religious spirit inspired by Ezra, they were not daunted by the oppressive measures of these conquerors. Instead, their suffering led to the rise of the great resistance movement known as the Maccabean Revolt. They were able to set up their own independent, religious state, which lasted until 67 BC. The frontiers of the state gradually expanded, so that over the course of time, it came to embrace the entire territory that had once been under the control of the two Israelite kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Eventually, however, the moral and religious fervor that marked the Maccabean Revolt declined and was replaced by worldliness and a mechanical, superficial adherence to a mere show of religious rites. Serious divisions appeared among the Children of Israel, and some of them invited the Roman general, Pompey, to attack Palestine. Pompey returned to Palestine in 63 BC and put an end to the independence of the Children of Israel.

The Jewish religious leadership betrayed the Prophets Zechariah, John, and Jesus, upon them all be peace, who appeared at around the same time and tried to reform them. The Prophet John was actually decapitated, and his head was placed at the feet of the dancing maiden at whose behest this heinous crime had been committed. Some Jews fiercely opposed the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, and pressed the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, to have him put to death. However, God saved him.

Not long after, a fierce conflict ensued between the Children of Israel and the Romans, culminating in an open rebellion by the Jews against the Romans in 64 AD. When the Roman governor failed to crush the rebellion, a large-scale military operation was carried out by the Roman Empire. The rebellion was suppressed, and in 70 AD, Titus forcibly seized Jerusalem. A massacre followed in which 133,000 people lost their lives, and a further 67,000 were made captive and enslaved. Additionally, thousands were conscripted to work in the mines in Egypt, and thousands of others were dispatched to amphitheaters and coliseums in different parts of the Roman Empire, to face either gladiators or wild beasts, who tore their bodies to pieces. All the beautiful girls were offered up to the lust of the conquerors. Jerusalem, along with the Temple of Solomon, was razed to the ground. All this put an end to Jewish power in Palestine for about 1,800 years (Summarized from al-Mawdūdī, 5: 9–26).
8. It is hoped that your Lord may show mercy to you, but if you return (to your sins), We will return (to Our punishment). And We have made Hell a prison for the unbelievers.

9. This Qur’ān surely guides (in all matters) to that which is most just and right, and gives the believers who do good, righteous deeds the glad tidings that for them there is a great reward.

10. And that for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, for them We have prepared a painful punishment.

11. Yet human (through his actions as well as his words) prays and calls for evil just as he prays and calls for good. Human is prone to be hasty.

12. (As in the life of humankind, “days” and “nights” alternate in the world also.) We have made the night and the day two signs (manifesting the truth of God’s Power, Knowledge, and absolute sovereignty, and His grace on you). We have obscured the sign of the night (made it dark), and We have made the sign of the day illuminating (therefore, a means for you) to see, that you may seek bounty from your Lord and that you may know the computation of (time) the years and the reckoning; We set out all things in clear detail.

13. Every human being’s fate We have fastened around his neck, and We will bring forth for him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will see spread open.

14. “Read your book! Your own self suffices you this day as a reckoner against you.”

15. Whoever takes the right way takes it for the good of his soul only; and whoever goes astray, goes astray but to its harm only. No soul, as bearer of burden, bears (and is made to bear) the burden of another. We would never punish (a person or community for the wrong they have done) until We have sent a Messenger (to give counsel and warning).

16. And when We finally will to destroy a township (that has deserved destruction), We leave those of its people lost in the pursuit of pleasures to their own devices, and so they transgress all limits therein. In consequence, the word (of punishment) is justified against it, and so We annihilate it, reducing it to nothing.

17. How many a generation have We (thus) destroyed after Noah! Your Lord suffices as One All-Aware and All-Seeing of the sins of His servants.
7. If the second punishment mentioned in the above verse is yet to come, and the first punishment refers to what the Assyrians and Babylonians and the Romans did, then this verse is in the continuation of the previous one and addresses all the Jews from 70 AD. If the second punishment is what Titus did in Palestine, then this verse addresses the Jews at the time of the Messenger and those to come. Islam, as the latest and most perfected form of God’s Religion and which Prophet Muhammad conveyed, was God’s great mercy for them, and as mentioned in 2: 89, they had been asking for a victory in Madinah over the tribes of Khazraj and Aws, who were then unbelievers, saying: “The Last Prophet will come and we will defeat and destroy you under his leadership.” However, when there came to them the Messenger whom they knew as they knew their own sons (2: 146), they disbelieved in him,” except a few. Despite this and their continuing refusal to believe in Islam, Jews have lived their happiest years under Muslim governments, including, in particular, the Ottoman State. Finally, as God decreed, concerning the Jews, though ignominy has been their portion wherever they have been found, except for (when they hold on to) a rope from God or a rope from other peoples (3: 112), by being much more obedient to the commandments of their religion, even if many were abrogated when Islam came, than the Muslims are to Islam, and more respectful to their religious heritage, and, moreover, by being backed up by many governments throughout the world, they have been able to acquire power and influence in many parts of the world, and established Israel in Palestine in 1948.

8. Unless God informs them, human beings cannot know what is ultimately to their advantage and what is to their disadvantage. The Qur’an declares: It may well be that you dislike a thing but it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing but it is bad for you. God knows, and you do not know (2: 216). For this reason, people usually desire and call down on themselves (by their words and actions) what is evil for them, thinking that it is for their own good. They even pray to God for evil, knowingly or unknowingly, under the spell of their carnal souls and worldly ambitions. They also desire what they think of as an advance payment and dislike what they think of as a payment on credit. This is why they usually prefer a worldly advantage over eternal reward in the Hereafter, which is one of the primary reasons for their errors, including unbelief. The Qur’an also draws attention to this important point in several verses: They choose the present, worldly life in preference to the Hereafter (14: 3); and That is because they have chosen the present, worldly life in preference to the Hereafter (16: 107). This is mostly because people are disposed to haste. Humans are, by nature, hasty. Like other apparently negative attributes, such as greed, envy, and obstinacy, this attribute is ingrained in people so that they may channel it into virtues. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declares that undeliberate haste comes from Satan, but also advises that we should not postpone doing good, and should show celerity in good things, such as doing the Prescribed Prayers on time and helping the needy.

9. According to Ibn ‘Abbás, the sign of the night refers to the moon, and the sign of the day, to the sun. Therefore, from the words, We have obscured the sign of the night, we may infer that the moon once emitted light as the sun does and God took its light from it, causing it to darken, or obscuring it. Or, we could infer that the solar system was a single mass, later dividing into the sun and its satellites. While the verse thus recounts the past of the moon, it also points to the future destiny of all heavenly bodies.

10. Everything exists in Divine Knowledge and is recorded. The Qur’an calls this record “the Supreme Preserved Tablet” (sūrah 85: 22; sūrah 13: 39, note 13). It explicitly states that nothing befalls us save that which God has decreed for us (sūrah 9: 51); and no living creature moves on the earth, no bird flies on its two wings, but they are communities like us, and God has neglected nothing in the Book (the Qur’an, the Supreme Preserved Tablet) (sūrah 6: 38). Each thing is given a particular nature and identity, which constitutes its destined and determined existence. Then, the Divine Power gives each nature and identity external or witnessed exis-
tence along with the dimensions or “tapes” of time and space, and branches into the worlds of the seen and unseen as the Tree of Creation.

The Supreme Preserved Tablet is a title for Divine Knowledge as related to creation. We can also call it the Original, Manifest Record. In the “process” of creation, this Record is duplicated. Its first, most comprehensive copy or duplication, which comprises the whole of creation, is called the “Tablet of Effacement (Canceling) and Confirmation” in the Qur’ān.

While the Manifest Record relates to the origins of creatures and the principles and laws of creation, the Manifest Book, or the Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation, is the reality of time. Divine Power transfers things from the Manifest Record onto the Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation. In other words, Divine Power arranges things on the page of time, or attaches them in turn to the string of time.

Nothing changes on the Supreme Preserved Tablet; everything is fixed there. But in the “process” of creation, God effaces whatever He wills, and confirms and establishes whatever He wills (ṣūrah 13: 39).

The second kind of duplication can be thought of as follows:

After birth, everyone is registered in their nation’s registry of births. Then, according to the information in this state register, everyone is given an identity document. Similarly, everyone is registered on the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet with all their personal characteristics, special features, and future life-history, down to the smallest details. This original register of everyone is copied out by angels, and each person’s record or register around their neck; this is what we call destiny or fate. God’s fore-knowledge and recording of whatever people will do throughout their whole life in no way compel them to do these actions. Rather they act of their own free will, doing of their free will whatever they do. All of a person’s life is recorded by two angels, whom we call the Kirāmun Kātibūn (Noble Scribes). On Judgment Day, the angels’ recordings of a person’s life will be presented to that person, and he or she will be told to read that book.

These two verses have another meaning. Everyone’s life in this and the other world, their fate, and whatever they will encounter in both worlds, are dependent on a person’s own choice and actions. The original word translated as “fate” in verse 13 is ṭā‘îr, meaning bird. The pre-Islamic Arabs would foretell the future from the manner and direction in which birds flew. The Qur’ān rejects such a superstition and concepts of good or bad omens, explicitly declaring that everyone’s future is dependent on their own acts which they perform out of free choice.
18. Whoever wishes for only the immediate gains (of this transitory life), We readily grant thereof as much as We please to whomever We will. Thereafter, We consign him to Hell, wherein he will roast, disgraced and disowned.

19. But whoever wishes for the Hereafter and strives for it as it should be striven for, being a believer, then for those (who do so) their striving shall be recognized with thanks and reward.

20. Each do We supply – these ones as well as those ones – out of the free gifts of your Lord (in the world); the gift of your Lord is not confined.

21. See how We have made some of them excel others (in worldly gifts and in virtues); yet the Hereafter will certainly be greater in ranks and greater in excellence.

22. Do not set up another deity besides God, or you will be sitting disgraced and forsaken.

23. Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him alone, and treat parents with the best of kindness. Should one of them, or both, attain old age in your lifetime, do not say “Ugh!” to them (as an indication of complaint or impatience), nor push them away, and always address them in gracious words.

24. Lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say: “My Lord, have mercy on them even as they cared for me in childhood.”

25. Your Lord best knows what is in your souls (in respect of all matters, including what you think of your parents). If you are righteous (in your thoughts and deeds), then surely He is All-Forgiving to those who turn to Him in humble contrition.

26. And give his due to the relative, as well as the destitute and the wayfarer; and do not squander (your wealth) senselessly.

27. Surely squanderers are ever brothers of satans; and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.

11. Why does God not endow His servants equally? Why does He create some of them blind, disabled, or afflicted in other ways, and make some of His servants excel others in worldly things?

To begin with, God is Sovereign; He is the Lord of both the earthly and spiritual dominions of existence. He wills and creates whatever is in them, and does so however He wills: Blessed and Supreme is He in Whose Hand is the Sovereignty; and He has full power over everything (surah 67: 1). No one has any part in His Sovereignty, nor can anyone intervene in what He creates except as He wills and to the extent that He wills.

It is God Who has created every thing and every being and Who provides for them. It is God Who bestows our human nature upon us.
We have given nothing to God, but He has given us everything without our having deserved it. What claim or right do we have, therefore, over anything? We have no right to impute injustice to Him because injustice comes from not giving what is due. Nor can we question Him. We can ask such questions only to learn His wisdom in creating and providing for His servants in a manner which appears unequal. He is absolutely free of injustice, since He is the Giver of everything that we have or use.

Secondly, we cannot know which conditions are for our own good, and everyone is responsible in proportion to their own capabilities. It is not possible for us to decide whether being wealthy or poor, or sound or disabled, is something that is good for us. The true criterion to decide on whether something is good or evil is the afterlife or what we will find in the Hereafter. God may deprive an individual of something which he or she values, but grant that individual a manifold return for that loss in the Hereafter. By means of that loss, God makes us feel our need, our powerlessness, and our poverty in relation to Him. In this way, He makes us turn to Him with a weightier sincerity, a fuller heart, and so makes us worthier of His Blessing and Favor. Thus, our apparent loss is, in reality, a gain.

Thirdly, there are innumerable degrees in worldly things. If we observe and investigate all that is around us, we will certainly realize that there are many things or people different from us, inferior or worse in our judgment, with which we would not change places – just as there may be others with which we might, out of misguided thinking or envy of some kind, wish to change places. So everyone should accept their place with sincerity. Also, just as there are differences that arise with creation, they are also differences caused by human beings themselves. The differences that arise with creation are causes of the different professions one can follow in life; these are indispensable to the social life of humanity. Moreover, no one person excels all others in all respects, and everyone excels and is excelled by others in one or more respects.

Fourthly, material possessions should not be seen as necessarily good or bad in and of themselves. God sometimes bestows material security and happiness upon those who petition Him for such things, but sometimes He does not. The truth is that there is good in His bestowing what He bestows, be it wealth or poverty. For the faithful individual who does good deeds and is charitable with what has been given to them, wealth is a means of good. If, however, the individual is of weak faith and has strayed from the path of right action and charity, wealth becomes a means of evil. Similarly, for an individual who has deserted the path of right action, poverty may be a means of unbelief, determining that each day that person inwardly or outwardly rebels against God. Whoever does not submit heart, mind, and soul completely to God, whoever does not try sincerely to act upon the teachings of Islam, will find that whatever level of wealth he or she owns will become a means of distress, a severe and demanding test: Know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and temptation, and God is He with Whom there is a tremendous reward (sūrah 8: 28).

It is not poverty or richness itself which is good; rather, it is the state of mind which has disciplined (and triumphed over) the carnal soul (nafs) and set its sights upon the eternal life. The surest way for a person to please God, therefore, is to understand that whatever God gives is given in order to perfect that person in the best way. Whatever people’s circumstances, they should strive to fulfill their duties toward the Creator and the created. The best attitude to adopt toward all the circumstances of this world, which is only a stopping-place on the way to our everlasting destination, is well-expressed in this brief poem:

I accept, my Lord, whatever comes to me from You,
For whatever comes to me from You is to my good;
Whether a robe of honor comes or a shroud,
Whether a sharp thorn or a sweet, fresh rose,
If it comes with Your blessing, it comes to my good.
(Questions and Answers, 1: 158–160)
12. About parental care of children and the filial duty expected of the children, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi writes as follows:

Parental affection for children is one of the sublime realities of worldly life and, in turn, filial gratitude to parents is a most urgent and strenuous duty. Parents sacrifice their lives lovingly for their children, and if this is so, what falls to a child who has not lost his or her humanity and become transformed into a monster of ingratitude, is to show sincere respect for them, to serve them willingly, and to try to gain their approval. With regard to filial respect and service, uncles and aunts are like parents.

We should be aware of how disgraceful and how unscrupulous it is to be tired of the existence of old parents and to desire and wait for their death. We should know this and understand what an injustice it is for us to desire the end of the lives of ones who have sacrificed their lives for us.

Know, O friend who complains about the scant of your livelihood! Know that your disabled relative whom you regard as unbearable in your house is, in fact, the means of blessing and abundance. Never complain that you can scarcely make a living (that your means of subsistence are strained); for were it not for the blessing and abundance bestowed on you through them, you would have to face even more difficulties in making your living. This is an undeniable reality.

Indeed, as is witnessed by the whole of the existence, when the Generous, Majestic Creator, Who is infinitely merciful, compassionate, gracious, and munificent, sends children to the world, He sends them along with their sustenance, which He provides in abundance through the breasts of the mothers. In the same way, He sends in the form of blessing and unseen, immaterial abundance, the sustenance of the old, who are like children and even more worthy and needy of compassion than children. He does not load their sustenance onto mean, greedy people.

The truth expressed in the verses, Surely God – it is He Who is the All-Providing, Lord of all might, and the All-Forceful (51: 58); and How many a living creature there is that does not carry its own provision (in store), but God provides for them, and indeed for you (sūrah 29: 60), is openly proclaimed by living creatures of all kinds through the language of their dispositions. So, not only the sustenance of old relatives, but also that of pets, like cats, which have been created as friends to human beings and usually live on food from human beings, is, again, sent in the form of a blessing.

A human being is the most esteemed, noble, and the worthy-of-respect among all creatures; among human beings, the believers are the most perfect. Among the believers, helpless old people are those who are the most worthy and needy of respect and compassion. Among the old, close relatives deserve affection, love, and service more than others; and among relatives, one’s parents are the most truthful confidants and the most intimate companions. So, parents are an invaluable means of blessing and mercy in a house and, additionally, as stated in the hadīth, But for the old bent double (because of old age), calamities would be pouring down upon you (al-Ājūnī, 2: 163), they are also an important means for the removal of calamities.

This being so, be careful! If our parents have been assigned a long life, certainly, we too, will grow old; and if we do not show due regard for our parents, according to the rule that one is rewarded or punished in accordance with one’s action, then our children will not respect us either. Furthermore, if we consider our afterlife seriously, it is a precious provision for that life to gain the approval of our parents by serving them in this life. If we love the worldly life, again we should please them so that we, too, may lead a pleasant life. If, by contrast, we regard them as unbearable, if we break their easily-offended hearts, and if we desire their death, we will be the object of the Qur’ānic threat, Such incur loss of both this world and the Hereafter (22: 11). So, whoever wishes for the mercy of the All-Merciful must show mercy to those in their house who have been entrusted to them by God (The Letters, “The 21st Letter,” 2: 53–56).
28. But if you must turn away from those (who are in need, because you are yourself in need, and) seeking mercy from your Lord in hopeful expectation, then (at least) speak to them gently and well-meaning.

29. Do not keep your hand bound to your neck (in niggardliness), nor stretch it without any restraint, or else you will be left sitting reproached and denuded.

30. Surely your Lord God enlarges provision for whom He wills, and straitens it (for whom He wills). Indeed He is fully aware of His servants and sees them well.¹⁵

31. Do not kill your children for fear of poverty; it is We Who provide for them as well as for you. Killing them is surely a grave sin.¹⁴

32. Do not draw near to any unlawful sexual intercourse; surely it is a shameful, indecent thing, and an evil way (leading to individual and social corruption).¹⁵

33. Do not kill any soul, which God has forbidden, except for a just cause. 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 (retal- tory) killing. Indeed he has been helped (already and sufficiently by the provisions and procedures of the Law).¹⁰

34. And do not draw near to the property of the orphan except in the best way (such as to improve and increase it) until he comes of age and is strong; and fulfill the covenant: the covenant is surely subject to questioning (on the Day of Judgment, you will be held accountable for your covenant).

35. Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a true, accurate balance. That is what is good and (to do so is) best in the long term.

36. Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge (whether it is good or bad), and refrain from groundless assertions and conjectures. Surely the hearing, the sight, and the heart – each of these is subject to questioning about it (you are answerable, and will be called to account for each of these on the Day of Judgment).¹⁷

37. Do not strut about the earth in haughty self-conceit; for you can never split the earth (no matter how hard you stamp your foot), nor can you stretch to the mountains in height (no matter how strenuously you seek to impress).

38. The evil of all this is abhorrent in the sight of your Lord.
13. Like everything else, provision for each person has also been (pre-)determined by God, and no one can obtain more than the provision that has been determined for them, nor can anybody die without having consumed their provision. Every living being’s basic provision – the least amount of provision sufficient for its survival – is guaranteed by God, provided that being depends on Him in all respects. The procurement of any extra provision that will be needed because of certain conditions, like habits, depends on personal effort.

God does not forbid working or exerting effort, nor does He want His servants to be content with their basic provision. Rather, He encourages the making of an effort, declaring, Human has only that for which he labors (sūrah 53: 39), and wills that His servants should earn in lawful ways to spend in God’s cause for the cause of Islam, and for the good of people. He has created humankind as vice-geners to improve the earth, to share and distribute its provision justly, and to thank Him. One who earns lawfully, who is thankful, and who helps others is much better in the sight of God than one who is content with the basic provisions. Although asceticism is commendable in order to keep one’s lusts under control and to help advance toward spiritual perfection, lawful earning, spending for the livelihood of oneself and one’s family and in God’s cause, and being thankful, without indulging in luxuries, without going into extremes of consumption, and stimulating one’s lusts, are better and more commendable than asceticism. What God forbids is greed, earning in unlawful ways, pursuing one’s own interests only, hoarding wealth, miserliness, and not helping the needy. He also forbids taking the worldly life as the goal for working and earning.

Concerning greed, Said Nursi writes as follows:

Greed demonstrates its evil consequences throughout the world of animate beings, both at the level of species and at that of particular individuals. On the other hand, seeking one’s lawful provision while putting one’s trust in God is, by contrast, a means to achieving tranquility, and it demonstrates its good effects everywhere. For example, in the animal and human kingdoms only the young, who demonstrate their trust in God through their weakness and helplessness, receive in full measure their rightful and delicious provision from the treasury of the Divine Compassion, Which sets the parents and some other elders at their service, while adult animals that leap greedily at their provision are able to obtain coarse food only at the cost of great effort. It is most pertinent to reflect on the fact that the more powerful wild animals get their food with greater difficulty and at greater intervals than others.”

Greed is a source of humiliation and loss. There are so many instances of a greedy person being exposed to loss that the idea that “The greedy are subjected to disappointment and loss,” can be found in many proverbs and is a universally accepted truth. That being the case, if we love wealth, we should seek it not with impatience, but with contentment, so that we may earn it abundantly. (The Letters, “The 22nd Letter,” 2: 70-71)

Islam exhorts mutual assistance and solidarity, and orders Muslims to give a certain amount of their wealth to the needy, which is called Zakāh. What follows in a significant excerpt from what Said Nursi writes concerning the Zakāh:

All immorality and disturbances in human social life proceed mainly from two sources, from these two attitudes:

The first: Once my stomach is full, what do I care if others die of hunger?

The second: You work and I will eat.

The behavior that perpetuates these two attitudes is the prevalence of usury or interest on the one hand and the abandonment of the Zakāh on the other. The sole remedy for these two awful diseases can only be provided through implementing the Zakāh as a universal principle and duty, and banning interest. The Zakāh is an essential pillar, not only for individuals and particular communities, but for all of humankind, if they are to live a happy life. Humankind are usually divided
into two classes; the elite and the commonalty. Only the obligation of the Zakāh can arouse compassion and generosity in the elite towards the commonalty and respect in the commonalty towards the elite. In the absence of the Zakāh, what will come to the commonalty from the elite is oppression and cruelty, and what will rise from the commonalty towards the elite is rancor and rebellion. That will give rise to a constant struggle and a constant opposition between the two classes, resulting finally in the confrontation of labor and capital, such as happened in Russia at the beginning of the century. (The Letters, “The 22nd Letter,” 2: 74)

14. It is clear that Islam forbids the killing of children, whether after their birth or before it (abortion), for economic or other reasons. Birth control today is encouraged apparently for economic reasons, especially in poorer countries, but in truth this is done to prevent an increase in population in those countries. The growth of population can never be an obstacle to economic development nor does it cause poverty. On the contrary, population means a work force for a nation. Many of the rich countries of the world, such as Germany, England, France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, and Japan, have a high density of population. What people should do, as al-Mawdūdī says (5: 39, note 31), is not to waste their energy on the destructive task of reducing the number of mouths that have to be fed; instead, they should devote their energy to constructive tasks which will lead to an increase in the production of wealth.

15. The word translated as unlawful sexual intercourse is zinā, a word which signifies all sexual intercourse between a man and woman who are not husband and wife, and therefore denotes both “adultery” and “fornication” in English. The Qur’ān not only forbids any unlawful sexual intercourse, but also orders that all ways to it be blocked by saying, do not draw near. So, just as a Muslim community or state is obliged to take all measures to prevent unlawful sexual intercourse in society, so too, are individuals required to hold back from everything that may lead to it. Through the rules it has introduced and the spiritual and moral training it offers, Islam seeks to close the door to unlawful sexual intercourse, as well as other evils.

16. For Islam’s view of life, the unjust taking thereof, and retaliation, see sūrah 2: 178, note 131; sūrah 179, 194, note 140; sūrah 5: 31, 32, 45, note 10.

As well as murder or other unjust killing, Islam also forbids suicide. We are not our own masters and owners, and have no right to treat ourselves however we wish. Our bodies, souls, and lives belong to God and are sacred. Some people try to justify euthanasia. However, we should consider the fact that we are in the world to improve it according to God’s laws and prepare for the other world, making it fertile ground for the other world; whatever misfortune believers suffer, it causes one or some of their sins to be forgiven. The pain a believer suffers at death is also a means of forgiveness. God has endowed every person with the power to endure to a certain extent and when their pain comes to an unbearable point, they either faint or cease to feel. Therefore, Muslim jurists should approach the matter of euthanasia with great care in the light of Islam.

There are many ways in which one can exceed the legitimate bounds in retaliatory killing. For example, killing someone other than the actual killer, taking the life of another person in addition to the killer, subjecting the killer to torture, mutilating the corpse, and harming relatives, are some examples of exceeding the bounds.

It is the legal authority to execute retaliation. People cannot attempt to restore their rights by themselves without first applying to the court.

17. Islam decrees that people should be guided by knowledge rather than by conjecture and baseless assertions. The sources or means of knowledge are three: true reports (Divine Revelation and the authentic reports from the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the reports given by truthful persons), reason, and our five (sound) senses. A believer must
accept the true report but can study its meaning and draw certain conclusions from it, if he or she has the authority to do so. The data perceived by reason and the five senses may be either true or false and require further investigation.

Rejecting the Divine Revelation and the authentic reports that come from the Prophets means restricting the scope of knowledge and knowledge itself to what is obtained through reason, the five senses, and experiences which relate to the visible, sensed world. But there are so many dimensions of existence and almost innumerable things and beings outside the visible world, that restricting knowledge to this world in the name of scientific knowledge causes knowledge (or science) to either admit its ignorance of the other dimensions of existence or to remain agnostic. Also, science cannot deny these dimensions, simply because denial is a conclusion which should be based on investigation, therefore science must be able to prove the non-existence of the dimensions it denies. This is why, like atheism, rejecting the existence of beings that we cannot see such as Satan, angels, and the jinn, can in no way be a scientific attitude. It can merely be a baseless assertion or allegation, or even dogmatism.

Science can neither excuse itself by attributing the acceptance of such beings to belief. Islam states that belief should be based on, or at least corroborated by, knowledge and that it is in no way incompatible with knowledge. Therefore, accepting the existence of God and beings such as angels and jinn is not dogmatism, but rather a scientific attitude. There are scientific criteria that support the acceptance of their existence. First of all, even if our five senses cannot perceive these truths, God has actually given humankind other senses with which to be able to perceive them. More than 100,000 Prophets, who were able to use those senses, who never lied during their lives, and who were followed by innumerable people, as well as millions of saints, have informed us of their existence; in addition to these, millions of other people have had similar experiences. Secondly, denial of the Divine Revelation as a source of knowledge means accusing all the Prophets and saints, whose truthfulness has been witnessed and accepted, of being the meanest liars in human history, and designating their billions of followers as fools who blindly follow liars. Moreover, to cite just one example of truthfulness out of countless ones, both in the Qur’ān and the sayings of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, there are many predictions, most of which have proven true. The remaining ones are waiting for their due time to be proven true. There are indeed so many scientific facts which have been discovered or are being discovered in parallel with developments in science that these alone are sufficient to establish the truth of the Divine Revelation.
39. All this is (part) of the Wisdom which your Lord has revealed to you (O Messenger). (As the source and basis of all wisdom), do not set up with God another deity, or you will be cast into Hell, blamed and disowned.

40. Has, then, your Lord distinguished you (O unbelievers) by preferring for you sons, and taken for Himself from among the angels, daughters? Most certainly you utter an awful, horrendous saying.

41. We have set out (the truths) in diverse ways in this Qur’ān, so that they may reflect and be mindful, but all this increases them (the unbelievers) only in their aversion (to truth).

42. Say: “If there were, as they assert, deities apart from Him, surely they would seek a way to the Master of the Supreme Throne (the dominion of the creation).”

43. All-Glorified is He, and absolutely exalted, immeasurably high above all that they say.

44. The seven heavens and the earth, and whoever is therein, glorify Him. There is nothing but it glorifies Him with His praise (proclaiming that He alone is God, without peer or partner, and all praise and gratitude belong to Him exclusively), but you cannot comprehend their glorification. Surely He is (despite what His servants have deserved from Him) All-Clement, All-Forgiving.

45. When you recite the Qur’ān, We place an invisible veil between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter (and who, by making themselves deaf and blind to the creation’s praise of its Creator, make themselves incapable of such belief).

46. And over their hearts We lay veils (made from their ill-intention, wrongdoing, and arrogance) that prevent them from grasping it (the Qur’ān), and in their ears, heaviness. When you make mention of your Lord in the Qur’ān as the One (the Unique Divine Being), they turn their backs in aversion.

47. We know best what they wish to hear when they listen to you and that, when they are secluded among themselves, these wrongdoers say (to one another): “You are following but a man bewitched.”

48. See what strange comparisons they invent about you. They have altogether strayed and are now unable to find a way (to the truth).

49. And they say: “What! is it when we have already become bones and particles of dust – is it then that we will be raised as a new creation?”
18. Islam aims to develop human beings from being potentially human to being truly human, thus perfecting them. It develops the human character in the best way. The parts of the Wisdom which the Qur'ān enumerates in verses 22–39, beginning and ending with the absolute prohibition of associating partners with God in any way in His Divinity and Lordship, are important in developing that character and raising members of a Muslim society. We can summarize them as follows:

- Do not set up another deity besides God.
- Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him alone.
- Treat parents with the best of kindness.
- Give their due to your relatives, as well as to the destitute and the wayfarer; and do not squander (your wealth) senselessly.
- Do not keep your hand bound to your neck (in niggardliness) nor stretch it without any restraint.
- Do not kill your children for fear of poverty.
- Do not draw near to any unlawful sexual intercourse.
- Do not kill any soul, which God has made forbidden, except in just cause.
- Do not draw near to the property of an orphan, except in the best way (such as to improve and increase it) until they come of age; and fulfill your commitments.
- Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a true, accurate balance.
- Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge, (refraining from groundless assertions and conjectures).
- Do not strut about the earth in haughty self-conceit.
- Do not set up with God another deity or you will be cast into Hell, blamed and disowned.

Before proceeding to promulgate the laws that regulate the life of Muslim society, the Qur'ān aims to instruct the members of that society in such a way that the laws can be applied without resorting to force. Moreover, the Qur'ān raises the members of a Muslim society so perfectly that, at the time of the Prophet, before such laws existed, the believers requested him to pray to God Almighty for such laws to be promulgated. For example, before the Qur'ān ordered Muslim women to cover themselves, there had been applications to the Messenger requesting that women should cover themselves; the people at this time were convinced of the necessity of such a law. As another example, some also applied to the Messenger for the prohibition of alcohol before it was banned.

We should also point out here that all the injunctions above, which were revealed during the Makkan period of the Messenger’s mission, end, with the exception of associating partners with God, by mentioning either the wisdom or reasoning in their revelation, or with the words of encouragement or discouragement. When the same injunctions were revealed in Madīnah, where the Muslims were organized as a society, they usually ended in either promises or threats in return for following or disobeying them, respectively, or the legal penalties that were to be given for committing the prohibitions.

For the meanings of wisdom in its special sense, see surah 2, notes 108 and 159.

19. It is the clearest fact that this universe, so harmonious, coherent, and balanced, and which obviously requires absolute, all-encompassing knowledge, will, and power, must have a creator and controller. Therefore, atheism is no more than a dogma – even the most incomprehensible dogma of all times.

As for associating partners with God in order to divide God’s power and acts between different deities, one of its basic reasons is the absence of knowing God with His Attributes. The perfect harmony, coherence, and balance observed in the universe clearly demonstrate that there cannot be more than one deity or lord with the same attributes. Having no beginning or end, and being eternal and uncontained by time and space, are indispensable attributes of Divinity. Obviously, there cannot be two beings with these attributes existing at the same time. In addition, having a beginning and end requires coming into existence at a certain time, as well as there...
being someone or something that brought this being into existence; yet, God eternally exists without having come into existence.

If, despite the clear facts which we have set out here, we were to conceive of more than one deity, then either these deities should be independent of the others, or there must be one true god, the others being subordinate to him. In the former case, it is simply inconceivable that several independent, sovereign deities would always concur on all matters, so that the universe could maintain its perfect harmony, coherence, and balance. Had there been a multiplicity of deities, there would have been clashes and discordance at every step. Moreover, it is sheer absurdity for there to be several independent, sovereign deities with the same attributes of, for example, absolute knowledge, will, and power.

In the second case, while there is an independent, sovereign, all-knowing, all-will, and all-powerful God, then it can be no more than a fantasy to conceive of subordinate gods. If there were such gods, they would desire and attempt to be lord of the universe or, at least, to have a part in the creation and administration of things. The order and operation of the universe also contradicts this. It is evident that everything in the universe is interconnected to everything else, and all the forces in the universe are set to collaborate even just for a single blade of grass to come into existence and grow. In conclusion, there is nothing in the universe more manifest than the existence of the One, All-Knowing, All-Willing, All-Powerful, and All-Independent, Sovereign God, to Whom the Qur’an introduces us.

20. The last two verses succinctly express what we have tried to explain in the note above. As Divinity must be, and is, absolutely free from how the polytheists conceive of it, and God, the Sole Deity, is infinitely exalted above having any partners and similarity to the created, the universe, with all that is in it, declares this truth. Since it is the One God Who creates, sustains, maintains, and administers the whole universe with all that is in it, all praise is due to Him, and so the whole of creation praises Him exclusively. While conscious, believing beings praise Him consciously – verbally, actively, and by heart – the bodies of all beings also praise Him through the satisfaction of their needs and contentment of their senses and faculties.

21. This verse explains the reason why God places an invisible veil between the Messenger and those who do not believe, and lays veils over their hearts and heaviness in their ears. They did not listen to the Messenger’s recitation of the Qur’an to learn the truth; rather, they listened to him with the hope of finding something to support their denial. Then they would come together in secret and consult among themselves as to how they could effectively refute the Prophet’s Message and prevent people from believing in him.
Say: “Whether you have become stone or iron,
51. “Or any other created substance which, in your minds, is greater (in its resistance to being given life).” Then they will say: “Who will bring us back to life?” Say: “He Who originated you in the first instance with a unique individuality.” They will shake their heads at you (in amazement and derision) and say: “When will that be?” Say: “It may well be soon,
52. “On the Day when He will call you and you will answer with (words of) His praise, thinking that you have stayed (on the earth) but a little while.”
53. And say to My servants that they should always speak (even when disputing with others) that which is the best. Satan is ever ready to sow discord among them. For Satan indeed is a manifest enemy for humankind.

54. Your Lord knows you best (and what you deserve). If He so wills, He has mercy on you (which is sheer grace); and if He so wills, He punishes you (which is pure justice). We have not sent you (O Messenger) to be a guardian over them, responsible for them; (you are only a warner). 23

55. And your Lord knows best all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Assuredly We have exalted some of the Prophets above others (some in an absolute sense, and others in some respects); and to David We granted the Psalms. 24

56. Say: “Call upon those (the angels, human beings, the jinn) whom you pretend are deities apart from Him! They have no power to remove any affliction from you, nor can they make any changes in your conditions.”

57. Those whom they invoke themselves seek a means to approach their Lord, each trying to be nearer to Him, hoping for His mercy and fearing His punishment. 25 The punishment of your Lord is surely to be feared and avoided.

58. There is not a township but that We will have destroyed it before the Day of Resurrection (as a consequence of its people’s way of life, and in accordance with the laws We have established for the lives of communities), or punished it with a severe punishment (such as dissension, corruption, and foreign invasion): all this is written down in the (eternal) Book.”
22. Concerning the arguments about the Resurrection, see Appendix 11.

23. No one, including even the Prophet, can judge or decide who will go to Paradise or Hell. It is God alone Who fully knows about all human beings, as to who among them deserves happiness or punishment in the other world. All that human beings can discuss, based on the teachings of the Qur’an, is what kind of people deserve mercy and what kind deserve punishment. No one can know or say whether a particular person will be treated with mercy or be punished.

Although God, being the All-Wise and the All-Just, has set conditions for going to Paradise and has clearly stated what kind of creed and deeds cause one to deserve Hell, no one can compel Him to do something nor claim, as the Mu’tazilites and Shi’ah do, that He is obliged to admit those who believe and do good deeds into Paradise, while the others will go to Hell. God is not obliged to do anything, because He has absolute freedom to do what He wills. His admitting the believers into Paradise is out of His pure mercy, for no one can deserve Paradise with their own deeds, while His sending the unbelievers to Hell is pure justice. In viewing the judgments and acts of God, we must take into consideration all His Names and Attributes together.

24. This verse explains a Divine principle in choosing the Prophets. God knows best all that is in the heavens and on the earth with the characteristics and abilities of each, and He also knows best who is worthy of Prophethood. However, the Makkah polytheists tried to find excuses for their rejection of the Divine Message brought by the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. They falsely argued that the Messengership should have been given to Walid ibn Mughirah in Makkah or Abū Ma’sūd Urwah ibn Mas’ūd, the chief of the Thaqīf Tribe of Ta’if (43: 31), although God knows best upon whom to place His Message (6: 124). They also argued that a Prophet should not need to eat or drink, nor walk in the streets – in short, that he should be an angel.

The Qur’an mentions such false objections and answers them in several verses. By mentioning David in particular in this verse, the Qur’an is saying that even a king with a splendid kingdom, who lived in a palace, and had several wives and children, can be chosen to be Prophet of God, whom He even exalted above many Prophets in certain respects. So, Muhammnd, upon him be peace and blessings, as a human being who ate, drank, and who was married, and not an angel, can be a Prophet; he can even be the one who is the greatest of all Prophets.

This verse also hints at an important point concerning the evaluation of Prophethood and the Prophets. Both in the past and in the present, some people have tended to see the Prophet only as a means of transmitting the Divine Revelation, without any distinction of character. However, by beginning with an affectionate address to God’s Messenger, Your Lord knows best all that is in the heavens and on the earth, the verse stresses that being a Prophet requires certain qualities and distinctions worthy of it, and that God knows best who is worthy of Prophethood and upon whom to place His Message.

By continuing, Assuredly, We have exalted some of the Prophets above others (some in an absolute sense, and others in some respects), the verse suggests that God’s Messenger is one of those exalted above others. Among the Prophets, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, upon them all be peace, are the greatest, and the Prophet Muhammad, whose mission is universal and lasting until the Resurrection Day, is the greatest of all. It is worth quoting from Said Nursi here:

The behavior and characteristics of the noble Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, have been described in books of history and biographies. However, his spiritual persona and the sacred nature of his being are so sublime and illustrious that those of his qualities explained in books of history and biography fail to describe his high stature. For, according to the rule, “The cause is like the doer,” from the time of the declaration of his Prophethood through to the present time (and, indeed,
until the end of time), the rewards from the good deeds of every Muslim are added to the accounts of the Prophet’s perfections, upon him be peace and blessings. He also receives countless invocations of all the members of his community every day, as well as the mercy of God, which is infinite and which he draws in without measure. Furthermore, since he is the result and most perfect fruit of creation, and the beloved, and the interpreter of the Creator of the universe, his true nature and the truth of his perfections cannot be contained in the human qualities recorded in books of history and biography. Certainly, the stature of a blessed being who had the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, upon them be peace, as his aides-de-camp, one on each side, at the Battle of Badr, is not to be found within the incident of a man who haggled with a Bedouin in the marketplace over the price of a horse, calling Hudhayfah to be his witness in the deal. Thus, in order not to fall into error, we must turn our attention away from the common human qualities of the holy Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, to his true nature and illustrious spiritual persona in his rank of Messengership. Otherwise, we may risk showing him disrespect or entertain uncertainties about his persona. To understand this point, study the following analogy:

Suppose that a date-stone, planted under the ground, has sprouted and become a tall, fruitful tree, and is still continuing to grow taller and broader. Or that from a peacock egg duly incubated, a chick has hatched and grown into a beautiful peacock adorned by the Pen of Divine Power, and is still growing larger and more beautiful. Now there exist qualities, properties, and precisely balanced elements possessed by that date-stone and that egg. They are, however, not as striking and significant as those of the tree and the peacock that grew from them. While describing, therefore, the qualities of the date-stone and the egg, along with those of the tree and the peacock, it is important to appropriately distinguish the qualities of the date-stone and the egg from the palm-tree and peacock, respectively, so that anyone reading or hearing the description may find it reasonable. Otherwise, if, for example, one claims to have got thousands of dates from a date-stone (and not from the tree) or commends the egg as (already) the prince of birds, people will be led to contradiction and denial.

The human nature of God’s most noble Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, may thus be likened to that date-stone or egg, but his true nature, illuminated with the Prophetic mission, is like the Tūbā Tree or the Royal Bird of Paradise. His true nature is, moreover, continually growing more and more perfect. That is why, when one is thinking of that exalted person while he was disputing with a Bedouin in the marketplace, one should turn the eye of one’s imagination to the illustrious essential nature of the man who rode the Burāq and Rifa‘f during the Mi‘rāj, who left Gabriel behind and reached the Divine Presence (See Appendix 10 for the Mi‘rāj). Otherwise, one risks either showing insufficient respect to or failing to convince one’s earthbound soul of his true nature. (The Letters, “The 19th Letter,” 1: 110–111)

For the superiority of some Prophets relative to others (in some aspects or respects), see surah 4: 164, note 33.

25. This verse categorically rejects the claim to deification of any other being besides God, including the Prophets, angels, and saintly beings among humankind and the jinn, who themselves believe in God alone and try to do His commandments, seeking a means to approach Him, striving to be nearer to Him, hoping for His mercy, and fearing His punishment. As for other beings, such as Satan, devils, the unbelieving jinn, and devilish people, to whom some have attributed Divinity, their bodies also obey God unconditionally, and they themselves will offer utter submission to God in the Hereafter and seek a means to obtain God’s forgiveness.

26. For the Book and what is written down in it, see surah 6: 59, note 13; surah 13: 39, note 12; and in this surah, note 10.
59. Nothing stops Us from sending the miracles (they demand as evidence in support of the Messenger’s claim to be appointed by God) except that (many among the) former generations rejected them as false (and were destroyed). We had given the Thamūd the she-camel as a visible sign (miracle), but they did wrong in respect of her. We do not send (Our) Revelations except to warn (and to make them aware of a possible destruction, and the eternal punishment).

60. And (recall) when We said to you (by way of a warning), that your Lord encompasses all humankind (with His Knowledge and Power). We did not make the vision that We showed you (during the Ascension) but as a trial for humankind to mend their ways, and (in the same way, We mentioned) in the Qur’an the Accursed Tree (the tree in Hell absolutely outside the sphere of God’s Mercy). And We warn them, exhorting them to be fearful and amend, but it increases them only in great insolence and rebellion.²⁷

61. And (recall another instance of arrogance and insubordination) when We said to the angels: “Prostrate before Adam!” they prostrated, but Iblīs did not; he said: “Shall I prostrate myself before one whom You created of clay?”

62. He said: “Do You see this that You have honored above me? Indeed, if You grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few!”

63. (God) said: “Go your way! Whichever of them follows you – surely Hell will be the recompense of you all, a recompense most ample!

64. “Arouse with your (seductive) voice whomever you can from among them, and rally against them with your cavalry and foot soldiers, and be their partner in their wealth and children, and make promises to them.” And Satan promises them nothing but deceit.²⁸

65. “But as for My (sincere, devoted) servants – you will have no authority over them.” And your Lord suffices as protecting guardian (as One on Whom to rely, and to Whom all affairs are referred).

66. Your Lord (O humankind) is He Who causes the ships to sail for you through the sea, that you may seek of His bounty.²⁹ Surely He is ever Compassionate towards you.
27. When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, returned from the Ascension, he narrated to the Makkans what he had witnessed during his miraculous journey. He had transcended the corporeal dimensions of existence and saw the forms that the creed, deeds, and words of people take on in the Hereafter. Although Paradise and Hell still exist as "seeds," they wait to be expanded into their eternal forms, which will take place during the Resurrection. People's creed, deeds, and words provide the building blocks for their places in Paradise or Hell. For example, a word of thanks or praise such as _al-hamdu li-l-lāh_ (All praise is for God) is returned to the one who utters it as an apple in Paradise. People sometimes see in their dreams the similar forms that their creed, deeds, and words will take on in the Hereafter. So, during the Ascension, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, saw examples of these forms and of the people who have such creeds and do those deeds. The tree accursed in the Qur'ān, that is, the tree mentioned in the Qur'ān as being absolutely excluded from God's Mercy, is the Tree of Zaqqūm (sūrah 37: 62–67; sūrah 44: 42–46; sūrah 56: 51–54). It is a bitter tree that will grow in Hell and of which the people of Hell will eat. Certainly, this is as a consequence of some deeds of the unbelievers, and constitutes one of the forms of torment in Hell. Far from providing sustenance, it gives pain and causes torment as food for the people of Hell.

The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, related to the Makkans all that he had seen during the Ascension. Although the Messenger exhibited several clear and undeniable signs of his miraculous journey, the unbelievers contradicted him willfully and persisted knowingly in unbelief. Like all other miracles and truths, the Ascension, with all its aspects, proved to be a test for people. However, we should point out that the Almighty does not create miracles or test people so as to lead them astray. People stray because of their arrogance, willful obstinacy, and their insistence on their way even in the face of the most manifest truths.

28. Satan seduces people in a variety of ways. As well as, in particular, whispering into people's hearts and with his voice, which those near to him can hear, he also seduces people with sounds like obscene music and calls for disobedience to God. In addition to his offspring, Satan has well-equipped armies, both from among the jinn and human beings, and he is a partner with people in the wealth gained through and spent in unlawful ways and in children who have not been brought up properly according to God's commands. He continually makes false, deceptive promises to people. He deceives them with long-term ambitions, worldly aims, and false expectations. (For the deception of Satan, see also sūrah 7: 17, note 2.)

29. God has created the sea both as a treasure of bounties and as a way to overseas bounties. In order to benefit from it, He has inspired people to build ships. As He employed His Messengers as both the conveyors of His Message and the vanguard of scientific and technological developments, initially He taught Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, to build a ship.
67. When distress afflicts you in the sea, all that you invoke (as powers to help you) fail you save Him only; yet when He brings you safe to land, you turn away from Him. Indeed human is ever ungrateful.

68. Do you then feel secure that He will not cause a part of the land to (fall on you and) engulf you, or send a sand-storm upon you? Then you will not find a protecting guardian for yourselves.

69. Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back (to the sea) another time, and send against you a raging tempest to drown you because you disbelieve in ingratitude? Then you find none to uphold you against Us.

70. Assuredly We have honored the children of Adam (with many distinctions): We have sustained their traveling on the land and the sea, and provided for them (their sustenance) out of pure, wholesome things, and preferred them with particular preferment above many of those whom We have created.

71. On the Day when We will call every human community with its leader: whoever (has followed a leader towards true faith and righteousness and accountability in the Hereafter) is given his Record (of his life) in his right hand – those will read their Record with contentment, and they will not be wronged by even so much as a tiny hair.

72. Whoever is blind in this (world) (who has followed no guidance towards true faith and righteousness and accountability in the Hereafter), will be blind in the Hereafter, and even further astray from the way (that leads to Divine forgiveness and eternal contentment).

73. They have indeed sought to tempt you (O Messenger) away from what We have revealed to you so that you may fabricate something else against Us. And then (had you done so), they would have taken you as a trusted friend.

74. And had We not made you wholly firm in what We reveal to you, you might just have inclined to them a little bit.

75. In that case, We would have made you taste double punishment in life and double punishment after death, and you would have found none to help you against Us.
30. As the Qur'an explicitly states (6: 38), all beings created live in communities, and God, Who does not leave the bees without a queen bee, nor the ants without a leader, does not leave humankind without a true leader. So, throughout history He sent to every community a Messenger and granted a Book to the leading ones among them, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, upon them all be peace. After the Messengers, He sent Prophets in their footsteps, and after the Last Messenger – Muhammad – He has created leading scholars and guides who have fulfilled the mission of the Prophets, except that they did not receive Revelation. This is because, unlike the previous Books, the Qur'an has remained intact, without the least change or interpolation. God has honored human beings with distinctive attributes and abilities, such as intellect, conscious nature, and heart (spiritual intellect). However, although the Divine Book is a leader (sūrah 11: 17), every human being is not able to understand it properly or deduce from it the principles for the governance of human life in every age and all conditions. This is why God has favored some persons with perfect guidance, namely the Prophets, and those loyal to God, who are truthful in whatever they do and say, and the witnessing saints, who have seen the hidden Divine truths, the existence of which they bear witness to with their lives, and the righteous in all their deeds and sayings, and those dedicated to setting everything right (sūrah 4: 69). He has ordered us to pray to Him in every rak'ah of the daily Prescribed Prayers (in Sūrat al-Fātihah, 1: 6–7) to guide us to the Straight Path, as the Path of those whom He has favored; that is, those whom He has mentioned in sūrah 4: 69. So, what a person should do – if they do not have the necessary ability and purity of heart to understand the Divine Book properly and infer from it and the Prophetic Sunnah the necessary rules to order their life according to God’s Will and lead others – is not to be blind to the truth but rather, to try to find a true leader. God has promised that He will guide those who strive for His sake to any of the paths that lead to the Straight Path (sūrah 29: 69). Whoever tries to find this Path sincerely will most certainly find what they seek.

31. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, submitted himself wholly to God and fulfilled his mission solely because God commanded him to. He never resorted to compromise in order to be successful and never deviated from his way.

When he began preaching his Message, he had to face severe opposition, but he confronted all the opposition with a smile on his lips. He stood firm, undeterred by criticism and coercion. When the locals realized that the threats had failed to frighten him and that the severest treatment of his person and his followers had not made them move even an inch, they played another trick on him – but that too was destined to failure.

A deputation of the leading Quraysh, his tribe, called upon the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and tried to bribe him by offering all the worldly glory they could imagine. They said: “If you want to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish; if you aspire to win honor and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the most beautiful maiden of your choice.”

They wanted him to make a compromise, even if he did not abandon his mission. The terms were extremely tempting for any ordinary mortal, but they were of no significance in the eyes of the great Prophet, who replied:

*I want neither wealth nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner to humankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity and joy in this life and eternal bliss in the life to come; should you reject the Word of God, surely God will decide between you and me.*

On another occasion, he said to his uncle, who, because of pressure from the leaders of Arabia, was trying to persuade him to abandon
his mission: “O uncle! Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, so as to make me renounce this mission, I will not do so. I will never give it up; either it will please God to make it triumph or I will perish in the attempt” (Ibn Hishām, 2: 285).

The unbelievers of the Prophet’s time were the most refractory and bitterest unbelievers of all times, and so were the hypocrites. But the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was never inclined to make a compromise; he never even contemplated the idea, by God’s help and grace. In the words of Said Nursi:

In his preaching of the Message and in his calling people to the truth, he displayed such steadfastness, firmness, and courage that, in spite of the antagonism of great powers and religions, and those of his own people and tribe, and even of his uncle, he never showed even the slightest trace of hesitation, anxiety, or fear, and he successfully challenged the world; as a result, he made Islam superior to all other religions and systems. This proves that there is not and cannot be anyone like him in his preaching of and calling to the message of the truth.

He had such extraordinary strength, such wonderful certainty, such miraculous perseverance, and such elevated and world-enlightening conviction in his faith that none of the prevailing ideas and beliefs of that time, and none of the philosophies of the sages and teachings of the spiritual leaders, although they were all opposed and even hostile to him, were ever able to cause him any doubt, hesitation, or anxiety concerning his certainty, conviction, and assurance. Moreover, all saintly people throughout time, especially his Companions, have all benefited from his faith, which they admit to be of the highest degree. (The Letters, “The 19th Letter,” 1: 267)

The verse also teaches that for people to be able to overcome all the plots of the unbelievers they are in dire need of God’s help and support; without this no one can ever be successful.
76. Indeed they have sought to estrange you from the land (of your birth) and drive you from it; but then, they themselves will not remain there, except a little while.

77. (That has been Our) way with all those whom We sent (as Messengers) before you. You will not find any alteration in Our way.

78. Establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and (be ever observant of) the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn (the Dawn Prayer). Surely the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is witnessed (by the angels and the whole creation awakening to a new day).

79. And in some part of the night, rise from sleep and observe vigil therein (through the Prayer and recitation of the Qur'an) as additional worship for you;^34 your Lord may well raise you to a glorious, praised station (of nearness to Him, and give you leave to intercede with Him, as He wills, on behalf of His servants, in the Hereafter).

80. And say: “My Lord! Cause me to enter in a manner sincere and faithful to the truth, and cause me to exit in a manner sincere and faithful to the truth, and grant me from Your Presence a sustaining authority!”^35

81. And say: “The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish by its very nature.”

82. We are sending down the Qur'an in parts – it is a healing and a mercy for the believers, though for the wrongdoers it increases them only in ruin.

83. When We favor human (an ungrateful one) with comfort and contentment, he draws aside and arrogantly keeps aloof (from any thought of Us), but when evil touches him, he is ever despairing.

84. Say: “Every one acts according to his own character (made up of his creed, worldview and disposition), and your Lord knows best who is better guided in his way.”

85. They ask you about the spirit. Say: “The spirit is of my Lord’s Command, and of knowledge, you have been granted only a little.”

86. (You are not, as the unbelievers allege, the author of the Qur'an. It is only We Who reveal it entirely.) If We willed, We could certainly take away what We have revealed to you (by effacing it from the hearts and memory of you and those who have memorized it, and from any written record of it). Then you would find for yourself no protecting guardian against Us (to help you to claim or recover it) –
32. The verse alludes to and gives tidings of the Messenger’s emigration to Madīnah. For the meaning and importance of emigration (Hijrah) for those who follow a sacred cause, see sūrah 19, note 10.

As emigration has a very important place in the preaching of the Divine Message and the missions and lives of those who carry it out, any people who force their Messenger to leave his native land are either destroyed or exposed to another calamity or defeated by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and his new followers. They cannot remain long in their former state. So, verse 76 gives the tidings that those who forced the Messenger to leave Makkah would be destroyed soon after his departure. And this happened. The leading opponents of Islam in Makkah were killed in the Battle of Badr two years after the Messenger’s emigration, and Makkah was conquered six years later.

33. This verse alludes to the five daily Prescribed Prayers and the time of each prayer. The declining of the sun means that the sun has passed its zenith and, therefore, indicates the Noon Prayer. After the Noon Prayer comes the Afternoon Prayer. Immediately after sunset and after night has fully fallen, the Evening and Late Evening Prayers are performed respectively. The verse specifically mentions the Dawn or Morning Prayer because of its importance and draws attention to the recitation of the Qur’ān during this time. The Messenger, under Divine Revelation, used to lengthen his recitation in the Dawn Prayer. In addition, recitation at this time is more effective upon our hearts.

Although the Prayer was prescribed in the early days of Islam, it was only established as five daily Prayers at the Ascension. This sūrah, which begins with mention of this miraculous journey, contains this prescription.

Although the Qur’ān mentions some pillars of the Prayer, such as bowing and prostration, it does not specify all the pillars and other acts, nor does it describe how they must be performed. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, performed the Prayer according to how God had taught him, and he declared: “Establish the Prayer the way you see me establishing it” (al-Bukhārī, “Ṣalāḥ,” 70; Muslim, “Nikāḥ,” 5). So, like all other forms of worship, the way of establishing the Prayer is completely dependent on the Sunnah.

34. Each occasion of the Prayer is not only the opening of a significant turning-point but also a mirror to the Divine disposal of power and to the universal Divine bounties within that disposal. We are enjoined to perform the Prescribed Prayers at these defined times, so as to give more adoration and glory to the All-Powerful One of Majesty, and to give more thanks to Him for all the bounties that have been accumulated between any two occasions, which is the meaning of the Prescribed Prayers.

The consecutive divisions of day and night, and the years and phases of each individual’s life in the world are, as it were, an immense clock, the parts of which function like the wheels and cogs which calculate seconds, minutes, and hours as they move. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi writes about the meanings of the specific times of the daily Prayers:

The time of Fajr (dawn or early morning), which is designated for the Morning Prayer, may be likened to the birth of spring, or the moment when sperm takes refuge in the protective womb, or to the first of the six consecutive “days” during which the earth and the sky were created, and it recalls how God disposes His Power and acts at such times and events.

The time of Zuhr (just past midday) may be likened to the completion of adolescence, or the middle of summer, or the period of humankind’s creation in the lifetime of the world. It, too, points to God’s compassionate manifestations and abundant blessings in those events and periods of time.

The time of ‘Asr (afternoon) resembles autumn, old age, and the time of the Last Prophet, known as the Age of Happiness. It calls to mind the Divine acts and the favors of the All-Compassionate in them.

The time of Maghrib (sunset) reminds
us of the decline of many creatures at the end of autumn, and the death of individual persons and, at the end of time, of humankind as a whole. It thus forewarns us of the destruction of the world at the beginning of Resurrection, and also teaches us how to understand the manifestation of God’s Majesty and, in this way, wakes us from a deep sleep of neglect.

The time of Ṭisā (nightfall), calls to mind how the world of darkness veils all the objects of the daytime with its black shroud, and winter covers the surface of the dead earth with its white robe. It brings to mind, also, how the remaining works of the dead are completely forgotten, and points out to us the inevitable, complete decline of this world, which is a place of testing. Thus, Ṭisā proclaims the awesome acts of the All-Powerful One of Majesty.

As for night-time, if we bring to mind winter, the grave, and the Intermediate World, we are reminded how much our spirit is really in need of the Mercy of the All-Merciful One.

The Tahajjud Prayer, in the later, deeper part of the night, reminds and warns us how necessary this Prayer will be as a light in the darkness of the grave. In this way, by recalling the infinite bounties of the True Bestower that have been granted to humankind within the sequence of all these extraordinary events, it proclaims how worthy He is of praise and thanks.

The following morning is a time that points to the Resurrection, or the morning that follows the destruction of the world. Just as it is reasonable, necessary, and certain that morning follows night, and spring comes after winter, so too, will the morning of the Resurrection follow death.

We now understand that each appointed occasion for the five daily Prayers is itself the beginning of a vital turning-point and a reminder of greater revolutions or turning-points in the life of the universe. Through the incredible daily gifts of the Power of the Eternally Besought One, the times of the Prayers call to mind the miracles of Divine Power and the gifts of Divine Mercy found in every year, every age, and every epoch. So, the Prescribed Prayers, which are an innate need and the firm foundation of worship, and an unquestionable duty of humankind, are most appropriate and fitted for these times (The Words, “The 9th Word,” 58–59).

35. This prayer, taught to the Messenger by God, indicates that the time of the emigration to Madinah was close at hand. According to some, God taught it when the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, approached Madinah during the Hijrah. It was a practice and recommendation of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to say this prayer when entering and leaving a place. It also instructs us in what manner we should enter a place and leave it.

36. About the spirit, see Appendix 12.
87. But (you are one favored with) a
great, special mercy from your Lord. His
favor on you is great indeed.
88. Say: “Surely, if humankind and the jinn
were to come together to produce the like
of this Qur’ān, they would never be able to
produce the like of it, though they backed
one another up with help and support.”
89. Assuredly We have set out in diverse
ways for humankind in this Qur’ān all
kinds of parables and comparisons (to
help them understand the truth), yet
most people refuse to accept anything
save unbelief.
90. They say: “We will not believe in you
(O Messenger) until you cause a spring to
gush forth for us from this land (which is
short of water);
91. “Or you have a garden of date-palms
and grapes, and cause rivers to gush forth
in their midst abundantly;
92. “Or you cause the heaven to fall upon
us in pieces, as you have claimed (could
happen); or bring God and the angels as
a warrant (before our eyes, proving the
truth of your message);
93. “Or you have a house of gold; or you
ascend to the heaven. But we will even
then not believe in your ascension until
you bring down upon us (from heaven) a
book that we can read.” Say, (O Messen-
ger): “All-Glorified is my Lord (in that He
is absolutely above what you conceive of
Him)! Am I anything but a mortal sent as
a Messenger?”
94. And what has kept people from be-
lieving when guidance has come to them,
except that they said: “Has God sent a
mortal man as the Messenger?”
95. Say: “If angels had been walking about
on earth as their abode, then We would
surely have sent down upon them an an-
gel from heaven as Messenger.”
96. Say: “God suffices for a witness be-
tween me and you. Surely He is fully aware
of His servants, and sees them well.”
97. Whoever God guides, then he it is who is rightly guided; and whoever He leads astray, you shall find for them, apart from Him, no guardians (who might own and help them). We will raise them to life and gather them together on the Day of Resurrection prone upon their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf. Their refuge is Hell – every time it (seems to them that its torment) is abating (because of their being inured to it), We increase them in (suffering in its) blazing flame.

98. That will be their recompense because they disbelieved in Our Revelations and signs (manifesting the truth) and said: “What! is it when we have already become bones and particles of dust – is it then that we will be raised as a new creation?”

99. Do they never consider that God Who has created the heavens and the earth, (the creation of which is something greater than the creation of human and never wearied Him) is able to create them (the dead) anew in their own likeness? And He has set a term for them about which there is no doubt; yet the wrongdoers refuse to accept anything save unbelief.

100. Say: “If you possessed the treasures of my Lord’s Mercy, still you would surely hold them back for fear of spending (in God’s cause and as subsistence for the needy).” Indeed human is ever grudging.

101. We certainly granted to Moses nine clear signs (miracles). So ask the Children of Israel (what happened despite these miracles): when he came to them (and asked the Pharaoh to let the Children of Israel leave Egypt with him, and even after he showed to them these miracles), the Pharaoh said to him: “Earnestly, O Moses, I earnestly consider you to be one bewitched.”

102. (Moses) said: “You know for certain that no one but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent down these (signs) as openings to discernment and insight. And earnestly, O Pharaoh, I earnestly consider you to be one doomed to loss.”

103. Then the Pharaoh intended to terrify them from the land (of Egypt) and destroy them, but We caused him and all who were with him to drown.

104. And after that, We said to the Children of Israel: “Dwell now securely in the land (which God has decreed for you and commanded you to enter). But when the time (for the fulfillment) of the last decree comes, We will bring you as a mixed crowd (gathered from disparate nations).”
37. This, again, is in response to the Makkan polytheists’ demands that the Messenger of God work miracles. God granted Moses nine miracles as clear signs of the truth of his message, but despite all these, Pharaoh and his people persisted in unbelief. Some of these miracles are mentioned in 7:133:

We sent upon them floods and (plagues of) locusts and vermin, and frogs, and (water turning into) blood: distinct signs one after another. The other three are the Staff; Moses’ white, radiant hand; and the defeat of the magicians’ magic. Moses performed other miracles, too, such as making water gush forth from a rock by striking it with his staff, and bringing a cow back to life by striking it with a bone from its leg. However, the nine miracles mentioned in the verse are those that were shown to the Pharaoh and his people, in particular. Despite these miracles, the Pharaoh and his people persisted in unbelief. So, the unbelievers were not sincere in their demand for miracles. They demanded them only in order to cause problems for the Prophets. They well knew that the Prophets were not lying when they declared their Prophethood. There were many irrefutable proofs that showed the sincerity of the Prophets; their truthfulness, trustworthiness, intelligence, and sinlessness are but a few examples. However, when the people persisted in unbelief willfully, despite the miracles which they had demanded and which had been shown to them, they usually got what they deserved.

Being the last Divine Book valid until the Day of Judgment, and as a Book that serves us at a time when humankind has inclined greatly toward reason, sciences, and the exploration of the universe, the Qur’an frequently and insistently calls on people to think, study, and reflect on the “natural” phenomena and the history of human communities. For this reason, except for a few times, like the Ascension and the splitting of the moon, God’s Messenger did not work miracles that were visible to all during the Makkan period of his mission, the time when he preached the pillars of faith. Rather, he worked most of his miracles in Madinah only in order to meet a need; these miracles were performed when there was no other way to solve a problem, such as the miraculous abundance of food or water, or a little food or water becoming sufficient for many people, or water flowing from his fingers. The Qur’an is his greatest, lasting miracle, and the greatest of all the miracles performed by all the Prophets.

38. The Qur’an is full of tidings of many future events, some of which it mentions explicitly, such as the victory of the Romans over the Sassanids (sūrah 30:2–3), and the conquest of Makkah by the believers (sūrah 48:27), and others which are implied. In verse 76 above, the Qur’an threatens the Makkan polytheists who tried to drive the Messenger away from Makkah, saying: Indeed they have sought to estrange you from the land (of your birth) and drive you from it; but then, they themselves will not remain there, after you, except a little while.

It strengthened this threat by adding that God always punishes those who drive Prophets from their home by destroying them: (That has been Our) way with all those whom We sent (as Messengers) before you. You will not find any means to change Our way (sūrah 17:77). Verse 103 substantiates the threat with an important example from history and hints that those who forced the Messenger to leave Makkah would soon be destroyed. This took place two years after the Messenger’s emigration to Madinah at the Battle of Badr, in which 70 of the leading Makkans were killed, and six years later, the Messenger conquered Makkah.

39. The original of the statement, when the time (for the fulfillment) of the last decree comes, is exactly the same as that which is in verse 7 above, which expresses the second rise and decline of the Children of Israel (narrated in note 6 above). This must be referring to the last phase of the second decline, which ended in their dispersal throughout the world as the consequence of their own deeds, and their coming together again in Palestine to establish a state in 1948.

However, as the word translated as the last decree also means the Last Day, the statement threatens them with a doom decreed after their coming together for the last time, and with the inevitable end that they will be questioned in the Hereafter for all that they did in the world. So, the verse is a miraculously succinct summary of the history of the Children of Israel.
105. It is with the truth that We have sent it down (this Qur’ān, embodying the truth and forever invulnerable to falsehood), and it is with the truth that it has come down. We have not sent you but as a bearer of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness) and a warner (against the evil consequences of misguidance).

106. And (it is) a Qur’ān that We set forth in parts with clarity so that you may recite and convey it to people with deliberation (in order that they can absorb it), and We send it down in successive Revelations (each perfectly suited to its occasion and its wider purpose).

107. Say: “Believe in it or do not believe.” Surely those who were endowed before it with knowledge (of the truth and Divine Revelation and teachings, and still follow that knowledge), fall down on their faces in prostration when the Qur’ān is recited to them.

108. They say: “All-Glorified is our Lord. Surely the promise of our Lord is ever bound to be fulfilled.”

109. And they fall down on their faces, weeping, and it increases them in humility and a feeling of awe.

110. Say: “Call upon Him as Allāh (God) or call upon Him as ar-Rahmān (the All-Merciful). By whichever Name you call upon Him, to Him belong the All-Beautiful Names.” And offer your Prayer neither in too loud a voice nor in a voice too low, but follow a middle course.

111. And say: “All praise and gratitude are for God, Who has neither taken to Him a child, nor has a partner in the Sovereignty (the dominion and ownership of the whole creation), nor (being exalted above all want or insufficiency) has He a guardian against neediness and weakness. And exalt Him in His immeasurable greatness.
40. When those endowed with knowledge of the truth and Divine Revelation and teachings, whether from among the People of the Book or others, recite or listen to the Qur’ān, they immediately understand that it belongs to God, and cannot help but fall down on their faces in prostration before God. When they see that what God promised concerning the advent of Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and many other important events, like the sending of the Last Book, which came as the Qur’ān, were all fulfilled, they once more prostrate themselves before God in increasing humility and a feeling of awe before Him.

41. Almighty God has many Names that are included in the Qur’ān and which were taught by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. They are all the All-Beautiful Names by which any other being cannot be called. For further explanations about Names, God and the All-Merciful, see al-Fāțihah, notes 2–4.

42. One should neither raise one’s voice too loud, nor keep it too low during one’s invocations. The Qur’ān orders: Remember and mention your Lord within yourself (in the depths of your heart), most humbly and in awe, not loud of voice, at morning and evening (sūrah 7: 205). In one’s Prayer (the Ṣalāh), a person should recite loud enough so that they are distinctly able to hear their own recitation. It was a practice of the Prophet which we must follow that during the Morning, Evening and Late Evening (Nightfall) Prayers, the Qur’ān is to be recited loud enough that those standing behind can hear, while the Noon and Afternoon Prayers should be recited in a voice that only the worshipper him/herself can hear.
SŪRAH 18

AL-KAHF (THE CAVE)

Makkah Period

This sūrah was revealed in the Makkah period of the Messenger’s mission, at a time when the polytheists had begun to escalate their opposition to the preaching of Islam. Searching for a way to stop this preaching the Makkans occasionally made contact with the People of the Book in order to get from them questions they could put to the Messenger. This sūrah apparently was revealed in response to questions about the People of the Cave, the story of Moses and al-Khadr, and Dhu’l-Qarnayn. It also contains the parable of two friends who owned vineyards. The sūrah takes its name from the ninth verse, where the people of the Cave are mentioned. It consists of 110 verses.

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

1. All praise and gratitude are for God, Who has sent down on His servant the Book and has put no crookedness in it (so that it is free from contradiction and inconsistency, and anything offensive to truth and righteousness).

2. (He has made it) unerringly straight, to warn of a stern punishment from Him and give the believers who do good, righteous deeds the glad tidings that for them is an excellent reward (Paradise),

3. Abiding therein forever,

4. And to warn those who say: “God has taken to Him a child.”

1. It is clear that in the early years of Islam, some among the Jews and Christians supported the Makkah polytheists in their hostilities. The previous sūrah ends by declaring that God has not taken to Himself a child, and this sūrah begins by declaring the same truth. By pronouncing that God has not taken to Himself a child, the Qur‘ān is saying that God has no offspring, and it categorically rejects the polytheists who claim that He has taken angels for daughters, and the Christians who assert that Jesus is the son of God, and the claim of some Jews that Ezra is the son of God.

As has been generally accepted by Qur‘ānic commentators, the Companions of the Cave, whose exemplary story will be told in the following verses, were among the monotheistic followers of Jesus. The fact that the sūrah begins by rejecting the notion of Divine fatherhood may be meant to underline the truth of this view.
5. Of that they have no knowledge (on which to base such an assertion), nor did their forefathers. Dreadful as a word is (that assertion) coming out of their mouths. Indeed they speak nothing but falsehood.

6. Yet, it may be that you (O Muhammad) will torment yourself to death with grief, following after them, if they do not believe in this Message.

7. We have surely made whatever is on the earth as an ornament for it (appealing to humanity), so that We may try them (by demonstrating it to themselves) which of them is best in conduct.

8. Yet, We surely reduce whatever is on it to a barren dust-heap, (and will do so when the term of trial ends).

9. Or do you reckon the People of the Cave and the Inscription as something strange among Our signs (manifesting the truth, and too extraordinary to believe)?

10. (Events came to the point) when the young men took refuge in the cave and said: “Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Your Presence and arrange for us in our affair what is right and good!”

11. Then We drew a veil over their ears (causing them to go into a deep sleep) in the cave for a number of years.

12. Then We raised them up, (and dividing into two groups, they discussed how long they had remained in that state). We willed to make known which of the two groups were (more conscious of time with the events in it, and therefore) better in computing the time-span during which they had remained (in this state).

13. It is We who relate to you their exemplary story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance (so they adhered to the truth more faithfully).

14. And We strengthened their hearts, (and a time came) when they rose up (against association of partners with God and other injustices in the society), and they proclaimed: “Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and we never invoke any deity apart from Him; if we did so, we would certainly have uttered an enormity (a monstrous unbelief).

15. “These people of ours have adopted deities other than Him, although they cannot bring any clear authority for them. And who is more in the wrong than he who fabricates falsehood against God?”
2. The original word translated as forefathers means fathers, as well, and also implies the Fathers of the Church who established the Christian creeds. The usage of word in Dreadful as a word is (that assertion) coming out of their mouths, also implies this. Those Fathers did not base their claim that Jesus was the son of God on any knowledge, and their followers have tragically done nothing more than blindly imitating them. Their assertion is mere words uttered out of ignorance and myth-making.

As pointed out in note 1 above, the verses also reject the polytheists’ assertion that God has taken angels for daughters.

3. Any Prophet is, in a way, obsessed with how he is to perform his duty. To this end, he considers all circumstances and does everything permitted. Many Prophets lived and died with a handful of people, or less, accepting their Message. However, they did not lose heart, weaken in resolve, or resort to means not permitted by God, like violence, terror, or deception, despite having to suffer every kind of hardship and torture of the most pitiless sort. Every Prophet conveyed God’s Message to his people without becoming weary or daunted. The harsh reactions of people could not hinder a Prophet from his duty.

The communication of the Divine Message was the most essential characteristic of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. We are troubled whenever we are hungry or thirsty, or when we have difficulty in breathing; but he was troubled if a day passed when he could not find someone to whom he could convey the Divine Message. There was nobody left in Makkah whom he had not invited in public or in private to God’s path. He had called some, like Abū Jahl, who was extremely stubborn, at least fifty times. He was so concerned about the guidance of people, and so physically pained by unbelief, that God advised him in this verse to take care of his health.

4. According to some of the interpreters of the Qur’ān, ar-Raqīm (translated here as Inscription) is the name of the district where the Cave is located. Others are of the opinion that it is the epitaph which was placed at the Cave as a monument to the People of the Cave.

5. The word used to mean young (fātā) has a special meaning and usage in Islamic literature. Its infinitive form futtāwah, meaning youth and chivalry, is a composite of virtues, such as energy, revolutionary vigor, heroism, generosity, munificence, modesty, chastity, trustworthiness, loyalty, mercifulness, knowledge, humility, and piety.

Futtāwah also signifies an altruistic character that enjoys helping others, wishing no one any harm. It is an important, indispensable dimension of good conduct and a significant aspect of humanity. Derived from fātā meaning young man, futtāwah has become a symbol of rebellion against all kinds of evil and of sincere servanthood to God as the way to attain true freedom. Some have summed up the descriptions made for futtāwah in the following cardinal virtues, in addition to those mentioned above:

- Forgiving when one is able to punish.
- Preserving mildness and acting mildly and gently when one is angry.
- Wishing well for all, including one’s enemies, and doing good.
- Always being considerate of the well-being and happiness of others first, even when one is needy.

The signs of one being a fātā (young, chivalrous one) are that their spirit, which was created with the potential to accept Divine Unity and Islam, has utmost conviction of Divine Unity and urges them to live according to the requirements of this conviction, and that, without being captivated by carnal or bodily desires, they live a pure, spiritual life, always aiming to please God in all acts, thoughts, and feelings. It is not possible for one who cannot be saved from the temptations of their carnal soul, from Satan, from bodily appetites, and from a love of the world or attachment to worldly life, to climb up toward the peak of futtāwah. (See Key Concepts, 1: 81–83.)
16. (Events developed to the point that they had to leave their society. They discussed what they should do and concluded:) “And now that you have withdrawn yourselves from them and all that they worship instead of God, then seek refuge in the Cave. Your Lord will lay out for you of His mercy, and He will arrange for you in your affair a comfort and support.”

17. (They entered the Cave and fell into a deep sleep.) You would have seen the sun, when it rose, moving away from their Cave to the right, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in a spacious hollow in the Cave. That was one of God’s signs. Whoever God guides, he alone is rightly guided; and whoever He leads astray, you will never be able to find for him any friend or guardian to guide him to the right way.

18. You would have thought them awake though they were asleep. We caused them to turn over to the right and the left, and their dog lay outstretching its two forelegs on the threshold. Had you come upon them unprepared, you would certainly have turned away from them in flight, and would certainly have been filled with awe of them.

19. Such being their state, We raised them up so they began to ask questions of one another. One who spoke said: “How long have you stayed?” They (some among them) answered: “We have stayed a day, or part of a day.” The others said: “Your Lord knows better how long you have stayed. Now (we must deal with our hunger. So) send one of you to the city with this coin of yours: let him see what food is most pure there (and so lawful), and bring a supply from it. But let him behave with utmost care and guarded courtesy, and by no means make anyone aware of you.

20. “Indeed, if they should find you out, they will stone you to death or turn you back to their way of belief and life by force; then you will never attain prosperity ever hereafter.”
6. The position of the cave was such that God protected the young men from sunlight and protected their color tone from changing and their clothes from fading. Although they remained in the Cave for many years asleep, when they awoke, nothing about them had changed; they had not even grown beards. This shows that either they entered a death-like sleep or that God guarded their bodies against any changes; this situation, whichever scenario is correct, should be investigated by science, as there will be some beneficial factors hidden in this event. The fact that they remained asleep for a long time without suffering any alterations in their appearance is an exceptional sign of God.

7. It can be understood from this verse that their eyes were open. The Almighty caused them to turn from their right to their left and from their left to their right, preventing sores on the body, and the eventual decay of both their bodies and their clothes. Such movement prevented their bodies from becoming weak and listless. The sight of a number of people lying down, yet with their eyes open – people who are repeatedly turning over inside a cave in a mountainous area, and who are guarded by a dog – would surely have presented an awe-some spectacle. Thus, it is highly probable that there were other factors that would cause fear in those who saw them.

8. Who were these young men, and where did their experience actually take place? Before proceeding to answer this question, we should remember that the Qur’ān is not a history book, and that it recounts past, exemplary events in the most proper way to guide people to the pillars of the Religion, to establish these pillars in the minds and hearts of people. It does not usually mention the names of the people involved, nor does it designate time and place. Similar events may well have taken place, and may take place, in other places at other times.

According to considerably more reliable narratives, as the message of Jesus, upon him be peace, spread across neighboring lands, six youths from the royal class of the Romans in Syria-Jordan region gave up idol-worship, accepting God as the only Deity and their True Lord. It was the years when the followers of Jesus’ faith were being subjected to great tortures and persecutions. The Emperor Trajan (98–117 CE) had issued a decree that any follower of Jesus would be tried as a traitor and sentenced to death. He was visiting the region when these six youths openly and fearlessly proclaimed their faith in his presence, saying that the Lord of the heavens and the earth was their One and only True Lord. The emperor gave them three days’ respite to revert to their old faith. But they managed to leave the city secretly in 112 CE. A shepherd from a neighboring village joined them, with his dog following them up to the cave despite their efforts to dissuade it. They took shelter in a deep cave with the dog sitting at its mouth. Soon they fell into a deep sleep.

There are different views about which cave it was in which they took shelter. In 1963, near the village Rajīb, 80 kilometers from Amman, the capital of Jordan, a cave was excavated. When this cave was discovered, Rafiq Wafā al-Dujānī wrote his book entitled Iktishāfu Kahfi Ahl al-Kahf (Discovery of the Cave of the People of the Cave). It was then seen that the cave and its neighboring land correlates with the Qur’ānic description.

Due to the fact that the question about the People of the Cave arose from some Jews who lived during the time of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, some commentators, like Ibn Kathīr, present another opinion that the People of the Cave lived before the time of Jesus, upon him be peace, even though similar events may have taken place after Jesus. There are several caves in the world, each of which is claimed to have belonged to the People of the Cave. As we pointed out above, the Qur’ān is not a history book and it usually recounts past, exemplary events for its main purposes. So what is important is that we should draw the intended lessons from them.

9. Since the Qur’ān is never concerned with events for their own sake, it does not go fur-
ther in narrating what happened in the city. But the words used enable the reader to guess what might have happened.

This was at a time when Christianity had long ago been accepted as the official creed of the Roman Empire, and the Christians were fiercely divided on the question of life after death. Many people refused to believe in the Hereafter, at least in the bodily resurrection. The Emperor was keen to find some means whereby he could persuade the people to give up this denial. He was so concerned about the matter that on one occasion he earnestly prayed to God to show a miraculous sign that would make people believe in the bodily resurrection and afterlife. It was under such circumstances that the People of the Cave awoke from their sleep. According to the narratives, the one who was sent to the city went to a shop to buy bread and paid for it with an ancient silver coin. There was an altercation as the man was trying to pay with a three-hundred year old coin, and this drew a crowd. The crowd, amazed, took the man to the governor. The things that he saw in the city confused the young man. Everything had changed. The city they had had to leave was now a Christian city, Christianity having been adopted as the official creed of the Empire. He reported his story to the governor (or, according to another account, to the Emperor Theodosius the Younger (418–450 CE). Greatly amazed, the governor (or the Emperor) followed the young man to the Cave, followed by a crowd. Seeing that the words of the young man were true, they marveled at God's power and providence. At that point, God took their souls from the Cave, and belief in revival after death, a matter over which the people had been disputing for many years, was firmly planted in the hearts of the people.
21. And in this way, We disclosed them to the people so that they might know that the promise of God is true, and that there can be no doubt about (the coming of) the Last Hour. When they (the people) disputed about their affair, they said: “Build a structure over them (to hide them and leave them to their rest). Their Lord knows best about them.” Those who prevailed (in the long-disputed matter) said: “We will most certainly build a place of worship over them.”

22. (Instead of reflecting on the lesson to be learnt from the People of the Cave, people concentrate their interest on the details of the event.) Some will say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them; and some will say they were five, the dog being the sixth – all guessing at random at (something related to) the Unseen. Still others will say: “They were seven, the dog being the eighth.” Say (O Messenger): “My Lord knows their number better; it is but few that know (the truth about) them.” So do not argue about them, and be content with what is obvious (to you through Revelation), nor ask any of them (who argue even among themselves) to give you an opinion about them.\[12/13\]

23. And do not say about anything (you intend), “I will do it tomorrow,” without (adding) “If God wills.” And remember and mention Him (straight-away) should you forget (to do so when expressing an intention for the future). And say: “I hope that my Lord will guide me to what is nearer to right conduct than this (forgetfulness of mine).”\[15\]

24. And they stayed in their Cave three hundred (solar) years, and added nine (for lunar years). Say: “God knows better how long they stayed. To Him belongs (absolute dominion and full knowledge of) the unseen of the heavens and the earth. How perfect is His seeing and how perfect is His hearing! And they have apart from Him no guardian, and He allots to no one a share in His absolute authority.

25. Recite (and teach) that which has been revealed to you from the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His words (whatever the unbelievers may say or desire), and you will never find, apart from Him, any refuge.
10. The experience of the People of the Cave is significant in two important ways: One is that God has promised that He will make successful those who believe in Him sincerely and strive in His way, helping His Word to prevail, even if they are weak and oppressed at the beginning. This is a matter over which people have been disputing since the time of Adam and over which the People of the Cave rose against the ruler and his people. While the People of the Cave themselves remained in the Cave, their resistance on behalf of their faith ended in victory. The second point is, as in the case of the man whose experience is narrated in surah 2: 259, who remained dead for a hundred years and then was raised to life by God as a sign for the people (so that they might understand how He created them and how He will restore them to life after their death) that the experience of the People of the Cave became a manifest sign for the coming of the Last Hour and the Resurrection, over which there had been a fierce controversy until the time they awoke.

11. Despite this manifest sign, many did not refrain from doubting the Resurrection and the afterlife, and even disclosed their denial of, at least, their doubts about God by saying, “their Lord,” not “our Lord.” This shows that if one does not have a sincere intention to believe, one can refuse to believe, even in the face of miracles.

12. This verse shows that at the time of the revelation of this surah a number of stories were in circulation about the People of the Cave among the People of the Book – i.e., the Christians and the Jews who had provoked the Makkah polytheists to ask the Messenger about them. Rather than concentrating on the lessons this experience teaches, they only debated about its details, such as the number of the men and how long they had remained in the Cave. Those who said they were three, the dog being the fourth among them, or that they were five, the dog being the sixth, or that they were seven, the dog being the eighth, were the People of the Book. The verse using the tense denoting the near future should not mislead us. It points to the fact that people will keep arguing about their number, just as they argued following the death of the People of the Cave. The Qur’an orders the believers to be intent primarily on the lessons given and not to ask anybody from among the People of the Book about these matters.

There is a subtle point here concerning the number of men in the cave in this Qur’anic narrative. Naturally, it is not forbidden to investigate into details, without restricting the historical events to the details. Verse 19, which informs us of the men’s conversation concerning how long they had remained in the Cave, mentions one person who asked about how long they had been there, with two different groups expressing their opinions. It uses the plural form in reference to these two groups. In Arabic, the plural is applicable to at least three persons. Therefore, we can conclude that there were two groups of at least three people, plus the man who posed the question, making at least seven People of the Cave, with the dog being the eighth. In addition, this last verse (22) does not criticize those who say they were seven, the dog being the eighth, for guessing at random at (something related to) the Unseen, while it does criticize the others who say they were three and those who say they were five.

13. By narrating the experience of the People of the Cave, the Qur’an also dispels the false belief that the apparent complex of causal relationships, which people call “laws of nature,” is unalterable. What we call the laws of nature are, in fact, the usual ways in which God lets things happen. He is not bound by any such laws. He can cause someone to remain asleep for hundreds of years and then rouse him, while preventing this long period from having any effect on that person’s age, appearance, or health.

The Reasons Why God Has Created Natural Laws and Causes: In the next world, the realm of Power, God will execute His Will directly without the ‘medium’ of causes, so that everything will happen instantaneously. The Divine Name, the All-Wise, requires that in this world, which is the realm of Wisdom,
Divine Power should operate from behind the veil of causes and laws. The following reasons may be given for this:

- Opposites are mingled in this world: truth with falsehood, light with darkness, good with evil, white with black, and so on. In this world, God tests humankind, in whose nature there are ingrained inclinations towards both good and evil, to mark out whether we will use our free will and other faculties in the way of truth and goodness or not, and in order that our potential may develop and that we may attain perfect humanity, Divine Wisdom has required that the veil of causes and laws should be drawn before the operations of Divine Power. If God had so willed, He could train the planets with His “Hands” in a way that would be observable by us, or He could have them administered by angels whom we could see openly, and we would then not be speaking of the laws of causes, such as gravity. Or, in order to communicate His Commandments, He could, without sending any Prophets, speak to each individual directly, or, in order to compel us to believe in His existence and Oneness, He could write His Name with stars on the skies. But in this case, human earthly existence would be meaningless.

- Like the two sides of a mirror, existence has two aspects or dimensions, one visible and material, the realm of opposites and (in most cases) imperfections, and the spiritual realm which is transparent, pure and perfect. There can be, in the material dimension, events and phenomena which appear disagreeable to human beings. Those who are unable to perceive the Divine Wisdom behind all things may go so far as to criticize the Almighty for those disagreeable events and phenomena. In order to prevent this, God has made natural laws and causes a veil to fall before His acts. For example, so that people should criticize neither God nor His angel of death for the loss of their beloved ones or for their own death, God has placed between Himself and the phenomenon of death (among other “agents” or “causes”) diseases and “natural” disasters.

    Again, on account of the essential imperfection of this world of test and trial, people encounter and suffer from many deficiencies and shortcomings. In absolute terms, whatever God does or decrees is good, beautiful, and just. Injustice, ugliness, and evil arise from the errors and abuses of humankind. For example, a court may pass an unjust sentence on you; but you should know that Destiny permitted that judgment because of a crime which had remained hidden. Whatever befalls people is usually because of self-wronging, an evil they themselves have done. However, those who lack the sound reasoning and judgment necessary to understand the Divine Wisdom behind events and phenomena may attribute the apparent ugliness or evil, and the imperfections and shortcomings that they experience, in this worldly life, directly to God. But God is absolutely free from any kind of defect or imperfection.

    Therefore, to prevent people from ascribing to God the ugliness and evil they encounter in life, His Glory and Grandeur have required that natural causes and laws should be a veil before His acts, while belief in His Unity demands that any kind of creative power should not be ascribed to those causes and laws.

- If God Almighty were to act in the world directly, without the “medium” of causes and laws, humankind would not have been motivated and enabled to develop scientific knowledge, and to live free from fears and anxieties. It is thanks to the fact that God acts from behind natural causes and laws that human beings are able to observe and study patterns in phenomena. Otherwise, each event would be perceived as a miracle. The regularity within the flux and mutability of events and phenomena makes them comprehensible to us, therefore awakening in us the desire to wonder and reflect; this
is a principal factor in the establishment of sciences. It is for the same reason that we are able, to some degree, to plan and arrange our affairs in advance. Consider how complicated life would be if we had absolutely no idea at all whether or not the sun would rise tomorrow!

- God has absolute beauty and perfection; all His Names are absolutely beautiful without any defect. If He manifested His Names and Attributes directly, without the “medium” of causes and laws, we would not be able to endure them, and more than that, lost in these manifestations, we would not be able to know Him. It is impossible for us to know something that is infinite. It is only by putting a limit to a thing that we can recognize it. The Almighty manifests His Names and Attributes and His Perfections from behind causes and laws, and by degrees within the confines of time and space, so that the world and life might have a regularity with which we can build a connection by perceiving and reflecting. The gradual manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes is also a reason for our curiosity and wonder about them.

These four constitute only some of the reasons why God acts through the “medium” of natural laws and causes.

14. Although human beings are free to make plans for the future and endowed with the necessary equipment to do what they plan, what they will do in the future, even in the present, is not dependent on their will power exclusively. There are many other factors that must be taken into consideration. No one knows whether they will be able to do what they have planned and intended. In fact, no one knows what lies in store even one minute later. Nor does anyone have the absolute power to do whatever they will. In addition, one does not know for sure whether what they intend to do is for their own good. So, we must do what we should according to God’s Will and commands, taking the necessary measures and making the required preparations, placing our trust in God, and then referring to Him whether our intention will be realized or not.

15. This part of the verse should not only be taken in connection with the previous one. Although it is evident that it demands that, in case we forget to refer the realization of our future intentions to His absolute Will, we should mention him when we remember, this verse should also be viewed in a more general sense in the light of the following, and other similar, Divine declarations:

And do not be like those who are oblivious of God and so God has made them oblivious of their own selves (59: 19).

Those who keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety: when a suggestion from Satan touch them — they are alert and remember God, and then they have clear discernment (7: 201).

Remember and mention your Lord within yourself (in the depths of your heart), most humbly and in awe, not loud of voice, at morning and evening. And do not be among the neglectful (7: 205).

16. According to some commentators, the People of the Cave took refuge in the Cave in 112 CE during the reign of Trajan. They argue that the Qur’anic statement, God knows better how long they stayed, is a confirmation that they stayed 300 (solar) years, with 9 more for lunar years, that is, 300 solar or 309 lunar years, and that this is a statement answering those who put forth different opinions. However, God knows best the truth for, to Him belongs (absolute dominion and full knowledge of) the unseen of the heavens and the earth. We must remain intent on the lessons to be drawn from historical events, and not become distracted by details the knowledge of which will not assist us in learning or applying those lessons.
28. And keep yourself patient along with those who invoke their Lord morning and evening seeking His “Face” (His eternal, good pleasure, and the meeting with Him in the Hereafter), and do not let your eyes pass from them, desiring the attraction of the life of this world, and pay no heed to him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, who follows his lusts and fancies, and whose affair exceeds all bounds (of right and decency).

29. And say: “The truth from your Lord (has come in this Qur’an).” Then, whoever wills (to believe), let him believe; and whoever wills (to disbelieve), let him disbelieve. Surely We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire, its billowing folds encompassing them. If they beg for water, they will be given water like molten metal that scalds their faces. How dreadful a drink, and how evil a couch to rest on!

30. Surely for those who believe and do good, righteous deeds – We do not leave to waste the reward of any who do good deeds, aware that God is seeing them.

31. Those are they for whom are Gardens of perpetual bliss through which rivers flow; adorned therein with armbands of gold, and they will dress in green garments of fine silk and rich brocade; they recline there upon thrones. How excellent a reward, how lovely a couch to rest on!

32. Set forth to them the parable of two men: for one of them We had made two vineyards and surrounded both with date-palms, and placed between them a field of grain.

33. Each of the two vineyards yielded its produce, without failing in anything. We had also caused a stream to gush forth between the two.

34. So the man had fruit (in abundance), and one day he said to his companion while he was conversing with him: “I am more than you in wealth, and mightier in manpower (children and those working for me).”
17. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, nearly tormented himself to death with grief over those who rejected faith in the Qur’ān. People’s prosperity in both worlds lay in faith in the Qur’ān and its rejection would bring their doom. So, without showing any trace of weariness, he called people to it. However, the chieftains in Makkah offered him to dissociate himself from the “lowly” believers as a condition for their participation in his teaching circles. The Messenger categorically rejected such demands. This verse condemns such demands and emphatically expresses that no follower of the Qur’ān can repulse a believer.

18. In the past, kings used to wear bracelets or armbands and garments of the finest silk and brocade. What people usually yearn for in the name of the worldly happiness is such royal prosperity. So the verse presents the enjoyment in Paradise in the terms of that prosperity, which is the greatest that people can imagine. However, the verse can also be taken with its literal meaning without forgetting that the garments described are particular to Paradise.
35. He went into his vineyard while wronging himself (in his vain conceit). He said: “I do not think that this will ever perish.
36. “Nor do I think that the Last Hour will ever come. Even if (it should come, and) I am brought back to my Lord, I will surely find something even better than this as a resort.”
37. His companion said to him, while he was arguing with him: “Do you (expressing such ingratitude) disbelieve in Him Who created you from earth, then from a mere drop of seminal fluid, then fashioned you into a perfect man?
38. “But (for my part I believe that) He is God, my Lord, and I do not associate with my Lord any partner.
39. “If only you had said, on entering your vineyard, ‘Whatever God wills (surely has and surely will come to pass); there is no strength (to achieve anything) save with God.’ Though you see me with less wealth and offspring than you (I have no complaint at all, for it is God Who does as He wills, and He is All-Compassionate toward His servants).
40. “It may well be that my Lord will give me something better than your vineyard, and send on it (your vineyard) a calamity from heaven, so that it becomes a barren waste.
41. “Or its water sinks deep into the ground, so that you will never be able to seek it out.”
42. And (as it happened) his produce was encompassed by ruin, and he set to wringing his hands with grief over all that he had spent on it, when it was now all ruined on its trellises, and he was saying: “Oh, would that I had never associated anyone with my Lord as partner!”
43. And he had, apart from God, none, no troop of men, to help Him, nor could he be of any help to himself.
44. For thus it is: all power to protect belongs to God, the All-True, Ever-Constant One. He is the Best for reward, and the Best for outcome.
45. And strike to them a parable of the present, worldly life: (it is) like water that We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it (flourishing abundantly). Then it turns into dry stubble which the winds scatter about. God is absolutely able to do all things.”
19. This is a very typical mood of many worldly people. They attribute whatever they have in the world to themselves. Because of this, they do not like anyone else, for example, the poor and the needy, to have any share in it. They are so puffed up by their worldly things that they deceive themselves into believing that God is their Lord in particular, and He is ready to welcome them under any circumstances. Such people are usually ignorant upstarts with crude manners.

20. After the experience of the People of the Cave, the parable of the two men is significant in two points. One is that a religious movement, or faith movement, which is based on sincerity, altruism, self-sacrifice, and trust in God, usually requires donations from its followers. Even though those followers do not have considerable wealth, they prefer the continuation of the movement to a prosperous life. This movement usually encounters fierce opposition from those in power and the self-indulgent, capital-owning segment of society. With the sole aim of living a luxurious worldly life, those wealthy ones do not wish to accept a power above them that will interfere with their way of earning and spending and, therefore, prefer a life outside the fold of the Divine Religion. So great are their successes and attainments in their own eyes that they identify their prosperity with happiness in Paradise and cannot see any real reason to strive for Paradise in the Hereafter.

Another point to which the parable draws our attention is that among those who lead the faith movement, or rather those who have taken part in it in the later stages and who have not had to bear any misfortunes, there may appear some who have tasted the riches of the world and who are attached to the worldly life at the cost of the goals of the faith movement. Such people attribute their attainments to their own abilities consciously ignoring God as the sole Giver of all that one has. They forget thankfulness and gradually take a prosperous worldly life as the sole aim of their existence, remaining in oblivion of the other life. When they are reminded of Paradise, they are in a mood in which they see their worldly prosperity as being identical with Paradise, and even worse, they regard themselves as the only ones who deserve Paradise. This is the stage where a civilization founded upon the pillars of the faith movement begins to decline. So, by telling the parable of the two men, the Qur’ān both urges the believers to spend in God’s cause, for the sake of reforming themselves as well as the society, and warns both these and the other believers, who have managed to carry the movement to the stage of founding a civilization, against the corruption which comes with being defeated by the charms of the world.