

Surah 29

*Al-`Ankabūt*¹

(The Spider)

Makkan²

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introductory Note

“The title has been derived from the parable of ‘the spider’s house’ in verse 41, a symbol of false beliefs and false values, which in the long run are bound to be blown away by the winds of truth” (Asad).

Yusuf Ali writes in his introduction to the *Surah*: “This *Surah* is the last of the series begun with S. xvii, in which the growth of the man as an individual is considered, especially illustrated by the way in which the great Prophets were prepared for their work and received their mission, and the nature of the Revelation in relation to the environments in which it was promulgated... It also closes the sub-series beginning with S. xxvi, which is concerned with the spiritual Light, and the reactions to it at certain periods of religious history...

“The last *Surah* closed with a reference to the doctrine of the Ma`ad,

or final Return of man to Allah. This theme is further developed here, and as it is continued in the subsequent *Suras*, it forms a connecting link between the present series and those three *Suras*.

“In particular, emphasis is laid here on the necessity of linking actual conduct with the reception of Allah’s revelation, and reference is again made to the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Lot among the Prophets, and the stories of Midian, `Ad, Thamūd, and Pharaoh among the rejecters of Allah’s Message. This world’s life is contrasted with the real Life of the Hereafter.

“Chronologically, the main *Surah* belongs to the late Middle Makkan period, but the chronology has no significance except as showing how clearly the vision of the Future was revealed long before the *Hijrat*, to the struggling Brotherhood of Islam.”

[1] Alif Lam Mim.

[2] Do the people reckon that they will be left alone that they say, 'We believed,' and will not be tried?³

الم ﴿١﴾
 أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا
 وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

1. This *Surah* can be related to the previous one in many ways such as, to mention one of them: When Allah (*swt*) said He will take the Prophet back to the Place of Return, meaning Makkah, He meant to say that this returning will require struggle leading to armed conflicts. Consequently, He said at the beginning of this *Surah*, "Do the people reckon that they will be left alone that they said, 'We believed, and they will not be tried?'" That is, they will have to struggle in Allah's cause and be ready for *Jihad*.

Another point of note is that there is wisdom in trials. The lowest rank that a believer enjoys is that he is a plain Muslim. Anything below this level is unbelief. Further, of those who register themselves as Muslims, there are some who are active, offering various services to Islam, others who lag behind, while a few are there who get their names deleted from service. Accordingly, some Muslims are advancing, some stagnating, while others retreating. So Allah said, "Do the people reckon they will be

left alone?" That is, they will not be left alone, but rather tried, in order that they remain active, advancing to higher ranks. Or they may refuse, enter into sins and transgressions, go down in ranks to finally descend into unbelief, if they so wish (Razi, shortened).

2. According to Hasan, 'Ikrimah, 'Ataa and Jabir, the whole of this *Surah* is Makkan. But, according to one of the two opinions of Ibn 'Abbas – and Qatadah - the whole of it is Madinan. Yahya b. Sallam said that the first ten verses are Madinan, the rest Makkan. 'Ali b. Abi Talib said that it was revealed between Makkah and Madinah (Qurtubi, Alusi).

3. Yusuf Ali comments: "Mere lip profession of Faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life. The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances, in individual life, and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put Allah above Self. Much pain, sorrow, and self-sacrifice may be necessary, not because they are

good in themselves, but because they will purify us, like fire applied to a goldsmith's crucible to burn out the dross."

Although the *ayah* is in the general sense, most early commentators have said that the allusion is to those who had suffered persecution in Makkah; and a few have mentioned specific instances. One of them refers to the martyrdom of Mahja` the freed slave of `Umar who was the first to fall at Badr. His martyrdom evoked the Prophet's words: "Mahja` is the Prince of Martyrs and will be the first to be invited to the gates of Paradise."

Sha`bi has said that this *ayah* refers to some people who embraced Islam at Makkah but did not migrate to Madinah. The Companions of the Prophet wrote to them that their Islam was invalid if they did not migrate. So they attempted to migrate but the Makkans chased them and brought them back. It was at this point that this verse was revealed: "Do the people reckon that they will be left alone that they say, 'We believed,' and will not be tested?" So the Companions wrote to them again informing them that such and such a verse had been revealed concerning them. So they said to them-

selfs, "Let us go. If the pagans fight, we shall give them a fight." So they made another attempt at *hijrah*. As expected, the pagans gave them a chase. So they fought them. Some got killed, others escaped to Madinah; and Allah (*swt*) revealed another verse (of *Surah Al-Nahl*, no. 110) which said, "But, verily your Lord, unto those who migrated, after they were persecuted, yet struggled thereafter, and persisted in patience .. after all that, Your Lord is (unto them) All-forgiving, All-kind" (Ibn Jarir at verse 3 and Qurtubi). Zamakhshari has a similar report but does not name Sha`bi.

The report is also in `Abd b. Humayd and Ibn Abi al-Mundhir (Shawkani).

Ibn Jarir presents this same narrative a second time at *ayah* 10, but as an opinion of Ibn `Abbas, and then remarks that according to Qatadah, the first ten verses of this chapter are Madinan while the rest of the *Surah* is Makkan.

Qurtubi quotes a *hadith* of Ibn Majah which reports about Abu Sa`id al-Khudri:

أَنَّ أَبَا سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيَّ دَخَلَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- وَهُوَ مُوعِظُهُ عَلَيْهِ قَطِيفَةٌ فَوَضَعَ يَدَهُ عَلَيْهِ فَوَجَدَ خِرَازِمَتَهَا فَوْقَ الْقَطِيفَةِ فَقَالَ أَبُو سَعِيدٍ : مَا أَشَدَّ حَرَّ حِمَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- : إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُشَدُّ عَلَيْنَا

الْبَلَاءِ ، وَيُضَاعَفُ لَنَا الْأَجْرُ . ثُمَّ قَالَ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ بَلَاءً؟ قَالَ : الْأَنْبِيَاءُ . قَالَ : ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ : ثُمَّ الْعُلَمَاءُ . قَالَ : ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ : ثُمَّ الصَّالِحُونَ . كَانَ أَحَدُهُمْ يُبْتَلَى بِالْفَقْرِ حَتَّى مَا يَجِدُ إِلَّا الْعَبَاءَةَ يَلْبَسُهَا وَيُبْتَلَى بِالْقَمَلِ حَتَّى يَثْقُلَهُ وَلَا أَحَدَهُمْ أَشَدُّ فَرَحًا بِالْبَلَاءِ مِنْ أَحَدِكُمْ بِالْعَطَاءِ .

That he entered upon the Prophet while he was ill, covered in a blanket. He placed his hand over the blanket and found it hot. He remarked, 'How severe your fever is, Messenger of Allah.' He replied, 'This is how it is with us Prophets. Our trials are doubled, and so are our rewards.' I asked, 'Which of the people is tried most?' He answered, 'Prophets.' I asked, 'Who after them?' He replied, 'Scholars.' He asked, 'Who after them?' He answered, 'The righteous ones. One of them was tried with poverty to such extent that he had nothing on him but torn clothes, and another tried with lice that would almost kill him. Yet, one of them would be more pleased with tribulations than you are with ease.'"

The above version is from *Adab al-Mufrad* declared trustworthy by Albani.

Another report narrated by Sa'd b. abi Waqqas says,

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً قَالَ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الصَّالِحُونَ ثُمَّ الْأَمْتَلُ قَالُوا مَتَلُ مِنَ النَّاسِ يُبْتَلَى الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ صَلَابَةٌ زِيدَ فِي بَلَائِهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةٌ خُفِّفَ عَنْهُ وَمَا يَزَالُ الْبَلَاءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى تَمْشِيَ عَلَى ظَهْرِ الْأَرْضِ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ خَطِيئَةٌ

"I asked the Prophet, 'Which of the people is tried most?' He answered, 'The Prophets; then the next best, and then the next best. A man is tested in accordance with his religion. If there happens to be strength in his religion, his trials are increased in severity. Tribulations keep visiting a slave until they leave him walking on the earth without any sin on him'" (Qurtubi).

So trials are in the nature of things. Allah said elsewhere (3: 142),

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾ { آل عمران: ١٤٢ }

"Or, do you reckon that you will enter Paradise (without being tested) while Allah has not yet known those of you who fight (in His cause), and (in order that) He may know the persevering (ones)."

He said at another place (2: 214),

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَاءُ وَزُلُّوا حَتَّى

يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرَ اللَّهُ أَلَا إِنَّ
نَصَرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ { [البقرة: ٢١٤]

“Or do you reckon that you will enter Paradise, while (trials) similar to those (that visited others) before you, have not yet come to you? Suffering and adversity touched them, and they were shaken until the Messengers and those who had believed in them cried out: ‘When (will come) Allah’s help?’ Verily, Allah’s help is nigh” (Ibn Kathir).

We could quote a few lines from Ibn al-Qayyim: “When a Messenger is raised among a people, they face two alternatives. Either one of them says, ‘yes I believe,’ or he decides to continue on the path of sin. Now, whoever says, ‘I believe,’ is subjected to tests and trials to determine the truth of his claim. Allah said (3: 179),

{ مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ
يَمَيِّرَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ { [آل عمران: ١٧٩]

‘Allah was not such as to let the believers remain in the state in which you are, until He distinguished the corrupt from the good.’

“To be sure, he who says ‘no’ to the message, should not imagine that he will escape the trials. Indeed, he faces greater tribulations, which are an immediate chastisement for the choice he made. In the next life he will meet with everlasting condem-

nation. In short, in this world, none can escape tribulations: whether he is a believer or an unbeliever.

“Therefore, whoever imagines that he can somehow escape sufferings and trials, is sadly mistaken. They are part of this life: in two ways. Man is made up of conflicting elements and, in trying to meet with the demands of these elements, he commits excesses in one or the other direction, and exposes himself to a variety of sufferings. Another factor is that he is a social being who must cooperate with others to meet with his needs. This cooperation leads to competition between individuals, so that, at one end he is loved, but at the other, hated. If he fails in giving what the others expect of him – as price for their co-operation with him – he faces their ire. If he gives in, it is to his peril. For, such giving in has to be in terms of efforts whose consequence is pain. To escape, therefore, from belief in Allah, in fear of trials and tribulations, or pain and suffering, is not an intelligent strategy. We might therefore keep before us `A’isha’s admonition to Mu`awiyah, ‘He who pleased Allah at the cost of the people’s displeasure will find Allah sufficient against their harm. But he who pleased the people at the cost of Allah’s anger, will find that they can-

[3] We did try those that were before them, so, Allah will surely know those who are truthful and He shall surely know the liars.⁴

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] Or do they reckon - those who indulge in evil - that they will outstrip Us? Evil is what they judge.⁵

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

not benefit him aught against Him' (Bada'i')."

Sayyid Qutb adds, "A word on trials: Iman is Allah's trust in the land that none will bear and carry except those worthy of it, and have the ability to carry it – whose hearts bear sincerity for it, in the absolute sense; and not those who give preference to ease and comfort over it.. to peace and security, to materials and temptations. It is the trust of the vicegerency in the earth; and people's guidance to the way of Allah, and establishment of his Word in the world of the living. Thus it is a noble trust .. and it is a burdensome trust. It is Allah's strategy whereby He exposes the people. It needs a special class of people to bear the trust: people who can be patiently persevering during the course of trials."

4. Allah (*swt*) knew all about them before the test, during the test and

after the test. What He meant here is that 'He shall make known the truth of the truthful and the lie of the liars' (Tabari).

In fact, 'Ali (ibn Abi Talib) and *Zubri* read the word "*la-ya`limanna*" as "*la-yu`limanna*" meaning, He shall make it known (Zamakhshari).

5. The immediate reference was to Walid b. al-Mughirah, Abu Jahl, Al-Aswad b. Hashim, al-'Aas b. Hisham, Shaybah, 'Utbah, Walid b. 'Utbah, 'Uqbah b. Abi Mu`ayt, Hanzala b. Abu Sufyan, 'Aas b. Wa'il and others (Qurtubi, Alusi).

Yusuf Ali has in mind another implication of the words, "If the enemies of Truth imagine that they will 'be first' by destroying Truth before it takes root, they are sadly at fault, for their own persecution may help to plant Allah's Truth more firmly in men's hearts."

[5] Whoever hopes to encounter Allah, (should know) that Allah's (appointed) term is surely coming; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.⁶

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

[6] And, whoever strives, strives only for himself.⁷ Indeed, Allah is Independent of (all the beings of) the worlds.

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

[7] As to those who believed and acted righteously, We shall surely blot out their misdeeds from them and shall surely recompense them with better than what they were doing.⁸

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

6. Yusuf Ali explains: "The term (*ajal*) may signify: (1) the time appointed for death, which ends the probation of this life; (2) the time appointed for this life, so that we can prepare for the Hereafter; the limit will soon expire. In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. We must strive now and not postpone anything for the future. And we must realize and remember that every prayer we make to Allah is heard by Him, and that every unspoken wish or motive of our heart, good or bad, is known to Him, and goes to swell our spiritual account."

7. Perhaps because whenever the term *Jihad* is used in the Qur'an,

the default meaning is to wage war in Allah's cause, unless the context lends the meaning of struggle or strive that Hasan al-Busri cautions us about those who had no chance to participate in a battle. He writes, (in words as quoted by Ibn Kathir): "A man might conduct *Jihad* although he might not have struck with the sword once in (his) lifetime."

8. The translation as done here has the backing of Zamakhshari and as adopted by Alusi and Thanwi. Hence, Alusi points out, every one of their deeds will earn rewards ten times their value, or more.

[8] And We enjoined on man goodness to his parents. But if they strive against you, that you associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, then obey them not.⁹ To Me is your return, and I shall inform you of what you were doing.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ
جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ
فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] As for those who believed and acted righteously, We shall surely admit them among the righteous.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾

9. The connection between this and the previous verses seems to be that earlier Allah said, "And whoever strives, strives only for himself," He points out now that this striving could start with the parents who could be the first, as experienced quite often, to oppose their son embracing Islam (Au.).

Imām Razi extends the meaning to people's reliance on others for thoughts, ideas and concepts. In Asad's words, "According to Razi, this phrase may also allude to concepts not evolved through personal knowledge but, rather, acquired through a blind, uncritical acceptance of other people's views (*taqlid*)."

Qatadah has said that this verse was revealed in reference to Sa'd b. abi Waqqas's emigration to Madinah (Ibn Jarir, and Zamakhshari without naming Qatadah), and Qurtubi (as well

as Ibn Kathir) quote the following from Tirmidhi who recorded it as the context of revelation of this verse, declaring the report trustworthy. Sa'd's son narrated from his father that four verses were revealed in reference to him. Sa'd's mother asked, "Has not Allah commanded you to be good? By God, I shall not eat anything nor drink until I die or you denounce (this new religion)." "So," said Sa'd, "When they wanted to feed her, they used to forcibly open her mouth." It is then that Allah revealed this verse. It is also recorded that Sa'd initially tried to persuade her to give up while she taunted him that after her death he will be remembered as the killer of his mother. Finally, Sa'd told her, "Mother, if you had a hundred souls, and gave them all up, one after another, I will not abandon my religion. So, if you wish to eat, you may, but if you do not, then don't." She gave up.

[10] And, among the people are some who say, 'We believe in Allah.' But when (one of them) is harmed in (the cause of) Allah, he treats the people's oppression as a wrath of Allah.¹⁰ But if help comes from your Lord, they will surely say, 'Indeed we were with you.'¹¹ Is not Allah best knowing of what is in the bosom of (all the beings of) the worlds?

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا
أُودِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ
اللَّهِ وَلَئِن جَاء نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُولَنَّ
إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ أَوْلَىٰ لَئِن لَّمْ يَأْتِكُمْ
بِأَمْرٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ
أَوْلَىٰ لَئِن لَّمْ يَأْتِكُمْ بِنُورٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
لَيَقُولَنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ أَوْلَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

Shawkani adds: According to a *hadith* in Tirmidhi (who declared it *Sahih*), Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Bayhaqi and a few others, the Prophet (*saws*) said,

لَقَدْ أُودِيَ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَمَا يُؤَدِي أَحَدٌ وَأُخِفْتُ
مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُخَافُ أَحَدٌ وَلَقَدْ أَتَتْ عَلَيَّ ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنْ
بَيْنِ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ وَمَا لِي وَلِعِيَالِي طَعَامٌ يَأْكُلُهُ دُو كَبِدِ إِلَّا
مَا يُؤَارِي إِبْطَ بِلَالٍ

“I have been persecuted like no one else was persecuted; I feared in the way of Allah like no one feared; a third day would dawn upon me in a condition that I and Bilal had nothing to eat except for what could be concealed in Bilal's armpit.”

10. That is, they said to themselves: 'If we believe, we are persecuted by the unbelievers, and if we do not, then we face Allah's ire' - equating the two. But can the two be equated? (Razi, shortened). So one of them decided that he should perhaps take

a way in between, and adopt hypocrisy. So Allah said, “But if help comes from your Lord, they will surely say, ‘Indeed, we were with you’” (Au.).

This verse has been differently expressed elsewhere. Said Allah (22: 11-12):

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّبِعُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِن أَصَابَهُ
خَيْرٌ اطمأنَّ بِهِ وَإِن أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انقلبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ
خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١١)
يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُ وَمَا لَا يَضُرُّهُ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُ ذَلِكَ
هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ﴾ [الحج: ١١، ١٢]

“And, among the people is such a one who serves Allah on an edge. If good touches him, he is satisfied therewith. But if a trial touches him, he turns on his face. He loses this world and the Hereafter. That indeed is an evident loss. He calls to one - apart from Allah - who can neither harm him nor benefit him. That indeed is the extreme error” (Ibn Kathir).

11. So you should give us a share in the booty (Zamakhshari).

[11] And Allah will surely know those who believed and He shall surely know the hypocrites.¹²

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ
الْمُنَافِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

As Allah said elsewhere (4: 141),

{ الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فُتْحٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ }
[النساء: ١٤١]

“Those who wait upon you so that if victory comes to you from Allah, they ask: ‘Were we not with you?’ But if the unbelievers get a share of it they say (to them): ‘Did we not gain mastery over you, and protect you from the believers?’” – Ibn Kathir.

12. (Thus, we can see once again that trials are in Allah’s scheme). After the battle of Uhud which subjected the believers to extreme tribulation, Allah said (3: 179),

{ مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ } [آل عمران: ١٧٩]

“Allah was not such as to let the believers remain in the state in which you are, until He distinguished the corrupt from the good” (Ibn Kathir).

Asad has a word on hypocrisy: “This is probably the earliest occurrence of the term *munafiq* in the chronology of the Qur’anic revelation. Idiom-

atically, the term is derived from the noun *Nifaq*, which denotes an ‘underground passage’ having an outlet different from the entry, and signifying, specifically, the complicated burrow of a field-mouse, a lizard, etc., from which the animal can easily escape or in which it can outwit its pursuer. Tropically, the term *munafiq* describes a person who is ‘two-faced,’ inasmuch as he always tries to find an easy way out of any real commitment, be it spiritual or social, by adapting his course of action to what promises to be of practical advantage to him in the situation in which he happens to find himself. Since a person thus characterized usually pretends to be morally better than he really is, the epithet *munafiq* may roughly be rendered as hypocrite.”

Along with the above description, we might keep that definition before us which has been offered by the *Salaf*, stated elsewhere in this work, which should help us draw a line between a weak Muslim and a hypocrite: “*Nifaq* is to conceal disbelief and put up a show of faith.” To put it differently, it is the effort to

[12] And said those who disbelieved to those who believed, 'Follow our way, and we shall carry (the burden) of your faults.'¹³ But they are not going to carry any of their faults. Indeed, they are liars.

[13] But rather they shall carry their (own) burdens, and (other) burdens along with their (own) burdens.¹⁴ And they shall surely be questioned on the Day of Standing about that which they were forging.¹⁵

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا
سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ
بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُمْ
لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

وَلْيَحْمِلُنَّ أَثْقَاهُمْ وَأَثْقَالًا مَعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ
وَلْيُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ
﴿١٣﴾

manifest faith in Islam, without its existence in the heart. According to this definition, if someone has belief well planted in his heart, but is unable to make it manifest, for whatever reason, or reasons, other than to mislead Allah and His creations, then he is not a *munafiq*. Therefore, to qualify Asad's statement above, (viz., "he always tries to find an easy way out of any real commitment, be it spiritual or social, by adapting his course of action to what promises to be of practical advantage"), we might add, "doing it out of lack of conviction with regard to Islamic values, teachings and demands, in a word, faith in Islam." On the other hand, if he adopts the course as described by Asad, but either out of inner weaknesses, or simply for practical advantages, which he admits, and is remorseful of, then, Allah willing, it is not hypocrisy (Au.).

13. That is, 'if there is sin in following our pagan ways and beliefs, then such a sin will be our burden (Alusi); such was the level of confidence of the pagans in their religion. They had a feeling deep down in their hearts that their pagan ways were sinful, but considered it worth bearing the burden! (Au.).

14. That is, they will carry their own burden of sins and, in addition, the sins of those they misguided (Ibn Jarir).

Thus, there is no contradiction between the previous verse which says that they will not carry the burden, and this one which says they will. What was meant earlier was that the sins of the sinners they misguide will not be offloaded from them on to these people so that the misguided ones become free of any responsibility (adopted from Razi). This is clari-

fied by a *Sahih hadith* that Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir quote. It says,

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَالَّةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا

“Whoever invited to guidance will have rewards equal to the rewards of those who follow him until the Day of Standing without their own rewards being reduced by aught. And whoever invited to misguidance, will have upon him sins equal to the sins of all those who follow him until the Day of Standing, without their sins being reduced by aught.”

Another *Sahih* report says,

لَا تَقْتُلُ نَفْسٌ ظُلْمًا إِلَّا كَانَ عَلَى ابْنِ آدَمَ الْأَوَّلِ كَيْفٌ مِنْ دَمِهَا وَذَلِكَ لِأَنَّهُ أَوَّلُ مَنْ سَنَّ الْقَتْلَ

“No one is killed unlawfully but a share of the guilt is upon the first son of Adam because he was the first to set the example.”

The report is in Bukhari (Au.).

15. That is, these misguiding people will carry several kinds of loads: sins of their own, sins of those they mis-guided, and, in addition, sins of fabricating lies when they claimed that they could carry the sins of others (Razi).

In this connection, Abu Umamah al-Bahiliyy reports that the Prophet said,

إياكم والظلم، فإن الله يعزم يوم القيامة فيقول: وعزتي لا يجوزني اليوم ظلم! ثم ينادي مناد فيقول: أين فلان ابن فلان؟ فيأتي يتبعه من الحسنات أمثال الجبال، فيشخص الناس إليها أبصارهم حتى يقوم بين يدي الله الرحمن عز وجل ثم يأمر المنادي فينادي (ع) من كانت له تبتاعة -أو: ظلامة- عند فلان ابن فلان، فهلّم. فيقبلون حتى يجتمعوا قياما بين يدي الرحمن، فيقول الرحمن: اقضوا عن عبدي. فيقولون: كيف نقضي عنه؟ فيقول لهم: خذوا لهم من حسناته. فلا يزالون يأخذون منها حتى لا يبقى له حسنة، وقد بقي من أصحاب الظلمات، فيقول: اقضوا عن عبدي. فيقولون: لم يبق له حسنة. فيقول: خذوا من سيئاتهم فاحملوها عليه“. ثم نزع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بهذه الآية الكريمة: وَلِيَحْمِلَنَّ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَتَقَالَا مَعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ وَلَيَسْأَلَنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتُرُونَ

“Beware of injustice. Allah will swear by His Power and Majesty and say, ‘No injustice will overtake Me today.’ Then a caller will call out, ‘Where is so and so, son of so and so?’ He will come forward with mountains of good deeds behind him. People’s eyes will be stuck to them (the good deeds) in wonder – until he stands before the All-merciful. He will command a caller to call out, ‘Whoever is owed anything or an injustice (done to him) by so and so, son of so and so, may come forward.’ Such of them will come

[14] Indeed We sent Nuh to his people. He dwelt among them a thousand years except for fifty years.¹⁶ Then the flood seized them while they were wrongdoers.¹⁷

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ
أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ
الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

forward until they stand together before the All-merciful. The All-merciful will say, ‘Pay back from My slave.’ (I.e., the one who did wrong to others: Au.). They will ask, ‘How shall we pay back from him?’ He will say, ‘Pay back out of his good deeds.’ So they will keep transferring the good deeds, until none of his good deeds remains. But there would still be people with scores to be settled. He will say, ‘Pay back from My slave.’ They will ask, ‘Nothing is left of his good deeds.’ He will say, ‘Take their evil deeds and load them on to him.’ Then the Prophet recited this verse, “But rather they shall carry their (own) burdens, and (other) burdens along with their (own) burdens” (Qurtubi).

This report, which is in Ibn Abi Hatim also, has similar reports in *Sahih* works corroborating it.

Ibn Abi Hatim has another report which fits the context. He narrates Mu`adh b. Jabal as saying,

يا معاذ، إن المؤمن يسأل يوم القيامة عن جميع سعيه،
حتى عن كُحل عينيه، وعن فتات الطينة بإصبعيه،

فلا ألقىَنَّكَ تأتي يوم القيامة وأحد أسعد بما آتاك
الله منك

“The Prophet told me, ‘O Mu`adh. A believer will be questioned on the Day of Judgment about his every action to the extent of the kohl in his eyes and the little dust between his fingers. So, let me not find someone on the Day of Judgment who would have done better than you in reference to what Allah bestowed on you” (Ibn Kathir).

The authenticity of the above report could not be verified (Au.).

16. The period of Nuh’s stay was mentioned to encourage the Prophet and his early followers to bear the Makkan rejection with patience. After all, an earlier Prophet had shown patience in the face of rejection for no less than 950 years (Razi).

There are several opinions about the age at which Nuh (*asws*) was commissioned and how long he lived. The nearest to being correct is that of Ibn `Abbas, (as in Ibn Abi Shaybah, `Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir,

Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu al-Sheikh and Hakim, with the last rating it *Sahih*: Shawkani), that he was granted Prophethood at forty, remained preaching for the next 950 years, after which the Flood overtook the unbelievers. After the floods he lived for another sixty years (Qurtubi, Zamakhshari and others).

Qurtubi presents another report coming from Anas b. Malik. It says that when the angel of death came to Nuh, he asked him, "O thou, the longest living Prophet. How did you find the world?" Nuh replied, "Like a man who built a house with two doors. He entered by one door, stood in the middle to say, 'Salam to you,' and then left by another." (The report is in Ibn 'Asakir whose authenticity could not be checked: Au.).

Alusi points out that it is in Ibn Abi al-Dunya also, (but he does not evaluate it: Au.).

Mujahid said, "Ibn 'Umar asked me, 'How long did Nuh tarry among his people?' I said, 'A thousand years except for fifty.' He said, 'Since that time people have been suffering decrease in their ages, their aspirations, their morals, and their physical stature - to this day'" (*Durr al-Manthur*).

Sayyid has an intelligent point for the rationalists who fail to think straight quite so often. He writes: "By any account, the length of Nuh's life was certainly long. By today's standards, it was unnatural and is not known to occur among humanity today. But we have it from a source that happens to be the truest source in existence. This is evidence enough for us. However, if we wished to explain, we could say that the human population then, at the time of consideration, must have been quite low. It is no surprise that Allah should have compensated fewness in numbers with long lives in order that human life could continue on the earth. When the numbers increased and mankind spread over the lands, there remained no need for such long lives. This can be noticed in many species: whenever the populations are low, the age factor increases such as in the case of certain reptiles. For example, turtles live for hundreds of years. On the other hand among the flies, which multiply in millions, individuals hardly live for more than two weeks."

17. That is, they remained adamantly on unbelief: wrongdoers to the end (Razi).

[15] And We delivered him and the companions of the boat and appointed it a sign for the (peoples of the) worlds.¹⁸

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] And (remember) Ibrahīm, when he said to his people, ‘Worship Allah and fear Him. That is better for you if only you knew.

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] You only worship idols besides Allah, and invent a falsehood. Indeed, those you worship besides Allah have no power of sustenance for you. Therefore, seek sustenance from Allah,¹⁹ worship Him, and be grateful to Him; to Him you will be returned.

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] But if you cry lie (to Muhammad), then, surely nations before you also cried lies. And there is no more on the Messenger, except clear conveyance.²⁰

وَإِن تَكْفُرُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ أُمَّةً مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] Have they not seen how Allah begins the creation and then repeats it? That surely is easy for Allah.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

18. According to Qatadah the meaning is that Allah left the boat on top of Mount Judiyy as a sign. But another possible meaning is that He appointed the punishment meted out to the unbelievers as a sign for the rest of the world (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

19. “Rizq” of Arabic has a wide connotation, often relegated to the back of the mind. Yusuf Ali reminds us: “Sustenance: in the symbolic as well as the literal sense. Seek from Allah all that is necessary for your upkeep

and development, and for preparing you for your future Destiny. Lay all your hopes in Him and in no one else. Dedicate yourselves to His worship. He will give you all that is necessary for your growth and well being, and you should show your gratitude to Him by conforming your will entirely to His.”

20. It is also possible that these are the words of Ibrahīm (asws) in which case he was referring to the nations of Sheeth, Idrees, Nuh and others (Zamakhshari).

[20] Say, 'Journey in the land and see how He began the creation.' Then Allah will produce the final producing.²¹ Surely, Allah has power over all things.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ
الْحَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] He punishes whom He will and shows mercy unto whom He will.²² And to Him shall you be turned back.

يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَإِلَيْهِ
تُقَلَّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] And you are not going to frustrate (Him) either in the earth or in the heaven.²³ And you have not, apart from Allah, a protector or helper.

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي
السَّمَاءِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ
وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] As for those who rejected Allah's revelations²⁴ and the encounter with Him, it is they (who) are despaired of My mercy, and it is they for whom awaits a painful chastisement.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ
يَكْسَبُونَ مِنَ رَحْمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ عَذَابُ آلِيمٍ
﴿٢٣﴾

21. According to Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah, the allusion is to the resurrection after death (Ibn Jarir).

Shu`ayb al-Arna'ut judged the above as a strong report (Au.).

22. It is another thing that Allah (*swt*) does not punish every defaulter, every time he commits an error, but rather offers reprieve, punishing only those who cross all limits. Otherwise, as Ibn Kathir quotes a *hadith* (from Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah and *Musnad* Ahmad: H. Ibrahīm),

The connection with the previous verse is obvious. There it was said that Allah will resurrect a final time. Now, resurrection will be for the purposes of judging the people, rewarding or punishing them, which is what this present verse says (Au.).

إن الله لو عذب أهل سماواته وأهل أرضه، لعذبهم
وهو غير ظالم لهم

23. That is, you will not be able to frustrate Allah's designs either in the earth, or in the heavens if you happened to be there (Ibn Jarir).

“Verily, if Allah punished all of his creations in the heavens and all of them in the earth, He could do it without being unjust.”

24. The translation of the word *ayah* as ‘revelation,’ has the backing of Qurtubi (Au.).

[24] But there was no answer of his people except that they said, 'Kill him, or burn him.' But Allah rescued him from the fire. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who believe.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ
أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ إِنَّ فِي
ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] And he said, 'You have only taken to yourselves, other than Allah, idols as (bonds of) mutual love between you for the life of this world. But on the Day of Standing you will disown one another, and you will curse one another. Your abode will be the Fire, and you will have no helpers.'²⁵

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ
بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم
بَعْضًا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ
نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

25. Yusuf Ali comments on high level of co-operation seen among those who reject the truth, but who will end in sorrow: "In sin and wickedness there is as much log-rolling as in politics. Evil men humor each other and support each other; they call each other's vice by high-sounding names. They call it mutual regard or friendship or love; at the lowest, they call it toleration. Perhaps they flourish in this life by such arts. But they deceive themselves, and they deceive each other. What will be their relations in the Hereafter? They will disown each other when each has to answer on the principle of personal responsibility. Each will accuse the others of misleading him, and they will curse each other. But there will then be no help, and they must suffer in the Fire."

In connection with "some helping others" on the Day of Judgment, Ibn Kathir has the following to report from Ibn Abi Hatim. Umm Haani, the sister of `Ali ibn Abi Talib said,

أخبرك أن الله تعالى يجمع الأولين والآخرين يوم
القيامة في صعيد واحد، فَمَنْ يَدْرِي أَيْنَ الطَّرْفَانِ ،
فَقَالَتْ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . "ثم ينادي مناد من تحت
العرش: يا أهل التوحيد، فيشرّبون" قال أبو عاصم:
يرفعون رؤوسهم . "ثم ينادي: يا أهل التوحيد،
ثم ينادي الثالثة: يا أهل التوحيد، إن الله قد عفا
عنكم" قال: "فيقول الناس قد تعلق بعضهم ببعض
في ظلمات الدنيا - يعني: المظالم - ثم ينادي: يا
أهل التوحيد، ليعف بعضكم عن بعض، وعلى الله
الثواب

"The Prophet told me, 'Let me inform you that Allah is going to gather together whole of mankind in one field on the Day of Judgment. Then who knows the two ends?' She said, 'Allah

[26] But Lūt believed in him.²⁶ And he said, 'I am emigrating toward my Lord.²⁷ He indeed is the All-mighty, the All-wise.'

فَأَمَرَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾

and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'Then a caller will call out from below the *'Arsh*: "Ya Abl al-Tawhid." They will raise their heads. Then he will call out again, "Ya Abl al-Tawhid." Then he will call out a third time and say, "Allah has forgiven you." The Prophet added, "Then some people (of the *Abl al-Tawhid*) will remain who would be held back because of wrongs committed against others in the world. Then it will be announced, "Ya Abl al-Tawhid, let you forgive each other, and Allah will recompense."

Al-Haythamiyy noted that Abu Hatim declared the above *hadith* as "munkar" – a kind of quite weak *hadith* (Au.).

26. That is, he believed in Ibrahīm the moment he presented his call, and accepted all that he had brought as true (Alusi).

Lūt was a nephew of Prophet Ibrahīm (Qurtubi from Ibn Is-haq).

27. It is Ibrahīm who said this (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*). Qatadah however said that both he and Lūt emi-

grated (along with Ibrahīm's wife Sarah) from Kutha (a place near Kufa) to Syria. He also said that we used to hear that the Prophet had said,

سَتَكُونُ هِجْرَةٌ بَعْدَ هِجْرَةٍ، فَخِيَارُ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَىٰ مُهَاجِرِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، يَبْقَىٰ فِيهَا شِرَارُ أَهْلِهَا، تَلْفِظُهُمُ الْأَرْضُ، وَتَقْدَرُهُمْ نَفْسُ اللَّهِ، فَيَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَارًا تَحْشُرُهُمْ مَعَ الْقِرَدَةِ وَالْخَنَازِيرِ

"There will be *hijrah* after *hijrah*. In droves peoples of the earth will go to the places Ibrahīm migrated. Only the worst kind of people will be left in the earth, their lands will throw them out, Allah will disapprove of them, until Allah will send upon them the fire that will collect them along with monkeys and swine."

The report is in Abu Da'ud also (Ibn Kathir).

But Albani declared it weak; although meaning-wise there are other reports of trustworthy nature (Au.).

Ibn Jurayj however said that Lūt first migrated to Harran. Then he was ordered to move to the Syrian region (Ibn Jarir).

[27] Then We bestowed on him Is-haq and Ya`qub²⁸ and appointed Prophethood and the Book to be among his progeny;²⁹ and We gave him his reward in this world,³⁰ and in the world to come he shall surely be among the righteous.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي
ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي
الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

It has been thought by some scholars however, that the words are those of Lūt (*asws*). In this context Anas b. Malik reported that `Uthman b. `Affan left with Ruqayyah – the Prophet’s daughter - to the Abyssinian lands. For some time no news reached the Prophet about them, until a Qurayshi woman, who had just come back from a journey, told him: “I saw your son-in-law with your daughter.” He asked, “In what state did you find them?” She said, “I saw him having mounted his wife on a lean donkey, while he led it on.” The Prophet said,

إِنَّ عُثْمَانَ أَوْلَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَى اللَّهِ بِأَهْلِهِ بَعْدَ لُوطٍ.

“Uthman is the first after Lūt, to migrate along with his family” (Qurtubi).

Asad comments on the term “*muhajir*”: “In the present instance this term is obviously used in both its physical and spiritual senses, analogous to the early allusion (in 19: 48-49) to Abraham’s ‘withdrawal’ (*i`tizal*) from his

evil, native environment and to his physical emigration to Harran (in northern Mesopotamia), and thence to Syria and Palestine.”

28. That is, a son Is-haq, and a grandson Ya`qub. It is in this sense that Ibn `Abbas meant to say when he said that the two were sons of Ibrahīm (Ibn Kathir).

29. So that, writes Ibn Kathir, every Prophet who came after Ibrahīm (*asws*) was raised from his progeny.

30. It is said that Mujahid sent someone to `Ikrimah to find out what was the ‘this-worldly’ reward that Ibrahīm was given. He told him, his ‘this-worldly’ reward was that all the nations of the world love to own him as theirs. When the man returned with the answer to Mujahid he remarked, “He is correct.” This is the opinion of Ibn `Abbas and others who added that another of the rewards of this world granted to him was righteous progeny (Ibn Jarir).

[28] And (recall) Lūt when he said to his people, 'Verily, you commit a lewdness that no one has preceded with before you in the worlds.³¹

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ
الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] What, do you approach men, cut off the highway,³² and commit abomination in your assembly?³³ But there was no answer of his people except that they said, 'Bring us Allah's chastisement if you are of the truthful.'

أَفَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ
وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ فَمَا كَانَ
جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتَّبِنَا بَعْدَابِ
اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] He said, 'O my Lord. Help me against the corrupting people.'

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ
﴿٣٠﴾

31. `Amr b. Dinar used to say that no one in the world ever committed homosexuality before the people of Lūt (Ibn Jarir); perhaps he meant as a nation (Au.).

roads, threw pebbles at the passers by, (especially women: Qurtubi), and made fun of them (Ibn Jarir).

32. Ibn Zayd has said that the allusion is to their habit of waylaying passers-by and forcing anal sex on them (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Umm Hani's report is in Tirmidhi also, but who declared it not so reliable. The report is also in Hakim who declared it trustworthy (Alusi). The allusion could in general be to all sorts of indecencies that they committed in their assemblies (*Ma`arif*).

Another connotation of "*taqta`una al-sabil*" is, as offered by Hasan and quoted by Zamakhshari: "to cut across the way (of nature)." And, as noted by Asad, "Imām Razi adopts it exclusively and without reservation."

The report about throwing pebbles etc., is in Abu Da'ud Tayaalisi, Nuhhas, Tha`labi, Mahdawi and Mawardi. As regards reports about passing winds, it also comes from Ibn `Abbas and Qasim b. Abi Bazzah. Several other indecencies are reported of them, including lesbianism (Qurtubi), such as, as one coming from Ibn `Abbas which says that the allusion is to finger-joints crackling, chewing

33. While a report from `A'isha said that the allusion is to wind-passing contests in their assemblies; Umm Haani says she was told by the Prophet that they squatted on the

[31] When Our messengers came to Ibrahīm with the good news,³⁴ they said, 'Indeed We are about to destroy the inhabitants of this township. Verily, its inhabitants have been evildoers.'

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى
قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ إِنَّ
أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] He said, 'But surely Lūt is in it.'³⁵ They said, 'We know very well who is in it. Assuredly we shall save him and his family - except his wife: she has been of those who lag behind.'

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ
فِيهَا لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ
الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] And when Our messengers came to Lūt, he was troubled on their account and felt himself powerless for them.³⁶ They said, 'Fear not, nor grieve. We shall save you and your family, except your wife - she has been of those who lag behind.'

وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ
وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا تَحْزَنْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ
إِنَّا مُنَجِّوْكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ كَانَتْ
مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] Indeed, we are about to bring down upon the inhabitants of this township a scourge from the heaven because they have been doing corruption.'

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ
السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

gum, rubbing miswak in public, removing clothes before others, calling names, and indecency in jokes (Zamakshari).

The above report has not been authenticated. We have presented it to give some idea of what our ancestors disapproved of, some of which have entered into Muslim society of our times (Au.).

34. When Lūt (*asws*) prayed to Allah (*swt*) for help against the evildoers, Allah responded by sending angels of destruction. They passed by Ibrahīm (*asws*) but first gave him the glad tid-

ing of a son and a grandson in order to comfort him at the impending destruction of the people of Lūt (Ibn Kathir).

35. Ibrahīm was not informing the angels about Lūt's presence in the township (Au.), but rather he meant to express his wonder over how could a people be destroyed when there happened to be a Prophet among them (Razi); so, primarily he was concerned with Lūt (Au.).

36. Their arrival, and the nefarious intentions of the inhabitants of his town, made Lūt distressful, (Qata-

[35] *Indeed, We left thereof a clear sign for a people who reason.*³⁷

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

﴿٣٥﴾

dah: Ibn Jarir), especially so because he felt himself powerless against the corrupt folk (Razi). According to details given in Hūd, al-Hijr and al-Qamar, the townsmen visited Lūt to demand his guests. He cried out in anguish (10: 80), “Would that I had a power against you or take refuge in a strong corner” (Mawdudi).

37. That is, a lasting sign and unforgettable lesson was left in them, in the town, and in the punishment which was meted out to them (Ibn Jarir, reworted). When the Arabs of the Prophet’s time visited the Syrian region, they passed by the Dead Sea and learned from the local populations that the nation of Lūt was buried in there (Au.). Allah said about their main town under the sea (15: 76-77):

{وَأَنَّهَا لِبَسِيبٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٧٦) إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً
لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ} [الحجر: ٧٦، ٧٧]

*“And it is right on the high-road.
Surely, in that is a sign for those
who believe.”*

Asad adds: “This is an allusion to the Dead Sea – known to this day as Bahr Lūt (“The Sea of Lot”) – which covers most of the region in which

Sodom and Gomorrah were once situated. Its waters contain so high a percentage of sulphur and potash that no fish or plants can live in them.”

Majid adds: “The sea itself has certain very curious peculiarities. ‘Ocean water contains on an average 4-6% of salts. Dead Sea water contains 25% .. Owing principally to the large proportion of chloride and bromide of magnesia, no animal life can exist in its water. Fish .. die in a very short time if introduced into the main waters of the lake.’ (EBr. VII. p. 879, 11th ed.). ‘The water of the Dead Sea is intensely saline .. The Chlorides of magnesium, largely held in solution, gives water its nauseous taste .. No animal life can exist in its waters... The recent (1924) joint expedition of the Xenio seminary and the American School of Oriental Research sent out to locate the Cities of the Plain are convinced that three of them, Sodom, Gomorrah and Zoar, stood in the south-east corner of the Dead Sea ... but now of course beneath the area.’ (EBr. VII, pp. 99-100).”

[36] And to Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu`ayb. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah and look to the Last Day.³⁸ And act not corruptly in the earth, spreading mischief.

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ
اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْتُوا
فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] But they lay the lie on him and so the earthquake seized them and by morning they lay prostrate in their dwelling.³⁹

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي
دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] And (remember) `Ad⁴⁰ and Thamūd - surely, it has become clear to you (what We did to them) from their homes (now in ruins). Shaytan decked out fair to them their deeds, and thus averted them from the Path, although they were (otherwise) quite sagacious.⁴¹

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَسَاكِينِهِمْ
وَرَبَّنَّ هُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَاهُمْ فَصَدَّاهُمْ عَنِ
السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Yusuf Ali has his usual poignant remark: "The whole tract on the east side of the Dead Sea (where the Cities were situated) is covered with sulphureous salts and is deadly to animal and plant life. The Dead Sea itself is called in Arabic the Bahr Lūt (the sea of Lot). It is a scene of utter desolation, that should stand as a Symbol of the Destruction that awaits Sin."

38. That is, you should look forward to be rewarded for your good deeds in the Hereafter (Ibn Jarir). A few have thought that the meaning is "fear the Hereafter" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Qurtubi).

39. That is, they lay dead, piled upon each other (Ibn Jarir).

40. Asad comments: "As regards the tribe of `Aad, the above seems to be an allusion to their one-time capital, the legendary 'Iram the many pillared' (mentioned in the Qur'an only once, namely, in 89: 7). It has since been buried in the moving sand-dunes of *Al-Ahqaf* (a region between 'Uman and Hadramawt, within the great South-Arabian desert of Rub al-Khali); it is said, however, that its traces are occasionally uncovered by strong winds."

41. Alternative meanings are, "they were endued with sight" (Majid), or "were keen of sight." Asad writes, "Thus, the Qur'an implies that it is man's 'ability to perceive the truth' (*istibsar*) that makes him morally re-

[39] And Qarūn, Fir`awn and Haman - Musa did go to them with clear signs but they waxed proud in the earth, but they were not the overtakers (against Us).

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ
مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] Wherefore We seized each one for his sin. Against some We loosed a storm of stones;⁴² some were seized by the Cry;⁴³ some We sank in the earth;⁴⁴ while some We drowned.⁴⁵ And Allah was not such as to wrong them, but rather, they were wronging themselves.

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن أَرْسَلْنَا
عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ
مَّنْ أَعْرَقْنَا وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن
كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

sponsible for his doings and hence, for his failure to resist his own evil impulses..”

Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Qatadah said that they were quite sagacious in their religious affairs, doing what they did consciously; upon which Dahhak added that not only they knew well what they clung to as their religion, but were in fact sort of proud of it (Ibn Jarir). Another possible meaning is that they knew the error in their pagan religion, and were quite aware that the truth lay in the message brought by their Prophets, yet clung to paganism. Farra’s opinion on the other hand was that although they were a sagacious people, their sagacity served them not (when they decided to reject the messages) - Qurtubi.

42. The allusion is to `Aad and the nation of Lūt.

The Arabs name every storm that carries sand, pebble, or hale, as `aasif (Ibn Jarir).

43. The allusion is to Thamūd and the inhabitants of Madyan.

44. Such as Qarūn. Asad comments: “The common denominator between these two (Haman and Qarūn: au.) and Pharaoh is their false pride (takabbur) and arrogance (istikbar), which caused them to become ‘archetype of evil’.. A similar attitude of mind is said to have been the characteristic of the tribes of `Aad and Thamūd mentioned in the preceding verse.”

45. Such as the nations of Nuh, Fir`awn and his folks.

[41] The example of those who took protectors other than Allah is like the spider which takes (to itself) a house; but truly, the weakest of houses is the spider's house;⁴⁶ only if they knew.⁴⁷

[42] Surely, Allah knows whatever aught they call upon other than Him. He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.

[43] And We strike these similitudes for the people, but ponder not except the knowledgeable.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ
كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ
أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا
إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

46. Yusuf Ali has a goodly note on the spider's nest: "The Spider's house is one of the wonderful Signs of Allah's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body. There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider's houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned. There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap-doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion. Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi-circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box. The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an

insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey. In case the prey is powerful, the spider is furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey. The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the under-side of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication. The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of 'Ankabut is feminine."

Spiders

Except Antarctica, spiders are found everywhere. A few of them are aquatic, that is, live under water. There are about 30,000 known spe-

cies of them. Their average sizes vary from a few millimeters to 9 cm. body length. Feet included, they can be as large as 30 cm. (a foot). The bird-eating spider weighs 120 gm. and is capable of hunting down little birds.

Spiders have eight legs and eight simple eyes. In some species the eyes are so arranged as to allow all around view. They can see ahead, behind, above, and to the sides, all at the same time. The lower part of the abdomen produces the silk gland. They live for about a year and are predators; they bite their prey releasing a powerful poison which causes paralysis. The poison also produces digestive juices in the body of the prey which the spider sucks along with other juicy parts of the body. To humans, their bite is not fatal although can cause severe pain. Occasionally, they may cause death.

Usually they use their nets to trap insects. Some species however lasso them as they come within range. The famous Tarantula variety lives in burrows and is large enough to pound on the prey rather than use a net.

The main wonder of the spiders is the silk they produce. Initially, it is a fluid which contains a protein called fibroin. It solidifies into an insoluble thread when the proteins rearrange

themselves under tension as the silk is drawn out of the spider's body. Spiders have several glands to produce several types of silk. Spider silk is up to 200 times finer than the finest human hair and is highly elastic. It can be stretched to over 20% of its length and retains its elasticity at temperatures as low as - 40 ° C. It is one of the strongest natural substances known. A single thread of it can be stretched by nearly a third without snapping, and would have to be about 80 km long to break purely under its own weight. It is said that an inch thick of pure spider silk net can stop a flying jetliner in the air.

Mating occurs by the force of nature, otherwise, it is the end of the male which is either eaten off by the female, or dies off, immediately after the mating is over. Once mature, the male spider stops feeding and spends all the time and energy trying to find a female to mate with. In some cases the female starts eating off the male even as mating is going on. Strangely, in such cases mating actions continue despite the male having lost its head to the female.

Spiders are oviparous, i.e., they lay eggs. The mother sometimes carries the eggs on her back, or conceals them somewhere, preserving them

[44] Allah created the heavens and the earth in truth.⁴⁸ Surely in that is a sign for the believers.

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book, and perform the Prayer (assiduously and spiritedly);⁴⁹ verily, Prayer forbids the indecent⁵⁰ and the reprehensible.⁵¹ Surely, Allah's remembrance is greater.⁵² Allah knows the (deeds) that you commit.

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

in silk cocoons. When they hatch, the young ones ride on their mother's back until they are big enough to fend for themselves. Among the Wolf spiders, when two female spiders carrying young meet, they fight to the death of one of them. When that happens, the spiderlings from both will climb onto the back of the victorious mother who carries them around as if they are her own.

47. Yusuf Ali tells us why people fail to learn in life: "Parables seem simple things, but their profound meaning and application can only be understood by those who seek knowledge and by Allah's grace attain it." And, "Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the

air. So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing. The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of a man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plans which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them."

48. "I.e., endowed with meaning and purpose.. In other words, belief in the existence of a meaning and purpose underlying the creation of the universe is a logical corollary of one's belief in God" (Asad).

49. *Iqamatu al-salah* is, to repeat, to do the Prayers on time, in good spirit, doing all its parts in an efficient, acceptable manner (Qurtubi).

50. Majid comments: "That brings to mind, by way of contrast, the strong

connotation that has very frequently existed between obscenity and the acts of worship as ordained by the so-called religions of the world. In many of them even prostitution appears to have been not merely tolerated but encouraged. 'In Egypt, Phoenicia, Assyria, Chaldea, Canaan and Persia, the worship of Isis, Moloch, Baal, Astarte, Mylitta and other deities consisted of the most extravagant sexual orgies, and the temples were merely centres of vice. In Babylon some degree of prostitution appears to have been even compulsory and imposed upon all women in honor of the goddess Mylitta. In India the ancient connection between religion and prostitution still survives.' (EBr. XVIII, p. 596). 'The Kedeshoth mentioned in the *Bible* were prostitutes attached to the Canaanite temples, and were held in the highest reverence by the worshippers. Temple prostitutes, in all countries, and at all times, have been highly thought of.' (Scott, *History of Prostitution*, p. 10). In its earliest of phases prostitution was always associated with religion; and there seem strong grounds for the assumption that the first brothels were run by priests.' (p. 59)."

51. Although a lone opinion of Ibn 'Umar is that by "*salah*" the allusion is to the Qur'an which is recited in

Prayers, most others, such as Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas and others have said that by the term "*salah*" the allusion is to Prayers. In fact, Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said, "A Prayer which does not prohibit a man from the indecent and the reprehensive, actually distances him from Allah." This is reported as a Prophetic statement also, coming down through Ibn Mas'ud (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Ibn Jarir however, does not seem to be very comfortable with the above report either as a Prophetic statement, or as that of Ibn 'Abbas. For, he quotes Ibn 'Awn as saying, (in reference to this verse), "When you are in the Prayers, you are in a good act: Prayer has come in between you and the indecent and reprehensive. 'Fahshaa' is fornication, and 'the reprehensive' is disobedience. Whoever then, committed an obscenity or disobeyed Allah, such as one which nullifies his Prayers, and, obviously, such a man did not Pray at all."

In any case, the above as a statement of Ibn 'Abbas is, according to Haythamiyy, a weak report, while, as a Prophetic statement, it is, according to Albani, a "*Batil*" narrative ("*Mawdu'ah*" no. 2), while to Haythamiyy it is untrustworthy (*Majma'*) - Au.

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir also caution that none of the statements about a “*salah*” distancing away from Allah reaches the Prophet. Another *hadith* of the Prophet apparently contradicts the *hadith* that says that Prayer can cause distancing from Allah. It is said that the Prophet was told, “So and so Prays the whole night but steals in the morning.” He replied, “His Prayers will prevent him.” And, Qurtubi adds, that is how it happened.

Haythamiyy said about this last report: “Ahmad and Bazzar recorded it and its narrators are those of *Sahih* collections” (Au.).

In short, writes Qurtubi, if *salah* is performed properly, in the manner it is required of a Muslim, in complete mental presence, and physical humbleness, the heart filled with fear, then it does move one away from the indecent and the evil. It is reported of one of the *Salaf* that when he stood for Prayers, he became pale and shook with fear. When asked why that happened to him, he would say, “This is how one feels when before a king; what about when one is about to appear before the King of all kings?” It is this kind of Prayer about which the Prophet (*saws*) said, as in Tirmidhi, who judged it *Hasan Sahih*,

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَنَّ تَهْرًا بِيَابِ أَحَدِكُمْ يَغْتَسِلُ فِيهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ
حَمْسًا مَا تَعُولُ ذَلِكَ بَيْتِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ قَالُوا لَا يَبْقَى مِنْ
دَرَنِهِ شَيْئًا قَالَ فَذَلِكَ مِثْلُ الصَّلَاةِ الْحَمْسِ يَمْحُو
اللَّهُ بِهِ الْخَطَايَا

“Do you think if one of you had a river passing by his door, in which he bathed himself five times a day, will he have any dirt left on him?” They replied, “No, no dirt will be left on him.” He said, “This is how it is with the five daily Prayers. Allah wipes out the sins thereby.”

The above *hadith* is in Bukhari also (Au.).

But when *salah* is done badly, year after year, without any remorse, then it does not prevent a man from sins, but rather, he begins to commit them oftener. When he does that, then the sins that are blatantly committed cause him to stray away from Allah.

Hatim described his own *Salah*, “As if my feet are on the Bridge, Paradise on my right side and Hellfire on left with the angel of death right above me. And I Pray in a state of hope and fear.” It is this kind of Prayer, writes Zamakhshari, which comes in between a man and indecent acts.

Alusi clarifies the issue to a greater degree. He writes that some confusion is allowed for, when we fail to

assign an exact meaning to the textual “*tanhaa*.” Many people seem to understand it not in the sense of “prohibit,” in which sense it has been used. They rather understand it in the sense of “prevent,” in which sense it has not been used. We must understand that Prayers can only “prohibit” a man from the indecent and reprehensive, but do not “prevent.” (That is, a strong inner voice protests against sins and says, in effect, “Do not do it”). This prohibition does not mean a complete prevention, for that is something for a man to decide for himself. Indeed, Allah Himself does no more than this with His slave. He prohibits. He said (16: 90):

{ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُم لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَذَكَّرُونَ } {النحل: ٩٠}

“Verily, Allah enjoins justice, good-doing, and giving to kin. And He forbids the indecent, the reprehensible and rebellion.” Now, it is up to a man to decide how he will treat the admonition. (Hence Allah ended the verse by saying, “He admonishes you that perhaps you will be mindful”: Au.). It is following this understanding that we find Ibn ‘Abbas as saying, as in Ibn Hayyan, Kalbi, Ibn Jurayj and Hammad b. Sulayman that ‘the Prayers forbid these things, so long as a man is in the Prayers.’

What they meant perhaps, continues Alusi, is that the Prayer is the prohibiting element, telling him from within, “Do not do this, do not do that,” etc., in short, offering checks and brakes. Nonetheless, the possibility remains, adds Alusi, that, in addition to prohibiting, Prayers also “prevent” a slave from the indecent and reprehensible. But that of course is conditional to how well they are done, (the better done, the better the effects on the devotee). They weaken in their effect with increase in inattentiveness during the Prayers (*ghaflah*): the kind of Prayer that, as the Prophet said, is bundled as old clothes are bundled and flung back on the face of the devotee with the Prayers saying, “May Allah squander you, as you squandered me.”

The effect of *Salah* on the devotees is a commonly noted fact. Even non-Muslims confess that they see a glow on the faces of Muslims as they emerge from the mosques. A Hindu once complaining of a Muslim’s lies remarked, “And, the strange thing about him is that he Prays regularly (Au.).

Majid quotes, “.. In the words of a distinguished American psychologist: ‘All historians declare that the amazing success of Islam in domi-

nating the world lay in the astounding coherence or sense of unity in the group, but they do not explain how this miracle was worked. There can be little doubt that one of the most effective means was prayer. The five daily prayers, when all the faithful, wherever they were, alone in the given solitude of the desert or in the vast assemblies in the crowded cities, knelt and prostrated themselves towards Mecca uttering the same words of adoration for the one true God and of loyalty to His Prophet, produce an overwhelming effect upon the spectator, and the psychological effects of thus fusing the minds of the worshippers in a common adoration and expression of loyalty is certainly stupendous.' (Dennison, op. cit., 274-275)."

52. "Allah's remembrance is greater." But greater than what? Imām Razi answers that since there is nothing that can be compared to Allah's remembrance, to any degree, nothing could be brought forth for comparison. After all, one does not say, "The mountain is bigger than a grain of sand." There is no comparison between a grain of sand and a mountain. Yet, we know that the two are of the kind and class that are in some ways comparable. In contrast, is there anything that can be brought

forth as comparable to Allah's remembrance?

The translation of the text follows the heavier of the two opinions about how this verse is to be understood. One opinion (as in Ibn Jarir and others) is that "A slave's remembrance of Allah within the Prayers, is greater than the Prayer itself. (Allah said in 20: 14, "*Establish the Prayers for My remembrance*": Au.).

`Abdullah b. Rabi`ah says Ibn `Abbas asked him about how he understood these words. Ibn Rabi`ah replied that the allusion is perhaps to the mention of Allah's Names and Attributes within the Prayers, recitation of the Qur`ān within them, etc. Ibn `Abbas told him that it sounded good, but was not correct. But rather, he said, the allusion is to Allah's remembrance of His slaves, which is a greater thing than their remembrance of Him. Another report coming down from him makes it clearer. He said, "Surely, Allah's remembrance of His slaves, when they remember Him, is greater than your remembrance of Him." This was also the opinion of `Atiyah, Mujahid, Salman (al-Farsi: Ibn Kathir), Sho`bah and several others as in Ibn Jarir. A second opinion of Qatadah and Salman, also in Ibn Jarir, was

[46] *And dispute not with the People of the Book save with that which is better,*⁵³ *except for those among them who do wrong;*⁵⁴ *and say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us, and sent down to you.'*⁵⁵ *Our God and your God is One; and to Him we have surrendered.*⁵⁶

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِهْتِنَّا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

that the meaning is, “Remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in this world).” A third opinion, that of Ibn ‘Abbas, is that both the meanings are possible, meaning perhaps that one does not rule out the other. Ibn Jarir’s own inclination is toward the first opinion while Qurtubi accepts all possibilities.

53. That is, with arguments and evidences better than that they, the People of the Book put forth (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

It means, to respond to crudeness with gentleness, to anger with calmness, to argumentativeness with admonition (Alusi), and, to emotionalism with rationalism (Au.).

Mawdudi further expounds: “That is, the discussions should be conducted rationally, in a civilized and decent manner, with the reformation of the opponent as the objective. The chief aim should be to appeal to the heart and mind and not make it a wrestling match with the objective to defeat

rather than convince. One should act like a physician, who tries to heal, and not to make the patient’s situation worse through ill-treatment.”

54. That is, you can act tough with those who are obstinate in the face of truth (Alusi and others). In the words of Mawdudi: “Islam ordains politeness. But that does not mean meekness and undue humbleness. The Muslims should not be such as to be taken for granted by every wicked tyrant.”

The prevalent opinion is that of Mujahid who said that the meaning of the second part of the verse is that those among them who do wrong, i.e., obstinately remain on their corrupt beliefs, should be fought against until they believe, or pay the tribute (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

55. Sufyan b. Husain is said to have remarked that to say, “We believe in what has been sent down to us, and sent down to you,” is the “better” spoken of in verse 46 (Alusi).

[47] And thus it is that We have sent down the Book to you;⁵⁷ wherefore those We have given the Book believe in it; as some of these (also) believe in it;⁵⁸ and none gainsay⁵⁹ Our revelations but the unbelievers.⁶⁰

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

Mawdudi points out that the verse implies that discussions should start with the points of agreement and not points of disagreement.

However, when that fails to convince, then the discussant or the debater may switch over to disagreements to demonstrate how Islamic position is the more rational and nearer to truth, but which of course should be done without hurting the sentiments of the contestants (Au.).

56. Explaining this verse Abu Hurayrah said: People of the Book used to recite the *Tawrah* in Hebrew and then explain to the Muslims in Arabic. The Prophet said, “Neither refute the holders of previous Scriptures, nor confirm. But rather say, ‘We believe in what has been sent down to us, and sent down to you. Our God and your God is One; and to Him we have surrendered’” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The above report is in Bukhari. Another report of *Musnad* Ahmad has Abu Namlah al-*Ansari* saying that he

was in the company of the Prophet when a Jew came in and asked,

يَا مُحَمَّدُ هَلْ تَتَكَلَّمُ هَذِهِ الْجَنَائِزُ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ، فَقَالَ الْيَهُودِيُّ: أَنَا أَشْهَدُ أَنَّهَا تَتَكَلَّمُ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَا حَدَّثَكُمْ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ فَلَا تُصَدِّقُوهُمْ وَلَا تُكْذِبُوهُمْ، وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَكُتِبَهِ وَرُسُلِهِ، فَإِنْ كَانَ حَقًّا لَمْ تُكْذِبُوهُمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَاطِلًا لَمْ تُصَدِّقُوهُمْ

“Muhammad, do these corpses speak?” He replied, “Allah knows best.” He said, “But I bear witness that they speak.” The Prophet (*sams*) told the people around him, “When the People of the Book narrate to you something, neither give them credence nor refute them. But rather, say, ‘We have believed in Allah, His Books and Messengers.’ If it happens to be true, you would not have denied it, and if it happens to be false, you would not have given it credence” (Ibn Kathir).

The report is also in *Sahih* of Hibban (Au.).

Nevertheless, Imām Bukhari has a report that once Mu`awiyah (b.

[48] And you were not reciting any book before this,⁶¹ nor did you inscribe one with your right hand:⁶² for then the followers of falsehood⁶³ would have doubted.⁶⁴

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لِآرْتَابِ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

Sufyan) was speaking to a group of people when Ka`b al-Ahbar was mentioned. Mu`awiyah said, “Although he is the most trustworthy of those who narrate from the People of the Book, we still reckon that some of the things he narrates are not true (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

57. That is: Just as We sent Books to earlier Prophets, in the like manner We have sent down the Book upon you, O Muhammad (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

58. That is, those who have been given the Qur`ān believe in it, while some of these – the People of the Book – also believe in it (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir however, understands the verse the other way around. That is, he assumes that by “of these” the reference is to the pagans of the Prophet’s time.

59. Jahad of the text is defined as denial of what one’s own heart is convinced (as true), and to confess and insist on what the heart denies (as false) - Alusi from Raghīb.

60. That is, it is only those deny who have decided to remain on untruth (Au.).

61. *Ayah* 46 suggested that we are not to argue with the People of the Book save with that which is better: as arguments and as evidences. This *ayah* helps us with an evidence: how could someone who never wrote down anything in life, was able to dictate an everlasting masterpiece in one attempt, without ever editing and improving it? (Au.)

62. The addition of the words “with your right hand” is to draw an image for greater emphasis (Alusi), and leave a stronger impression on the mind (Au.).

Qurtubi comments on this verse in the following manner: Except for an outside opinion, that of Abul Walid al-Baji, who said that our Prophet wrote (a few words) at the time the peace-treaty was being drawn at Hudaibiyyah, which opinion has been rejected by the rest of the *Ummah*, the consensus has ever been that to the end of his life the Prophet re-

mained unlettered. One or two stray reports to the effect that he had learnt how to read and write before his death are not authentic. It is said for instance that in one of his trustworthy *hadith* he stated that Dajjal will have *kafir* written on his forehead. He emphasized by pronouncing the letters: kaf, alif, faa, raa, which means he knew the Arabic letters. But, Qurtubi answers, we might not forget that he also said, "Everyone, whether lettered or not lettered, will be able to read these letters on Dajjal's forehead." (Being able to know the alphabets does not make one literate: Au.).

As regards the Hudaibiyah incident, when the Prophet dictated the text of the treaty to 'Ali which said, "In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Compassionate: This is what Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, agreed to .." The Quraysh objected, saying, "If we had known that you are a Messenger of Allah, we would have followed you. So, you better write, 'Muhammad, son of Abdullah.'" The Prophet ordered 'Ali to erase the words, "Messenger of Allah." But 'Ali refused, saying "By Allah, I will not erase." So the Prophet asked to be shown the words "Messenger of Allah" and erased them and wrote in their place, "son of 'Abdul-

lah." According to another version in Bukhari, "(He wrote down) but did not do it legibly." This incident, continues Qurtubi, has led one or two stray scholars to believe that toward the end of his life the Prophet had learnt how to read and write. But, the great majority has not considered this evidence enough to conclude that he had become literate, and that he might have asked another person to write those words. The latter day scholars have thought that it was a miracle that he wrote those words. Allah moved his hands that drew lines that somehow read like "son of 'Abdullah."

Qurtubi's comments end here.

Majid quotes the consensus of Western scholars: "His youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing.' (GRE. V. p. 376). 'As to acquired learning, it is confessed he had none at all.' (SPD. p. 73). 'It is probable that he could neither read nor write.' (Palmer, The Qur'an, Intro. p. XLVII). 'There is no evidence that he was able to read.' (EBr. XIII, p. 483). 'It is certain that he had neither read the *Bible* nor any other books.' (HHW, VIII, p. 11)."

63. Asad has a note on the contextual "*mubtiloon*": "The participial noun *mubtil* is derived from the verb

[49] But it is clear verses⁶⁵ within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge.⁶⁶ And none gainsay Our verses but the wrongdoers.⁶⁷

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] And they said, 'Why signs have not been sent down upon him from his Lord?' Say, 'Indeed, signs are with Allah alone, while I am only a plain warner.'

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

abtala, 'he made a false [or 'vain'] claim', or 'tried to disprove the truth [or something]', or 'to reduce [something] to nothing,' or 'to prove [it] to be of no account', or 'null and void', or 'unfounded', 'false', 'spurious', etc., irrespective of whether the object is true or false, authentic or spurious, valid or unfounded (*Lisan al-'Arab* and *Taj al-'Arus*)." 64. They would have doubted both ways. If the Prophet knew how to read and write, they would have said he was not a Prophet since their Scriptures said that he will be unlettered. They would have also said that since he knew how to read and write, what he produced was no more than some clever plagiary (based on Zamakhshari).

65. Asad comments, "Lit., 'self-evident (*bayyinah*) in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge' – the term *'ilm* having here the

connotation of intuitive, spiritual perception."

66. There are two opinions. One, the allusion is to the predictions about our own Prophet found in the older Scriptures, such as that the final Prophet will be unlettered, which, along with others, are signs in the hearts of those of the People of the Book who have knowledge. This is attributed to Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Jurayj. (The Prophet carried in his person not one, but several signs: Qurtubi). The second opinion is expressed by Hasan who thought that by the signs, the allusion is to Qur'anic revelations. Ibn Jarir prefers the former.

Ibn Kathir follows the latter opinion and reminds us of the *hadith* of Bukhari which says,

مَا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا أُعْطِيَ مَا مِثْلُهُ مَا أَمَرَ عَلَيْهِ الْبَشَرُ وَإِنَّمَا كَانَ الَّذِي أُوتِيَتْ وَحْيًا أَوْحَاهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيَّْ فَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ أَكْثَرَهُمْ تَابِعًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

[51] Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down the Book upon you (which is) recited to them?⁶⁸ Assuredly, in that is a mercy and a reminder for a people who believe.

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ
يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرَىٰ
لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] Say, 'Sufficient is Allah as a Witness between me and you. He knows whatsoever is in the heavens and earth.' Those who have believed in falsehood and disbelieved in Allah, it is they indeed who are the losers.

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا
يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

“There has not been a Prophet but who was given something because of which people believed in him (i.e., miracles). I have been given the Revelation that Allah revealed to me (as the miracle). And I expect that I will be the most-followed-one on the Day of Judgment.”

He is also recorded in Muslim as having said,

يَا مُحَمَّدُ إِنَّمَا بَعَثْتُكَ لِأَبْنَيْكَ ، وَأَبْنَيْ بَيْتِي ، وَأَنْتَ لَيْتَ
عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا لَا يَغْسِلُهُ الْمَاءُ تَفْرُؤُهُ نَائِمًا وَيَقْطَعَانَا

“Allah said, ‘I shall try you, and through you try others. And I am going to send down a Book upon you that water cannot wash away; which you will recite in wakefulness and when asleep.’” That is, a Revelation which will be in the memory of the people and so cannot be washed away with water (Ibn Kathir).

67. One might note that here, at this verse, Allah (*swt*) designated them as “*zalimoon*” while at verse 47 He called them “*kafiroon*.” This is because at verse 47 they were simple “*kafiroon*” since the evidence had not yet been presented. By this verse, an evidence has been presented, viz., the Prophet was unlettered. If the unbelievers still refuse, then they become “*zalimoon*” – a rank above the ordinary unbeliever in perversion (Razi).

68. That is, writes Zamakhshari, is not a single sign – the Qur’ān – enough for them? As against several signs of the past – such as the rod or the camel - this is a sign which is permanent, which does not wither with time, and remains a sign in every place, until the end of time? And which, Razi adds, cannot be rejected on grounds that it is sorcery (as, for example, the signs of Jesus could be rejected on grounds of sorcery: Au.).

[53] And they urge you to hasten on the punishment. If it was not for an appointed term, the punishment would have certainly come to them.⁶⁹ Indeed, it will come upon them of a sudden while they perceive not.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَوْ لَا أَجَلٌ
مُّسَمًّى لَجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَعْتَةٌ
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] They urge you to hasten on the punishment,⁷⁰ but surely Jahannum will encompass the unbelievers.⁷¹

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Apart from above, Imām Razi also points out that, (as against the Prophethood of other Prophets) since our Prophet's Prophethood was meant for all mankind, and not for a specific people, he was given a few miracles that were for all mankind, e.g., the splitting of the moon, two halves of which went down towards two opposite parts of the earth; or the seas that witnessed storm (in some parts of the globe), or Kisra's pillars crashing down, while church portals came down in yet another part of the earth, all indicating that the Prophet's Prophethood would not be for a specific people, but for the entire globe.

It is also reported (by Yahya b. Ja`dah: Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir) that some Companions of the Prophet made notes of what the People of the Book were saying and brought them to the Prophet. He waved them aside and Allah revealed this verse:

“Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down the Book upon you, (which is) recited to them?”

Accordingly, the Prophet has said, Qurtubi adds,

ليس مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَتَعَرَّ بِالْقُرْآنِ

“He is not of us, who is not satisfied with the Qur`ān (to give up the rest).”

It could also be rendered as: “He is not of us who does not sing out the Qur`ān.” The present translation is based on the understanding of Imām Shafe`I (Au.).

69. For the Quraysh that appointed term was the Day of Badr (Qurtubi), while for every nation there is an appointed term; and the final appointment for everyone is the Day of Judgment (Au.).

70. The reference is to the Quraysh (particularly Nadr b. al-Harth) who said (8: 32),

[55] The day the punishment will overwhelm them from above them and from under their feet,⁷² and He will say, 'Taste now what you were doing.'⁷³

يَوْمَ يَعْشَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ
تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

﴿وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ
فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ
أَلِيمٍ﴾ [الأنفال: ٣٢]

"When they said, 'O Allah, if this is truly from You, then rain down upon us stones from the sky'" (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

71. That is because, man is drowned in sins and the consequences – *Jahannum* – must overwhelm him (Zamakhshari, reworded). Actually, writes Imām Razi, the words express amazement that although the Fire has already surrounded the unbelievers, they still seek it to be hastened on.

Mujahid said that the allusion is to the oceans (Ibn Jarir). That is, oceans will be turned into *Jahannum*. The Prophet is reported in Ahmad,

الْبَحْرُ هُوَ جَهَنَّمُ

"The oceans are *Jahannum*."

The report is also in Hakim with Dhahabi remarking that it is trustworthy.

That is, the oceans will be turned into *Jahannum*. Ibn `Abbas said that the stars, sun and moon will be dipped into the oceans, then it will be set on fire, and that will be *Jahannum* (Ibn Kathir). Haythamiyy said that the *hadith* of Ahmad about the oceans is trustworthy (Au.).

However, there is no consensus over where *Jahannum* is or will be. Trustworthy *ahadith* say that it will be dragged and brought to the Field of Resurrection on the Day of Reckoning. We also know that the heavens and the earth will be destroyed and created anew, that this earth will be expanded and that *Jahannum* will have various levels. In the light of these and several other details, it is better to leave the question where it is, without a final opinion (Au.).

72. Since common understanding leads to the opinion that the unbelievers will be surrounded by Fire from all sides, which leaves the sides above and below free of it, it was specifically said that, "The day the Punishment will overwhelm them from

[56] O My slaves who have believed, surely My earth is wide. Therefore, Me alone should you serve.⁷⁴

يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ
فِيَّيَايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

above them and from under their feet.” That is, as against all expectations of Fire rising up, it will descend on them from above, while the area immediately under their feet, will be shooting out flames of Fire, despite being quenched by the feet (Imām Razi, reworded).

73. While the Fire will be torturing their physical bodies, these words will be said in taunt for adding spiritual torture (Razi).

74. “Implying that since the earth offers innumerable, multiform facilities to human life, there is no excuse for forgetting God ‘owing to the pressures of adverse circumstances.’ Whenever or wherever the worship of God – in its essential, and not merely liturgical sense – becomes impossible, the believer is obliged to ‘forsake the domain of evil’ .. and to ‘migrate unto God,’ that is, to a place where it is possible to live in accordance with one’s faith” (Asad).

Sa`id b. Jubayr explained the verse as meaning: When sins are committed in a land, then leave the place. For, Allah’s earth is vast. Mujahid added:

“Emigrate, and join in *Jihad*.” `Ata` expressed a similar opinion. Ibn Zayd said however, that Makkan Muslims were the immediate context. They were urged to leave the township in view of persecutions. Ibn Jarir explains that the words with which the verse ended, “Then Me, and Me alone you serve” imply that if Allah’s worship is not possible in a land, one might leave it. Qurtubi has similar opinions and adds the words of Sufyan Thawri to expand the meaning, “If you are in an expensive place, shift to another where you can fill your basket with bread for a Dirham.”

On Zubayr b. al-`Awwam’s authority, it is reported in Ahmad that the Prophet said,

الْبِلَادُ لِلَّهِ وَالْعِبَادُ لِلَّهِ فَحَيْثُمَا أَصَبْتَ خَيْرًا
فَأَقِم

“The lands are Allah’s lands, and people are Allah’s slaves. Therefore, wheresoever you find good, take up residence there” (Ibn Kathir).

The report is thought to be weak by Haythamiyy (Au).

Zamakhshari adds: "Places widely vary from one another from the point of view of being or not being conducive to Islam and its demands. We have tried, as others before us have also tried, and have found that among the places we lived in, and they lived in, there is no place more helpful in suppressing the inner self, destroying the base desires, more ingathering for the heart, more bringing together the spread out worries, more urging to contentment, more chasing away the Satan, more away from trials and tribulations, than the city of Makkah."

This comes from a man of letters, a philosopher, and a migrant to Makkah with no means of income in a city of harsh economic environment, which offered none of the charms that cities like Cairo, Dimashq, Kufa or Busra, or even Madinah offered. He ends his passage above by saying, "Praise be to Allah then, for making it easy (to live in Makkah), and for bestowing perseverance and gratefulness" (Au.).

We could end with a note from Yusuf Ali: "There is no excuse for any one to plead that he could not do good or was forced to evil by his circumstances and surroundings, or by the fact that he lived in evil times. We must

shun evil and seek good, and Allah's Creation is wide enough to enable us to do that, provided we have the will, the patience, and the constancy to do it. It may be that we have to change our village or city or country; or that we have to change our neighbors or associates; or to change our habits or our hours, our position in life or our human relationships, or our callings. Our integrity before Allah is more important than any of these things, and we must be prepared for exile (or *Hijrat*) in all these senses. For the means with which Allah provides us for His service are ample, and it is our own fault if we fail."

Mufti Shafi` tells us about when *hijrah* becomes obligatory. First, it must be noted that at the beginning of Islam, *hijrah* was a requirement of faith for every Makkan Muslim, man or woman. Those who did not migrate were not considered Muslims. This rule came to end with the fall of Makkah. The Prophet then said, "There is no *hijrah* after the fall." Now the situation is that *hijrah* once again becomes obligatory if Muslims find themselves in *Dar al-Kufr*, that is, a place where they do not have the freedom of faith, or are not allowed to practice the essentials of Islam. But of course, this is conditional to the ability to migrate. On the other

[57] Every soul shall taste death.⁷⁵ Then unto Us shall you be returned.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] Then those who believed and did righteous works, We shall surely lodge them in lofty chambers of Paradise⁷⁶ underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever; an excellent reward for those who labored.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

hand, although it is not obligatory, it is desirable (*mustahab*) to migrate from *Dar al-Fisq*, i.e., where Islamic commandments are openly flouted. Such a place need not necessarily be *Dar al-Kufr*. This was also the opinion of Ibn Hajr.

75. That is, if you fear that during or after emigration in the way of Allah you will face deprivation or death, then you might remember that death will overtake you in any case. None will escape it (Razi, Qurtubi).

76. Muslim has a report that the Prophet said,

إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ لَيَبْتَاعُونَ أَهْلَ الْعُرْفِ مِنْ قَوْفِهِمْ كَمَا تَبْتَاعُونَ الْكُوكَبَ الدُّرِّيَّ الْعَابِرَ مِنَ الْأُفُقِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ أَوْ الْمَغْرِبِ لِيَتَفَاضِلَ مَا بَيْنَهُمْ. قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ تِلْكَ مَنَازِلُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ لَا يَبْتَاعُهَا غَيْرُهُمْ. قَالَ بَلَى وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ رِجَالٌ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَصَدَّقُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“The inhabitants of Paradise will see the people of the ghuraf (lofty chambers) above them as you see the bright stars appear-

ing in the eastern or western horizons – such will be the differences in ranks between them.” They asked, “Messenger of Allah. Those must be places for Prophets that other than them can never obtain.” He answered, “By Him in whose hands is my life, (they will be for) men who believed in Allah and gave credence to the Prophets.”

And Tirmidhi has a report that there are chambers in Paradise whose inside can be seen from outside and the outside from inside. A Bedouin got up and asked, “Whom are they meant for O Messenger of Allah?” He replied,

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا يَرَى ظَاهِرَهَا مِنْ بَاطِنِهَا ، وَبَاطِنَهَا مِنْ ظَاهِرِهَا ، أَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِمَنْ أَطْعَمَ الطَّعَامَ ، وَأَدَامَ الصِّيَامَ ، وَصَلَّى بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامَ

“For him who fed the food, uttered good words, followed Prayers and fasts (with Prayers and fasts), and stood in the night

[59] Such as those who persevered, and who place their trust on their Lord.⁷⁷

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision; Allah provides for it and for you also.⁷⁸ He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن دَابَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

(in Prayers) while the people were asleep” (Qurtubi).

Haythamiy declared it *Sahih*.

77. Allah mentioned two qualities: patience and trust. This is because time has three phases: past, present and future. Past is past; there is no point in discussing it. Present is worthy of patience and perseverance. As for the future, one should adopt the policy of trust in Allah. Further, patience and trust in Allah are qualities that cannot be obtained without the knowledge on the one hand, of what is with Allah and the knowledge of what is with other than Allah. He who knew ‘what is other than Allah,’ knew that it is going to pass away. This knowledge makes it easier for him to bear hardships with patience. And, one who knows Allah, knows that He is Eternal. He places his trust in Him, in the hope of future bounties. From another angle, some people can put up with persecutions, others cannot, and so they emigrate.

Now, those who cannot emigrate, bear the persecutions with patience, while those who can, do emigrate, placing their trust in Allah (Razi).

78. Muslims are being encouraged to emigration, take up *Jihad*, and not to slacken from the fear of provision (Ibn Jarir).

The point of discussion then, is not trust in Allah, but show of weakness in His path (Alusi). Accordingly, Ibn `Abbas reports that the Prophet (*saws*) told Makkan Muslims when they were subjected to persecutions: “Go to Madinah; do not live among a transgressing people.” They said, “We have no homes there, nor property, nor anyone to feed us.” So Allah revealed, “And how many an animal carries not its own provision..” The verse then is not saying that food storage is disallowed. In fact, the Prophet used to distribute (in his final years: Au.), provision of a whole year amongst his wives, as recorded in the *Sahihayn*; and so did many of

[61] And if you asked them 'who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to law)?' they will certainly say, 'Allah.' How then are they deluded?⁷⁹

وَلَيْن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ
اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

the Companions, who were leaders in piety and trusted Allah to an unsurpassable degree (Qurtubi).

While reading the *Bible* for the first time a quarter century ago, this writer's mind had immediately committed to memory a beautiful line which said, "Sufficient unto the day the evil thereof." Mawdudi's eye fell upon the same lines. He quotes the entire passage. He writes: "Precisely the same thing was taught by the Prophet Jesus (may Allah's peace be upon him) to his disciples when he said,

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, or love the other: or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore, say I unto you, Take ye no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what shall you put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much bet-

ter than they? Which of you by taking thought can add a cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things the Gentile seek); for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need for all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6: 24-34)."

79. Asad elucidates: "The perversion consists in their thinking that they

[62] Allah extends the sustenance to whomsoever of His slaves He will, and constricts for him.⁸⁰ Surely, Allah is of all things, Knowing.

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] And, if you asked them, 'who brought down water out of heaven and quickened the earth thereby after its death?' they will certainly say, 'Allah.' Say, praise to Allah. But rather, most of them ponder not.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] And the life of this world⁸¹ is no more than an amusement and play.⁸² Surely, the Abode of the Hereafter, it indeed is the (true) life⁸³ – only if they knew.

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا هُتُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

really 'believe in God' and nevertheless worshipping false values and allegedly 'divine' powers side by side with Him: all of which amounts to a virtual denial of His almightiness and uniqueness."

80. That is, Allah's material bounties are not dependent on belief or unbelief (Qurtubi).

The implication is both ways. (1) Allah extends provision to an individual at one time and restricts at another. (2) He extends to some people, while He restricts to another group of people (Alusi).

81. The "this" of "this world" is to express the littleness of this world and worthlessness of its affairs (Zamakhshari).

The following may not be a very accurate description of what this world in reality is; but it does reflect how those devoted to the Hereafter have looked at it. Alusi writes that in the opinion of some of the Gnostics: "This world is less worthier than a dead swine's limb, over which a leprous stricken dog had urinated."

82. "That is," comments Mawduudi, "the reality of it is no more than the children engaging in sport and pastime for a while, and then returning home. One who became a king, does not become one in reality, he is only playing his part in a game. When the time comes, he descends the throne and leaves as empty handed as he came. Similarly, time is elusive. No phase of life is enduring and lasting.

[65] Then when they board a ship, they supplicate Allah, making the religion pure for Him.⁸⁴ But when He rescues them to the land, behold, they associate (others with Him).⁸⁵

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] That⁸⁶ they may be ungrateful for what We have given them, and to enjoy themselves. But soon they will know.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

Everyone is playing out his role for a time.”

83. The construction of the word “*haywan*” on the pattern of “*ghadban*” or “*lahyan*” lends the connotation of activity and commotion, which is missing from the simple “*hayaah*,” (Zamakhshari), and, on the other hand, of exaggeration (Razi).

84. This kind of reaction has been reported quite often by passengers of ships who say that when the ship encounters rough weather, rocking left and right, everybody, including the atheists, turn to God the Supreme, begging forgiveness (Au.).

Ibn Kathir quotes `Ikrimah b. Abu Jahl from Ibn Is-haq: When the Prophet had subdued Makkah, he left the town escaping him. He boarded a ship heading for Abyssinia. Once in deep waters, storms struck and the ship started rocking. They began to say, “Fellow-passen-

gers! Supplicate your Lord making your call pure for Him. No one can save you now except He.” `Ikrimah said, “By Allah, if none can rescue except He in the waters, then surely, it is He alone who can rescue on the land.” So, he supplicated, ‘You have my promise that if I escape this, I shall go back and place my hand in Muhammad’s hand.’ “I am sure,” (He thought), “that I’ll find him kind and clement.” Which is what of course, he did.

85. That is, as soon as they are on land, they go back to their false beliefs and false deities. Or, it could mean that they attribute their escape to the skill of the ship’s captain and his crewmen (Qurtubi).

86. Although a few commentators have thought that the “*laam*” of “*li-yakfuru*” is “*lamu-kayy*”, others have thought that it is “*laam-al-`Aqibah*.” In Asad’s words, “The particle *li* prefixed to the subsequent verb *yakfuru*

[67] Do they not observe that We have made a Sanctuary secure (for them) while people are snatched away from all around them?⁸⁷ Will they then believe in falsehood and be ingrate to Allah's blessings?

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيُتَخَطَّفُ
النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ
وَبِعِزَّةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] And who can be more unjust than He who forged a lie on Allah, or cried lies to the truth when it came to him?⁸⁸ Is not in Jahannum a home for the unbelievers?

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ
كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ
مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] And those who strived in Us,⁸⁹ We shall surely guide them to Our ways.⁹⁰ Verily, Allah is with those who do things well.⁹¹

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(‘they show [utter] ingratitude’) and *yatamatta`u* (‘they enjoy [or ‘go on enjoying’] their worldly life’) is not an indication of intent (‘so that’ or ‘in order that’) but merely of a causal sequence..”

87. The allusion is to the peace that the Quraysh and other Makkan pagans enjoyed, as custodians of the House of God, while others suffered violence of various kinds. The situation was that any individual other than they could be kidnapped, enslaved and sold as a slave, if a powerful tribe did not support him (Au.). Mawdudi comments: “That is, has the city of Makkah, in whose surroundings they enjoy perfect safety and security, been declared a Sanctuary by their deities?”

Asad picks up spiritual overtones. He writes: “In contrast to the ‘sanctuary secure’ – the inner peace and sense of spiritual fulfillment which God bestows on those who truly believe in Him – the atheist or agnostic, is more often than not exposed to fear of the Unknown and a despair born of uncertainty as to what will happen to him after death.”

88. The addition of the words, “when it came to him” implies that they did not wait to consider and weigh the truth when it came to them, but at once denied it, immediately as it came (Alusi).

89. “All that man can do is to strive in Allah’s Cause. As soon as he strives with might and main, with constancy and determination, the Light and

Mercy of Allah come to meet him. They cure his defects and shortcomings. They provide him with the means by which he can raise himself above himself. They point out the Way, and all the Paths leading up to it" (Yusuf Ali).

90. That is, We shall guide them to the several ways by which Our Pleasure can be obtained (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali elaborates: "The Way of Allah (*sirat-ul-mustaqim*) is a Straight Way. But men have strayed from it in all directions. And there are numerous Paths by which they can get back to the Right Way, the way in which the purity of their own nature, and the Will and Mercy of Allah require them to Walk. All these numerous Paths become open to them if once they give their hearts in keeping to Allah and work in right Endeavour (*Jihad*) with all their mind and soul and resources. Thus will they get out of the Spider's web of this frail world and attain to eternal Bliss in the fulfillment of their true Destiny."

Asad adds: "The plural used here is meant to stress the fact – alluded so often in the Qur'an – that there are many paths which lead to a cognizance (*ma`rifah*) of God."

Majid has a pertinent point to make: "Note that mere sincere search after God and His truths, apart from all consequences, is promised reward. Sincerity of purpose is the main thing, good results will follow of themselves."

The above reminds us of an American new-Muslim's story told us by other than he. His mother fell sick and they lost hope of her recovery. He prayed to God that if she recovered he would devote himself to His service. She recovered but he, being a nominal Christian, did not know how to serve God. He went about with the thought that he needed to find God and serve Him. One day he was sitting with a fellow Muslim on a bench in a college campus while she was going through her mail. She had received some religious literature and he began to browse. He came across a word that somehow struck a note in him. It was 'A`Isha. He asked the girl how it was said. She pronounced it. It struck chord. Twice he had heard in his dreams a voice saying 'A`Isha, but being American he hadn't known what it meant or that it was a name. He followed the trail and became a Muslim: "Allah guides whom He will to a Straight Path" (2: 213) - Au.

Some scholars have said that he who practices what he knows, receives Divine impulse for loftier deeds. It is also said that what we see of our ignorance concerning what we do not know, is because of our failure with what we already know (Kashshaf).

Ibn Kathir adds that 'Abbas al-Hamdani of 'Akka said while commenting on these words of Allah, ["And those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them to Our ways"], that the meaning is, "those who live by what they know; gain Allah's guidance to what they do not know." Ahmad b. al-Hawwari said that I mentioned this explanation to Abu Sulayman al-Daarani. He felt

pleased but added the caution, "It is not right of anyone who has been inspired to a good deed, to actually do it, unless he finds support for it from the primary sources of Islam. If he finds support for it there, he can put it into action and express gratitude to Allah for having created corroboration and acceptance for the deed in his heart."

91. Ibn Abi Hatim has reported Sha'bi as saying, "'Isa ibn Maryam had said: 'Ihsan is that you should do good to him who ill-treated you; it is not ihsan that you should do good to someone who did you good'" (Ibn Kathir). ﷺ





Surah 30
Al-Rūm
 (The Romans)
 Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Mim.

الم ﴿١﴾

[2] The Romans have been overcome.²

عَلَيْتِ الرُّومُ ﴿٢﴾

1. In the opinion of Ibn `Atiyyah and others there is no difference in opinion among the earliest scholars that without exception of a verse, the whole of this *Surah* is Makkan (Alusi).

The connection between the previous chapter and this one is apparent. It is, as stated by Jalaluddin Suyuti, as follows: The previous chapter ended with the words, "As for those who struggle in Our cause, We shall guide them to Our ways," this one opens with the good news of the People of the Book ultimately overcoming pagans - implying that their own defeats here and there should not worry the Muslims. They shall also emerge victorious.

After stating the above opinion, Alusi mentions that he does not think that this is a strong opinion since the wars of the People of the Book cannot be considered as "Jihad in Allah's cause." He offers his own understanding of the connection between the two, but to us Suyuti's opinion seems reasonable enough to be content with (Au.)

2. There is consensus of opinion among the earliest scholars that the allusion is to the victory of the Persians over Romans, that took place before the emigration. The Prophet (*saws*) and his Companions wished to see the Romans, People of the Book, emerge victorious over the Persians. The latter were Magians, a branch of paganism; which was the prime rea-

[3] In a land close by,³ but, after their defeat, they shall soon be victorious.⁴

فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾

son why the Makkan pagans wished to see the Persians victorious. The pagans would tell the Muslims, “Our brothers (in faith), the Persians have overcome the Christians who are as much People of the Book as you are. In the like manner we shall also overcome you.” So Allah (*swt*) revealed these verses (Ibn Jarir and others). The Roman defeat resulted in the loss of large territories. Heraclius, the Roman emperor, had to flee and seek refuge in his capital Constantinople (Ibn Kathir).

3. Most scholars have stated that the allusion is to the lands which the Romans had lost: Palestine, Syria, and southern Iraq, which were close to the Arab borders.

4. One may ask, Why did Allah start off by saying, ‘The Romans have been overcome?’ The answer is, it is to impress that the prediction of their being victorious one day, will be more amazing in the light of the fact that once they were so weak as to have been so thoroughly overcome. After all, it is easier to predict a future victory following present victo-

rious, but not the other way round (Razi, slightly reworded).

This prediction prompted Abu Bakr (according to some reports he was backed by other Muslims) to bet with some pagans (some said it was Ubayy b. Khalf) over some camels. Abu Bakr agreed to five years’ time. But when the Prophet learned of the bet, he recommended that the period be extended to 8-9 years. He also recommended enhancement of the stake – betting being allowed in those early Islamic years (Ibn Jarir).

The above reports are also found in various *hadith* works such as Tirmidhi, Nasa’i and Ibn Abi Hatim. Tirmidhi declared his own report as trustworthy. This last mentioned report adds that since the original betting period that Abu Bakr had agreed to was six, the pagans took away whatever (of the camels) he had betted. But by the seventh year the Romans had begun to overcome the Persians and so a lot of people embraced Islam. Similar reports have also come through many second generation scholars of Islam (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

[4] In a few years.⁵ Allah's is the command, before and after. And that day the believers shall rejoice.⁶

فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ
بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[5] In Allah's help.⁷ He helps whom He will. He is the Almighty, ⁸ the Most Merciful.

يَبْصُرِ اللَّهُ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

According to some reports (having extended the time factor) Abu Bakr received the bet-camels but the Prophet asked him to give away in charity since it was unlawful, or unclean (Alusi).

5. The Prophet interpreted the textual "bid'" as any figure between three and nine.

6. Yusuf Ali places the following note at *ayah* 3, but is relevant to *ayah* 4 as well: "The Pagan Quraish of Makkah rejoiced at the overthrow of Rome by Persia. They were pro-Persian, and in their heart of hearts they hoped that the nascent movement of Islam, which at that time was, from a worldly point of view, very weak and helpless, would also collapse under their persecution. But they misread the true Signs of the times. They are told here that they would soon be disillusioned in both their calculations, and it actually so happened at the battle of Issus in 622 (the year of *Hijrat*) and in 624, when Heraclius carried his campaign into the heart

of Persia.. and the Makkan Quraish were beaten off at Badr."

7. Ibn Jarir treats the words, "And that day the believers shall rejoice in Allah's help," as one sentence. (That is, the last part of verse 6 and the beginning part of verse 7: Au.)

The victory took place at the same time as Muslim victory over pagans at Badr (Ibn Jarir). [Thus, the Qur'an used one sentence for two events of joy: Au.].

The above was the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Thawri, Suddi and many others. Abu Sa'id also held this opinion as one of Tirmidhi's report suggests. However, 'Ikrimah, *Zuhri*, Qatadah and many others believe the prediction came true after Hudaibiyyah, because Heraclius had vowed that if he became victorious, he would walk up to Bayt al-Maqdis from Hims in thanks to Allah. He was there when Dihya Kalbi arrived with the Prophet's letter to him. Heraclius ordered that any other Arabs visiting his lands be brought

forth. Abu Sufyan happened to be in Ghazza. He was taken to the royal court and one of the several questions that he asked him was, "Has the person who claims to be a Messenger ever deceived you?" Abu Sufyan said, "Not in the past. But just now we have entered into a treaty with him, and it is to be seen whether he will honor it." He was referring to the Hudaibiyyah treaty (that took place in the sixth year after *hijrah*). The two opinions can be reconciled, adds Ibn Kathir, in effect, by saying that the original victory took place earlier, but by the time Heraclius had wrested all his territory, had reorganized the affairs, and went up to Bayt al-Maqdis, another four years had elapsed. (The time between Badr and Hudaibiyyah was four years).

The Romans

In what follows we present an account, taken from various sources, to illustrate the historical conditions prevailing at the time the astonishing Qur'anic prediction of Roman victory over its Persian adversary was issued.

The Arabia of the Prophet's time was, although not geographically, but from the point of view of important activities, in a remote corner of the world. At best it was known

to the outside world for its hungry, ferocious, untamed desert-dwellers, and God-forsaken desert lands. The so-called civilized world – although as far away from true civilization as our contemporary world – was divided into two major powers. Both were vast, powerful, and several centuries old. They were the Roman and the Persian. The Romans (known by the later historians as the Byzantine) ruled over some parts of Europe, the whole of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. The Persian Empire had its roots in Persia, spread eastward, as well as down into the Yemen. Iraq was shared between the two. The two super powers had long been warring with each other in their efforts to control territories and collect taxes.

If the year 570 was significant for the humanity for the fact that it was the Prophet's year of birth, it was significant for the Persians for the death of the renowned Anoushairwan. He was succeeded on the throne by an unworthy son Hurmuz (570-590). Had it not been for the talents of his able General Bahram, his Empire would have been ruined by the invasions of the Turks on one side and Romans on the other. Eventually Bahram rebelled, and Hurmuz was deposed and killed. His son Khus-

rau Parwez (Chosroes II) took refuge with the Byzantine Emperor Maurice. The latter practically adopted him as a son, gave him a daughter in marriage, and when time became ripe, restored him to the Persian throne with Roman arms. Khusrau reigned over Persia from 590 to 628. It was to him that the holy Prophet had sent his letter of invitation to Islam, which might have reached him, or might not have gone beyond one of his Governors.

On the Roman side, the army mutinied against the emperor Maurice (582-602) replacing him with Phocus. The latter promptly executed five sons of Maurice, then Maurice himself, and later the former empress and her three daughters also. This enraged Khusrau, who promised to avenge the killing of his godfather Maurice and family. Thus started a series of wars which lasted until his death. Phocus himself proved too tyrannous to bear the throne, and a Governor of African territories sent his son Heraclius to depose him. The mission succeeded and Heraclius (Hiraql of Arabic) was installed in 610 to rule until 642. The year in which he was installed emperor, was the year Prophet Muhammad was commissioned as a Messenger. It was Prophet Muhammad whose tongue

pronounced ultimate Roman victory against the Persians. Yet, it were his own Muslim forces who ultimately took away the Empire from the Emperor.

To continue with the Persians, Khusrau's armies began their attack on the Romans in 603, and tore through their defenses. They reached Edessa in Asia Minor on the one side and Syrian territories on the other in quick time. Their sweeping victories brought them Damascus in 611. Jerusalem fell to their arms in 614-615, about 7 to 8 years before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. Some 90,000 Christians were massacred. The city was burnt and pillaged, churches were pulled down, the burial place of Christ was insulted, and many relics, including the "Holy Cross" on which the Christians believed Christ had been crucified, were carried away to Persia. The priests of the Persian religion celebrated an exultant triumph over the priests of Christ (Yusuf Ali). In this pillage and massacre the Persians were assisted by the ever discontent crowds of Jews and ever undependable Pagans. The sympathies of the Nestorians, Jacobites and other Christian sects - which had been excommunicated by the Roman Church and tyrannized for years - were also with the Mag-

ian (Zoroastrian) invaders. Thus, it might be proper to say that the Pagans, Persian Zoroastrians, Magians, Jews and a few Christian sects were all pitted against the Qur'anic prediction.

In Mawdudi's words: How puffed up was Khusrau Parvez at this victory can be judged from the letter that he wrote to Heraclius from Jerusalem. It said: "From Khusrau, the greatest of all gods, the master of the whole world: To Heraclius, his most wretched and most stupid servant: 'You say that you have trust in your Lord. Why then did not your Lord save Jerusalem from me?'"

It was at this juncture that the Prophet announced the Qur'anic prediction of ultimate Roman victory. But, despite the prediction, nothing visible happened. The situation got worse for Heraclius, who (as Gibbon wrote), being more a man of the pleasantries of the palace than the battlefields, watched with complete helplessness the on-going destruction of his empire. As if the Persian scourge was not enough, he had to now to deal with the Avars who were attacking from the northern side of Constantinople (today's Istanbul), which was, with Persian armies pitched at the southern side,

practically in a state of siege. Famine and pestilence added to the horrors of the situation.

By 619 A. D. the whole of Egypt had passed into Persian hands and their armies shortly arrived at the gates of Tripoli. In Asia Minor they pushed back the Romans to Bosporus, stationing their army right at the gates of the capital of Rome: Constantinople. The helpless Emperor Heraclius begged for peace but Khusrau's reply was: "I shall not give protection to the emperor until he is brought in chains before me and gives up obedience to his crucified god and adopts submission to the fire god" (Mawdudi).

He who was promised victory, was denied peace.

Referring to the Qur'anic prediction delivered in the 4th or 5th year of Apostleship the famous English historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) wrote the following lines in one of the greatest of historical works, "*The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*" (vol. 5 p. 79, London, 1911):

"At the time when the prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissoLution of the empire."

But then something happened to Heraclius. He changed. He gave up pleasantries of the palace, assumed the role of a hero, and borrowing all the gold that the churches could lend him (on interest: Mawdudi), he set sail quietly into the Mediterranean Sea with a small band of soldiers. As he was sailing down – a fugitive - the Prophet was in his emigration journey from Makkah to Madinah. Little did the unbelieving world realize what the two journeys meant for future history.

Heraclius landed at the shores of Syria and defeated the Persian army sent to intercept him. The vigor and valor of his army surprised the Persians, especially when Heraclius advanced further, handing them defeat after defeat. (The Persians had still a large force in Asia Minor, which they could have brought into play against the Romans if Heraclius had not made another and equally unexpected dash by sea from the north. He returned to Constantinople by sea, made a treaty with the Avars, and with their help kept the Persians at bay around the capital: Yusuf Ali). Then he returned to the Syrian region and marched on carrying in the process his victorious armies as far as the royal cities of Casbin and Ispahan, which had never been ap-

proached by a Roman emperor before. There he faced the largest- ever Persian army, so fearful that his bravest veterans were left speechless with awe. Although he knew nothing of the prophecy of the Qur’ān, Heraclius addressed his commanders in prophetic words:

“Be not terrified by the multitude of your foes. With the aid of Heaven, one Roman may triumph over a thousand barbarians.”

The victory was his. The decisive battle was at Ninevah. And a little later he recovered the “Holy Cross.” In seven years Heraclius had liberated all the provinces that had been lost in thirty years. The prediction of the Qur’ān had come true. And astonishingly again, Heraclius went back thereafter to the same old life of pleasure and ease, forcing Gibbon to state:

“Of the characters conspicuous in history, that of Heraclius is one of the most extraordinary and inconsistent. In the first and last years of a long reign, the emperor appears to be the slave of sloth, of pleasure, and of superstition, the careless and impotent spectator of public calamities.”

It was as if Heraclius had woken up from his sloth only to fulfill the prophecy of the Qur’ān.

[6] Allah's Promise; ⁹ Allah fails not His promise; but most people do not know. وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

In pursuance of a vow, Heraclius went south to Emessa (Hims) from where he marched on foot to Jerusalem to celebrate his victories, and restore to its place the "Holy Cross" which had been recovered from the Persians. Heraclius's route was strewn with costly carpets, and he thought that the final deliverance had come for his people and his empire. But, either on the way, or in Jerusalem, he met a messenger from the holy Prophet. The Prophet's letter of invitation to Islam was a Divine announcement of the end of his duties. His job was done, he had to be relieved, and the people under his yoke had to be relieved from the slavery of men and put into the slavery of God. The Prophet had announced another prediction coming from on High, though not in the Qur'an but in the *hadith*, preserved in Bukhari and others:

On Abu Hurayrah's authority, the Prophet (*saws*) said,

إِذَا هَلَكَ كِسْرَى فَلَا كِسْرَى بَعْدَهُ وَإِذَا هَلَكَ قَيْصَرٌ فَلَا قَيْصَرَ بَعْدَهُ وَالَّذِي تَمْسِي يَدِيهِ لَتُفَقَّرَنَّ كُنُوزُهُمَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

"When Kisra (Persian emperor) dies there will be no Kisra after him, and when Qaysar (Roman emperor) dies, there will be no Qaysar after him. By Him in whose hands is my life, you shall surely spend their treasures in the way of Allah."

Within a decade after the Prophet's death, all the three prophecies were fulfilled (Au.).

8. The words of 'Al a b. Zubayr's father are worth reproducing at this point, (as in Ibn Kathir), who said, "I have been witness to the Persians overcoming the Romans, then the Romans overcoming the Persians, and then the Muslims overcoming both Romans as well as the Persians – all within fifteen years."

We might point out that those fifteen years were the most consequential in the history of mankind (Au.).

9. Yusuf Ali comments: "The promise refers to the Decision of all things by the Command of Allah, Who will remove all troubles and difficulties from the path of His righteous Believers, and help them to rejoice

[7] They know but the apparent of the worldly life; but of the Hereafter, they are unmindful.¹⁰

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ
الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

over the success of their righteous Cause. This refers to all times and all situations. The righteous should not despair in their darkest moments, for Allah's help will come. Ordinarily men are puffed up if they score a seeming temporary success against the righteous, and do not realize that Allah's Will can never be thwarted."

10. That is, (and if we summarize what the earliest scholars had to say: Au.), "They know all about commerce, industry, agriculture, and how to build the land, but little else" (Ibn Jarir).

Zahir wa Batin

The *ayah* implies that the world consists of the apparent and the inapparent. The apparent is known and understood by all; but not the inapparent. Its inapparent aspect is that which leads to the Hereafter; whose blessings are to be earned through righteous living. Also, the *nakira* form employed for "*zahir*" implies that there are many aspects of the apparent, of which the unbelievers know only one: the most obvi-

ous one (i.e. the profane one: Au.) – Zmakshari.

Imām Razi writes that the outward aspect of the world is its glitter and pleasantness, while the inner aspect is the harm and fatigue that it brings. The unbelievers understand only its outward visible nature, but have no idea of its concealed ephemeral character.

Hasan al-Busri has said, "By Allah, one of them knows this world so well that he can tell you the weight of a coin by balancing it on his nail, but he cannot do his Prayers well" (Zamakshari and Qurtubi in part, Ibn Kathir in full). Alusi recalls Kirmani's simple definition: The apparent (*zahir*) is that which is visible to the eye at one glance, while the inapparent (*batin*) is that reality which has to be arrived at through intellectual reasoning.

In the words of contemporary writers, man has in the modern age learnt to fly in the air like birds, swim in water like fishes, but has not learnt how to walk on the earth (Au.).

[8] Have they not reflected within themselves?¹¹ Allah created not the heavens and the earth, and what is between them, but in truth and to a named term.¹² But surely, most of the people are disbelievers in the encounter with their Lord.

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Have they not travelled in the land to see how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than them in might; they cultivated the land¹³ and populated it more than they themselves have populated it; and their Messengers came to them with clear evidences. Thereupon, Allah was not such as to wrong them but rather they were wronging themselves.¹⁴

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

11. After commenting upon man’s refusal to look beyond the apparent, the *ayah* now invites him to reflect over the created world, which can lead to some understanding of the inapparent (*batin*) – Au.

12. That is, the whole as well as its parts are created in Truth, to serve its purpose and conclude to a pre-determined end. E.g., every plant on this planet has a predetermined life-term, while there is no difference in opinion that this earth (unless destroyed earlier) has about four billion years left to it before the sun enlarges in size to take it within its radius to burn down everything to ashes. To consider the non-living, at the macrocosm level, the sun will

last another 5 billion years while on the microcosm, atoms are known to have a rate of decay that will lead to its final annihilation. If the others are not known to be affected by decay, it could perhaps be because their life runs into time incomprehensible to the humans (Au.).

13. The translation reflects the understanding of most scholars. However, Ibn `Abbas – as in Ibn Jarir - interpreted the textual:

١ . أثاروا الأرض

as meaning, “they owned the lands and tilted them.”

14. “Let not any generation think that it is superior to all that went before it. We may be ‘heirs to all the ages,

[10] Then the end of those who did evil was evil,¹⁵ for that they cried lies to the signs of Allah and used to ridicule them.¹⁶

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا السُّؤَىٰ أَنْ
كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

﴿١٠﴾

[11] Allah begins the creation and then repeats it; then to Him you shall be returned.

اللَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

﴿١١﴾

[12] And, the Day the Hour is called the criminals will be struck with despair.¹⁷

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

﴿١٢﴾

in the foremost files of times.’ That is no reason for arrogance, but on the contrary adds to our responsibility. When we realize what flourishing cities and kingdoms existed before, how they flourished in numbers and prosperity, what chances they were given, and how they perished when they disobeyed the law of Allah, we shall feel a sense of humility, and see that it was rebellion and self-will that brought them down. Allah was more than just. He was also merciful. But they brought about their own ruin (Yusuf Ali).

15. The original su’a is the feminine of *aswa*, just as “*husna*” is that of “*absan*” (Zamakhshari and others).

16. The translation of the verse reflects the understanding of Ibn ‘Abbas and Qatadah, as in Ibn Jarir (Au.). The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim as narrated by Dahhak b. Muza-him (Ibn Kathir).

17. Another meaning of “*yublisu*” that Ibn Zayd offered is ‘descending down of evils on a man.’ When several misfortunes descend upon a man, it is said, “*ablasa al-rajul*” (Ibn Jarir). Another meaning that “*ablasa al-rajul*” offers, according to some linguists such as Zajjaj is, ‘the man was quiet because he was left without any argument to defend himself.’ Some have conjectured that the word “Iblis” carries this connotation (Qurtubi).

Lest we forget, we might keep Mawdudi’s comments before us, “... (the word) ‘criminals’ here does not imply those alone who commit theft, murder and robberies, etc. But rather those who rebelled against God, refused to accept the guidance and teachings of His Messengers, denied the accountability of the Hereafter, or lived a heedless life, have been worshipping other than Allah, or their

[13] No intercessors shall they have from among those they associated (in Allah's Divinity)¹⁸ but rather, they shall disown their associates.¹⁹

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَائِهِمْ شُفَعَاءَ وَكَانُوا بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] And, the day the Hour is called, that Day they shall split (into groups).²⁰

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُنْفِرُونَ بِمِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ يُنْفِرُونَ وَهُمْ فِي شُكُوفٍ ﴿١٤﴾

own selves, whether or not, besides these deviations, they also committed those acts which are commonly called crimes. Further, it includes those people also who, in spite of believing in God, His Messengers and knowing about the accountability in the Hereafter, disobey Him and persist in their ways to the end of their lives. When these people are brought back to life in the Hereafter, they will discover that they confront what they denied, or ignored, and so, will be dumbfounded.”

18. Mawdudi comments: “Associates include three kinds of beings: (1) Angels, Prophets, saints and righteous men to whom the polytheists assigned divine attributes and worshipped as gods. (2) Inanimate objects such as the sun, moon, stars, trees, etc. The polytheists worship them and would expect them to come forward and intercede for them. (3) Arch-criminals, who by

deception or fraud, or by the use of force, compelled God’s slaves to worship them, e.g., Satan, false religious guides, tyrants and despots.

19. As Allah (*swt*) said elsewhere (2: 166,167):

﴿إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ (١٦٦) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَّبِعُ اللَّهُمَّنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّأُوا مِنَّا﴾ [البقرة: ١٦٦، ١٦٧]

“When those that had been followed will disown those who followed them and (both) will witness the punishment - and the relationship between them will be cut asunder. Then (it will be that) those who had followed will say to those they had followed, “Oh that for us (another chance) when we will disown these (people) as they have disowned us” (Ibn Jarir).

20. Into groups of believers and unbelievers, never to be brought together again (Tabari, Ibn Kathir from Qatadah).

[15] Then, as for those who believed and acted righteously, they shall be made happy²¹ in a green meadow.²²

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَهُمْ
فِي رَوْضَةٍ يُجْبَرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

21. Mujahid and Qatadah said that the meaning is, “They will enjoy a life of luxury.” Another meaning of “*yuhbarun*” as forwarded by Yahya ibn abi Kathir is, “They will be offered songs and music” (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

On the topic of songs and music in Paradise, Ibn al-Qayyim reproduces in his Bada'e' a *hadith* from Abu Nu'aym's Sifatul Jannah. It is on the authority of Ibn 'Umar who narrates the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

إِنَّ أَزْوَاجَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ لَيُعَيِّنَنَّ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ بِأَحْسَنِ أَصْوَاتٍ
سَمِعَهَا أَحَدٌ قَطُّ إِنَّ مِمَّا يُعَيِّنَنَّ : نَحْنُ الْحَيَّرَاتُ الْحِسَانُ
أَزْوَاجُ قَوْمٍ كَرَامٍ يَنْظُرُونَ بِفَرَّةٍ أَعْيَانٍ ، وَإِنَّ مِمَّا يُعَيِّنَنَّ بِهِ
: نَحْنُ الْحَالِدَاتُ فَلَا يُمِيتُنَّهُ ، نَحْنُ الْأَمَنَاتُ فَلَا يَخْفِنَهُ ،
نَحْنُ الْمُقِيمَاتُ فَلَا يَظْعَنَنَّ - رواه الطبراني في الصغير
والأوسط ورجاله رجال الصحيح (الهيثمى).

“Spouses of the inhabitants of Paradise will sing for them in voices so sweet as never heard by anyone before. Of what they would sing: ‘We are the good ones. We are spouses of an honored folks. They see with eyes like those of cows.’

And of what they would sing: ‘We are eternally abiding, not to die. We

are the peace givers, so let no one be apprehensive. We are stayers who will not move away.” (Haythami treated the report as trustworthy Au.).

Another report comes through Anas b. Anas. The Prophet said,

الخور العين يعنين: نحن الحيرَات الحسان، خلقتنا
لأزواج كرام

“Wide-eyed Houries will sing (in Paradise), ‘We are the beautiful Houries who have been created for honorable spouses.’”

This *hadith* is also from Abu Nu'aym's Sifa and declared *Sahih* by Albani: Yusri.

He has several other reports but they are weak.

Nonetheless, Ibn Abi Dunya and Diya' al-Maqdisi have in their *Sifatu al-Jannah* a statement from Ibn 'Abbas, which Suyuti thought was trustworthy. He said, “There is a tree in Paradise of such large trunk that a traveler could cover the tree's shade in one hundred years. The inhabitants of Paradise will come out, and chat under its shade. One of them will remember worldly music. Allah

[16] But, as for those who disbelieved and cried lies to Our signs, and to the encounter of the Hereafter, they indeed shall be brought forth into the torment.²³

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ
الْآخِرَةِ فَأُولَئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] So glory to Allah when you do your evening and when you do your morning.

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] His is the Praise in the heavens and the earth – and (glory to Him) at the sun’s decline,²⁴ and when you do your noon.²⁵

وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا
وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

will send a wind from Paradise that will flutter the tree with every music played in the world” (Shawkani).

22. The translation of “*rawdah*” is influenced by Raghib’s note (Au.).

23. It is noteworthy that while right belief was coupled with righteous deeds for salvation, disbelief has not been made conditional to evil deeds. This is to indicate that disbelief in Allah is by itself a crime which deserves everlasting punishment, whether coupled with evil deeds or not (Mawdudi).

24. `Ashiyy is for the time between the sun’s decline until next morning (Raghib). Qurtubi however mentions that according to Jawhariyy `ashiyy is for the time between *Maghrib* and *Isha*’.

25. Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah, Ibn Zayd and others have said that the verse

thus mentions four of the five daily Prayers: *Maghrib* (when you do your evening), *Fajr* (when you do your morning), *Asr* (the sun’s decline), and *Zuhr* (when you do your noon). When Ibn `Abbas was asked whether five daily Prayers were mentioned in the Qur`an anywhere, he recited this verse and that of *Surah Nur* (no.58):

وَمِن بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَّكُمْ (النور - ٥٨)

“and after the `Isha Prayer - three (times) of privacy for you.”

Mujahid however believed that the five-daily Prayers were in this present verse itself, explaining the textual tumsun as covering both the *Maghrib* as well as *Isha* Prayers (Tabari).

Ibn `Abbas reports the Prophet as having said, (in a trustworthy report found in Abu Da`ud and Tabarani: Ibn Kathir),

[19] He brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living,²⁶ and He quickens the earth after its death – in the like manner you shall be brought out.

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

مَنْ قَالَ حِينَ يُصْبِحُ (فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ) إِلَى (وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ) أَذْرَكَ مَا فَاتَهُ فِي يَوْمِهِ ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ قَاهَنَّ حِينَ يُمْسَى أَذْرَكَ مَا فَاتَهُ فِي لَيْلَتِهِ

“Whoever said these words at the morning (as in text above) will regain what he lost during his day, and whoever said them in the evening will regain what he lost during his night” (Kashsh af, Ibn Kathir).

Imām R azi points out that the five daily Prayers done by a Muslim between sunset and sunrise, as well as at the early hours of the day and night - all in all seventeen *raka`ah* (cycles), for seventeen hours that he is awake – as if keep him in Prayers the whole of the time he is awake, to put him on par with the angels about whom Allah said (21: 20),

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ - الْأَنْبِيَاءَ (٢٠)

“They glorify (Him) by night and day, and take no break.”

Shabbir draws our attention to the timing of the five daily Prayers in

reference to the Sun, which has been revered by the pagans of all times and even worshipped as the greatest of gods. The first Prayer of the day is done before the Sun appears. (There are no Prayers until the Sun is in its glory, having risen up in the sky). Next Prayer is offered only after it begins to decline; the next after it begins to acquire paleness; the next after it has set; and the last after every trace of its light and shine has been lost. That is, all the prayers are offered at times when the sun has lost part or all of its glory (Au.).

26. To most the *ayah* is in material sense, (e.g., chicken from egg and egg from chicken), but Hasan al-Busri said that the meaning is, “Allah brings out a believer out of a non-believer, and a non-believer out of a believer” (Ibn Jarir).

Although science is unable to define life, to the modern scientific mind eggs are living matter and hence, a chicken out of egg is the emergence of the living from the living. But there are other examples of the living coming out of the dead. The

best examples are viruses, viroids and prions. In their natural form, these three are mere chemical bonds, or to define precisely, a macromolecular package.

In its natural state, a virus is nothing but a particle of dust. There can be billions of them strewn around us. Ordinarily harmless, we breathe millions of them in and out without any harm. They contain within them a small strand of RNA or DNA. This is surrounded by a protein layer. The outer surface (the protein capsule) can be round, square or many sided (In fact, outwardly, they are beautiful to observe). The RNA or DNA encode anything from a few to hundreds of genes. Once one of them can find a cell (human, animal or plant), whose surface matches its own, the protein covering of the virus binds with a particular surface component of the host cell. Soon, and through a few chemical reactions, it finds its way into the cell, and lo! the same dead dust particle, comes alive. It orders the host cell to make copies of its own kind which, when once filled, burst out of the cell and begin to invade other cells, dysfunctioning them, cell by cell. In a few hours they can spread to millions of cells of a body causing various illnesses.

Viroids are simpler than viruses in their construction. They are pure RNA without a protein coat. The RNA can be anything between 240 to 600 nucleotide length. A viroid works the same way as a virus does, invading a cell, and then taking over the cell machinery to produce more of itself. The effects of viroids on crops can be serious. A particular type of viroid disease called cadang-cadang has in the past devastated coconut palm groves in the Philippines. Others have affected other kinds of plants in USA.

A prion is much simpler than a viroid in that it lacks even a Nucleic acid chain – DNA or RNA. It is a mere block of protein. It enters into the brain of the victim and stays there quietly for years before springing to action. The best example is that of the CJD disease, which is caused by a prion that sits in the brain of cows. It can sit there dormant, for as long as ten years. And, since, it does nothing, it cannot be detected, nor an animal can be tested for its presence. But, one fine day, for no apparent reason, it becomes active, begins to produce more of itself, and damage the functioning of the brain (hence the common reference to it as “mad cow disease”). It is said that they strike those animals that are fed on

other animals' reprocessed body material; (perhaps nearest to being referred to as the Jallalah of the Islamic concept, which is declared unlawful by the *Fuqaha*: Jallalah is that cattle which feeds on the faeces of other animals). The most amazing part – or not so amazing for Muslims who believe in Allah's Planning – is that the prion protein is encoded by a gene within the host cell's own chromosome. In other words, the body of an organism actually brings the disease upon itself by actively engaging in the production of its enemy, without any request by the latter. The self-inflicted disease is then transmitted to human beings. But, more strangely, attempts to transmit the disease caused by prions have failed. That is, a living body could not be induced to catch the disease through forced transmission. It seems it must do it on its own, without human intervention: what we can call as 'by Allah's will.'

At the moment we have these three examples of non-living coming to life by Allah's command. No one knows how many more are there in the unknown (16: 8):

{وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ} [النحل: ٨]

"And He creates what you know not."

To be sure, we also have the dead molecules turning into living ones. This happens, (as Rashid Rida and Sayyid have discussed, though not at this point), during digestion when what has been cooked, and its characteristics of life are destroyed, it is again converted into living matter. To elaborate, the stomach breaks the food into molecules. These molecules are passed on through the blood stream to the cells of the body. There, they are either used as molecules, or further broken down into atoms, which are absorbed and brought into the life cycle. Obviously, atoms by themselves are not living matter, but, once within the cell, they are converted into such molecules as have the characteristics of the living matter, such as, the DNA which has the ability to replicate: an important characteristic of life, as understood by the scientists who deny the soul (Au.).

[20] And among His signs is that He created you of dust then, behold,²⁷ you are men scattering (far and wide).²⁸

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] And among His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, so that you might repose in them,²⁹ and He placed between you love and tenderness. Surely, in that are signs for a people who reflect.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

27. A *hadith* preserved by Ahmad, Abu Da'ud and Tirmidhi (who declared it *Hasan Sahih*), has Abu Musa al-Ash'ari as saying that the Prophet said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْضَةٍ قَبَضَهَا مِنْ جَمِيعِ الْأَرْضِ فَجَاءَ بَنُو آدَمَ عَلَى قَدَرِ الْأَرْضِ جَاءَ مِنْهُمْ الْأَحْمَرُ وَالْأَبْيَضُ وَالْأَسْوَدُ وَبَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَالسَّهْلُ وَالْحَزْنُ وَالْحَيِّثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ - قال أبو عيسى هذا حديث حسن صحيح

“Allah created Adam from a handful of dust that consisted of material taken from all over the earth. That is how Adam’s progeny came: in varieties as the earth varies: they came as white, red, and black – and between them – wicked and the well-disposed, the pliant and the rough to handle – and between them rotten and good ones” (Ibn Kathir).

28. Whether for good or bad reason, or for no reason at all, living

organisms must migrate. It is firmly planted in their nature. They do not seem to be able to stay in one place for long. Some of them must keep moving out to new lands, no matter at what cost of physical pain bordering to suffering. From fishes to shrimps, birds to creepers, human beings to insects, they all seem to suffer an urge to venture into new lands. Butterflies have been found at Mount Everest, on their way across the Himalayas (Au.).

29. “That is,” writes Mawdudi, “he Creator’s perfect wisdom is that He created human beings in two sexes. In their humanness they are identical to each other, yet with different physical features, different mental and psychological qualities, and different emotions and desires. Yet there is perfect harmony between the two in that each is the counterpart of the other.”

[22] And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth,³⁰ and the diversity of your tongues and your colors. In that indeed are signs for the knowledgeable.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَاجْتِيَافُ اللَّسَانِكُمْ وَالْوَالِدِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي
ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

With reference to the repose that one finds in the other, Qurtubi writes that a woman should respond when her husband invites her to the bed, otherwise, she will be putting him into a restless state. The Prophet (*saws*) has said (as in a *hadith* of Bukhari),

إِذَا بَاتَتْ الْمَرْأَةُ مُهَاجِرَةً فِرَاشَ زَوْجِهَا لَعَنَتْهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ
حَتَّى تَرْجِعَ [صحيح البخاري]

“When a woman spends a night having abandoned her husband’s bed, angels curse her until she returns.”

Majid adds: “The word connotes companionship and mutual love, which is distinct from mere sexual pleasure. This determines the proper status of the wife in Islam. She is not a handmaid, but a lifelong companion of her husband, his consort. Her function is to be, by her words, acts, or by mere presence, a source of comfort and solace to him. She must constitute the chief consoling, soothing element of his life. And a relation of affection, harmony, and mutual happiness and goodwill out to subsist between man and wife.

Contrast this with the attitude of the early Church. ‘We cannot but notice, even in the greatest of the Christian fathers, a lamentably low estimate of women, and consequently of the marriage relationship. Even St. Augustine can see no justification for marriage, except in a grave desire deliberately adopted for having children; and in accordance with this view, all married intercourse, except for this single purpose, is honestly condemned ... This idea of the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity, hardly existed, and could hardly exist.’ (DCA, II, p. 1909).”

30. The coming into existence of the heavens and the earth from nothingness, and their being established on an unchangeable law, functioning of great many forces within them, in harmony and equilibrium, contain many signs of their Creator, One God. Reflecting over the initial pure energy assuming the form of matter, the transformation of matter into so many elements and then combin-

[23] And among His signs is your sleep by night and day, and your seeking of His bounty. Surely, in that are signs for a people who hearken.³¹

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ مَنَامُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
وَابْتِغَاؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] And among His signs is: He shows you the lightning - generating fear and hope; and He sends down out of heaven water reviving the earth therewith, after its death. In that indeed are signs for a people who think.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا
وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُحْيِي بِهِ
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] And among His signs is that the heaven and earth stand firm by His command. Then, when He calls you, by a single call (coming) from the earth, behold, you shall (all) come forth.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَقُومَ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ
بِأَمْرِهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا دَعَاكُم دَعْوَةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ إِذَا
أَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

ing themselves into this wonderful world, every unbiased mind is bound to conclude that the whole could not have happened all by itself. Further, the fact that the most distant part in the cosmos is made up of the same stuff, and follows the same laws, should lead a man to One God who made this possible. Could several gods have achieved this? (Au).

31. Yusuf Ali summarizes the message contained in the above few verses: "From verse 20 to verse 25 are mentioned a series of Signs or Miracles, which should awaken our souls and lead us to true Reality if we try to understand Allah. (1) There is our own origin and destiny, which must necessarily be our subjective start-

ing point: 'I think; therefore I am': no particular exertion of our being is here necessary (xxx. 20). (2) The first beginnings of social life arise through sex and love: see iv. 1, and n. 506; to understand this in all its bearing, we must 'reflect' (xxx. 21). (3) The next point is to understand our diversities in speech, color, etc., arising from differences of climate and external conditions; yet there is unity beneath that diversity, which we shall realize by extended knowledge (xxx. 22). (4) Next we turn to our psychological conditions, sleep, rest, visions, insight, etc.; here we want teaching and guidance, to which we must hearken (xxx. 23). (5) Next, we must approach the higher reaches of

[26] And to Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, and all are devotedly obedient to Him.³²

[27] And He it is who begins the creation, then repeats it, and that is easier for Him.³³ To Him belongs the loftiest similitude in the heavens and the earth.³⁴ And He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَهُ قَانِتُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

spiritual hopes and fears, as symbolized by such subtle forces of nature as lightning and electricity, which may kill the foolish or bring prosperity in its train by rain and abundant harvest; to understand the highest spiritual hopes and fears so symbolized, we want the highest wisdom (xxx. 24). (6) And lastly, we may become so transformed that we rise above all petty, worldly, ephemeral things: Allah calls to us and we rise, as from our dead selves to a Height which we can only describe as the Heaven of stability: here no human processes serve, for the Call of Allah Himself has come (xxx. 25-27).”

32. “All nature in Creation not only obeys Allah, but devoutly obeys Him, i.e., glories in its privilege of service and obedience. Why should we not do likewise? It is part of our original unspoilt nature, and we must respond to it, as all beings do, by their very nature” (Yusuf Ali).

33. Some commentators, such as Qurtubi, have pointed out that since nothing is difficult for Allah, “ah-wan” should be understood in the sense of “*hayyin*” i.e., “easy.” Others have said however that if re-creation is easier, first time creation was not any difficult for Allah. Therefore, the translation as “easier” should be acceptable; in Majid’s words, “(It is) easier from the stand point of man, not of God; for to Him everything is equally easy (Th.)”

Allah says in a *hadith* preserved by Bukhari,

كَذَّبَنِي ابْنُ آدَمَ وَمَ يَكُنْ لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَشَتَمَنِي وَمَ يَكُنْ لَهُ ذَلِكَ فَأَمَّا تَكْذِيبُهُ إِيَّايَ فَقَوْلُهُ لَنْ يُعِيدَنِي كَمَا بَدَأَنِي وَلَيْسَ أَوَّلُ الْخَلْقِ بِأَهْوَنَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ إِعَادَتِهِ وَأَمَّا شَتْمُهُ إِيَّايَ فَقَوْلُهُ اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا وَأَنَا الْأَحَدُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ أَلِدْ وَمَ أَوْلَدٌ وَمَ يَكُنْ لِي كُفْوًا أَحَدٌ - [صحيح البخاري]

“Son of Adam lays the lie on Me, which is not right of him. He reviles Me, which is not right of him. As for his laying the lie, he

[28] He strikes for you an example from yourselves: ³⁵ Do you have among those your right hands own, partners in what We have provided you, so that you are equal in it, fearing for them as your fear for yourselves? ³⁶ That is how We explain the signs for a people who think.³⁷

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَكُمْ
مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي
مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ
كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ
الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

says, ‘He will not recreate me as He created me at first’ – although the first creation was not easier for Me than the recreation. As for he reviling Me, it is his saying, ‘Allah took a son,’ – while I am the One, the Eternal; who did not beget nor was begotten, and none is there comparable unto Him” (Ibn Kathir).

34. Except for the last sentence, Asad’s following note finely sums up commentaries of the classical commentators. He writes: “Primarily, the term mathal denotes a ‘likeness’ or ‘similitude’, and hence is often used in the Qur’ān (e.g., in the next verse) in the sense of ‘parable’. Occasionally, however, it is synonymous with sifah, which signifies the intrinsic ‘attribute’, ‘quality’ or ‘nature’ of a thing, concept, or living being (cf. the reference to ‘the nature of Jesus’ and ‘the nature of Adam’ in 3: 59). With reference to God, who is ‘sublimely exalted above anything that men

may devise by way of definition’ ... the expression mathal clearly points to a quality of being entirely different from all other categories of existence, inasmuch as there is ‘nothing like unto Him’ (42: 11) and ‘nothing that could be compared with Him’ (112: 4): hence, the rendering of mathal as ‘essence’ is most appropriate in this context.” And Majid adds the note of warning: “I.e., none in the heaven and earth is comparable to Him, seeing He is the Creator of all. In speaking of Him and His attributes, we must make use of most noble and magnificent expression we can possibly desire and even then we shall fall far short of the actual reality.”

35. This is a parable of the idolaters and those who associate partners with Allah. He asks them whether they consider their slaves on equal footing with themselves? Are they equally concerned of them? Do they fear that they might share their

[29] *Nay, but the transgressors followed their own caprices, without knowledge. Then who shall guide those whom Allah led into error? And they shall not have any helpers.*³⁸

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
فَمَنْ يَهْدِي مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ
نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

wealth after them? In the like manner, Allah (*swt*) has no partners with a share in His creation (Ibn Kathir).

36. One opinion is that it means, “You fear that they might inherit your wealth as one of you inherits others.” Another and more sound opinion is that “You fear that these people (the slaves) might split up your wealth between themselves, as some of you do with others when those others are not circumspect.” This was the opinion of Abu Mijlaz (Tabari).

In any case, adds Razi, is there any comparison between the relationship between you and your slaves on the one hand, and, on the other, between yourselves and your Lord? The ownership of the slaves you have is transferable, while your slavery to Allah is intransferable. Your slaves share all human and spiritual qualities with you, while you share no quality with your Lord. Finally, the slaves you

own are but Allah’s bestowal on you. How can you then, if you do not like to be equal to your slaves (despite so many similarities), approve of partners for Allah in His Divinity?

37. Yusuf Ali expounds the theme of the verse: “Allah is far higher above His Creation than any, the highest, of His creatures can be above any, the lowest, of His creatures. And yet would a man share his wealth on equal terms with his dependants? Even what he calls his wealth is not really his own, but given by Allah. It is “his” in common speech by reason merely of certain accidental circumstances. How then can men raise Allah’s creatures to equality with Allah in worship?”

38. When the unbelievers abandoned Allah, by associating partners with Him, He too abandoned them, and, in consequence, they shall not find any helpers (Razi).

[30] So set your face steadfastly to the religion, upright – Allah’s original, upon which He originated mankind.³⁹ There is no changing Allah’s creation.⁴⁰ That is the Straight Religion,⁴¹ but most of the people know not.⁴²

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي
فَطَّرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ
ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Turning in repentance to Him, fear Him (alone). Perform the Prayer (in good spirit), and be not of the idolaters.

مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا
تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

39. *Fitrah*, rooted in *fatarah* has several meanings. One is to split. Another is to create, but, more specifically, to originate. Ibn `Abbas said that he did not know this meaning until he heard a Bedouin claiming watering rights to a well say,

أَنَا فَطَرْتُهَا

“I originated it.”

Fitrah then is the original, uncorrupted state, or, “a frame of mind that has belief in God laid deep down at its sub-conscious level” (Au.).

Ibn Zayd and Mujahid have said that the allusion by the words “Allah’s original” (*Fitrata Allah*) is to Islam (the religion of submission) – a faith planted into every individual, to which Allah alluded in (7: 172),

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ
وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتَ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ
شَهِدْنَا - الأعراف - ١٧٢

“And when Your Lord took from the loins of Adam’s children their offspring and made them testify concerning themselves, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They replied, ‘Yes. We do testify’...” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Accordingly, points out Razi, “If you ask them, who created the heavens and the earth, they will surely say, “Allah.” But this instinctual belief (*fitri*) is not sufficient to win salvation.

However, points out Qurtubi, another possible meaning of “*fatara*” is creation. Several Qur’ānic usages can be cited as examples.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir also report that `Umar (*ra*) happened to pass by Mu`adh ibn Jabal. He asked him, “What is the mainstay (*qiwwam*) of this *Ummah*?” He answered, “Three; and they are the means of deliverance too: Sincerity which is the Original (*Fitrah*) upon which Allah

created the creation, Prayers, which (leads to the establishment of) the *Ummah*, and obedience which is the safeguarding (mechanism).” `Umar remarked, “You spoke the truth.”

40. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Qatadah, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Ibn Zayd and Ibrahim have all interpreted the textual word “*khalq*” as the religion of Allah (Ibn Jarir). This is how Bukhari understood it. And, on the topic of Allah’s creation created on the faith of Oneness of Allah we have several reports coming down from the Prophet. One is in Nasa’i narrated by Aswad b. Surayye`. He said,

عن الأسود بن سريع قال: أتيت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وغزوت معه فأصبحت ظفراً وقتل الناس يومئذ حتى قتلوا الولدان - وقال مرة: الذرية - فقال رجل: يا رسول الله إنما هم أبناء المشركين؟ ثم قال: “إن خياركم أبناء المشركين”. ثم قال: “ألا لا تقتلوا ذرية ألا لا تقتلوا ذرية ألا لا تقتلوا ذرية فإن كل نسمة تولد على الفطرة حتى يعرب عنها لسانها فأبواها يهودانها أو ينصرانها”. رواه أحمد بأسانيد والطبراني في الكبير والأوسط كذلك إلا أنه قال: بلغ ذلك النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال “ما بال أقوام جاؤوا بهم القتل حتى قتلوا الذرية؟”. فقال رجل، والباقي بنحوه. وبعض أسانيد أحمد ورجاله رجال الصحيح. (المهشمي)

Change above to following.

عَنِ الْأَسْوَدِ بْنِ سَرِيحٍ قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَغَزَوْتُ مَعَهُ فَأَصْبَحْتُ ظَهْرًا، فَقَتِلَ النَّاسُ يَوْمَئِذٍ حَتَّى قَتَلُوا الْوِلْدَانَ، فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ «مَا بِالْأَقْوَامِ

جَاوَزَهُمُ الْقَتْلُ أَيَّوَمَ حَتَّى قَتَلُوا الذُّرِّيَّةَ؟» فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَمَا هُمْ أَبْنَاءُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ؟ فَقَالَ «لَا إِنَّمَا خِيَارُكُمْ أَبْنَاءُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ - ثُمَّ قَالَ - لَا تَقْتُلُوا ذُرِّيَّةً، لَا تَقْتُلُوا ذُرِّيَّةً - وَقَالَ - كُلُّ نَسَمَةٍ تُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ حَتَّى يُعْرَبَ عَنْهَا لِسَانُهَا، فَأَبْوَاهَا يَهُودَانَهَا أَوْ يَنْصَرَانَهَا» رَوَاهُ النَّسَائِيُّ وَبَعْضُ أَسَانِيدِ أَحْمَدَ وَرِجَالَهُ رِجَالُ الصَّحِيحِ. (المهشمي)

Al Aswad b. Sari` reported: “Once I went to the Prophet and participated with him in a battle. I struck (someone) in the back. A lot of people were killed that day until even children were killed. The Prophet was informed. He remarked, ‘What’s wrong with the people that they overdo in fighting to the extent that they kill even children?’ A man said, ‘Messenger of Allah, are they not progeny of the idolaters?’ He answered, ‘No. The best of you are progeny of the idolaters.’ Then he added, ‘Do not kill children. Do not kill children.’ He said further, ‘Every soul is born on *Fitrath* until its tongue begins to express for it. Thereafter its parents Christianize it, or Judaize it.’”

The *Sahibayn* have a report according to which the Prophet was asked about the children of the pagans, (i.e., where will they be after death?) He answered, “When Allah created them, He knew how they would act.”

Another report of Ahmad and Muslim is worth reproducing. `Iyad b. Himar al-Mujashe`i reported that Allah's Messenger said while delivering a sermon:

أَلَا إِنَّ رَبِّي أَمَرَنِي أَنْ أُعَلِّمَكُمْ مَا جَهِلْتُمْ بِمَا عَلَّمَنِي
يَوْمِي هَذَا كُلُّ مَالٍ نَحْنُهُ عِنْدًا حَلَالٌ وَإِنِّي خَلَقْتُ
عِبَادِي حُرَّةً كَلَّمَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ أَتَتْهُمْ الشَّيَاطِينُ
فَاجْتَنَلْتَهُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِمْ وَحَرَمْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا أَخَلَلْتُ لَهُمْ
وَأَمَرْتَهُمْ أَنْ يُشْرِكُوا بِي مَا لَمْ أَنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
نَظَرَ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَمَقَمْتَهُمْ عَرَبَهُمْ وَعَجَمَهُمْ إِلَّا
بَقَايَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا بَعَثْتُكَ لِأَتْلِيكَ
وَأَتْلِي بِكَ وَأَنْزَلْتُ عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا لَا يَغْسِلُهُ الْمَاءُ تَقْرُؤُهُ
نَائِمًا وَيَمْطُأَنَ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَنِي أَنْ أُحَرِّقَ قُرَيْشًا فَقُلْتُ
رَبِّ إِذَا يَتَلَعُوا رَأْسِي فَيَدْعُوهُ حُبْرَةً قَالَ اسْتَخْرِجْهُمْ
كَمَا اسْتَخْرِجُوكَ وَأَعِزَّهُمْ تُعِزُّكَ وَأَنْفِقْ فَسَنْفِقَ عَلَيْكَ
وَابْعَثْ جَيْشًا تَبْعُثُ حَمْسَةَ مِثْلَهُ وَقَاتِلْ بِمَنْ أَطَاعَكَ
مَنْ عَصَاكَ. قَالَ وَأَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ ثَلَاثَةٌ ذُو سُلْطَانٍ مُقْسِطٍ
مُتَّصِدِقٍ مُؤَفَّقٍ وَرَجُلٌ رَحِيمٌ رَفِيقُ الْقَلْبِ لِكُلِّ ذِي
قُرْبَى وَمُسْلِمٍ وَعَفِيفٍ مُتَعَوِّفٍ ذُو عِيَالٍ - قَالَ -
وَأَهْلُ النَّارِ حَمْسَةُ الضَّعِيفِ الَّذِي لَا زُبْرَ لَهُ الَّذِينَ هُمْ
فِيكُمْ تَبِعًا لَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْلًا وَلَا مَالًا وَالْحَائِثُ الَّذِي لَا
يُخْفَى لَهُ طَمَعٌ وَإِنْ دَقَّ إِلَّا خَانَهُ وَرَجُلٌ لَا يُصْبِحُ وَلَا
يُمْسِي إِلَّا وَهُوَ يُجَادِعُكَ عَنْ أَهْلِكَ وَمَالِكَ . . . وَذَكَرَ
الْبُخْلُ أَوْ الْكَذِبَ - وَالشَّيْطَانُ الْفَحَّاشُ - صحيح
مسلم

“Lo, my Lord has commanded me that I should teach you that which you are ignorant of. Out of what He taught me this day (are the following): All that I have conferred upon My slaves is lawful for them. I have created My servants as those with a

natural tendency (to the true religion) but it is Satans who turn them away from the right religion and make unlawful for them that which has been declared lawful. And they command them to ascribe partnership to Me, although I have not sent down any authority for that. Verily, Allah looked at the peoples of the world and He strongly disliked them: the Arabs of them and the non-Arabs of them, except for a few remnants from the People of the Book. And He (further) said to me: ‘I have sent you in order to put you to test and put others to test through you. And I have sent a Book to you which cannot be washed away with water, that you may recite while awake or asleep.’ Verily, Allah commanded me to burn the Quraysh. I said: ‘My Lord, they will break my head (like the breaking) of bread.’ Allah replied: ‘You turn them out as they turned you out. You fight against them. We shall help you in this. And, you spend, you will be conferred upon. You send an army and I shall send an army five times greater than it. Fight against those who disobey you in the company of those who obey you.’ The Prophet also said, ‘The

inmates of Paradise are (of) three (kinds): One who wields authority and is just and fair; one who is truthful and has been endowed with power to do good deeds. (A second) who is merciful and kind hearted towards his kin and (towards every) Muslim. And (a third) who does not stretch his hand in spite of having a large family to support.' He also said, 'The inmates of Hell are five: the weak one who lacks power to (avoid evil): the (carefree) ones who pursue (everything irrespective of the fact that it is good or evil) and who do not have any care for their family or for their wealth; the dishonest ones whose greed cannot be concealed even in minor affairs. And those who betray you morning and evening, in regard to your family and your property.' He also made mention of the miser and the liar and those who are in the habit of abusing people and using obscene and foul language. (Muslim - Ibn Kathir.

The report of Muslim is also mentioned by Qurtubi in passing who has a somewhat detailed discussion on the topic of children born on *Fitrah*. What exactly does it mean? Are they who are born as Muslims

believers in *tawhid*? He prefers the opinion of a sizable number of scholars who have thought that the allusion is to belief in Allah as the Lord God of the world. He presents his own master's opinion: Allah creates the hearts of Adam's progeny prepared and ready to accept the truth as He creates their sensory organs ready to hear or see. So long as the hearts remain on their original creation, they accept the truth when it becomes evident. This is supported by the *hadith* which says, "At birth (infants are) just like the young of the animals when they emerge. Do you see any one of them severed of earlobes or mutilated?" That is, just like animals are born whole, but their masters mutilate them, human beings take birth on *Fitrah*. It is their parents (the term "parents" has here the wider meaning of "social influence" or "environment" – Asad), who turn them Christians, Jews or Magians.

Mufti Shafi` summarizes Shah Waliyullah's exposition in *Hujjatullahi al-Baligha* to the effect that Allah has placed natural instinct or disposition in all His creations. He said (20: 50):

{ أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى } [طه: ٥٠]

"He gave everything its instinct and then guided (it)."

[32] Of those who split their religion and are sects: every group rejoicing in what they have.⁴³

مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

It is by this instinct that a bee knows how to collect nectar and convert into honey. In a similar manner, He places in every human He creates a natural disposition to belief in Him. This is the *Fitrah*.”

Also see Yusuf Ali’s note below.

41. The textual “*Qayyim*” has been understood to mean “*mustaqim*” i.e., straight, correct, upright, etc. - that which has no crookedness in it” (Ibn Jarir).

42. Yusuf Ali seems to sum up the thoughts of many scholars on the topic: “As turned out from the creative hand of Allah, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue, and endowed with true understanding about his own position in the Universe and about Allah’s goodness, wisdom, and power. That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle and of a horse is to be swift. But man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires, and false teaching. This may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish, hankering after what is wrong or forbid-

den, and deflected from the love of his fellow-men and the pure worship of the One True God. The problem before the Prophets is to cure this crookedness, and to restore human nature to what it should be under the Will of Allah.”

43. Allah (*swt*) describes those who committed *shirk* as “those who split up their religion and are sects: every group rejoicing in what they have.” For, of the *mushirkin* there are kinds and classes. There are those who associate the Jinn in divinity; those who associate angels; those who associate their forefathers in divinity; those who associate their kings and rulers; those others who associate priests and religious leaders in divinity; yet others who associate stones and trees. Then, there are those who associate stars and planets in divinity; others who associate fire; those others who associate (the phenomenon of) day and night; yet others who associate false values, personal inclinations and greed. Thus, there are endless varieties of *shirk*. And (23: 53),

[33] And when an affliction touches the people, they call upon their Lord turning to Him in repentance. But when He gives them the taste of mercy from Him, lo, a party of them assigns associates to their Lord.⁴⁴

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ
إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا آذَاهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ
مِّنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] So as to be ungrateful for what We have given them. So enjoy a little, soon shall you know.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

{كُلُّ جَزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ} {المؤمنون: ٥٣}

“Every group rejoicing in what it has” while true values are unchanging and inalterable which lead their adherents to none other than one Allah, by whose command the heaven and earth remain in place, to whom belong all that is there in the heavens and the earth, and to whom have surrendered all that are therein” (Sayyid).

44. Yusuf Ali comments: “It is trouble, distress, or adversity that makes men realize their helplessness and turns their attention back to the true Source of all goodness and happiness. But when they are shown special Mercy - often more than they deserve - they forget themselves and attribute it to their own cleverness, or to the stars, or to some false ideas to which they pay court and worship, either to the exclusion of Allah or in addition to the lip-worship

which they pay to Allah. Their action in any case amounts to gross ingratitude; but in the circumstances it looks as if they had gone out of their way to show ingratitude.”

Imām Razi sheds light on another aspect: If someone attributes his deliverance from calamity to other than Allah, he commits open *shirk* (*shirk jaliyy*). On the other hand, if someone attributed his deliverance to natural means and causes, then too he committed *shirk*, although of a lower order (*shirk khafiy*), but *shirk* all the same. For example, to say after one finds a wooden plank, that he escaped drowning because of it, or, at the encounter with a ferocious animal, that it was the sudden appearance of a man which saved his life, is *shirk khafiy*. One condition being he believed the plank or the man had independent power. Indeed, if one says “Allah saved me by means of the plank, or the man,” then too

[35] Or, have We sent down an authority⁴⁵ upon them which speaks of what they are associating with Him?

أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] And, when We give the people a taste of mercy, they rejoice in it; but if an adversity touches them, as an outcome of what their own hands have forwarded, behold, they despair.⁴⁶

وَإِذَا أَدَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا وَإِن تُصِيبْهُمْ سَيْئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] Have they not noticed that Allah extends the provision to whomsoever He will, or restricts. Surely, in that are signs for a people who would believe.⁴⁷

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] Give therefore the kin his right,⁴⁸ as well as to the needy and the wayfarer.⁴⁹ That is better for those who seek Allah's Countenance; and such indeed are the prosperers.

فَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ وَحَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

it is some kind of *shirk*, although of a minor kind.

45. Qurtubi points out that technically "sultan" is something by which one staves off a punishment that he is due to receive (for a wrong he committed). E.g., Allah said (27: 21):

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْحِقَنَّهُ أَوْ لَيَأْتِيَنِي بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ - (النمل - ٢١)

"Assuredly, I shall chastise him with a painful chastisement or I shall slaughter him unless he brings me a good excuse."

46. After *shirk jaliyy*, Allah now describes *shirk khafiy* (Razi).

47. A believer should not look at what comes down: good or bad, plenitude or adversity, but rather, he should see "who" has sent it, viz., Allah. He should therefore rejoice at all events. This is the mark of a true believer. Hence Allah ended by saying, "Surely, in that are signs for a people who believe" (Razi).

48. Basing his opinion on this verse, Imām Abu Hanifah has ruled that the maintenance of every kin, male or female, who cannot earn his or her own livelihood, is the responsibility (of other kin). The Shafe`iyah however see the responsibility upon the incumbent's father (Zamakhshari, Alusi).

[39] And what you give out in usury⁵⁰ that it may grow upon people's wealth, does not grow with Allah.⁵¹ But rather, that which you give out as charity by which you seek Allah's Countenance, such indeed, they are the augmenters.⁵²

وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِّن رَّبًّا لِّيَرْبُو فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ
فَلَا يَرْبُو عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِّن زَكَاةٍ
تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

49. The allusion is to common charity. Deserving recipients of *Zakah* have already been nominated by Allah elsewhere in the Qur'an. The categories named here: the kin, the poor and the wayfarer, are those whose rights are not hinged to a man's savings reaching a certain level, as in *Zakah*. But rather, their rights are enduring and unconditional. One should expend on them even if he is poor, if they are poorer (Razi).

50. The following is a comprehensive statement from Asad on how Islam looks at *riba*. He writes: "This is the earliest mention of the term and concept of *riba* in the chronology of Qur'anic revelation. In its general, linguistic sense, this term denotes an 'addition' to or 'increase' of a thing over and above its original size or amount; in the terminology of the Qur'an, it signifies any unlawful addition, by way of interest, to a sum of money or goods lent by one person or body of persons to another. Considering the problem in terms of

the economic conditions prevailing at or before their time, most of the early Muslim jurists identified this 'unlawful addition' with profits obtained through any kind of interest-bearing loans irrespective of the rate of interest and the economic motivation involved. With all this – as evidenced by the voluminous juridical literature on this subject – Islamic scholars have not yet been able to reach an absolute agreement on the definition of *riba*: a definition, that is, which would cover all conceivable legal situations and positively respond to all the exigencies of a variable economic environment. In the words of Ibn Kathir (in his commentary on 2: 275), 'the subject of *riba* is one of the most difficult subjects for many of the scholars (*ahl al-'ilm*).'" It should be borne in mind that the passage condemning and prohibiting *riba* in legal terms (2: 275-281) was the last revelation received by the Prophet, who died a few days later; hence, the Companions had no op-

portunity to ask him about the shar`i implications of the relevant injunctions – so much so that even `Umar ibn al-Khattab is reliably reported to have said, ‘The last [of the Qur`ān] that was revealed was the passage [lit., ‘the verse’] on riba; and, the Apostle of God passed away without [lit., ‘before’] having explained its meaning to us’ (Ibn Hanbal, on the authority of Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib). Nevertheless, the severity with which the Qur`ān condemned riba and those who practice it, furnishes – especially when viewed against the background of mankind’s economic experiences during the intervening centuries – a sufficiently clear indication of its nature and its social as well as moral implications. Roughly speaking, the opprobrium of riba (in the sense in which this term is used in the Qur`ān and in many sayings of the Prophet) attaches to profits obtained through interest-bearing loans involving an exploitation of the economically weak by the strong and the resourceful: an exploitation characterized by the fact that the lender, while retaining full ownership of the capital loaned and having no legal concern with the purpose for which it is to be used or with the manner of its use, remains contractually assured of gain irrespective of

any losses which the borrower may suffer in consequence of this transaction. With this definition in mind, we realize that the question as to what kinds of financial transactions fall within the category of riba is, in the last resort, a moral one, closely connected with the socio-economic motivation underlying the mutual relationship of the borrower and lender; and, stated in purely economic terms, it is a question as to how profits and risks may be equitably shared by both partners to a loan transaction.”

(This perhaps is the aspect which was not clear to `Umar [*ra*] when he remarked that the Prophet (*saws*) passed away without having explained riba to full satisfaction. Extremely cautious as they were, our pious predecessors might have feared much of what we feel assured as lawful transactions, as, in their eyes, unlawful. This is evidenced by a statement of `Umar (in *Al-Zawajir* of Ibn Hajr): “We had given up nine-tenth of the lawful fearing riba.” As the remarks that follow indicate, Asad himself seems to be inclined to an expanded meaning of riba, i.e., beyond simply “increase over the principal” to include “assured profits” to some at the cost of others in deals involving monetary transactions.

The *ukhuwwah* of Islam, we might remind ourselves, depends to a large degree on how wealth is treated and distributed among the *ikhwah*: Au.).

Asad continues: “It is, of course, impossible to answer this double question in a rigid, once-for-all manner: our answers must necessarily vary in accordance with the changes to which mans social and technological development and, thus, his economic environment is subject. Hence, while the Quranic condemnation of the concept and practice of *riba* is unequivocal and final, every successive Muslim generation is faced with the challenge of giving new dimensions and a fresh economic meaning to this term which, for want of a better word, may be rendered as ‘usury’. In the present instance (which, as I have mentioned, is the earliest in the history of the Qur’ān), no clear-cut prohibition is as yet laid down; but the prohibition appearing in 2: 275 ff. is already foreshadowed by the reference to the immoral hope of increasing one’s own substance ‘through [other] people’s possession’, i.e., through the exploitation of others.”

Asad’s cautious line is justified by several prophetic sayings on the topic. In brief, we might quote the fol-

lowing: According to a report in Ibn Marduwayh of unknown status, the Prophet (*saws*) said,

سَيَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ عَضُوضٌ يَعَضُّ الْمُوسِرُ عَلَى مَا فِي يَدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِدَلِيكَ قَالَ اللَّهُ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ (وَلَا تَتَسَوَّأُ الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ) وَتَتَهَدَّى الْأَشْرَارُ وَيُسْتَنْدَلُ الْأَخْيَارُ وَيَبَايِعُ الْمُضْطَرُونَ وَقَدْ تَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- عَنْ بَيْعِ الْمُضْطَرِّ وَعَنْ بَيْعِ الْغَرِّ وَعَنْ بَيْعِ الثَّمَرَةِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُطْعَمَ.

“A time will come when tenacity will be of a high order. In those times even a well-to-do person will hold fast to what he has in his hands, which is not what he has been ordered. But rather Allah has said, “Do not forget to do good to each other.” (Ibn Kathir at 2:237).

According to another report he said,

سيد شرار الخلق يبايعون كل مضطر، ألا إن بيع المضطرين حرام، المسلم أخو المسلم، لا يظلمه، ولا يخذله، إن كان عندك معروف فعد به على أخيك، ولا تزده هالكا إلا هلاك

“The worst of the evil creations is those who would like to deal with the most desperate person. Remember, trade deals with the desperate is unlawful. A Muslim is a brother unto another Muslim. He does not wrong him nor does he humiliate him. If you have something good, extend it to your brother and not augment

ruin (from your side) to add on to ruin.”

Quite in contradiction to the noble principles laid down by Islam, we see today in the oil-rich Middle-east, that the most desperate people of the world – Muslim or non-Muslim – are identified, and brought in to labor for those whose wealth, created through exploitation of the weak, is no more than an easy game for the West, in whose coffers it ends sooner or later (Au.).

51. Authorities such as Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Mujahid, Ibrahim, Qatadah, Dahhak and others are of the opinion that the meaning is, “What you give as gifts (or as services) to people in the hope of being similarly compensated by them, is not registered as a good deed deserving to be rewarded, although not punishable” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others).

Ibn Abi Hatim has it that Ibn `Abbas said, “There are two kinds of riba: one allowed and the other disallowed. The one allowed is a man’s

gift to another hoping to get something better in return.” According to Bayhaqi’s report he added that this is neither rewarded nor punished. However, Allah (*swt*) specifically prohibited even this through a verse (74: 6) which said,

و لا تمنن تستكثر (المدثر - ٦)

“Do not do good (to others) in order to gain more.” (Shawkani).

52. That is, it is these who get multiple rewards as the Prophet (*saws*) said in a trustworthy report,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: ”لَا يَتَصَدَّقُ أَحَدٌ بِتَمْرَةٍ مِنْ كَسْبٍ طَيِّبٍ إِلَّا أَخَذَهَا اللَّهُ بِيَمِينِهِ. فَيُرِيهَا كَمَا يُرِي أَحَدُكُمْ قَلْوَةً أَوْ قَلْوَصَةً. حَتَّى تَكُونَ مِثْلَ الْجَبَلِ، أَوْ أَكْبَرَ.“ - مسلم

“No one spent the equivalent of a date out of his lawful earning but Allah takes it by His right hand and increases it several fold for him as one of you looks after his foal or young camel, until the date becomes like (Mount) Uhud, or larger than it” (Razi in brief, Ibn Kathir).

[40] Allah it is who created you and nourishes you.⁵³ Then He will deal you death, and thereafter bring you back to life. Is there any of your associates (in Divinity) who does aught of that? Glory to Him, high above that they associate (with Him).

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّنُكُمْ
ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ
مِنْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ سُبْحَانَ وَتَعَالَى
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] Corruption⁵⁴ has appeared in the land and sea⁵⁵ owing to what people's hands have earned, that He may give them a taste of some of what they have done, haply so they may return.⁵⁶

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ
أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] Say, 'Go about in the land and see how was the end of those who were there before.' Most of them were associaters (in Divinity).

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ
كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] So set your face steadfastly to the Straight Religion before there comes a day from Allah that has no repellant; that day they will be split.

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ
يَصَّدَّعُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

53. That is, He brings out a new soul from the mother's womb bereft of the senses of sound and sight, weak of body and mind, and then He nourishes it. It is reported that once Khalid's two sons went to see the Prophet. They found him attending to some work and extended a helping hand. He told them,

لَا تَأْيِسَا مِنَ الرَّزْقِ مَا تَهَزَّزَتْ رُؤُوسُكُمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ
تَلِدُهُ أُمَّهُ أَحْمَرَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ قِشْرَةٌ ثُمَّ يَرْزُقُهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

“Never despair of Allah's provision so long as your heads shake, for, a man emerges from his

mother's womb red, without a skin. Then on, Allah the Exalted nourishes him” (Ibn Kathir).

54. What is the allusion to? Imām Razi says it is to *shirk*. Allah said elsewhere (21: 22),

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (الأنبياء - ٢٢)

“Had there been a deity other than Allah, surely the two (the heaven and earth) would have been corrupted.”

Qatadah and Suddi held the same opinion, although several other opinions have also been offered

(Qurtubi), e.g., loss of “*barakah*”, droughts, murder, crop failure, etc. (Alusi and others); other corruptions being the direct effect of *shirk* (Au.).

Qatadah’s opinion that the allusion is to the epoch just before the appearance of the Prophet, seems to carry much weight in view of the fact that the whole world was at that time sunk in disbelief. The portrayal of the situation by the historians - vis a vis *kufir* – tells us in no indefinite terms that the whole world was sunk in debauchery of disbelief (Shabbir).

55. Although most early commentators, including Mujahid, have understood the term *barr* and *bahr* as meaning land and sea, Mujahid remarked that the Arabs also refer to every town or village situated by the shore of a river or lake as *bahr* (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi). The Prophet also used the word “*bahr*” in this sense in a letter he wrote to the ruler of Aylah (Ibn Kathir).

The meaning however is that when Allah is obeyed, the earth throws out its produce in abundance; but when He is disobeyed, it withholds. Accordingly, we have a *hadith* in Abu D a’ud which says,

إِقَامَةُ حَدِّ مِنْ حُدُودِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً
فِي بِلَادِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

“The execution on the earth of a capital punishment is better for its inhabitants than that they should be sent rains for forty mornings.”

The report is in Ibn Majah and others, but thought to be weak, but Ibn Kathir’s following note may be paid attention to (Au.).

The reason is that the execution of capital punishment deters people from breaking Allah’s laws. And, the observation of His laws opens the heavenly and earthly gates of good and plenty. Accordingly, when ‘Isa (*asws*) will come, he will rule by the Islamic law, killing swine, breaking the cross and annulling *Jizyah*. He will accept nothing but Islam or will put (the people) to the sword. In consequence, when Allah would have destroyed Dajjal, along with his followers, as well as *Ya’juj* and *Ma’juj*, the earth will be ordered to throw out its blessings. At that time a group of people will eat out of a single pomegranate and rest in the shade of its skin. That, for no other reason except that Allah’s laws would be executed in the earth, and there will be no one disobeying Him. In this connection we might also remember the *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* which says that when a corrupt sin-

[44] Whosoever disbelieved - upon him is (the consequence of) his disbelief, and whosoever worked righteousness, then, for themselves they are preparing.⁵⁷

مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا
فَلِأَنْفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] That He may recompense those who believed and worked righteousness out of His bounty. Surely, He does not approve of the unbelievers.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

ner dies, people, places, trees, and animal, all feel relieved about it. (The *hadith* is in Tirmidhi also, of Hasan status). And, Imām Ahmad has a report which says that during the time of Ziyad or Ibn Ziyad, a clay pot was found full of grains. They were the size of date stones. A writing found in it said, “This is of the times when justice used to be administered” (Ibn Kathir).

56. Asad places a note that is all the more relevant today in view of further deterioration of the corruption that he pointed out several decades ago. He wrote: “Thus the growing corruption and destruction of our natural environment, so awesomely – if as yet only partially – demonstrated in our time, is here predicted as ‘an outcome of what men’s hands have wrought’, i.e., of that self-destructive – because utterly materialistic – inventiveness and frenzied activity which now threatens mankind with

previously unimaginable ecological disasters: an unbridled pollution of land, air and water through industrial and urban waste, a progressive poisoning of plant and marine life, all manner of genetic malformations in men’s own bodies through an ever-widening use of drugs and seemingly ‘beneficial’ chemicals, and the gradual extinction of animal species essential to human well-being. To all this may be added the rapid deterioration and decomposition of man’s social life, the all-round increase in sexual perversion, crime and violence, with, perhaps, nuclear annihilation as the ultimate stage: all of which is, in the last resort, an outcome of man’s oblivion of God and, hence, of all absolute moral values, and their supersession by the belief that material ‘progress’ is the only thing that matters.”

57. Mujahid’s opinion was that the unbelievers are preparing their bed

[46] And among His signs is that He sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, so as to let you taste of His mercy,⁵⁸ so that the ship may sail at His command, that you may seek of His bounty,⁵⁹ and haply so you may give thanks.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ الرِّيحَ مُبَشِّرَاتٍ
وَلِيُذِيقَكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ
بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] Indeed, We sent before you Messengers to their people. They brought them clear signs; then We took revenge upon those who committed crimes: helping the believers was incumbent upon Us.⁶⁰

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ
فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاذْتَمَنَّا مِنَ الَّذِينَ
أَجْرَمُوا وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٤٧﴾

[48] Allah it is who sends the winds that stir up the clouds,⁶¹ then He spreads them in the sky as He will.⁶² Then He breaks them into fragments.⁶³ Then you see raindrops⁶⁴ issuing forth from its midst. Then, when He strikes thereof those of His slaves He will, behold, they are rejoicing.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا
فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَيَجْعَلُهُ
كِسْفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ فَإِذَا
أَصَابَ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ إِذَا هُمْ
يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

in the grave (Ibn Jarir), perhaps in the sense that it will be the point of start for the journey to the Hereafter, and a tortuous one at that (Au.).

“Whoever defended attack on the honor of his brother, makes it incumbent upon Allah that He should shield him from the Fire of Hell on the Judgment Day.” Then the Prophet recited this verse (Ibn Kathir).

58. That is, the rains.

The above was declared Hasan by Tirmidhi, the collector (Au.).

59. Through trade, commerce, and travel to distant parts of the world via the seas.

Iraqi has, however, declared this report as not trustworthy (S. Ibrahim).

60. In further exposition of the ending part of this verse, Ibn Abi Hatim has a report on the authority of Abu Darda'. He says he heard the Prophet say,

61. The words,

مَنْ رَدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ يَرُدَّ عَنْهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا

“Winds that stir up the clouds” could also suggest, “the winds

[49] Although before it was sent down upon them they were indeed – before it - in despair.⁶⁵

وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمُبْلِسِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] See then the marks of Allah's mercy: how He quickens the earth after its death. Surely that is the sure Quickener of the dead, and He has power over all things.

فَانظُرْ إِلَى آثَارِ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] But if We should send a wind⁶⁶ and they saw it turn (their crops) yellow, they would remain after that disbelieving.⁶⁷

وَلَكِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَظَلُّوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

stir up (water to create) the clouds” (Au.).

62. Qatadah understood “*yabsat-uhu*” as meaning, “He gathers them together” (Ibn Jarir), but many others have understood as “He spreads them, causes them to increase and grow” (Ibn Kathir).

63. Dahhak and others have pointed out that *kisafan* could also be understood as meaning layers upon layers (of clouds) - Ibn Kathir.

64. The rendering of “*wadq*” as raindrops is following Mujahid’s understanding as in Ibn Jarir.

65. What the repetition of the words “before it” means is that it had happened several times “before it” – i.e., before the rains finally came – that the rains did not fall despite expectation, until they lost all hope and had sunk into despair (Ibn Kathir).

66. It might be noticed that earlier the word used for “wind” was “*riyah*” (pl. of *rih*), while at this point it is “*rih*.” The reason is, remarks Imām Razi, mankind experience the life-giving winds (*riyah*) more than destructive “*rih*” which is not so common. Hence plural for those that bring glad tidings and singular for the one that brings destruction.

Hence the Prophet’s prayer-words, said whenever winds began to blow,

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا رِيحًا وَلَا تَجْعَلْهَا رِيحًا (أحمد)

“O Allah make it “*riyah*” (winds) and not “*rih*” (wind).”

The report is trustworthy.

67. The allusion is to another class of winds which carry no moisture at all, but rather are dry. They dry up the crops and plants, leaving them in their wake yellow; although, it was a

[52] Verily, you cannot make the dead hear nor can you make the deaf hear the call when they turn away showing their backs.⁶⁸

فَإِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ
الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] Nor are you going to guide the blind out of their error. You can only make hear those who believe in Our signs and so they surrender.

وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ
إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ
مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] Allah it is who created you in (a state of) weakness, then made after weakness strength; then made after strength, weakness and hoary-head. He creates what He will; and He is the All-knowing, the All-powerful.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ
الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ ﴿٥٤﴾

point in time when the farmers were expecting a refreshing shower that would turn the crops greener and cause to yield richer harvest (Au.).

68. Ibn Kathir uses this occasion to stress upon the living not to lose contacts with the dead: by way of visits to their graves, supplicating for them, and sending peace to them. He quotes Ibn `Abd al-Barr's *hadith* that he declared trustworthy:

ما من أحد يمر بقبر أخيه المسلم، كان يعرفه في الدنيا، فيسلم عليه، إلا رد الله عليه روحه، حتى يرد عليه السلام

“No one passes by a brother Muslim’s grave whom he knew in this world, who greets him, but Allah returns the man’s soul to him so that he can return the greeting.”

And Ibn Abi Dunya has narrated a man of the family of `Asim al-Juhdari as saying, “I saw `Asim in a dream two years after his death. I asked, ‘Are not you dead?’ He replied, ‘Of course I am.’ I asked, ‘Where are you now?’ He replied, ‘By Allah I am in one of the orchards of Paradise. Myself and a few of my companions gather together every Friday night and its morning at Bakr b. `Abdullah al-Muzani’s place where we pick up your news.’ I asked, ‘Your bodies or souls?’ He answered, ‘Out of the question. The bodies have become dust. It is the souls that meet.’ I asked, ‘Do you come to know when we visit you?’ He replied, ‘Yes. From the evening of Friday, the whole of its day, until the sunrise on Friday.’ I asked, ‘Why this, apart from other

days?’ He answered, ‘Because of the importance of Friday over all other days.’”

And, Abu al-Tayyah reports about Mutraf that, “We heard that he used to visit Ghotā. He would go there by night and stop by the graves as he passed by them. He would halt, remaining on his horse. He saw every dweller of a grave sitting on top of the grave. They would say to to each other, ‘This is Mutraf who comes to you every Friday...’”

A cousin of Sufyan b. ‘Uyaynah says, “When my father died, I was struck by great grief. I used to visit his grave every day. Then I discontinued for some reason, until I visited him again. As I was sitting at the grave, I was overtaken by sleep and saw that my father’s grave had split. He was sitting in his grave looking much perturbed. He had the expression of the dead on his face. I was in tears when I saw him in that state. He asked, ‘My son, what prevented you from coming to me?’ I asked, ‘Do you get to know when I come here?’ He replied, ‘You never came but I knew about it. You used to come pleasing me and pleasing others around me: by virtue of your supplications.’” He said, “Thereafter I used to visit him as often as I could.”

Ibn Suwayd al-Tafawi says his mother was so much given to devotions that she was nicknamed “Rahibah.” ... “When she died I used to visit her every Friday, pray for her and for the rest of the dead in the graveyard. One day I saw her in my dream and asked her, ‘Mother dear! How are you?’ She replied, ‘My son! Death is a painful affair. By Allah I am in a praiseworthy Barzakh where the floor is made of sweet basil (*rayhan*) and we rest on (pillows of) silk brocade – until the day of Resurrection.’ I asked, ‘Do you have any need?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ I asked, ‘What is it?’ She replied, ‘Do not discontinue with your visits to us and your prayers for us. I am given the glad news of you starting off from your homefolk. I am told, “O Rahibah! Here is your son advancing toward you.” At that I rejoice as also those around me of the dead.’”

This, says Ibn Kathir, is a vast chapter that has numerous reports from the Companions and those who came after them.

Alusi also agrees with Ibn Kathir in that the dead can hear when addressed. Abu al-Sheikh recorded that a woman used to clean up the Prophet’s mosque. She died but the Prophet (*saws*) was not aware she was

[55] *The Day the Hour⁶⁹ strikes, the criminals will swear (that) they tarried not but an hour. That is how they were being deluded.*

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُحْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] *But those who were given knowledge and faith will say, 'Indeed you tarried by Allah's decree to the day of resurrection. This then is the day of resurrection, but you were not knowing.'*

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْنَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ فَهَذَا يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] *That day, the excuses of the transgressors will not profit them, nor will they be asked to make amends.*

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَعذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] *Surely, We have set forth for the people in this Qur'ān all manner of similitude. And, even if you brought them a sign, those who have disbelieved will surely say, 'You are all not but indulging in vain.'*

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُبْطِلُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

dead. He happened to pass by a grave and inquired whose it was. They told him, "Umm Mahjan's." He asked, "The one who used to clean up the mosque?" When they said yes, he asked them to line up for Prayers. After the Prayer, he addressed the grave, "What did you find most beneficial?" They asked (him), "Messenger of Allah, does she hear?" He answered, "You are not hearing me any better than she does." Then he explained to them that she had replied: "Cleaning up the mosque." Bayhaqi also reported it as well as Hakim who declared it trustworthy.

(The above report could not be traced for its authenticity: Au.).

One may be warned, adds Shabbir, that Allah allowing a dead to hear is one thing, and a human being making them hear is another. There is no guarantee whatsoever that if we address the dead in the grave, whether by way of supplication for them, or, mere greetings of peace, that they should hear.

Also see *Surah al-Naml*, ayah 50, note 101 for relevant discussion.

69. The "Hour" has been so called because it will be the last hour of this world (Zmakhshari).

[59] That is how Allah sets the seals upon the hearts of those who do not know.

كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

[60] So, patiently persevere; surely, Allah's promise is true. And let not those who do not believe make light of you.⁷⁰

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَا يَسْتَخِفُّكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْفِقُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

70. "That is," writes Mawdudi, "Let not the enemies find you so weak as to suppress you by their uproar, nor to cow you down by their campaign of slander-mongering, nor dishearten you by their jesting, taunts and derisions, nor frighten you by their threats, show of power and persecution, nor allure you by offering baits, nor force you to effect a compromise with them ..."

Off the main implications, Ibn Jarir and others report that one of the Khawarij was Praying behind `Ali ibn Abi Talib in a *Fajr* Prayer. (The Khawarij fought against him because they believed he had abandoned Islam by making peace with Mu`awiyah, and by sheltering `Uthman's murderers, an allegation which had no basis but in evil suspicion: Au.). While `Ali was reciting the man shouted the following Qur'anic verse from the rear (39: 65),

لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ
- الزمر (٦٥)

"But if you commit association (with Allah), your deeds will go waste and you will surely be of the losers." `Ali fell silent for a moment, weighing his answer, then recited this last verse of this *Surah*:

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَا يَسْتَخِفُّكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْفِقُونَ (الروم - ٦٠)

"So, patiently persevere. Surely, Allah's promise is true. And let not those who do not believe make light of you."

The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim also (Ibn Kathir). And, what `Ali meant perhaps by replying to the man's taunt with this verse was that if he was so sure of his (`Ali's) apostasy then, he ought to remain patient, persevering in his belief, without spilling blood over the issue (Au.).

At this point Ibn Kathir also quotes a *hadith* from Ahmad transmitted by `Abdul Malik b. `Umayr. It is as follows:

وعن عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ عُمَيْرٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ شَيْبَةَ أَبَا رُوْحٍ مِنْ ذِي الْكَلَاءِ عَنْ رَجُلٍ أَنَّهُ صَلَّى مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الصُّبْحَ فَقَرَأَ بِالرُّومِ فَتَرَدَّدَ فِي آيَةٍ فَلَمَّا

انصرفت قال إنه يلبس علينا القرآن أن أقواما منكم
 يُصلون معنا لا يُحسبون الوضوء فمن شهد الصلاة
 معنا فليحسب الوضوء - رواه أحمد ورجاله رجال
 الصحيح. (الهيثمى)

Ibn `Umayr said, "I heard from Shabib Abu Ruh Dhu al-Kila` that he Prayed behind the Prophet. He recited *Surah al-Rum*. However, he got confused a bit. After it was over, he turned to them and remarked, "We got confused over the Qur`ān because some among you who offer Prayers

with us do not do their ablution properly. So, let anyone who attends the Prayers with us, do his ablution well." This *hadith*, remarks Ibn Kathir, although of Hasan status, tells us in definitive terms that the Imām and the followers in a Prayer are inter-related - acts of one affect the other.

Haythami has, however, declared it containing a chain which is that of the *Sahih* collections (Au.). بَقِيَّتُهُ



Surah 31
Luqman

Makkan¹



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Lam. Mim.

الم ﴿١﴾

[2] These are verses of the Wise Book.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٢﴾

[3] A guidance and a mercy for those who excel (in good deeds).²

هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] Those who offer the Prayers (correctly and spiritedly), give the Zakah and, they – in the Hereafter – they have sure faith.

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

[5] They are on a guidance from their Lord,³ and they, they indeed, are the prosperers.

أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] And, of the people is one⁴ who purchases idle discourse⁵ to lead astray from the path of Allah⁶ – without knowledge⁷ – and to treat it in mockery. They, for them is a humiliating chastisement.⁸

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي هُوَ الْحَدِيثَ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِعِيرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٦﴾

1. Qatadah has said that except for two verses 27 and 28, the rest of the *Surah* is Makkan. Ibn `Abbas however said that three of its verses are not Makkan (Qurtubi).

2. The “*muhsinin*” of the text has been explained in the verse itself with words that follow: “those who offer the Prayers (assiduously), give the *Zakah*” (Zamakhshari).

3. That is, on a path that is plain, clear, unambiguous and entirely satisfying to the mind, heart and soul (Au.).

4. It is reported by most classical commentators that the allusion is to Nadr b. al-Harith who, in the words of Majid, “brought from abroad the romance of Persian heroes, allured to them the crowds of the Quraish

and persuaded them to think that his stories were preferable to the word of God.” But, Asad warns, the allusion is not to a specific person but rather “describes a type of mentality and has, therefore, a general import.”

5. The textual “*shira`*” (purchase) is not in its literal sense but rather its preference over the truth; as for example, Allah (*swt*) said about those who preferred error over guidance, as those who purchased error. He said (2: 16),

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى (البقرة - ١٦)

“They are the ones who purchased error in exchange of guidance” (Qurtubi).

“Idle discourse” is not a very accurate rendition of the textual phrase “*lahwatu l hadith.*” It has been widely reported of Ibn Mas`ud that he emphatically explained it as alluding to songs and music. Ibn `Abbas and his students agreed with Ibn Mas`ud’s interpretation but added that all such instruments are included that cause distraction to the soul (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Hasan al-Busri specifically mentioned music as covered in the disapproval (Ibn Kathir). A narrative in this connection however, of `Abdullah ibn `Umar does not reach trustworthy status. It reports Nafi` as

saying, “I was with `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud when he passed by someone playing on a flute. He cut across the path, pressed his fingers against his ears and kept asking me, ‘Nafi`. Do you still hear?’ When I said no, he removed his fingers and said, ‘This is how I saw the Prophet do.’” Abu Da`ud and `Iraqi have both distrusted the report (Shawkani: S.Ibrahīm).

There is another report however which comes down on the authority of `Abdul Rahman ibn `Awf. It is of Hasan status. (It is in Tirmidhi: S. Ibrahīm) the Prophet (*saws*) said,

”كُفِّتُ عَنْ صَوْتَيْنِ أَمْمَقَيْنِ فَاجْرَيْنِ: صَوْتِ عِنْدِ مُصِيبَةِ حَمْسٍ وَجُوهٍ وَسَقِّ جُيُوبٍ وَرَنَةِ شَيْطَانٍ“
(الترمذي)

“I have forbidden the voice of two idiotic perverts: A senseless voice accompanied by music, and the mourning-voice at a misfortune accompanied by scratching of the face, tearing of the clothes and devilish screams” (Shawkani).

A shorter version of this *hadith* has been declared by Haythami in his *Zawa'id* as having a reliable chain (Au.).

In general, all that diverts one’s attention from the useful to the useless such as: nightly-gossips, flying anec-

dotes, talks centered around imaginary incidents or fictitious legends, jokes, songs and music, is covered in the term “*lahwatu l hadith*” (Zamakhshari); unless, of course, they remain within tolerable limits of occasional indulgence (Au.).

In this connection there is a report coming through Abu Umamah al-Bahili. The Prophet said,

لَا تَبِيعُوا الْقَيْنَاتِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوهُنَّ وَلَا تَعَلِّمُوهُنَّ وَلَا خَيْرَ
فِي بَحَارَةٍ فِيهِنَّ وَمَنْهُنَّ حَرَامٌ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا أَنْزَلَتْ هَذِهِ
الآيَةَ وَمَنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْتَرِي لهُوَ الْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِلَى آخِرِ الْآيَةِ

“Do not buy or sell (female) singers nor teach them (music), there is no good in trading them, and the profit thereof is unlawful. It is about them that Allah revealed, “Of the people is one who purchases idle tales to lead astray from the path of Allah” (Ibn Jarir).

The report as in Tirmidhi, was declared weak by him (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Bukhari, Nasa’i, Daraqutni and Abu Zur’ah have distrusted one of its narrators (*Tuhfah*) – Au.

Qurtubi lists down opinions of the past scholars about such songs as which included light music (in con-

trast to the kind of music in today’s songs, which can be described as heavy music, which are totally unacceptable: Au.). Ibn Mas’ud swore three times that the allusion in this verse is to songs (that include such music: Au.). So thought Ibn ‘Umar, ‘Ikrimah, Maymun b. Mahran, Mak-hul, Mujahid, Hasan, Qasim b. Muhammad, Malik, and others. But according to Imām Abu Hanifah, Imām Shafe’i, Imām Malik, Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Ibrahīm (Nakha’i), Sha’bi, Hammad, Thawri, and many others it is *Makruh*. Ibn Hanbal was asked about a singer slave-girl left to a boy in inheritance, whether she could be sold off to meet the child’s expenses. He replied that she could be sold, but not as a singer, even if that fetched a higher price. Qaffal has said that the testimony of a person given to songs and music may not be accepted. That applies to singers and musicians. Imām Malik in fact had learnt to play music in his younger days. But when he grew up his mother admonished him against it and so he gave up and took to studying Islamic disciplines. In sum, writes Qurtubi, the kind of song that motivates to what has been declared unlawful in Islam, is unlawful by consensus. However, that which does not, is lawful in small measures,

on occasions, to effect a change in mood or remove boredom. We have examples of simple songs to the accompaniment of a drum sung before the Prophet: (a) when he allowed `A'isha to watch a group of dancers perform in the yard of his mosque, (b) when some girls sang on the occasion of `Eid, [when Abu Bakr reproached them, the Prophet interrupted to say, "Let them alone, Abu Bakr. This is our `Eid"], (c) when the Companions sang at the time of the mosque construction, or (d) when the Trench was being dug. So also, simple kind of musical instruments such as a *tablah* or drum are allowable if played once in a while. It is engrossment in these pastimes that is disapproved of. Also disallowed to males are songs sung by *ghayr mahram* women. This was the opinion of *Imām Shafe`i*.

Mufti Shafi` adds a *hadith* which comes from Abu Da`ud, Ibn Majah (whose commentators declared it weak), as well as from Ibn Hibban's *Sahih* (which makes it trustworthy). The Prophet said,

عَنْ أَبِي مَالِكٍ الْأَشْجَعِيِّ؛ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "لَيْشَرَّيَنَّ نَاسٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي الْحَمْرَ. يُسَمُّوتَهَا بِعَيْرِ اسْمِهَا. يَعْرِفُ عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ بِالْمَعَارِفِ وَالْمُعْتَبَاتِ، يَخْسِفُ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ. وَيَجْعَلُ مِنْهُمْ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْحَنَازِيرَ" - (ابن ماجه)

"Surely some of my followers will give wine a different name and drink it; and female singers will sing for them to the tunes of music. Allah will sink them into the earth and transform some of them into monkeys and pigs."

6. According to Ibn `Abbas, recitation of the Qur`ān and similar other devotional activities constitute the path of Allah.

7. That is, in his extreme ignorance he does not realize that his indulgence in songs, music, and other such activities divert him off Allah's path (Ibn Jarir).

8. "Humiliating chastisement," because he did not treat Allah's revelations with the care and respect that was due to them (Ibn Kathir).

[7] When Our verses are recited to such a one, he turns away in arrogance, as though he did not hear them: as though there is heaviness in his ears. So, give him the glad tiding of a painful chastisement.⁹

[8] Surely, those who believed and did righteous works, for them are gardens of bliss.

[9] Abiding therein forever. Allah's promise is true; and He is the Al-mighty, the All-wise.¹⁰

[10] He created the heavens without any pillars that you can see;¹¹ and cast into the earth pegs¹² lest it should quake with you.¹³ And He scattered therein all kinds of animals. And We¹⁴ sent down out of sky water and made grow therein every noble species.¹⁵

[11] This is the creation of Allah. So, show me what those other than Him have created. Nay, but the transgressors are in manifest error.

وَإِذَا تُمْنَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا وَلَّىٰ مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَأَنَّ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا فَبَسَّرَهُ بَعْدَآبِ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَأَلْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾

هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١١﴾

9. "Painful punishment," because he used to be pained at hearing the revelations of Allah (Ibn Kathir).

10. Asad paraphrases Imām Razi's comments: "Commenting on the above three verses, Razi points out, firstly, that the deliberate contrast between the plural in the promise of 'gardens (*jannat*) of bliss' and the singular in that of 'suffering' (*'adhab*) is meant to show that God's grace surpasses His wrath .. and, secondly, that the use of the expression

'to abide therein' in connection with the mention of paradise only, and not with that of otherworldly suffering (or hell), is an indication that whereas the enjoyment of the former will be unlimited in duration, suffering in what is described as 'hell' will be limited."

11. That is, there are pillars but you cannot see them: Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Mujahid, Qatadah and others (Ibn Jarir). See *Surah al-Ra`d*, note 4 for further explanation.

[12] Indeed We gave Luqman¹⁶ wisdom:¹⁷
 ‘Give thanks to Allah. Whosoever gives thanks,
 gives thanks only to his own self, while he who
 is ungrateful, (may know that) verily Allah is
 free of wants, the Praiseworthy.’¹⁸

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ
 وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ
 فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾

12. That is, mountains that have been rooted into the earth, just like pegs - a geological fact unknown until some fifty years ago (Au.).

13. They help avoid convulsions in the outer crust (what is known as the Lithosphere) surrounding the inner layers of the earth (Au.).

14. The change from singular to plural is striking. Asad comments: “This is another of the Qur’anic instances where the personal pronoun relating to God is suddenly changed – in this instance from ‘He’ to ‘We’ – in order to indicate that God, being infinite, cannot be circumscribed by any pronoun applicable to created, finite beings, and that the use of such pronouns with reference to Him is no more than a concession to the limited nature of every human language.”

15. Yusuf Ali thinks that the words could be referring to the sex life in plants.

16. Majid comments: “Luqman, who may or may not be identified with Aesop of the Greeks was a sage

very ‘well known to the Arabs.’ ‘Lukman was already known in the pagan period as a sage. His wisdom is celebrated in pre-Muslim poets ... Lukman’s wisdom forms the transition from *Jahiliyyah* to the Qur’an (EI).”

Luqman and his Wisdom:

Yusuf Ali rules out the possibility of identifying Luqman with the Greek Aesop.

Mawdudi adds: “Luqman was well known as a wise and learned man in Arabia. He has been mentioned in the poetry of the pre-Islamic poets like Imra’ul Qays, Lab id, A’shi, Tarafah and others. According to traditions, some three years before the Prophet’s migration to Madinah, Suwayd b. Samit visited Makkah for pilgrimage. When the Prophet heard of him, he met him and invited him to Islam. Suwayd told him, ‘Perhaps I have something similar to what you have.’ The Prophet asked him what it was and he replied, ‘Luqman’s rolls.’ Then he read out a few pieces to him. The Prophet said, ‘It sounds good. But what I have is better.’ When he

read out the Qur'ān to him, Suwayd admitted that it was indeed better.”

A few lines down, Mawdudi presents us another example of honest Western scholarship. He writes: “The Arabic manuscript from the Library of Paris, which the Orientalist Derenbourg has published under the title *Amthal Luqman (al-)Hakim (Fable De Loqman Le Sage)* is a fabrication which has nothing to do with the Roll of Luqman. These fables were compiled by someone in the 13th century C.E. Its Arabic is poor, and perusal shows that it is in fact translation into Arabic from another language. The Orientalists conduct such research with special objective in view. It is in order to prove that the narrations of the Qur'ān are no more than legends and therefore unreliable. Anyone who reads B. Heller's article on Luqman in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* will not fail to understand the real motives of these people.”

Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Sa`id b. al-Musayyib and many others thought that Luqman was an Israeli, a carpenter or a shepherd, large-footed, thick-lipped, flat-nosed, black man from the Egyptian part of Sudan (Ibn Jarir).

Although we do not know how authentic, but a few stories are attributed to Luqman's wisdom. One of them, mentioned by Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir, reports that his master instructed him to cut a goat and bring him two of its best parts. He brought him the tongue and the heart. Another time his master told him to slaughter a goat and bring back two of its worst parts. Luqman again took to him the tongue and the heart. When asked he explained that the tongue and the heart can be the best parts of a body, or its worst, depending upon how they are used.

It is said that Sa`id b. al-Musayyib told a black man: “Do not be rueful because of your dark color. Three of the best men ever were black: Bilal, Mahja` (`Umar's freed slave) and Luqman” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi and others).

Perhaps he had non-Prophets in his mind for, Musa (*asws*) was also dark (Au.).

17. That is, ‘We gave him a good intellect, understanding and the ability to hold right opinions - all but Prophethood’ (Mujahid: Ibn Jarir).

18. “Hamid” is defined as One who is worthy of praise by Himself, whether He is praised or not (Ibn Jarir).

[13] And when Luqman said to his son, admonishing him, 'O my dear son!¹⁹ Associate not (aught) with Allah. Indeed, association (with Him) is a great wrong.'²⁰

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] And We have charged man²¹ concerning his parents²² - his mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years²³ - that, 'Be thankful to Me and to your parents.²⁴ Unto Me is your (final) destination.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

19. The textual "*bunayyah*" is diminutive form (*tasghir*) of "ibni", which the Arabs do to express love and affection (Au.).

20. Majid quotes: "This hatred of idolatry has been found even among the most uncivilized followers of the Prophet. The gorgeous rituals, the gaudy pictures, and the pious fraud which played so large a part in the conversion of the Solavonian nations to Christianity, seems only to have alienated these semi-barbarians. Mahmud the Ghaznavid ... was offered a sum of ten million sterlings if only he would spare the famous idol in the pagoda of Somnat. Avarice is said to have been his besetting fault, but he replied in the memorable words, 'Never shall Mahmud be a merchant of idols,' and broke it into pieces" (Bosworth Smith, op. cit., p. 265).

21. There is a break here between Luqman's admonitions to his son.

Allah's own words have been introduced in between. Yusuf Ali explains why: "Verses 14-15 are not the direct speech of Luqman but flow by way of commentary on his teachings. He was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son's attention to the limitations of filial obedience. These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luqman's teaching to men, and not dictated to his son; though in either case, as Luqman received wisdom from Allah, it is divine principles that are enunciated

22. "The coupling of parents with Himself in so far as the rendering of service is concerned, indicates the extreme importance that filial duty has in Islam" (Majid).

Compare this with the American culture where children as young as four are given call numbers at schools, and instructed to contact the police

[15] But if they strive with you that you should associate with Me what you have no knowledge of,²⁵ then obey them not. However, you bear their company in this world in a goodly way; and follow the way of him who turns to Me.²⁶ Then, unto Me is your return, and I shall declare unto you (all) that you were doing.'

وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

if the parents act tough with them (Au.).

23. That is, a mother's services to, and sacrifices for her child does not end with birth. She suckles him (and rears him) during the weakest phase of its life (Au.).

This present *ayah* and another of the Qur'an are the basis of the opinion that the minimum period of birth of a child after pregnancy is six months. The other *ayah* is of (*Al-Ahqaf* 46: 15),

حَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا (الأحقاف - ١٥)

"And, his carrying and weaning are thirty months" (Ibn Kathir).

The verse is also the basis of the opinion that suckling period, and what it entails of marriage taboos, is two years. That is, a woman giving suck to a child above two years old does not entail foster relationship. Also, according to Abu Hanifah, if the weaning has been earlier than

two years, say a year and a half, and the child is on external food, then too, further suckling does not entail foster relationship (Zamakhshari).

24. Parents hold rights that cross religious considerations. Non-Muslim parents of a Muslim deserve the same care. It is reported of Asma' bint Abi Bakr that she asked the Prophet, "My non-Muslim aunt, (it is thought she was [not an aunt] but a foster mother) is visiting me and seeks to be served. Should I be dutiful to her?" He replied, "Yes." After reporting this, Qurtubi adds the information for our benefit that Asma's mother was not Umm Ruman, the mother of 'A'isha and 'Abdul Rahman.

25. That is, "something which is contrary to thy knowledge that divine qualities are God's alone" (Asad).

26. That is, serve your parents, but when it comes to religious affairs, follow not their ways if they are off

[16] 'O my dear son! If it should be but the weight of a mustard seed, and should be (hidden) in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth.²⁷ Verily, Allah is All-subtle, All-aware.

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِنْتَقَالِ حَبَّةً مِنْ حَرْدَلٍ
فَتَكُنْ فِي صَحْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَوْ
فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ
خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] O my dear son! Establish the Prayer, enjoin the good, forbid the wrong, and bear in patience whatever befalls you. This indeed is the firmness in the affairs.

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] And, turn not your cheek away from the people,²⁸ and walk not through the earth exultantly. Surely, Allah does not approve of any proud boaster.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مَرْحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ
فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] Be modest in your walk,²⁹ and lower your voice. Surely, the most unpleasant of voices is the voice of the donkeys.³⁰

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْغِضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ
إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ
﴿١٩﴾

the track, but rather of those who are devoted to Allah (Au.).

27. Some people have difficulty in understanding how Allah (*swt*) could know the universe and its contents in every detail. They imagine, like the Greek philosophers, that He has the knowledge of important elements, while minor things take care of themselves. What they fail to realize is that if Allah does not know the minor, He cannot know the major, because the major is composed of the minor. If He does not know an atom, he cannot know a molecule. And if He does not know the molecule, He cannot know the rock. To

know the rock, He has to know the electrons, protons and neutrons, of which it is constituted in the ultimate sense (Au.).

28. That is, do not turn away from the people in arrogance while they are speaking to you. Ibrahim (Nakha`i) however thought the reference is to boastfulness, or being braggart (Ibn Jarir).

29. The allusion is not to a slow-paced walk, but rather, to modesty in gait. It is reported of `Umar that when he walked, he walked fast. The Prophet's own pace has been described as fast, as if he was surging forward or going

down a hill. In contrast, any style of walking that smacks of artificiality is disapproved. `Umar (*ra*) saw someone walking feebly – in the manner of the pseudo pietists. He raised his whip against him and ordered him to walk straight like any normal person (Au.).

`A'isha saw a man walking feebly. She inquired what was wrong with him. She was told that he was one of the reciters of the Qur'an (so he was trying to appear humble and ascetic). She remarked, "Let him walk properly. `Umar was better at recitation. But when he walked, he walked fast, when he spoke, he spoke aloud, and when he struck (with his whip), he struck hard."

Mawdudi adds: "What is actually meant by this is to reform the state of the self under which a person walks haughtily. Haughtiness and arrogance of a person inevitably manifest themselves in his gait and style of walking, which shows the state of his mind and also the cause of his pride and haughtiness. Wealth, authority, beauty, knowledge, power and such other things cause a man to become proud and vain, and each of these gives him a special style of gait. Contrary to this, manifestation of humility is also the result of one

or the other mental morbid states. Sometimes the hidden conceit of the self of a man takes on the form of ostensible humility, piety and godliness and this is shown by his gait..."

30. In this context Nasa'i has a *hadith* which says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ صِيَاحَ الدَّيْكَ فَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنَّهَا رَأَتْ مَلَكًا، وَإِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ نَحْيَقَ الْحِمَارِ فَتَعَوَّدُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ فَإِنَّهُ رَأَى شَيْطَانًا".
(قال أبو عيسى: هذا حديث حسن صحيح).

"When you hear the cry of a rooster, seek Allah's bounty. But when you hear a donkey braying, seek Allah's protection, for it has seen *Shaytan*."

Others also report this *hadith* (such as Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi: H. Ibrahīm), some of which add the words, "at night" (Ibn Kathir). That is, when such sighting is at night (Au.).

With reference to a few good qualities enjoined by Luqman, Ibn Kathir devoted a few pages to expand upon them, relying primarily on one of the treatise of Ibn Abi al-Dunya. But for a few, the authenticity of the reports could not be traced. We present those that echo quite often in the Islamic literature.

Humbleness

Mu`adh ibn Jabal reported the Prophet as having said,

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ؛ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَلَا أُحْبِرُكَ عَنْ مُلُوكِ الْجَنَّةِ؟ قُلْتُ: بَلَى. قَالَ: رَجُلٌ ضَعِيفٌ، مُسْتَضْعَفٌ، ذُو طَمْرَيْنٍ، لَا يُؤْبَهُ لَهُ؛ لَوْ أَقْسَمَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِأَبْرَهُ

“Shall I not inform you about the kings of Paradise?” I said, “Do, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “A weak man in an extremely poor state, in two torn cloaks, whom no one pays any attention, but who (is of such class that), if he swore by Allah, Allah would do as he swore.”

(Ibn Kathir quotes a slightly different version of Anas b. Malik which we could neither trace in Ahmad, nor find out its status. This particular one is from Ibn Majah, and Hasan of status, but available in various forms in several works: Au.).

On Abu Hurayrah’s authority,

إن من ملوك الجنة من هو أشعث أغبر ذو طمرين لا يؤبه له، اللذين إذا استأذنوا علي الأمراء لم يؤذن لهم إذا خطبوا النساء لم ينكحوا، وإذا قالوا لم ينصت لهم، حوائج أحدهم تتجملجل في صدره، لو قسم نوره يوم القيامة بين الناس لوسعهم (إبن أبي الدنيا)

“Of the kings of Paradise is one who is of disheveled hair, soiled clothes, who is paid no attention.

If they seek entry into (the company of) the rich, they are denied. If they ask for a girl’s hand, they are not given. When they speak, people do not listen to them. The needs of one of them reverberate within their breasts. But, if his Nur is divided between the people on the Day of Judgment, it would suffice them all.”

Popularity

Anas says the Prophet said,

عن أنس عن رسول الله أنه قال بحسب امرئ من الشر أن يشار إليه بالأصابع في دينه أو دنياه إلا من عصمه الله. إن الله تعالى لا ينظر إلى صوركم وأموالكم، ولكن إلى قلوبكم وأعمالكم. (إبن أبي الدنيا)

“It is enough of an evil for a man – except for he whom Allah saved – that he should be pointed at with the fingers either on account of his worldliness, or on account of his religion. Surely, Allah does not look at your faces, but at your hearts and deeds.”

The above seems to be a combination of two reports (Au).

Hasan (al-Busri) also narrated a similar narration. When someone told Hasan that people pointed fingers at him also (for his piety), he replied, “The allusion is to innovators and quacks in religion.”

Whenever Ibn Mas`ud found people following him reverentially, he would remark, "By Allah. If you knew what we do behind these closed doors, not two men would follow me." It is said that Ayyub would wear long shirts. When asked the reason he replied, "There was a time when wearing long shirts was a mark of pride. Today it is in wearing short shirts. So I wear long ones."

Thawri has said that the *Salaf* did not approve of such expensive attires which give a man eminence, nor so poor of quality that signal his deep religiousness.

Good Manners

`A'isha reports,

إن المؤمن يدرك بحسن خلقه درجات قائم الليل
صائم النهار. (أحمد)

"A believer attains the status of someone who stands long hours in Prayers, and fasts continually, through his good manners alone."

On Abu Hurayra's authority we have a *Sahih* report:

عن أبي هريرة قال: سئل رسول الله صلى الله عليه
وسلم عن أكثر ما يدخل الناس الجنة قال: تقوى الله
وحسن الخلق وسئل عن أكثر ما يدخل الناس النار،
قال: الفم والقروح. (هذا حديث صحيح غريب:
الترمذي).

The Prophet was asked about what would help the people enter Paradise most. He answered, "Allah's fear and good manners." And he was asked about what would push into the Fire most. He answered, "The mouth and the private parts."

Usama b. Shurayk says he was with the Prophet when a number of Bedouins flocked around him covering him from every side. They asked,

يا رسول الله ، ما خير ما أعطى الإنسان ؟ قال :
خُلُقٌ حَسَنٌ

"Apostle of Allah. What is the best thing that a man can be given?" He replied, "Good conduct."

The *hadith* is in Hakim's Mustadrak, declared trustworthy by Dhahabi (Au.).

Abu Furat reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

ما أحسن الله خلق رجل ولا خلقه فتطعمه النار.
(كنز: ابن عساکر)

"Allah will never beautify a man's character and person to ultimately shove him into the Fire."

Haythamiyy did not trust the authenticity of the *hadith* fully (Au.).

Pride

Ibn Mas'ud reported the Prophet (saws),

عن عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَزْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ، وَلَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ إِيْمَانٍ" (الترمذي)

"A man with pride equal in weight to a mustard seed will not enter Paradise, nor will anyone enter the Fire who has a mustard-seed worth of faith in his heart."

One of `Ali's sons is reported to have said that never did any amount of pride enter into a heart but an equal amount of intellect and good sense was removed from it.

Anas said that when Abu Bakr admonished us and talked about our origins, one of us would begin to feel filthy about himself. He would say, "He (man) came out twice through the passage of urine."

Abu Hurayrah reported the Prophet (saws),

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: لَا يَنْظُرُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِلَى مَنْ جَرَّ إِزَارَهُ بَطْرًا، وَبَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ يَتْبَخْتَرُ فِي حَلَّةٍ تَعْجِبُهُ نَفْسُهُ خَسَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَهُوَ يَتَجَلَجَلُ فِيهَا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ."

"Allah will not look at a man who dragged his clothes (in pride). There was a man strutting boastfully in his two cloaks, mighty pleased with himself, when Allah sank him in the earth, so that he will remain sinking until the Day of Standing."

This also seems to be a combination of two reports, both in Bukhari (Au.).

It is said that Ta'us poked into `Umar b. `Abdul `Aziz's stomach for walking in a proud manner. That was at the time when he was not yet a Caliph. `Umar begged excuse saying, "Uncle! I was beaten on every of my joint until I learnt how to walk in this manner." Ibn Abi Dunya also reported that Banu Umayyah used to beat their children until they learnt how to walk in that gait.

In some of the Arab countries, some organizations (governmental as well as private) design such a stiff collar for their employees, that he or she has to walk with the head raised high up, and women are trained to walk in such a manner as if she is floating on the ground (Au.).

[20] *Have you not seen that Allah has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth; and has completed His blessings on you: (both) outwardly and inwardly?*³¹ *Yet among the people there is such a one who disputes about Allah without knowledge, or guidance, or an illuminating Book.*

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] *When they are told, 'Follow that which Allah has sent down,' they say, 'But rather we shall follow that upon which we found our forefathers.' What! Even though Shaytan was inviting them to the torment of the (flaming) Fire?*

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَّلُو كَانِ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] *And, whoever submits his face to Allah, and he excels, grasped the most trustworthy handhold.*³² *And with Allah (rests) the outcome of all affairs.*

وَمَن يُسَلِّمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾

31. Commentators quote several statements in explanation of what the outward and inward blessings constitute. Many of them are of common nature, and echo around the opinions of Ibn `Abbas and Mujahid who thought that the allusion by the inward blessing is to belief in one God (planted in every soul) – Ibn Jarir.

Yusuf Ali comments: “Allah’s grace and bounties work for us at all times. Sometimes we see them, and some-

times we do not. In things which we can apprehend with our senses, we can see Allah’s grace, but even in them, sometimes it works beyond the sphere of our knowledge. In the inner or spiritual world, sometimes, when our vision is clear, we can see it working, and often we are not conscious of it. But it works all the same.”

32. For explanation see *Surah al-Baqarah*, note 554 (under *ayah* 256) of this work.

[23] Therefore, whoever disbelieves, then, let not his disbelief grieve you; unto Us is their return, then We shall inform them about what they did. Verily, Allah knows well that which is within the breasts.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ كُفْرُهُ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] We grant them a little pleasure, then We shall force them on to a massive chastisement.

نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] If you are to ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth?’ they will surely reply, ‘Allah.’ Say, ‘Praise be to Allah;’ but most of them know not.³³

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] To Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. Verily Allah - He is free of all wants, the Praiseworthy.³⁴

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] And, even if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea, extended after it with seven (other)³⁵ seas (as ink), Allah’s words would not be exhausted.³⁶ Surely, Allah is All-mighty, All-wise.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

33. That is, most of them do not know what it implies to admit that Allah (*swt*) created the heavens and the earth. Asad writes: “I.e., they give the above answer unthinkingly, following a vague habit of thought, without realizing that a cognition of God as the Ultimate Cause of all existence logically postulates one’s full surrender to Him, and to Him alone.”

34. That is, for Allah is the praise, whether someone praised Him or

not. He is above all wants and desires to be seeking to be praised (Au.).

35. This is how Zamakhshari, Alusi, Shawkani, Thanwi and others understand the word “*yamudduhu*,” i.e., the sea replenished with seven other seas.

36. When Hasan was asked how he understood this *ayah*, he replied that if the trees of the world were used to make pens and the eight seas turned into ink, the seas would dry up and the pens break down but Allah’s

Words, Might, and Wisdom will not exhaust (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

We have passed over a similar verse in *Surah Al-Kahf*, no. 109. It says,

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مَدَادًا لَكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفَذَ الْبَحْرُ
قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَذَ كَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا
(الكهف - ١٠٩)

“Say, ‘If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even if We brought the like of it, in supplement.’”

The number seven however is not in the literal sense referring to the seven Oceans: an idea taken by some from the Jewish sources, but rather, to indicate a large amount of water (Ibn Kathir).

And the cause of revelation is explained as follows. A group of Jewish scholars went up to the Prophet and asked him, “Muhammad! To whose knowledge did you allude when you said, ‘And you have not been given of knowledge but little?’ Ours or your people’s?” He answered, “Both.” They said, “Have you not been reciting out of what has been revealed to you that the *Torah* has the explanation of all things?” He replied, “Although the knowledge it has is enough for you, but, compared with Allah’s knowledge, it is but little.”

And Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Yusuf Ali suggests that the textual word “*al-bahr*” could be understood in the sense of “all the waters on the earth.” He writes, “Words of Allah: His wonderful Signs and Commandments are infinite and cannot be expressed if all the trees were made into pens, and all the wide Oceans, multiplied seven times, were made into ink. Any Book of His Revelation would deal with matters which man can understand and use in his life: there are things that man can never fathom. Nor would any praise that we could write with infinite resources be adequate to describe His power, glory, and wisdom.”

Significantly, among the scientists a common adage is that the more you know, the more you realize how much more there is to know. Of spiders there are thought to be 80,000 species. Doctorate degrees have been obtained on ants, while thousands of its species are still to be studied. The basic unit of any living organism is the cell. It has thousands of organelles working within its boundaries. One of its structures at its exterior, that, in a scientist’s words, “looks like a hair and beats like a whip,” helps in cell movement. This apparatus has

[28] Neither your creation, nor your resurrection are, but like (that of) a single soul.³⁷ Surely, Allah is All-hearing, All-seeing.

مَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا نَعْتَبُكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

been the subject of study because of its important function. How much is there to state about this part of the cell? Let us have it from a molecular biologist who wrote in 1998:

“A quick electronic search of the professional literature shows more than a thousand papers in the past several years that have cilia or a similar word in the title. Papers have appeared on related topics in almost all the major biochemistry journals, including Science, Nature, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, Bio-chemistry, Journal of Biological Chemistry, Journal of Molecular Biology, Cell, and numerous others. In the past decades, probably ten thousand papers have been published concerning cilia.” (*Darwin’s Black Box*, Michael Behe, Touchstone Books, 1998, p.67).”

So, that is about one-millionth part of a cell. And the study is not complete despite 10,000 scientific pa-

pers, since many questions remain unanswered. What about the rest of the cell? What about the whole human body? What about this universe? Indeed, far from details, the trees and the seven seas will not be enough to make an inventory of stars found in the universe (Au.).

“Here the object is,” writes Mawdu-di, “to make man realize that no creature can become a deity and associate in the works of Allah, who has brought into being such a vast universe, who is administering its affairs, and whose powers and resources are limitless. Not to speak of becoming an associate in the administration of this vast kingdom, it is not within the power of any creation to obtain a mere nodding acquaintance with the minutest portion of it. How can then anyone imagine that one or

37. That is, both are equally easy for Him.

[29] Do you not see that Allah causes the night to enter the day and the day into the night,³⁸ and He has subjected the sun and the moon? Each is running to a specified term; and that Allah is well aware of what you do?

أَمْ تَرَى أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ
وَيُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ
وَالْقَمَرَ كُلًّا يَجْرِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَأَنَّ
اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] That, because Allah – He is the Truth, and that, what they invoke apart from Him is the untruth, and that Allah – He is the All-high, the All-great.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ
مِن دُونِهِ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ
الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Have you not seen how the ships run upon the sea by the grace of Allah – that He may show you of His signs? Surely, in that are signs for every constantly persevering, greatly thankful (person).

أَمْ تَرَى أَنَّ الْفُلُكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ
اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] And when the canopy-like waves cover them, they call upon Allah, making religion purely for Him. But when He has delivered them to the land, then of them is one who is steadfast (in belief).³⁹ And none denies Our signs but every ungrateful traitor.

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوَّجٌ كَالظُّلْمِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ
مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ
فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كَلْبٌ
خَتَّارٌ كُفُورٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

38. That is, in one season a part of the night enters into the day, shortening it, while in another a part of the day enters into the night, shortening it (Ibn Jarir in effect, from the *Salaf*).

39. There are several possible meanings: First, among those who are delivered, there are a few who remain steadfast – on the path of Islam, while the rest return to their disbelief. Second, the term “*muqtasid*” stands for him who remains waver-

ing between belief and unbelief despite deliverance. A third meaning advanced by Ibn Kathir is that when a man is delivered by Allah from a dangerous circumstance, he ought to be, thereonward, wholly devoted to Allah, abandoning all worldly concerns. But, instead, he remains just a moderate Muslim. A fourth opinion is that of Mujahid who said, as in Ibn Kathir, that the allusion by “*muqtasid*” is to the unbeliever. That is, he remains disbelieving despite the deliverance.

[33] O people! Fear your Lord, and dread a day when a father will not avail his son aught, nor will a son avail his father aught. Surely, Allah's promise is true. Therefore, let not delude you the life of the world, nor delude you concerning Allah the Deluder.⁴⁰

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَاحْشَوْا يَوْمًا
لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنِ وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ
جَازٍ عَنِ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ
فَلَا تُغْوِيَكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغْوِيَكُمُ
بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] Surely, with Allah alone is the knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain, and knows what is in the wombs.⁴¹ And no soul knows what it shall earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it shall die.⁴² Verily, Allah is the All-knowing, the All-aware.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ
وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ
مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ
أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

To be sure, there is a line missing after *muqtasid*. If that is brought in, one could paraphrase the verse in the following manner: “And when the waves cover them – like canopies – they call upon Allah, declaring religion purely for Him. But when He has delivered them to the land, then of them is one who is steadfast (in belief), while the rest turn back to denying. And none denies Our signs but every ungrateful traitor” (Au.).

40. Generally speaking, *gharur* is anything that deludes and leads to errors. (It can be men, false ideas, delusions, etc.: Au.) But, here it alludes to *Shaytan*, as said by Sa`id b. Jubayr, Dahhak, and Qatadah (Ibn Jarir). Sa`id b. Jubayr explained it as meaning, ‘he leads on in sins assuring (the unsure) forgiveness from Allah’ (Zamakhshari).

41. That is, whether the child in the womb is male or female, fair or dark, etc. It is reported that a man from the deserts went up to the Prophet and asked, “My wife is pregnant, so tell me what will she deliver? And, our area is dry. So, tell us when will it rain? And, I have known when I was it that I took birth. Tell me when will I die?” In response, Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir).

As time moves forward, ignorance seems to increase, and reasoning power seems to decline, even when the issue is material. Common people have restricted the meaning of the words, “and He knows what is in the wombs” to the sex of the fetus. With this restricted meaning, they are led to confusion when they hear that with the development in the medical sciences, it has become

possible to conduct tests that can determine the sex of the fetus. Their ignorance consists in not knowing that the Qur'ānic statement is in its general and comprehensive sense, and involves all that there is to know of a person from birth to death and even thereafter. It means to say that no one knows whether the future baby will be male, female, fair, dark, tall, short, of good conduct or ill, defective by birth or whole, pessimistic or optimistic, a believer or non-believer, and everything else about him. No one shares with Allah this comprehensive knowledge concerning what is in the womb.

Even if the allusion is restricted to the sex of the fetus, then, why is it that determination with the help of modern equipments is considered as challenging Allah's knowledge, when a *hadīth* tells us that after a few weeks, an angel asks what has to be done with the fetus, and is told by Allah to make it a male or female. Once that is determined for the fetus, there should be no problem discovering what is there in the womb.

Further, mankind has not awaited modern methods to determine sex of the fetus. Medical men have always been able to conduct urine and other tests to determine the sex of the fetus

after some time had elapsed. Modern medicine has only advanced the time when sex can be determined: to – at least in theory – that is, a week or ten days after conception. But, can anyone determine the sex earlier than that? No. How can anyone determine the sex without the sex gonad development in the zygote? And sex gonads begin to develop only after one week of the zygote slipping into the womb. Before that, no one knows what's happening within the fertilized egg, which is no more than the size of a dot or smaller. Far from knowing anything about what the fertilized egg holds, no one knows until a week after fertilization anything about the existence of the fertilized egg itself. Now, this is of course in theory. In practice no one knows a woman is pregnant for quite a few weeks after conception. It is only when the normal menstrual cycle does not begin - which could happen only after a few weeks - that the concerned woman suspects she could be pregnant, and undergoes tests to determine what's going on in the womb. Thus, despite the "possibility" of determination of sex within about 10 days of pregnancy, in practice, it takes a couple of weeks to determine whether a woman is pregnant at all, and then, if she is,

undergo further tests to determine the sex. In the meanwhile, it is Allah alone who “knows what is in the wombs” (Au.).

42. Ibn `Umar reports the Prophet as having said,

مَفَاتِيحُ الْعَيْبِ خَمْسٌ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْعَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَآذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“Five are keys to the Unseen that no one has the knowledge of except Allah..” Then he recited this verse: “Surely, with Allah alone is the knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it shall earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die” (Ibn Jarir).

There is a similar report in the *Sahihayn* (Ibn Kathir). It says,

عَنْ رَجُلٍ مِنْ بَنِي عَامِرٍ أَنَّهُ اسْتَأْذَنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَلَيْجُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِحَادِمِهِ احْرَجِي إِلَيْهِ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يُحْسِنُ الْإِسْتِئْذَانَ فَمَوَّلِي لَهُ فَلْيُثَلِّ السَّلَامَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ قَالَ فَسَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ ذَلِكَ فَقُلْتُ السَّلَامَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَدْخُلْ قَالَ فَأَذِنَ أَوْ قَالَ فَدَخَلْتُ فَقُلْتُ بِمِ آتَيْتُنَا بِهِ قَالَ لَمْ آتِكُمْ إِلَّا بِخَيْرٍ أَتَيْتُكُمْ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ قَالَ شُعْبَةُ وَأَحْسِبُهُ قَالَ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَدْعُوا اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّى وَأَنْ تُصَلُّوا بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ حَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا مِنَ السَّنَةِ شَهْرًا وَأَنْ تَحُجُّوا الْبَيْتَ وَأَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِنْ مَالٍ أَعْيَانِكُمْ فَتُرَدُّوَهَا عَلَى فُقَرَائِكُمْ قَالَ فَقَالَ

هَلْ بَقِيَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ شَيْءٌ لَا تَعْلَمُهُ قَالَ قَدْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَيْرًا وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَا يَعْلَمُهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْعَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَآذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (أحمد)

A man of Banu ` Amir reports that he went to the Prophet's door and said, “Do I enter?” He told his maid, “Go out, for he does not know the manners of entry. Tell him to say, ‘*Al-Salamu Alaykum!* Can I come in?’” He says, “I heard his words and said, ‘*Al-Salamu Alaykum!* Can I come in?’ He allowed me in and I asked him, ‘What have you brought us?’ He answered, ‘I have not brought to you but good. I have brought to you (the message) that you should worship Allah, the one God who has no partners; that you should abandon Lat and ‘Uzza; that you should pray five times during the day and night; that you should fast a month in a year; that you should perform pilgrimage of the House; and that you should take out *Zakah* from your wealth and distribute it among your poor.’” At that the man asked him, “Is there any knowledge left that you do not know?” He replied, “Allah has taught me the good. But, of the

knowledge that no one has except Allah, they are five: “Surely, with Allah alone is the knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it shall earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die.”

The report is in Ahmad and comes through a reliable chain (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

With specific reference to where one will die, Ahmad has several reports. One of them comes through Abu 'Uzzah. The Prophet said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى إِذَا أَرَادَ قَبْضَ رُوحِ عَبْدٍ بِأَرْضٍ
جَعَلَ لَهُ فِيهَا أَوْ قَالَ بِهَا - حَاجَةً. (أحمد)

“When Allah wishes to take back the soul of one of his slaves in a particular land, He creates a need for him there” (Qurtubi).

Another report of similar nature is in Ibn abi Hatim whose words are:

إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ قَبْضَ رُوحِ عَبْدٍ بِأَرْضٍ جَعَلَ لَهُ إِلَيْهَا
حَاجَةً فَلَمْ يَنْتَهَ حَتَّى يَقْدُمَهَا

“When Allah wishes to take back the soul of one of his slaves in a particular land, He places his need there so that he will not give up but go there” (Ibn Kathir).

The report is in Hakim who declared it as following the criterion of the Sheikhayn; and Dhahabi agreed to it.

Zamakhshari adds: It is said that Mansur was overtaken by thoughts of death. He would wonder about how much was left for him, until he saw in his dream that an image raised its hand from the sea and showed the figure five with five fingers. He asked scholars to interpret it. Some said he would live for five more years, others that he would live for five months. But when Abu Hanifah was asked, he said that it meant it was one of those five things that nobody had any knowledge of.

It is also narrated that the angel of death visited Sulayman b. Da'ud at his court. He began to stare hard at one of the men there. The man asked who he was. Sulayman told him it was the angel of death. The man said, “Perhaps he wants to seize me.” He asked Sulayman to command the winds to drop him in India, which was accomplished. The angel of death said to Sulayman, “I was wondering how come the man was sitting next to you here in this court, while I was asked to draw his soul in India!?”

In the above list, points out Shafi`, it is mentioned that only Allah knows where will a man die, but not when. The reason is obvious. If we do not know where a man will die, we cannot say when he will die.

As this writer tries to hasten into the next chapter, several incidents of this context come to mind: There used to be a famous Jewish heart surgeon in the USA who would boast of the success of his operations, "Bring me a man within five minutes of his death from heart attack, and I'll revive him." Once, as he was entering the operation theatre, he suffered a stroke, and fell dead at the door. His colleagues removed the patient from the stretcher, placed him there, and did everything but failed to revive him.

In another case, another heart specialist rose up his chair to present his paper during a seminar on cardiac arrests. He suffered a stroke and died then and there.

During communal riots in India, a bullet from the police went through the stomach of a Muslim into the stomach of another Muslim behind him. The first man survived but the one behind him died.

In a busy street in India, a passing car's wheel came out loose. It rolled

out at good speed, went through the crowd of pedestrians on the sidewalk, hit a cobbler bent over his work and killed him.

In Saudi Arabia, a wheel that freed itself and ran loose out of a truck, somehow jumped several feet high and struck the wind screen of a tall bus coming from the opposite direction across the island. The tire broke through the glass and killed the driver.

In Bangalore, an eagle was carrying a snake as it flew. Below the eagle, a scooter was speeding with two men on it. The snake slipped out of the bird's talons and fell straight on the pillion rider of the speeding scooter. As it struck, it bit the man in the neck and killed him.

In Thailand, a hotel worker was chopping the heads of snakes to make a gourd out of its flesh. The chopping over, the man began to pick up the chopped heads lying on the floor. One of the heads bit him and he died.

In Kuwait a man fell off a building under construction (perhaps off a scaffolding). His colleagues rushed down but found no trace of him. He appeared sometime later to tell the amazing story of how he fell straight into a truck carrying sand. As the

colleagues were congratulating him, he said he would rather celebrate his new life by buying everyone a cool drink. As he was crossing the road, a vehicle ran over him and killed him.

In the United States, a man arriving late for his flight argued his best to get into the aircraft, but to no avail. Disappointed, he went back with a sullen face. At home he went to sleep. His mother received the news

that the aircraft had crashed and no one had survived. She thanked God for his son's lucky escape and went to his son to give him the news. He was dead in his bed.

In the Arabic tradition there is a story that a visiting doctor told his patient that he would die within next twenty-four hours. The patient recovered, but the doctor died (Au.). ﴿قَالَ﴾





Surah 32
*Al-Sajdah*¹

Makkan²



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] Alif. Laam. Meem.

[2] The sending down of the Book, wherein there is no doubt, is from the Lord of the worlds.³

[3] Or, do they say, 'He forged it?'⁴ But rather, it is the truth from your Lord that you might warn a people unto whom no warner came before you,⁵ haply that they may be rightly guided.⁶

الم ﴿١﴾

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ
 الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
 لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ
 لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣﴾

1. Bukhari and Muslim have reports that say that the Prophet (*saws*) used to recite this chapter and chapter "Al-Dahr" (no.76) in the *Fajr* Prayer of every Friday. On the other hand, Ahmad has a report that the Prophet would not sleep before having recited this chapter and chapter "Al-Mulk" (no.67) – Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shawkani.

The report about recitation of these two chapters is also in Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Hakim, who declared it *Sahih* (Shawkani).

2. The unanimous opinion is that this *Surah* is Makkan; although a few have thought that verses 3-5 were revealed after *hijrah*.

3. The translation reflects the understanding of Qatadah as in Ibn Jarir.

4. One has to be a man of poor intellect, who after having read the Qur'an, could hold the opinion that Prophet Muhammad wrote this Book, and started the Islamic movement, depending, for its accomplishment, on his own genius and abilities. It is a matter of common

sense, writes Shabbir in effect, that movements are started by men in response to needs and aspirations of the milieu in which they live. When someone presents a new program of action, he does it out of assurance that the public mood – or of a sizable number of them - is with him, that it will provoke an enthusiastic response on the part of a predictable majority. He will never present ideas that go completely against the spirit of his times. The Prophet's time too, carried its own spirit. His times had been molded by ideas inherited over ages, from generation to generation. This spirit stood entirely in contrast and opposed to the message that the Prophet presented. Not surprisingly, his call was summarily rejected without any serious consideration. Nor did the Arabs contemporary to the Prophet betray any signs of the abilities that the movement required to win good number of followers, and, as it became successful, implement its program of action - such abilities as upon which the Prophet could depend as he launched his movement.

But the problem with the human beings is the phenomenon as puzzling, as commonly observed, that when it comes to religion, the best minds pack off their intellect and begin to talk, think, argue, and behave in a

manner that can only be described as ridiculously irrational, and take a position that is hopelessly irredeemable (Au.).

5. The address is to the Quraysh among whom no Messenger had been raised. Until the advent of the Prophet, they were required to follow the *Shari'ah* as revealed to the ancient Prophets Ibrahim and Isma'il. Thus, the allusion by the word "nazir" in this instance is to a Prophet or Messenger, since, after all, there did appear a few non-prophetic warners among the Quraysh who warned them of the consequences of abandoning one True God in preference to idols and deities. (Mawdudi traces no less than 16 such warners: Au.) Asma' bint Abi Bakr says she had seen Zayd b. `Amr b. Nufayl resting his back on a wall of Ka`ba and saying, "O Quraysh. By him in whose hands is my life, none of you remains on the religion of Ibrahim except me." Musa b. `Uqba has mentioned in his Maghazi that he used to reproach the Quraysh over their slaughtering of animals in other than Allah's name. He himself never ate out of such sacrifices. It is in his person that the Qur'anic truth was expressed which said (35: 24),

{وَأَنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ} [فاطر: ٢٤]

[4] Allah it is who created the heavens and the earth and what is between the two in six periods.⁷ Then He assumed istawa on the `Arsh.⁸ You have no protector besides Him, nor an intercessor. Will you not then be admonished?

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤﴾

“There has not been a nation but there was a warner among them.”

That is, Zayd and his kind were merely warners, but not Prophets (Alusi). Perhaps the allusion could be to this class of people among the Israelites, when it is said that so many hundreds or thousands of Prophets appeared among them (Au.).

Nonetheless, Asma' bint Abi Bakr's report about Zayd b. `Amr has been judged weak, as stated by Mahdi Rizqallah in his Sirah. But it must also be kept in mind that strict *hadith* principles of criticism and evaluation cannot be applied to pre-Islamic reports (Au.).

6. If it is said, writes Zamakhshari, in view of the fact that no Prophet was raised among the Makkans, those who went before our Prophet should be absolved of any responsibility for their worship of false gods, the answer would be, yes, insofar as Divine Laws are concerned, the generations immediately before Prophet Muhammad could be declared absolved

of any crime for non-conformation. But, as far as the knowledge of Allah and His Oneness is concerned, they cannot be absolved because man's own reason and innate nature leads him to these fundamental truths.

In their case, they were not left to their innate nature alone, but rather, Isma'il was raised among them, whose message of Allah's Oneness was not entirely obliterated by the tides of time (Au.).

7. The rendering of the textual “yawm” as periods is not only following deductive reasoning in the light of several authentic traditions, but also happens to be the direct interpretation by some of the *Salaf*. Ibn `Abbas for instance, is reported to have said, as in Ibn Jarir, that this and the next verse should be paraphrased in the following manner: ‘Allah created the world in six days, each of which days was equal to a thousand years.’

At this point Ibn Kathir quotes a *hadith* that he had quoted earlier

from Muslim (see *Surah 7*, note 81). [He mentions it as found in Nasa'i, but it is not in Nasa'i: Au.]. Nonetheless, it is as follows: Abu Hurayrah (ra) says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِيَدِي فَقَالَ: "خَلَقَ اللَّهُ، عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، التُّرَابَ يَوْمَ السَّبْتِ. وَخَلَقَ فِيهَا الْجِبَالَ يَوْمَ الْأَحَدِ. وَخَلَقَ الشَّجَرِ يَوْمَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ. وَخَلَقَ الْمَكْرُوهَ يَوْمَ الثَّلَاثَاءِ. وَخَلَقَ النَّوْرَ يَوْمَ الْأَرْبَعَاءِ. وَبَتَّ فِيهَا الدَّوَابَّ يَوْمَ الْحَمِيسِ. وَخَلَقَ آدَمَ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، بَعْدَ الْعَصْرِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ. فِي آخِرِ الْخَلْقِ. فِي آخِرِ سَاعَةٍ مِنْ سَاعَاتِ الْجُمُعَةِ. فِيمَا بَيْنَ الْعَصْرِ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ." (المسلم)

"The Prophet (*saws*) took me by my hand and said, 'Allah created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days. He created the dust on Saturday; mountains on Sunday; trees on Monday; the *Makruh*(at) on Tuesday; Nur on Wednesday; beasts on Thursday; and Adam on Friday - in the last hours of the day, after *Asr*."

Ibn Kathir combines two narratives here to make one. We take the second part from Hakim who declared it *Sahih* on the conditions set by Bukhari and Muslim. It says,

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ آدَمَ مِنْ أَدِيمِ الْأَرْضِ كُلِّهَا فَخَرَجَتْ دُرَيْثُهُ عَلَى حَسَبِ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُمْ الْأَبْيَضُ وَالْأَسْوَدُ وَالْأَسْمَرُ وَالْأَحْمَرُ وَمِنْهُمْ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَمِنْهُمْ السَّهْلُ وَالْحَبِيبُ وَالطَّيِّبُ (الحاكم وقال هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد،

ولم يخرجاه).

"Allah created Adam from (various) hues of the earth so that his progeny came out in accordance with it: of them there are whites and blacks, browns and reds, while some of them are in between. Some of them are pliant, while others vicious or yet, decent" (Au.).

Ibn Kathir also tells us that Bukhari, as also others, was not happy with the chain of narrators that goes with this *hadith*. Nevertheless, as we have stated at an earlier point in this work, notwithstanding the dissatisfaction with the chain, text-wise it reflects modern understanding of the sequence of creation of life and its various forms, culminating in man. Opinions vary between the scientists over the exact time when man appeared: through whatever process they conjecture it happened. Some say modern man appeared about 100,000 years ago; others say a million years ago, while a few recent findings would lead them to believe that he appeared ten million years ago. Our point is, whatever figure we take, when it is compared with the 4.5 billion years since the creation of earth, man's appearance is indeed in the last hours of the final phase

[5] He directs the affair from heaven to earth, then it rises up to Him⁹ in a day whose measure is a thousand years of your reckoning.¹⁰

يُدِيرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ
يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ
بِمَا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٥﴾

[6] That is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Compassionate,

ذَٰلِكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ
الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦﴾

of creation. A scientific work has remarked that if the time-period is one mile long, we humans appeared at the last inch (Au.).

8. For a detailed discussion of the issue of “*istawa*” see *Surah al-A`raf*, note 82 and *al-Qasas*, note 23 of this work.

9. What is it that rises up to Him? It is the affair (taken up by an angel). Hence a possible meaning is that the affair (whatever it is) rises up to Him in one thousand years (Alusi); and not coming down and rising up in one thousand years, although quite a few have believed that the whole affair of coming down and rising up happens within this period (Au).

Qurtubi sums up: Yahya b. Salam said that the allusion by “it” is to Jibril who goes back to the heaven after delivering the revelation. Naqqash said it is to the angel who organizes the affairs of the earth from the heaven.

It is also said that the verse is saying that the news of the Earthians is

taken up by the angels. This was Ibn Shajarah’s opinion. It is also said that the allusion is to an affair, which, after its execution, will be returned to Him after cessation of life on earth, on a day which will be one thousand years long, namely, the Day of Judgment.

Thus the *ayah* is of the “*mutashabihat*” (uncertain of meaning to most but not to those who possess deep understanding). Hence we have a report in `Abdur Razzaq, Sa`id b. Mansur, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn al-Anbari, and Hakim, who declared it trustworthy, that `Abdullah ibn Abi Mulaykah said, “I entered upon Ibn `Abbas along with `Abdullah b. Fayroze the freed slave of `Uthman. He asked Ibn `Abbas about this *ayah*. But Ibn `Abbas seemed to be displeased. He asked him in return, ‘So what about the day “whose measure is a thousand years of your reckoning?’” He (ibn Fayroze) said, ‘I only asked you hoping you would educate me.’ He

(Ibn `Abbas) said, ‘These are two days that Allah mentioned in His Book. He knows best what is meant by them. Should I say in reference to the Book of Allah, something I have no knowledge of?’ Some time elapsed after that incident until I found myself in the assembly of Sa`id b. al-Musayyib. Someone asked him about the same two days (a day to come down and another to rise up). But he did not say anything. In fact, he said he did not know. So, I asked him whether I should tell him what I had heard from Ibn `Abbas? He said, yes. I told him the story. He turned to the inquirer and said, ‘Here is Ibn `Abbas who refused to say anything about them although he was more knowledgeable than me’” (Alusi).

10. Mujahid, Qatadah, Dahhak, `Ikrimah and others are in agreement over the opinion that when Allah (*swt*) sends down an angel with a command, it takes him, by our reckoning 500 years to descend, and 500 years to ascend back: one day by heavenly measure. This is because (as Prophetic statements tell us: Au.) the distance between the first heaven and the earth is 500 years, by our reckoning.

Another opinion is that the rising of the angel to the heaven takes a day,

which is equivalent of our thousand years (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Kathir mentions that whatever the travel time by our reckoning, the angel takes no more than the wink of an eye by our measure to cover the distance.

A third opinion is that the affair will rise up to Him on the Day of Judgment, which will be one thousand years long for some, while fifty thousand for others.

At all events, this *ayah* is a clear reference to the relativity of time, stated fourteen centuries earlier than modern scientific findings, and so close in agreement as to strike a chord of wonder. Modern science tells us that measurement of time – and its passage - depends on the speed of an object: the higher the speed, slower the time-travel. At the speed of light, (300,000 km per second) time comes to a halt, that is, it should register any elapsed time as zero. Accordingly, if someone traveled on the back of a photon, for say a few minutes, those that are stationary on the earth, would experience the elapse of thousands of years during those same few minutes of the traveler saddled on the back of the photon. Little wonder then that a day of the angel, traveling at, perhaps faster

[7] Who perfected everything that He created,¹¹ and who began man's creation from clay.¹²

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ
الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿٧﴾

[8] Then He made his progeny from the quintessence of a despised liquid.

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ
﴿٨﴾

than the speed of light, could be a thousand years for us. It is another thing that a day of the angel could as well be an instant, and the thousand years of the earthlings actually a tremendously higher figure, since it is the relativity of time that is intended by the verse, and not the exact ratio (Au.).

As this writer revises this work in November 2011, news has arrived that several experiments have consistently yielded the result that some sub-atomic particles travel faster than light and that, Einstein's equations, based on the assumption that nothing can travel faster than light, have a question mark before them (Au.).

11. The generally accepted meaning of the words "perfected everything that He created" is that whatever Allah created, created to the greatest degree of perfection (Au.).

In Asad's words, "He fashions every detail of His creation in accordance with the functions intended for it,

irrespective of whether those functions can be understood by us or are beyond the reach of our perception."

Ibn `Abbas (and Mujahid: Qurtubi) had remarked in reference to this verse that surely a monkey's buttocks are not the best things to look at, but functionally, they are perfectly designed (Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

It is reported in Tabarani through Abu Umamah that he said,

بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، إِذْ
لَحِقْنَا عَمْرُوَ بْنَ زُرَّارَةَ الْأَنْصَارِيَّ فِي حُلَّةٍ إِزَارٍ وَرِدَائٍ،
فَقَدْ أَسْبَلَ، فَجَعَلَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْخُذُ
بِنَاحِيَةِ ثَوْبِهِ، وَيَتَوَاضَعُ لِلَّهِ، وَيَقُولُ: "اللَّهُمَّ عَبْدُكَ،
وَإِنَّ عَبْدَكَ، وَإِنَّ أَمَتَكَ" حَتَّى سَمِعَهَا عَمْرُو بْنُ زُرَّارَةَ،
فَأَلْتَفَتَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ: يَا
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّي أَحْمَسُ السَّاقَيْنِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "يَا عَمْرُو بْنُ زُرَّارَةَ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدْ أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ خَلْقِهِ، يَا عَمْرُو بْنُ زُرَّارَةَ،
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْبِلِينَ"

"While we were with the Prophet, we met with `Amr b. Zurarah the *Ansari*. He had a cloak on him which reached his ankles. The Prophet (*sams*) picked up one end

of his cloak. He said in explanation, "Messenger of Allah, I have very thin legs." The Prophet told him, "O `Amr b. Zurarah, Allah perfected everything He created. O `Amr b. Zurarah, Allah does not approve of those who let down their clothes below the ankles" (Shawkani).

Haythamiyy gave his approval to one of the two chains of narrators of this report (Au.).

12. Within the three or four years that have elapsed since we wrote the lines while discussing verse 26 of *Surah Al-Hijr*, (note 26 and 27), further biological researches are leading the scientist to the conclusions that add mystery to the question of life's origins. For example, oxygen is necessary for "continuation" of life. But it is highly unfavorably disposed to "the first formation" of life. Its presence at the origin of life is ruled out because it would have immediately oxidized the newly formed living molecule and disintegrated them into fragments. But, in an oxygen-free atmosphere, ultraviolet-induced radiation would have immediately broken down any DNA molecule, which are highly sensitive to the ultraviolet flux. So, it seems we cannot accommodate (although necessary)

oxygen-induced atmosphere at the beginning but cannot do without it later. So we are in a conundrum: we do not want oxygen at the start, but cannot run the life-machine without it later.

There are further twists. E.g., the protein synthesis apparatus in every cell requires energy. But production of energy depends on properly functioning protein synthesis apparatus. The two are interlocked. We cannot have one without the other. This is true of whatever level of organism that is examined and however back we go in earth's history. Indeed the whole cell-apparatus is so complicated that we do not know where to begin for a clue to how life could have started. Francis Crick, the famous Nobel Prize winner, co-discoverer of the DNA wrote in his "Life Itself": "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going." (EvoLution, a Theory in Crisis, Michael Denton, Adler and Adler, 1996, p. 268).

The idea that all life organisms have risen from previous species is also be-

[9] Then He proportioned him and blew in him a spirit from Him.¹³ And He made for you the (faculties of) hearing, sights and hearts.¹⁴ Little it is that you thank.

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] But they said, 'Is it, when we are lost in the earth, are we in a new creation?' Nay, but they are disbelievers in the encounter with their Lord.

وَقَالُوا أَنزَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

coming difficult to assert with complete confidence. Fossil evidences show that probably in many earlier epochs several species have appeared on a sudden out of the blue. This does not sit well with the accepted notion that mutations (resulting in alteration of organs and functions) have to be gradual, leading up ultimately to the appearance of new species: from single-celled animal to multiple-celled organisms, culminating through the evolutionary tree in man. Geologists have found rock layers of all divisions of the last 500 million years but no transitional forms were contained in them: meaning, life forms appeared suddenly, just from nowhere. But the story goes beyond 500 million years. Biologists are now admitting that the simplest cell, e.g. that of a bacterium, "have nothing primitive" about them. Although they appeared very early in Earth's his-

tory, they represent fully formed and highly complex machinery – just as a human cell - without any visible trace of a primitive structure. The plot does not end here either. It gets deeper with every new discovery. For example, an Australian group of researchers have recently reported the remains of a simple type of algae (a form of aquatic life) in rocks at least 3.5 billion years old. This means life appeared very early on the primitive earth without a trace of evolution. This sudden appearance of life has no explanation (Au.).

13. "(This) is a metaphor for the divine gift of life and consciousness, or of a soul.." (Asad).

"... a spirit from Him" is no more than a spirit from Allah (and not of Him). The Christians fasten a lie upon Allah when they say that 'Isa was Allah's own soul, emanating from Him, forgetting that every soul is from Allah (Razi).

[11] Say, 'The angel of death given charge of you¹⁵ draws your souls,¹⁶ then to your Lord you will be returned.'¹⁷

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] And, if you could but see when the criminals will be in the presence of their Lord,¹⁸ their heads lowered, (saying), 'O our Lord! We have seen and we have heard. So, send us back that we may do righteousness. We are now indeed convinced.'

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُو رُؤُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

One wonders whether there is room for understanding that man has a spirit from God in the sense of possessing some of the attributes that are those of Him – although in limited degree? (Au.).

“Those, whose lives the angels took while they were wronging themselves..”

Or (6: 93),

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ (الأنعام - ٩٣)

14. Hearing, sight and heart: the order has been maintained everywhere in the Qur'an, (unless there was some reason to alter it). This is because, a man first hears of a thing, then uses his own sight for confirmation, then he uses faculties of his heart and mind to analyze, deduce, and arrive at his own conclusions and opinions (Razi - paraphrased).

“If you could see when the wrongdoers are in the agonies of death, angels stretching their hands..” (Adwa' al-Qur'an).

15. Shanqiti comments: “Here, mention is made of a single angel. But at several other places in the Qur'an, several angels have been mentioned as participating in the drawing of the soul. E.g. (16: 28),

A literary implication of the textual word “*tawaffa*,” as explained by Qurtubi, is: “to reckon (count), and, take (or accept) in full.”

The apparent meaning is that it is a particular angel that is meant, as a *hadith* would also lead us to believe. Some reports name him as 'Izra'il (عزرائيل) [which name means 'Abdullah: Qurtubi].

Qatadah and others have said that he has assistants (for his task) - Qurtubi.

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِم (النحل -

[13] And, had We so willed, We could give every soul its guidance.¹⁹ But the Word from Me came true (that) I shall surely fill Jahannum with the Jinn and mankind, all together.²⁰

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدَاهَا وَلَكِنْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

A *hadith* gives us to understand that it is the assistants who draw the soul until it is at the throat, and then `Izra'il takes over (Ibn Kathir).

16. Razi takes our minds beyond the information we receive and store, without realizing the significance. That our souls are drawn by the angels, and left in their custody is known by all and sundry. But our concern ends with death. What about the time our souls (our selves) will be in the custody of the angels? He writes: The clean and purified soul will remain with the angels like someone among his kinsfolk, for the great consanguinity with them (the pure with the pure). As for the wicked soul, it will remain with them like a prisoner, (lonely), not knowing their language, nor they its language, with nothing common between them and it.

Some *ahadith* lead us to believe that there are other angels to draw the souls of the Jinn, animals, insects, etc. (Alusi).

17. Mujahid has said that the whole earth is no more than a tray for the

angel of death from which he picks souls with complete ease (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn `Abbas is also reported to have made the statement as above. In fact, a *hadith* says the same thing but it is Mursal (Ibn Kathir).

Those who bear some misgiving about how the angel of death can alone be drawing the souls of the thousands that die every day, may look again at the preceding *ayah* about relativity of time, although, in this case, in the reverse (Au.).

18. Out of shame and regret (Ibn Zaid: Ibn Jarir).

19. What is the connection between these words: "Had We so willed, We could give every soul its guidance," and the previous verse which said, "And, if you could but see when the criminals will be (in the state of) heads lowered before their Lord, (saying), 'O our Lord! We have seen and we have heard. So, send us back that we may work righteousness. We are now indeed convinced?'" Imām Razi answers that were Allah to send

the criminals back to the world for a retrial, they would still remain unbelievers, such stubborn unbelievers they are. The only way they could be led to guidance would be for Allah to lend guidance to every soul whether it desired it or not, sort of force belief on everyone: "Had We so willed, We could give every soul its guidance." (But that has not been Allah's scheme. He willed that they be given the free will to choose: Au.).

Nonetheless, Imām Razi further elaborates that the unbelief of the unbelievers is the choice of their Lord who desired that they remain unbelievers. This choice was following His decision that He should create a world filled with good, but adulterated with a little evil. His will - to the effect that some people should remain unbelievers - is following this general design, viz., a few disbelieving, by Allah's decree, among the rest believing by Allah's decree.

This however, is a complicated issue, and a controversial one too. A short work of this sort does not afford space for a wholesome discussion (Au.).

Qurtubi offers us reconciliation. The Jabriyyah (those who denied free will) slipped to one extreme when they claimed that people's guidance

is bound with Allah's will. They depended on the *ayah* (76: 30),

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ (الإنسان - ٣٠)

"They do not will except that Allah should will."

They concluded that both guidance and error are Allah's own creation in the people's hearts. On the other hand, the Qadariyyah (who granted free will to man) claimed that man chooses guidance or error freely, following his own will. They substantiated their claim with the verse (81: 28),

لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ (التكوير - ٢٨)

"(The Qur'ān is a reminder) for whoever of you that wishes to go straight."

But the truth lies in between, and they were misled (in their understanding of the issue) because they failed to consider that man is both free as well as bound (by destiny), one and at the same time. His hand - when it vibrates - vibrates without his will. But he also enjoys the power - and free will - to vibrate his hand, as and when he will. Those who did not distinguish between an involuntary vibration of the hand, and the deliberate, fell into error.

We distinguish between what the humans enjoy as free will, and what

[14] Taste then, for that you forgot the encounter of this your day.²¹ We have indeed forgotten you;²² and taste the chastisement of eternity for that you were doing.

فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا إِنَّا نَسِينَاكُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

they are forced to do against or despite their will. Our contention, writes Qurtubi, and perhaps over which we all agree is that we are not absolutely bound (robots in modern terms: Au.); so that, if we choose guidance, it is because we are forced to it, and are acting against our will. But rather, we deliberately choose guidance, following our free will. Allah (*swt*) has said,

لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ (التكوير - ٢٨)

“(The Qur’ān is a reminder) for whoever of you that wishes to go straight.”

Subsequent to our choice, we are helped on by Allah, an act which He rightly attributes to Himself. He said,

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ (الإنسان - ٣٠)

“They do not will except that Allah should will,” and the implication is that the belief which is obtained by the believers is following their free will’s choice, although they could not have willed without Allah’s will agreeing with theirs. This explains why Allah said (2: 286),

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ (البقرة - ٢٨٦)

“Unto it (the soul) what it earned, and upon it what it earned.”

20. That is, ‘My rule will prevail that I shall fill *Jahannum* with those who disobeyed Me’ (Qurtubi).

21. Imām Razi argues that one can only forget what he knows. How is this applicable to the general lot of the unbelievers (who do not seem to know)? He answers that when the unbelievers were told of the resurrection, reckoning, and retribution, or reward, their minds agreed that the system and the process was reasonable. Thus, they became like those who know. But they chose to forget.

22. The translation follows the general understanding. However, Qurtubi points out, substantiating with examples from Arabic usage, that the “nasi” of the text can also be understood in the sense of abandonment. That is, “Verily We have indeed abandoned you (in the torment).”

[15] They alone believe in Our signs who, when they are reminded thereof, fall prostrate,²³ celebrate the glory of their Lord (with) praise,²⁴ and they do not wax proud.²⁵

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا بِهَا
خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] Removed are their sides from the beds, as they invoke their Lord in fear and hope,²⁶ and out of what We have bestowed, they expend.²⁷

تَنْجَافِي جُنُوبَهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ
رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ
﴿١٦﴾

23. Ibn `Abbas was of the opinion that the textual “*sujjadan*” is for “*ruku`*” (deep bow). He argued with the verse (38: 24),

حَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (ص - ٢٤)

“He went into a deep bow, and turned (to Allah)” - Qurtubi, Alusi.

Accordingly, the rule with the Hanafiyyah is that if an Imām recites a *Sajdah*-invoking *ayah* in a Prayer, and feels that the followers might get confused over whether he went into *ruku`* or *sujud*, he might as well go into *ruku`* at that point, since *ruku`* and *sujud* are homogenous acts (Au.).

It is noteworthy that those who receive the reminder go straightaway into prostration, as they stay away from the beds, in devotion to Allah: not in fear and hope, which come later, and whose effects follow afterwards (Razi).

24. That is, they say these words in prostration, (سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ) or words of similar nature (Qurtubi).

25. “And they do not wax proud”: this gives us the reason why these people believed while those who chose to forget the realities disbelieved: they were arrogant (Au.).

26. Anas thought that the time-allusion by (*yad`una rabbahum*) is to the `Isha Prayer, while Dahhak thought that it is the time between `Isha and Fajr Prayers (Ibn Jarir). The report about Anas has a good chain attached to it (Ibn Kathir). Tirmidhi in fact declared it *Sahih* (Shawkani).

But the preferred opinion, writes Ibn Jarir, is that of Hasan, Ibn Zayd and Mujahid who thought that the allusion by the invocation (*yad`una rabbahum*) is to voluntary Prayers, offered deep in the night, at which time their sides are removed from the beds. That is, they are in Prayers

while rest of the mankind is in sleep. This is supported by a report coming through Mu`adh ibn Jabal and others that the Prophet said,

أَلَا أُذَلِّكَ عَلَىٰ أَبْوَابِ الْخَيْرِ الصَّوْمِ جُنَّةً وَالصَّدَقَةِ
تُطْفِئُ الْحَطِيئَةَ وَصَلَاةَ الرَّجُلِ فِي جَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ
قَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى { تَتَجَاوَىٰ جُنُوبَهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ حَتَّىٰ
يَلْعَنَ } {يعملون} - (أحمد)

“Shall I not lead you to the doors of all good? - fasts are a shield, charitable expending atones for sins, and a slave’s standing in the depth of the night.” Then he recited this verse.

Another report, found in Tha`labi (as also in Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Marduwayh, as noted in Kanz: Au.) comes to us on the authority of Asma’ bint Yezid to the effect that the Prophet said,

يجمع الله الناس يوم القيامة في صعيد واحد يسمعونهم
الداعي وينفذهم البصر، فيقوم مناد فينادي: أين
الذين كانوا يحمدون الله في السراء والضراء؟ فيقومون
وهم قليل فيدخلون الجنة بغير حساب، ثم يعود
فينادي: أين الذين كانت {تتجافى جنوبهم عن
المضاجع يدعون رهم خوفا وطمعا ومما رزقتهم
ينفقون}؟ فيقومون وهم قليل فيدخلون الجنة بغير
حساب، ثم يعود فينادي: ليقيم الذين كانوا {لا
تلهيهم تجارة ولا بيع عن ذكر الله}! فيقومون وهم
قليل فيدخلون الجنة بغير حساب، ثم يقوم سائر
الناس فيحاسبون. - (كنز)

“Allah will gather together the people in one field in a state that

a caller will make them hear and the eyes will be able to see all. A caller will rise up and say, ‘Where are those who used to chant Allah’s glory in good and bad times?’ They will rise up – but few they will be – and will enter Paradise without reckoning. The caller will then return (to say), ‘Where are those to whom is applicable: Removed are their sides from the beds, as they invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they expend out of We bestowed them?’ They will rise up – but few they will be – and will enter Paradise without reckoning. The caller will then return (to say), ‘Let those rise up whom neither commerce nor sale distracted from the remembrance of Allah.’ They will rise up – but few they will be – and enter Paradise without reckoning. It is after this that the rest will rise and taken up for reckoning.”

Qurtubi has a slightly different version to offer. We have presented the version as in *Kanz*. Shawkani presented this report while discussing the status of those who were not distracted by commerce or sale at verse 37 of *Surah Nur*. See ch. 24, note no. 88 of this work (Au.).

A report in Ahmad comes through Ibn Mas'ud who narrates the Prophet (saws) as having said:

عَجِبَ رَبُّنَا مِنْ رَجُلَيْنِ رَجُلٍ نَارَ عَنْ وَطْأَيْهِ وَخِلافِهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ جَبِيهِ وَأَهْلِهِ إِلَى صَلَاتِهِ رَغْبَةً فِيمَا عِنْدِي وَشَفَقَةً بِمَا عِنْدِي وَرَجُلٍ غَزَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَاتَهَرَمَ فَعَلِمَ مَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْإِهْزَامِ وَمَا لَهُ فِي الرُّجُوعِ فَرَجَعَ حَتَّى أَهْرَيْقَ دَمُهُ فَيَسْئَلُ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِمَا لَيْكِنَهُ أَنْظُرُوا إِلَى عِبْدِي رَجَعَ رَغْبَةً فِيمَا عِنْدِي وَشَفَقَةً بِمَا عِنْدِي حَتَّى أَهْرَيْقَ دَمُهُ (أحمد)

“Our Lord is pleased with two men: a man who jumped out of his bed to pray, leaving behind a warm blanket and a wife. Allah says to His angels, ‘Look at My slave, he jumped out of his bed to pray, leaving behind a warm blanket and a wife, in search of what is with Me.’ And a man who fought in the way of Allah, but they were defeated. He knew what displeasure awaited him if he fled, so he returned seeking what is with Me and lost his life. Allah says to the angels, ‘Look at My slave. He has returned in hope and fear of Me until his blood was shed.’”

Abu Da'ud has a shorter version of this in his *Sunan* whose chain of narrators was not a happy one for Haythamiyy (Au.).

Imām Ahmad has a report on the authority of Mu'adh ibn Jabal. He said,

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ، قَالَ: كُنْتُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي سَفَرٍ، فَأَصْبَحْتُ قَرِيبًا مِنْهُ وَنَحْنُ نَسِيرُهُ، فَقُلْتُ: يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، أَلَا تُخْبِرُنِي بِعَمَلٍ يُدْخِلُنِي الْجَنَّةَ، وَيُبَاعِدُنِي مِنَ النَّارِ؟ قَالَ: “لَقَدْ سَأَلْتُ عَنْ عَظِيمٍ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِعَمَلٍ عَلَى مَنْ يَسْرُهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ، تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ، لَا تُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا، وَتُقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصُومُ شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ، وَتَحُجُّ الْبَيْتَ”

ثُمَّ قَالَ: “أَلَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى أَبْوَابِ الْخَيْرِ؟ الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ، وَالصَّدَقَةُ تُطْفِئُ الْخَطِيئَةَ، وَصَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ مِنْ حَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ، ثُمَّ قَرَأَ: “تَسْجُدُ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ” [السجدة آية ١٦] حَتَّى قَرَأَ: “حِزَاءُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ” [السجدة آية ١٧] ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: “أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ بِرَأْسِ أَمْرِ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَعَمُودِهِ، وَدُرُوزَةِ سَنَامِهِ؟ الْجِهَادُ”

ثُمَّ قَالَ: “أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ بِمَلَاكٍ ذَلِكَ؟”، قُلْتُ: بَلَى، يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: فَأَخَذَ بِلِسَانِهِ، فَقَالَ: “أَكْفَفُ عَلَيْكَ هَذَا؟”، فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَإِنَّا لَمُؤَاخِدُونَ بِمَا تَتَكَلَّمُ بِهِ؟ قَالَ: “نَكَلِّتُكَ أُمَّكَ يَا مُعَاذُ، وَهَلَنْ يَكْبُؤُ النَّاسَ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ أَوْ قَالَ: مَنَاجِرِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ؟”

“I was with the Prophet in one of those journeys. On one occasion I came close to him while we were riding. I asked, “Prophet of Allah. Will you not tell me about a deed that will lead me to Paradise, and put me away from the Fire?” He answered, “You have asked about something great. But it is easy for him unto whom Al-

[17] No soul knows what comfort of the eyes has been kept concealed for them as a reward for what they were doing.²⁸

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ
أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

lah renders it easy: Worship Allah without associating anyone with Him; establish the Prayers, offer the *Zakah*, fast the *Ramadan* and perform the pilgrimage.”

Then he added, “Should I not lead you to the doors of all good? Fasts are a shield, charity extinguishes the sins, and a man’s Prayers in the midst of the night.” Then he recited this verse, “Removed are their sides from the beds, as they invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and out of what We have bestowed, they expend. No soul knows what comfort of the eyes has been kept concealed for them as a reward for what they were doing.”

Then he added, “May I not tell you about the apex of the affair, its pillars and its zenith? It is *Jihad*.”

He further added, “Should I not tell you about something which overarches all these?” I said, “Yes, do it O Messenger of Allah.” (According to other reports, “At that point a rider or a group of them came up. I feared

that they will distract him from the topic. So I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah (you said), Should I not tell you about something which overarches all these?’”).

In reply he held his tongue and said, “Keep this under your control.” I asked, “Are we going to be held responsible for what we say?” He replied, “Your mother may lose you. Are the people going to be thrust into the Fire by their faces – or he said by their nostrils – but because of what their tongues reap?” This report is also in Nasa’i, Ibn Majah and Tirmidhi, who declared it *Hasan Sahih* (Ibn Kathir).

27. One might note how the rights of Allah’s creations always follow the mention of His own rights (Au.).

28. The pronoun expressed in “them” is for the believers endowed with qualities mentioned earlier, and not the “soul” itself about which Allah said that it does not know what has been concealed for it as rewards for spending the nights away from the beds (Au.).

A report in this context comes through several chains on the authority of Abu Hurayrah:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ اللَّهُ أَعَدَدْتُ لِعِبَادِي الصَّالِحِينَ مَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبٍ بَشَرٍ فَأَقْرَبُوا إِنْ شِئْتُمْ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قَرَّةٍ أَعْيُنٍ (البخاري)

“Allah has prepared what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no close angel has heard and no mind has imagined, for those whose sides stay away from the beds. Read if you wish, ‘No soul knows what comfort of the eyes has been kept concealed for them as a reward for what they were doing’” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud remarked that it is also written in the *Tawrah*,

لقد أعد الله للذين تتجافى جنوبهم عن المضاجع ما لم تر عين، ولم يخطر على قلب بشر، ولم تسمع أذن، وما لم يسمعه ملك مقرب.

“Allah has prepared for those whose sides stay away from the beds, what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no close angel has heard and no mind has imagined” (Ibn Jarir).

Hasan al-Busri has said, as recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim, that rewards match deeds. Since these people con-

cealed their deeds, they will be rewarded with rewards whose qualities have been concealed (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

We might add that since every rising from the bed late at night causes burning of the eyes, Allah will reward them with what will cool their eyes (Au.).

(But it seems rewards as promised here will be extended to those too who will remain faithful and on righteous deeds): Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi have on the authority of Abu Hurayrah and others that, Allah said,

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أَعَدَدْتُ لِعِبَادِي الصَّالِحِينَ مَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ، وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ، وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبٍ بَشَرٍ. (المسلم)

“I have prepared for My righteous slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no man’s mind has imagined.”

Another report of Bukhari adds, “.. reserved, quite apart from all that you have known (of the pleasures of Paradise).”

And Muslim has on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet said,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: “مَنْ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ يَنْعَمُ لَا يَبْأَسُ لَا تَبَلَى ثِيَابُهُ وَلَا يَفْقَى سَبَابُهُ.” (المسلم)

“He who entered Paradise will be in luxuries, will never be deprived, his clothes will not wear out and never will his youth fade.”

It is reported on the authority of al-Mughira b. Shu’ba that the Messenger of Allah said:

سَأَلَ مُوسَى رَبَّهُ: مَا أَذْنَى أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ مَنْزِلَةً؟ قَالَ: هُوَ رَجُلٌ يَجِيءُ بَعْدَ مَا أُدْخِلَ أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ الْجَنَّةَ فَيَقَالُ لَهُ: ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ. فَيَقُولُ: أَيُّ رَبِّ كَيْفَ؟ وَقَدْ تَرَلَّ النَّاسُ مَنَازِلَهُمْ وَأَخَذُوا أَحْذَانَهُمْ؟ فَيَقَالُ لَهُ: أَتَرْضَى أَنْ يَكُونَ لَكَ مِثْلُ مُلْكِ مُلِكٍ مِنْ مُلُوكِ الدُّنْيَا؟ فَيَقُولُ: رَضِيْتُ، رَبِّ فَيَقُولُ: لَكَ ذَلِكَ وَمِثْلُهُ وَمِثْلُهُ وَمِثْلُهُ وَمِثْلُهُ. فَقَالَ فِي الْحَامِسَةِ: رَضِيْتُ، رَبِّ فَيَقُولُ: هَذَا لَكَ وَعَشْرَةٌ أَمْثَالِهِ. وَلَكَ مَا اشْتَهَيْتَ تَفْسِكَ وَلَدَّتْ عَيْنُكَ. فَيَقُولُ: رَضِيْتُ، رَبِّ قَالَ: رَبِّ فَأَعْلَاهُمْ مَنْزِلَةً؟ قَالَ: أَوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَرَدْتُ غَرَسْتُ كَرَامَتَهُمْ بِيَدِي. وَخَتَمْتُ عَلَيْهَا فَلَمْ تَرَ عَيْنٌ وَلَمْ تَسْمَعْ أُذُنٌ وَلَمْ يَخْطُرْ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ“ قَالَ: وَمِصْدَاقُهُ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: { فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مِمَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ } (السجدة الآية: -) (المسلم)

“Musa asked his Lord: ‘Who amongst the inhabitants of Paradise will be the lowest in rank?’ Allah said: ‘Of those deserving Paradise, it is he who will be the last admitted into it. It will be said to him: ‘Enter Paradise.’ He will say: ‘O my Lord! How (can I enter) when the people have settled in their places and have taken their shares?’” It will be said to him: ‘Would it please

you, if there is for you a kingdom similar to the kingdom of a king of the world?’ He will say: ‘I am pleased my Lord.’ He will say: ‘For you is that, and like that, and like that, and like that, and like that.’ At the fifth (time) he will say: ‘I am well pleased my Lord.’ He (Allah) will say: ‘It is for you and, ten times like it, and for you is what your heart desires and your eyes are pleased with.’ He will say: ‘I am well pleased, my Lord.’ (Thereupon) Musa asked: ‘(Which then is) the highest of their ranks?’ Allah said: ‘They are the chosen ones. I shall establish their honor with My own hand and then set a seal over it. (They will be blessed with bounties) that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined.’ This is substantiated by the Book of Allah (which says): ‘No soul knows what comfort of the eyes has been kept concealed for them as a reward for what they were doing’” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Majid succeeds in searching out similar verses from the Old and New Testaments. He quotes: “For, since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear,

[18] Is he then, who has been a believer, like unto him who has been wicked? They are not equal.²⁹

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا لَا يَسْتَوُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

nor hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.’ (Is. 64: 4).” And, “But, as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath propounded for them that love him.’ (1. co. 2: 9).”

29. (Although the application is general, the immediate cause of revelation was, in the opinion of: Au.), `Ata b. Yasar, Suddi and others (who) said that the verse was revealed concerning `Ali ibn Abi Talib and Walid b. `Uqbah b. Abi Mu`ayt (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Reports in Abu al-Faraj’s al-Aghani, Ibn `Adiyy, Ibn Marduwayh, Khatib and Ibn `Asakir tell us that when Walid b. `Uqbah b. Abi Mu`ayt boasted his superiority over `Ali (on the day of Badr: Zamakhshari), he retorted by saying, “Shut up. I am a believer, while you are a libertine” (Shawkani).

It is reported of Hasan b. `Ali that he told Walid b. `Uqbah, “How can you speak ill of `Ali when Allah

named him a ‘*mu`min*’ in ten places in the Qur`ān, while He named you ‘*fasiq*:’” (Zamakhshari).

The report however is unconfirmed. And perhaps by ten places he meant ten such places where Allah mentioned the qualities of a believer (Au).

It might be recalled that this is the same Walid, writes Qurtubi, who was alluded to as “*fasiq*” (libertine) in the Qur`ānic verse of *Al-Hujurat* (49: 6) which said,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ (الحجرات - ٦)

“Believers, if there comes to you a *fasiq* with news, investigate, lest you harm a people in ignorance and then turn up regretful over what you did.” And, this is the same Walid who was found drunk while leading in *Fajr* Prayers, during the caliphate of `Uthman.

Ibn Kathir, however, does not report the row between `Ali and Walid, and is of the opinion that by the word “*fasiq*” as appearing in this verse, the allusion is to (any) “*kafir*”.

[19] As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them are gardens of (eternal) Abode,³⁰ as hospitality for that they were doing.

أَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ
جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَىٰ نُزُلًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] But as for those who acted wickedly, their abode will be the Fire. Every time they wish to get out of it, they will be returned to it.³¹ They will be told, 'Taste the chastisement of the Fire that you used to cry lies to.'

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ كُلَّمَا
أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَقِيلَ
لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا
تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] And, (in the meanwhile), We shall give them the taste of lesser chastisement before the greater chastisement,³² haply that they will return.

وَلَنَذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ
الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

That said, some doubt remains about the row between `Ali and Walid because, firstly, this chapter is Makkan, and, secondly, it is reported that at the time of Badr, when the row is reported to have taken place, Waleed was too young, perhaps a boy; although some reports recorded by Ibn Hajr and biographers of the Prophet's life suggest that he was an adult at the time of Badr (Alusi).

most Lote Tree. By it is the Garden of Ma'wa."

And, it is said that this Paradise is so named because souls of the martyrs take refuge in this retreat (*ma'wa*). It is also said that it is by the right side of the `Arsh (Zamakhshari).

30. Ma'wa of the text is one of the several kinds of Paradise. Allah (*swt*) said (53: 12-15),

31. Fudayl b. `Iyad said, "By Allah, their hands will be tied, their feet shackled, flames raising them upwards, and the angels thrusting iron forks into them" and they will be told, 'taste the torment of the Fire that you were denying'" (Ibn Kathir).

أَفْتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ. وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ. عِنْدَ
سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ. عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ (النجم - ١٢ -)
(١٥)

32. To what is the allusion by "the lesser chastisement?" According to Ibn `Abbas, Ubayy b. Ka`b, Abu al-`Aliyyah, Dahhak, Hasan and others, the allusion is to the sufferings, diseases, and ordeals of life, such as,

"Do you dispute him over what he saw? Indeed he saw him at the time of another descent: at the Ut-

[22] And who can do greater wrong than he who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, but turns away from them. Surely, We shall take vengeance upon the criminals.³³

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ
أَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Indeed, We gave Musa the Book,³⁴ therefore, be not in any doubt concerning the encounter with him.³⁵ And We made it a guide to the children of Israel.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تَكُنْ
فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَائِهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي
إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٢٣﴾

the defeat at Badr: so that they might repent. As for “the greater chastisement,” the allusion is to that of the Hereafter.

That was the opinion of Ibn Mas‘ud, Mujahid and Hasan also (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

33. Ibn Jarir mentions a *hadith* which reports one of the several ways of defining a “criminal.” It is declared weak by Haythamiyy but differently worded versions are found in other collections also: Mu‘adh ibn Jabal reports the Prophet as having said,

ثَلَاثٌ مِّن فَعَلُهُنَّ فَقَدْ أَجْرَمَ: مَن عَقَدَ لَوَاءً فِي غَيْرِ
حَقٍّ، أَوْ عَقَّ وَالِدَيْهِ، أَوْ مَشَى مَعَ ظَالِمٍ، فَقَدْ أَجْرَمَ،
يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ”إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ“
(رواه الطبراني وفيه عبد العزيز بن عبيد الله بن حمزة
وهو ضعيف - الهيثمي)

“There are three things that whoever did, committed a crime: He who pitched his flag on what is untruth, or mistreated his parents, or, accompanied a wrong-

doer helping him; he committed a crime. Allah says, ‘We shall take vengeance upon the criminals.’”

Qatadah has said, “Beware of turning away from the remembrance of Allah. Whosoever turns away from remembering Him will be the most misguided, the most in need, and the most guilty of sin. Allah said about such of those who do that, ‘Surely, We shall take vengeance upon the criminals’ (Ibn Kathir).

34. “With this passage the discourse returns to the theme enunciated at the beginning of this *Surah* – namely, the divine origin of the revelation granted to Muhammad, which, as the present passage points out, proceeds from the same source as that granted to Moses (the last of the great apostles of God accepted as such by all of the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Furthermore, the identity of the fundamental truths in all divine revelations,

[24] And We appointed from among them leaders guiding by Our command: when they observed patience,³⁶ and continued to have sure faith in Our signs.³⁷

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

stressed in the above verse, implies an identity of the moral demands made of the followers of those revelations irrespective of the period, race or social environment” (Asad).

Yusuf Ali comments on the word ‘Book’: “The Book’ is not here coextensive with Revelation. Moses had, revealed to him, a Law, a shari`at, which was to guide his people in all the practical affairs of their life. Jesus, after him, was also inspired by Allah: but his Injil or Gospel contained only general principles and not a Code or shari`at. The holy Prophet was the next one to have a shari`at or ‘Book’ in that sense: for the Qur`an contains both a Code and general principles. This Sura is a Makkan Sura. The Code came later in Madinah. But he is given the assurance that he will also have a Code, to supersede the earlier Law, and complete the Revelation of Allah.”

35. Ibn `Abbas reported the Prophet as having said that the allusion is to Musa (*asws*) meeting with his Lord (Ibn Jarir). The *hadith* is in Tabarani (Ibn Kathir).

There have been several other interpretations that we have avoided to reproduce because they conflict with the above *hadith* that Haythami declared trustworthy (Au.).

36. That is, when they showed patience (in the face of difficulties) remaining steadfast in religion, We made them leaders in piety. Or, differently understood, it was because they observed patience against the glamour of the world, and its trappings, shunning them, that they earned the right to leadership (Ibn Jarir).

Sufyan has said, “It is not deserving of a man to be a leader until he can shun the world.” Some other scholars have said that it is through sure faith and perseverance that one qualifies to be a leader (in piety) - Ibn Kathir.

37. That is, in a similar manner shall Allah (*swt*) make followers of this revelation, (who meet with the conditions of perseverance in efforts, and consistency in faith), ‘guides’ for the peoples of the world (Razi).

[25] Surely, your Lord - He will judge between them on the Day of Standing, in matters they were differing between themselves.³⁸

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Does it not guide them: how many nations We destroyed before them amid (whose) dwelling-places they walk about?³⁹ Verily, in that are sure signs. What, will they not hear?

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ
الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسَاكِينِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ
لَآيَاتٍ أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Have they not seen that We drive the water towards dry land devoid of herbage,⁴⁰ and then bring forth vegetation therewith whereof eat their cattle and they themselves? What, have they not the vision?⁴¹

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ
الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا تَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ أَنْعَامُهُمْ
وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ أَفَلَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And they say, 'When will this decision⁴² be if you are truthful?'

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

38. The allusion is to the perennial religious disputes over Divinity, God's oneness, nature of Prophethood, or of the Hereafter, Resurrection and Reckoning, and the like (Ibn Jarir in effect).

39. The allusion is to the past communities such as `Ad, Thamūd, and others, amidst whose ruins the Quraysh passed by and strolled in, when they journeyed out.

40. This is how the textual "juruz" has been explained by most commentators (Au.).

Ibn Jarir however thinks that it refers to a land that lets nothing settle upon itself, but spoils it, hence Qatada's definition as "dusty."

41. "The verse begins with 'do they not see?' a physical act. It ends with 'have they not the vision,' a matter of spiritual insight" (Yusuf Ali).

42. Although the textual word is "fat-h" meaning opening, or victory, the preferred interpretation is that the allusion is to the decision regarding the promised chastisement (Ibn Jarir).

[29] Say, 'On the day of decision⁴³ their belief shall not profit the unbelievers, nor shall they be respited.'⁴⁴

قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
إِيمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] Therefore, turn away from them⁴⁵ and wait; they are (also) waiting.⁴⁶

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَانْتَظِرْ إِنَّهُمْ مُنْتَظَرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

43. That is, the day of Judgment (Mujahid – Ibn Jarir).

The literal meaning of “*yawm al-Fath*” as the day of the fall of Makkah, as some have thought, cannot be accurate because Allah followed up with words, “On the day of decision their belief shall not profit the unbelievers, nor shall they be respited.” That is, their assertion of belief on the day Makkah fell should not have been acceptable. But, in actual fact the Prophet accepted those of the Makkans as Muslims who wished to join Islam after the fall of Makkah (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Hakim, who declared the report trustworthy, as well as Bayhaqi, have reported that in the opinion of Ibn `Abbas the allusion was to the victory at Badr, where the faith of the leading pagans did not profit them after their fall (Shawkani).

44. That is, they will not be allowed a return to previous life to amend their ways (Razi).

45. That is, when the tendency to contend is noticed among the opponents, it is better to turn one's attention away from them (Thanwi).

46. That is, they are waiting for your demise and destruction. مَتَّ





Surah 33
*Al-Ahzāb*¹

Madinan²



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. According to a report in Ahmad, as also in Nasa'i through another but weak chain, Ubayy b. Ka'b asked Zirr: How long is *Surah al-Ahzab*? He answered, "Seventy-three verses." Ubayy said, "I have seen it of length equal to *Surah Al-Baqarah*, which included a verse saying,

الشيخ والشيخة إذا زنيا فارجموها البتة، والله عزيز
 حكيم

'As for the married man and married woman, if they commit adultery, stone them (to death), and Allah is All-mighty, All-wise.'"

In other words, parts of this chapter have been abrogated (and removed from memory) – Qurtubi. The report is in Ahmad (Ibn Kathir).

The report concerning "As for the married man .." is in the *Sahihayn* (Shawkani).

As for the report, adds Zamakhshari, to the effect that the excluded portions of this *Surah* were with 'A'isha,

until chicken ate it off, is a *Shi'ah* concoction.

2. Asad writes: "The designation of this *Surah* is derived from the references in verses 9-27 to the War of the Confederates, which took place in the year 5 H. ... The tone of these references, and especially of verse 20, shows that this part of the *Surah* was revealed immediately after that war, i.e., towards the end of 5 H. Verses 37-40, which deal with the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh, were revealed in the same year, probably a few months earlier; the same can be said of verse 4-5, which apparently contain an indirect allusion to the Prophet's adoptive relationship with Zaynab's first husband, Zayd b. Haritha ... On the other hand, verse 28-29 and 52 cannot have been revealed earlier than the year 7 H., and may even belong to a later period ... There is no clear evidence as to the date of the rest of this *Surah*, although some authorities (e.g.,

[1] O Messenger, fear Allah³ and obey not the unbelievers and hypocrites;⁴ verily Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ
وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا



Suyuti) maintain that much – if not most – of it was revealed after *Surah* 3 (‘The House of ‘Imran’) and before *Surah* 4 (‘The Women’), which would place it toward the end of 3 H., or in the early part of 4 H. In brief, it can be stated with certainty that the *Surah* was revealed in small segments at various times between the end of the first and the middle of the last third of the Medina period. This, together with the fact that a considerable portion of it deals with the personal history of the Prophet, the relationship between him and his contemporaries – in particular, his family – and certain rules of behaviour explains why this *Surah* is so complex in its structure and so diversified in its mode of expression.”

3. “In the most adverse circumstances, in the midst of the assaults of Evil, the plots of treason and hypocrisy, the darts of slanders and false charges, and stupid superstitions and taboos, the Prophet of Allah should steer his course steadily according to Allah’s Law and not fear human evil, in whatever form it appears. Men

may misjudge, but Allah knows all. Men may try to overthrow Good, but Wisdom is with Allah” (Yusuf Ali).

Why did Allah (*swt*) have to exhort the Prophet to *Taqwa* when he was already at its highest level? Imām Razi answers that Allah is obeyed for several reasons: for fear of punishment, for fear of the severance of rewards, and for fear of being veiled from Allah and His special blessings. It is in this last sense that he is being told to observe *Taqwa*, for, worldly affairs cast a veil between a man and his Lord. He was told to beware of this, and renew his contact with Allah every hour and every moment, for, whoever remained at the same level any two days, in reality suffered detriment. Accordingly, we find the Prophet (*saws*) saying,

قال أبو هريرة: سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: (والله إني لأستغفر الله وأتوب إليه في اليوم أكثر من سبعين مرة)

“I seek Allah’s forgiveness and turn to him more than seventy times a day.”

[2] But rather, follow that which is revealed unto you from your Lord. Surely, Allah is ever Aware of what you do.

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

[3] And have trust in Allah.⁵ Allah is sufficient as a Disposer (of affairs).⁶

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٣﴾

But, obviously, on the general scale, it is primarily the followers of the Prophet who have been addressed (Au.).

4. It is reported that in his early phase in Madinah the Prophet (*saws*) was soft towards the Jews and hypocrites hoping to win them to Islam, and so Allah (who knew their disease: Au.) revealed this verse (Zamakhshari).

5. “The *Surah* begins by directing the Prophet, on whom be peace, to fear Allah, not to comply with the hypocrites and unbelievers, follow that which his Lord has revealed to him, and, finally, to place trust in Him alone. This beginning fuses together well the main contents of this *Surah* - its legislations, and surrounding events – with the main principle and pillar, over which this religion, its laws, its injunctions, its system, its statutes, its morals, and its mores rest. The said main principle and pillar is Allah’s fear, submission to His wish, following of the way that He has chosen, trust in Him alone, and

inner certainty concerning His help and succour” (Sayyid).

6. “Such are the words with which begins a *Surah*,” writes Sayyid, “which undertakes to organize a few social and moral features of the newly born Islamic society. It is a beginning which reveals the spirit and nature of the society that is to take shape, and the pillars on which it is to rest: its edifice rising high up in the external, material world, while its roots going down deep into the internal, spiritual world.

“Islam is not merely an aggregate of instructions and admonitions, nor an assortment of rules and regulations, nor yet of customs and conventions .. It includes all these, but they are not the whole of Islam. Islam is none other than submission ... submission to the will of Allah and His decrees, readiness to accept His commandments and prohibitions, following of the course He has charted – without paying the slightest attention to any other counsel, with-

out taking any other direction, and without reliance on any other save Him. It grows from the realization that man is already submitted in this world to a set of divine laws, the only set of laws that regulate the creatures and the earth in which they live, which also regulates the stars and the worlds beyond ... which regulates the affairs of all and everyone within them: the apparent of them and the inapparent, the visible of them and the invisible, what human knowledge can comprehend and what is beyond its comprehension. They are fully convinced that there is no other recourse to them but to follow what they are urged to from on High, and to steer away from what He forbids ... to adopt the means that will make it easy to achieve their goals ... and then, finally, await the outcome that Allah has destined for them. This is the foundation on which rests the statutes and the laws, customs and conventions, morals and manners: with the application of proper interpretations (of the directives) in a given situational context .. with the firm faith which is embedded in the hearts; with practical steps in the light of the soul's submission to Allah; and following of the life's course in its light.

“Islam indeed is a faith from which spring forth the laws, upon which in turn, rests the rest of the system. These active, integrated, and inter-related principles, are in their sum and substance, what is known as Islam.

“It is noticeable that the first directive, given precedence in a *Surah* that consists of the principles of organization of the social life of the Muslims, in the light of newly laid rules and regulations, was concerning *Taqwa*. And the counsel was directed to the Prophet, upon whom be peace, the one to supervise and implement: ‘O Messenger, fear Allah.’ *Taqwa* of Allah then, the fear of His surveillance, and the thoughts of His exaltedness is the first principle and the permanent watch-guard that lies in the depths of hearts and which oversees the implementation of every legislation. It is this to which is bound every commandment in Islam and every directive.

“The second directive is the forbiddance to obey the unbelievers and hypocrites, or follow any of their suggestions or advice which would include giving ear to their opinions or urgings. The precedence of this forbiddance over the commandment to obey the Revelation leads us to be-

lieve that the pressure by these groups within Madinah and around it was quite high in those days - hence the emphasis on not following their suggestions, opinions and directions, or to bend to their pressures. And this forbiddance remains for every Muslim community, of all times, lest that they ever obey the unbelievers and hypocrites; more so in affairs related to beliefs, legislation or social organization; in order that the course taken by the believers ever remains for Allah alone, without any adulteration of instructions or inspirations from sources other than His.

“And let no one be deceived by what the unbelievers and hypocrites possess of knowledge and experience, as some Muslims allow for themselves in times of weakness and heedlessness, for it is Allah who is the Knowing, the Wise. It is He who has laid down the form and the procedure in the light of His unlimited knowledge and wisdom: ‘Verily, Allah is ever Knowing, Wise.’ In comparison, what man has is nothing but the outer skin, not much, but very little.

“The third directive: ‘But rather follow that which is revealed unto you from your Lord,’ – this is the direction from which will emanate all directives; this is the true source that

can and should be obeyed. The text carries emphasis concealed in its construction: ‘But rather, follow that which is revealed unto you from your Lord.’ The revelation, ‘unto you,’ and the source, ‘from your Lord,’ ... these lead to the sense of emphasis, making it all the more imperative over the direct imperative contained in the fact that the command is from someone who demands complete obedience.

“Fourthly, the words that follow, ‘Allah is ever Aware of what you do,’ informs us that it is He who has full knowledge of you, and of what you do. It is He indeed who knows what really you are doing, as He knows the objectives that are concealed in your hearts that prompt you to do whatever you do.

“The final directive: ‘And have trust in Allah. And Allah is sufficient as a Disposer (of affairs),’ is saying in effect, ‘Do not be concerned at all whether they – the hypocrites and unbelievers – are with you or against you. Pay no attention to their scheming and plotting, but rather, direct all your affairs to Allah, and then place your trust in Him alone.’ This is the firm rule that a heart acts upon, and whereby finds its limits and boundaries, leaving whatever is beyond and

[4] Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his breast,⁷ nor has He made those of your wives - as you declare unlawful through Zihar-owth - your mothers;⁸ nor has He made your adopted sons, your sons in fact.⁹ Those are your mere words out of your mouths.¹⁰ Allah says the truth and He guides to the (right) course.

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ
وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمُ اللَّائِي تُظَاهِرُونَ
مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ
أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَلِكَ كَقَوْلِكُمْ بَأْفَوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ
يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤﴾

behind it to the One who commands and executes: depending on Him, finding peace in Him, and firmly believing in Him.”

7. That is, just as a man cannot have two hearts, so also a man cannot declare his wife his mother, nor can anyone have two fathers. That is the general meaning.

As for the immediate cause of revelation it is reported that there was a man in the Quraysh who used to boast: “I have two hearts and therefore can use my mind better than Muhammad” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

He has been identified as Jameel b. Asad al-Fihri. It is also reported that after the pagans were defeated at Badr, (and Jameel was fleeing) he passed by Abu Sufyan (who was leading the trade caravan back to Makkah). He asked him, “What happened at Badr?” Jameel replied, “The force (i.e., the Quraysh) split

into two kinds: those killed and those who fled.” Abu Sufyan asked him, “What’s with you that your one shoe is in your hand while the other is in the foot?” He replied, “I thought they were both in my feet” (Zamakhshari). So much for the two minds he boasted (Au.)!

[This is something we experience quite often. Most recently, it is reported that the General leading American attack on Qaim in Iraq, during April 2005, started off by boasting, “Bring Allah, bring Muhammad, I’ll fight them.” The American forces were routed and had to withdraw in haste. And the first casualty was the General himself, whose helicopter was downed by the resistance forces even before the battle could begin - Au.].

It is also reported that when Ibn ‘Abbas was asked about the reasons of the revelation of this verse he said,

قَامَ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا يُصَلِّي فَخَطَرَ
 حَظْرَةً فَقَالَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ الَّذِينَ يُصَلُّونَ مَعَهُ أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّ
 لَهُ قَلْبَيْنِ قَلْبًا مَعَكُمْ وَقَلْبًا مَعَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ: { مَا
 جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ } . (الترمذي)

“Once the Prophet began to lead in the Prayers, but was distracted a little (by something). The hypocrites behind him remarked, ‘He has two hearts. One is with you while the other is with them,’” (meaning, with his Companions: Au.) - Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi.

The first report is in Ahmad, while the second is in Tirmidhi who declared it Hasan (Ibn Kathir).

If it is asked, writes Zamakhshari, what is the point in adding, “in the breast” (since all hearts are in the breasts anyway), it can be said that the addition is for making the meaning reach home more emphatically. The addition creates sort of a graphic image.

It can be added that each man has a heart of his own, a heart which is filled with emotions of all sorts, which influence his behavior. But, within the same heart there cannot reside a second personality with exactly the opposite attributes – one and at the same time.

Thanwi writes that this verse is the basis of the opinion that a man cannot pay attention to two affairs at a time. This is the reason why, when a man complains of mental worries, he is asked to engage himself in Allah’s remembrance. The principle also leads us to identify an error in human behaviour. Some people hold rosaries (counting beads) in their hands in the act of remembrance of Allah, but also engage in conversation. When asked, they explain that they are capable of doing both viz., converse, without forgetting Allah. They must know that Allah has not placed two hearts in a man’s breast.

Yusuf Ali adds: “‘Two hearts in his (one) breast’: two inconsistent attitudes: such as serving Allah and Mammon; or subscribing to both Truth and Superstition; or hypocritically pretending one thing and intending another. Such a thing is against Allah’s Law and Will. Apart from the condemnation of general hypocrisy, two pagan customs of the Times of Ignorance are mentioned, and their iniquity pointed out.”

Sayyid expands further, “Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his breast: Indeed, it is a single heart and there is no course open for it but one to take for treading. There is no

other way for it but to have one vision of life to look up to. There is no other way for it but to have a single criterion by which to weigh the values, by which to assess the events and things, otherwise, it will disintegrate, commit hypocrisy, and will not be able to follow a single direction.

“It is not in the power of man to derive his morals and ethos from one source, laws and legislations from another, draw social and economical principles from a third source, and draw his arts and ideals from a fourth source. Such an admixture will not create a man who has a single heart but rather, (a split personality) of torn and fragmented pieces that has nothing to support, or firm it up.

“A man of faith has to have a true belief; and then devote himself fully to its demands and requirements, at every juncture and instance in his life, whether such instances are major or minor. It is not possible for him to say a word, or make a movement, or intend to do a thing, or imagine a thing, but where he is not ruled by this belief – if the belief happens to be a reality embedded in his soul – for Allah has not made for man save one heart: a heart that bends to a single law, draws from a single set of

concepts, and weighs with the help of a single weighing apparatus.

“It is not possible for a man of faith to do something and then say, ‘I did it in my own personal capacity,’ or to another thing, ‘I did that in my capacity as a Muslim;’ as do the politicians, businessmen, or men of social organizations, or of science, as we hear these days from them. A man of faith is a single undivided entity, with one heart, that houses a single doctrine, who has a single set of concepts, a single measuring scale, and whose perceptions have a single source, in every situation, at every time.

“It is with this single heart that he lives the life of an individual, the life of a family man, the life in the society .. within the nation .. and in the world. This is how he lives in open and secret, as employer and employee, as ruler and the ruled, in ease and hardships .. without altering his scales, or values, or criteria, for, ‘Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his breast.’

“The outcome is that there is not but a single vision, a single path, a single Revelation, and a single direction, viz., submission to Allah alone, for, a single heart cannot worship

two gods, cannot serve two masters, cannot walk in two directions, cannot tread on two courses .. he will attempt no such thing, but will experience break up, fragmentation, disintegration, and myriad of difficulties of this sort.”

The word for what we have rendered as “breast” is, in the text “*jawf*” which is for something “hollow” and not breast per se. Interestingly, Allah said, “Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his breast,” (using the words “any man” and not “any person” because “a person” would include “women” who do have two hearts during pregnancy: their own, and that of the child they bear (Au.).

8. In pagan days, when someone said to his wife, “Your back is like my mother’s” or, “You are like my mother’s back”, his wife stood divorced. This was known as “*Zihar*” (from “*Zahr*”: back).

Actually, Zamakhshari explains, they meant to say that your stomach is like my mother’s stomach, and by the word stomach, they meant the pudendum. They did not wish to use the last word, nor even the word stomach, for it housed the pudendum, and so, (in keeping with strong Arab sense of decency), ultimately adopted the word “back” implying

the front, which itself implied the pudendum.

Compare the decency prevalent among the pagan Arabs, and the West of today, where, women inspectors in prisons go about in their rounds, examining uncurtained bathroom cubicles for physical counting of the male or female inmates (Au.).

Majid comments, “(In pre-Islamic times) when the pagan husband wanted to get rid of his wife without making her free to remarry, he simply said to her: ‘Thou art to me as the back of my mother.’ By pronouncing these words he deprived her of all conjugal rights and yet retained control over her ([she] had to remain forever in her former husband’s custody: Asad). The holy Qur’an repudiated this barbaric form of divorce, and thereby effected a great reform in the status of the Arab women.”

9. That is, just like a woman does not become a mother if you address her as one, so also, a man does not become a son if you begin addressing him as your son.

Majid comments: “This repudiates the Christian (Catholic) notions according to which an adopted son was treated as a natural son, so that the same impediments of marriage arose from this supposed relation

in the prohibited degree as it would have done in the case of a genuine son. Strangely enough, the heathen Arabs, while they had no scruple in marrying the wives (excluding of course their own mothers) of a deceased father, considered it awfully wrong to marry the divorced wife of an adopted son. It was this crudity of the pagan moral that, upon the Prophet's marrying the divorced wife of his freedman Zaid, who was also his adopted son, gave rise to a great deal of hostile and scandalous criticism (in our times: Au.)”

10. The words about the adopted son were revealed in connection with Zayd b. Haritha whom the Prophet had adopted early in his life, and who was always referred to as Zayd b. Muhammad until the revelation of this verse. According to reports in Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nasa'i, such adopted sons were treated as real sons in all respects. For example, they were allowed privacy with those normally forbidden to them in marriage. Hence the incident involving Sahlah bint Suhayl, reported by `A'isha in Muslim,

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ سَالِمًا مَوْلَى أَبِي حُدَيْقَةَ كَانَ مَعَ أَبِي حُدَيْقَةَ وَأَهْلِهِ فِي بَيْتِهِمْ. فَأَتَتْ (تَعْنِي ابْنَةَ سُهَيْلٍ) النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. فَقَالَتْ: إِنَّ سَالِمًا قَدْ بَلَغَ مَا يَبْلُغُ الرِّجَالُ، وَعَقَلَ مَا عَقَلُوا، وَإِنَّهُ يَدْخُلُ

عَلَيْنَا، وَإِنِّي أَظُنُّ أَنَّ فِي نَفْسِ أَبِي حُدَيْقَةَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ شَيْئًا. فَقَالَ لَهَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "أَرْضِعِيهِ تَحْرِمِي عَلَيْهِ، وَيَذْهَبِ اللَّيْ فِي نَفْسِ أَبِي حُدَيْقَةَ" (مسلم)

“Salim was a client of Abu Hudhayfah living with them in the family in their house. She (that is, Sahlah bint Suhayl) came to the Prophet and said, “Salim has matured and understands what a matured man understands. He enters upon us and I think Abu Hudayfah does not feel very comfortable about it.” The Prophet told her, “Suckle him so that he becomes forbidden unto you and that will go away which is in Abu Hudhayfa’s heart.”

And, following this new rule, the Prophet took in marriage his adopted son's divorced wife Zaynab bint Jahsh in order that, as the Qur'an said (33: 37),

كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطْرًا (الأحزاب - ٣٧)

“... so that there should not be any hindrance for the believers with regard to the wives of their adopted sons, when they have accomplished what they would of them.” And, as in a hadith of the Sahihayn,

وَيَحْرُمُ مِنَ الرِّضَاعَةِ مَا يَحْرُمُ مِنَ الرَّجْمِ

[5] Call them after (the name) of their (real) fathers. That is more equitable in the sight of Allah. But if you know not their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your protégé. And there is no sin upon you in that in which you have erred, but rather, (in) what your hearts premeditate.¹¹ And Allah was ever Forgiving, Kind.

[6] The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves;¹² and his wives are their mothers.¹³ And some of the relations by the womb are closer to others in the Book of Allah than the (ordinary) believers and immigrants,¹⁴ unless you wish to do good¹⁵ to your friends.¹⁶ That has been scribed in the Book.

أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٦﴾

“Fostering forbids what the womb forbids” (Ibn Kathir, with slight modification).

11. That is, if someone attributed (himself, or another) to a non-biological father, then, if he did it without knowledge, he could be forgiven, but not someone who did it knowingly and intentionally (Ibn Jarir).

Hence a *hadith* which is reported by Abu Dharr:

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: “أَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ ادَّعَىٰ لِعَيْبَرِ أَبِيهِ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُهُ، إِلَّا كَفَرَ.” (مسلم)

The Prophet said, “Whoever attributed himself to a progenitor other than his, knowingly, committed disbelief” (Ibn Kathir).

The non-questionability would however be extended to cases where someone’s name settles on the tongues of the people such as, Miqdad b. al-Aswad (a name familiar in *hadith* literature: Au.), who was actually Miqdad b. `Amr. He himself drew attention to it, but somehow his adoptive father’s name “al-Aswad” remained stuck to his name. Or, another example is Salim b. Abu Hudhayfah, although he was not his son, but that is how the name stuck to the people’s tongue (Qurtubi).

12. That is, Hasan and other have said, the Prophet is their father. Hence the Prophet once said, as in a narrative preserved by Abu Da’ud, narrated by Jabir b. `Abdullah, The Prophet said,

عن جابر بن عبد الله عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يقول: "أنا أولى بكل مؤمن من نفسه فأما رجل مات وترك ديناً فإليّ، ومن ترك مالا فلورثته". (أبو داود)

"I am closer to every believer than his own self. Therefore, if one of you dies leaving debts, then, (let it be brought) to me. But whosoever left wealth behind him, then it is for his inheritors" - Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, in different words.

A version in Bukhari mentions Abu Hurayrah as reporting,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَنَا أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَمَنْ مَاتَ وَعَلَيْهِ دَيْنٌ وَلَمْ يَتْرِكْ وَفَاءً فَعَلَيْنَا قِضَاؤُهُ وَمَنْ تَرَكَ مَالًا فَلِوَرَثَتِهِ (البخاري)

The Prophet said, "I am closer to the believers than their own selves. Therefore, whoever died leaving debts, and did not leave someone to pay back then, its repayment is upon us, but if someone left wealth, then it is for his inheritors" (Au.).

It also implied, adds Sayyid, that if someone left his family destitute, the Prophet took charge of it. The above report is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir). The Prophet also said, as in Abu Da'ud,

عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ أَعْلَمُكُمْ، فَإِذَا أَتَى أَحَدُكُمْ الْغَائِطُ فَلَا يَسْتَقْبِلِ الْقِبْلَةَ وَلَا يَسْتَدْبِرُهَا وَلَا يَسْتَتِبُ بِيَمِينِهِ، وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ بِثَلَاثَةِ أَحْجَارٍ، وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الرُّوثِ وَالرَّثْمَةِ". (أبو داود)

"I am like your father, teaching you. Therefore, when one of you attends to nature's call, let him neither face the *Qiblah* nor show his back to it, nor cleanse himself with the right hand." And he used to instruct (us to use) three stones, and forbid us (the use of) animal waste and bones (for cleansing ourselves).

He also said, as in a *Sahih* report of Anas,

عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ-: "لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ." (البخاري)

"One of you is not a believer until I am dearer to him than his own self, his wealth, his children, and all the people" (Ibn Kathir).

The term "*awla*," however has a wider connotation. The Prophet said, as in *Sahih* collections,

عن أبي هريرة أنّ رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "إِنَّمَا مَثَلِي وَمَثَلُ أُمَّتِي كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَجَعَلَتِ الدَّوَابَّ وَالْفَرَاشُ يَغْعَنُ فِيهَا وَأَنَا آخِذٌ بِجُحْرِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَفْحَمُونَ فِيهَا". (الترمذي)

“My example and the example of those I am sent to, is like a man who started a fire. Creepers and flying insects began to fall into it. I am trying to hold you back by your waists, while you are rushing headlong into it.” In this sense too, (of love and care), the Prophet was closer to us than we are to our own selves (Qurtubi).

The text of the above *hadīth* is also in the *Sahihayn*.

The word for what is translated here as ‘close,’ is *awla*, meaning ‘first,’ and, therefore, the verse implies that a Muslim should first get familiar with the biography of the Prophet, before engaging in the activities of his personal life (Au.).

13. That is, not in real (or biological: Au.) sense, but in terms of respect and veneration to be granted to them (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Hence, although the believers were forbidden to marry the Prophet’s wives, their children or parents did not become unlawful to them (Razi). Zubayr for example married Asma’, ‘A’isha’s sister, and no one ever thought she was Zubayr’s aunt (Qurtubi).

Hence, (perhaps to refute this view), when ‘A’isha was addressed by a woman as, “O Mother of the believ-

ers,” she replied sharply, “I am the mother of your male believers.” On the other hand, Umm Salamah said (perhaps she had the general meaning of respect and reverence in her mind), “I am the mother of the male as well as female believers of this *Ummah*.”

Alusi traces a few *Shi`ah* sources that say that before dying the Prophet had given ‘Ali the power of attorney to divorce any of his wives if she misbehaved after his death. Accordingly, ‘Ali divorced ‘A’isha, after the Jamal Battle.

This monstrosity does not deserve refutation (Au.).

14. That is, “When a man leaves wealth behind him, then, his kindred related to him by blood are more deserving of inheritance than the ordinary believers or immigrants.” This was revealed eight years following emigration to Madinah; until then, the rule following the institution of brotherhood was that an immigrant (*Muhajir*) inherited another immigrant (or *Ansari*) brother, even though the two were not related to each other by blood, but rather, by the ties of the newly formed brotherhood. The true kindred, those related by blood, but who did not migrate to Madinah, but instead chose

to remain in pagan areas, despite the fact that they had embraced Islam, got nothing out of inheritance from an immigrant who died at Madinah. However, eight years after migration, after the fall of Makkah, the inheritance rules were changed, as expressed in this verse, which stated that the kindred related by blood (and not a *Muhajir* or *Ansari* brother) were closer to a *Muhajir*, and hence will, here onward, receive their share from a deceased *Muhajir*, even if such kindred had not migrated to Madinah, but instead, stayed back in lands controlled by the pagans, on the condition, of course, that he had embraced Islam. The directives concerning a *Muhajir* inheriting another *Muhajir* declared brother through the institution of brotherhood (or an *Ansari*) were issued by the Prophet himself (and which had remained in force until the fall of Makkah). After this explanation, Ibn Jarir quotes a *hadith* which we replace with one found in Muslim and Tirmidhi. The following version is from Tirmidhi. It is reported that the Prophet used to instruct his forces,

اعزوا بسّم الله وفي سبيل الله، قاتلوا من كفر بالله، ولا تغلوا تغدروا ولا تمثلوا، ولا تقتلوا وليدًا، فإذا لقيت عدوك من المشركين فادعهم إلى إحدى ثلاث خصالٍ أو خلالٍ أيها أجابوك فاقبل منهم وكف عنهم: وادعهم إلى الإسلام والتحول من

دارهم إلى دار المهاجرين، وأخبرهم إن فعلوا ذلك فإنّ لهم ما للمهاجرين وعليهم ما على المهاجرين، وإن أبوا أن يتحولوا فأخبرهم أنّهم يكونوا كأعراب المسلمين يجري عليهم ما يجري على الأعراب، ليس لهم في الغنيمّة والفية شيء إلا أن يجاهدوا، فإن أبوا فاستعين بالله عليهم وقاتلهم. (قال أبو عيسى حديث حسن صحيح).

“March out in the name of Allah, and in the path of Allah. Fight him who disbelieves in Allah. Do not deceive (in booty), do not disfigure the dead, and do not kill children. Then, when you face the pagans enemies, invite them to one of the three, accepting from them whichever they agree to, and spare them: invite them to Islam and to movement from their lands to the lands of the emigrants. Let them know that if they do that they will have what the emigrants have, and upon them will be (of duties) what the emigrants have. But if they refuse and prefer to stay in their lands then, let them know that they will be like the ‘A`rab-Muslims’ for whom will be the rules that have been laid down for the ‘A`rab; they shall have no share in the booties nor other war spoils, unless they fight in the way of Allah. But if they refuse, then seek Allah’s help and fight them.”

[7] And (recall) when We took from the Prophets their compact – and from you, from Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and `Isa ibn Maryam,¹⁷ We took from them a solemn compact.¹⁸

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنكَ
وَمِن نُّوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى ابْنِ
مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٧﴾

However, with the fall of Makkah, these rules were abrogated (by the verse under discussion) and the Prophet declared:

لا هجرة بعد الفتح

“There is no *hijrah* (emigration) after the fall (of Makkah).”

That is, the specific *hijrah* – the kind that entailed the rules that were instituted for those who had migrated to Madinah before the fall of Makkah – stood cancelled. But of course, ordinary *hijrah*, viz., escape from pagan lands to lands under Muslim control, remained a virtuous act even after the fall of Makkah (Au.).

15. “The extremely complex term *ma`ruf*,” writes Asad, “.. maybe defined as ‘any act [or attitude] the goodness whereof is evident in reason’ (Raghib).”

16. That is, unless you wish to leave a will behind (within the stipulated one-third: Au.), allotting some of your wealth to your friends, or blood-kindred, even if they happen to be pagans. This is how Qatadah, `Ikrimah, `Ata’ and others

understood the verse. In view of the change in inheritance rules, Mujahid thought that a *Muhajir* could leave a testament in favor of his brother-*Muhajir* of the brotherhood compact. This latter understanding is also Ibn Jarir’s preferred opinion since pagans cannot be considered as *Awliya*.

17. The compact was taken when they were still in the loins of Adam (Mujahid), and was to the effect that some of them will confirm and endorse others (Qatadah); hence the Prophet’s words,

”كنت أول النبيين في الخلق، وآخرهم في البعث،
فبدأ بي قبلهم.“ (الدر المنثور)

“I was the first of the Prophets to be created but the last to be raised. Thus He started with me before them” (Ibn Jarir, whose version is slightly shorter). This report however, is weak (Ibn Kathir).

In any case, the *ayah* under discussion is a replica of another which says (3: 81),

[8] That He might question the truthful concerning their truth.¹⁹ And He has prepared for the unbelievers a painful chastisement.

لَيَسْأَلَنَّ الصَّادِقِينَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ وَأَعَدَّ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿٨﴾

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ
وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ
بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَضُكُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَلِكَمْ إِنْ صِرْتُمْ
قَالُوا أَقْرَضْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

“And when Allah took covenant of the Prophets (to the effect that) ‘(when) I have bestowed on you a Book and Wisdom and then comes to you a Messenger (from Me), confirming that which is with you, you shall believe in him and strengthen him.’ Then He asked, ‘Do you agree and accept this, My covenant?’” (Qurtubi).

18. It has been preserved by Bazzar, in Tabarani’s Awsat and Abu Nu`aym’s Dala’il that the Prophet was asked by Maysarah al-Fajr,

وعن ميسرة الفجر قال: قلت: يا رسول الله، متى
كتبت نبياً؟ قال: ”وآدم بين الروح والجسد“. رواه
أحمد والطبراني ورجاله رجال الصحيح.

“Messenger of Allah, when were you written a Prophet?” He answered, “When Adam was between the spirit and the body” (Shawkani).

That is, the decree and the decision concerning his messengership is as old as that (Au.). The report has been treated trustworthy by Haythami (S. Ibrahim).

19. That is, He will question the Messengers about the truth they carried as to what was the response to what they had conveyed? (Mujahid – Ibn Jarir). Hence ‘Ali’s statement about this world:

الدنيا حلالها حساب و حرامها عذاب

“This world’s lawful (entails) reckoning and its unlawful chastisement” (Razi).

Other meanings are possible. One, the compact was taken in order that the Prophets be questioned whether they had properly conveyed the message; implying, if Prophets will not be spared questioning, then what about ordinary people? Two, the questioning will be by way of building argument against the rejecters of the Prophets (Qurtubi).

[9] O you who have believed! Remember Allah's favor on you when the hosts came against you,²⁰ and We let loose against them a wind²¹ and hosts that you did not see.²² And Allah is ever seeing of what you do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا ﴿٩﴾

20. The allusion is to the joint pagan and Jewish raid upon Madinah conducted in the 5th year after *hijrah* resulting in the Battle of the Trench (or Ditch: *Khandaq*). It is also known as *Ghazwah al-Ahzab* (War of the Hosts [or, Confederates]). Following our practice, we present a somewhat detailed but compressed account of the battle, ignoring minor points.

Battle of the Trench

Despite the victory at Uhud, the Quraysh were still smarting under the blow they had received at Badr, where their top-order leadership was wiped out. Further, they could see Islamic power growing apace. Their leadership, hegemony, trade and the special position they had occupied for centuries, was under threat. Under threat was also their way of life, social order, and the time-honored idols.

The Jews of Banu Nadir who had been exiled to Khayber added fuel to the low burning fire in the hearts of the Quraysh. Salam b. Abu al-Huqayq, Huyayy b. Akhtab, Kinanah b. Abu al-Huqayq, of the Banu Nadir,

and Hawdhah b. Qays and Abu 'Ammar, of the Wa'il tribes, (and Salam b. Mishkam of the Banu Nadir: Qurtubi), accompanied by a few others visited Makkah, warned the Quraysh against allowing the menace of Islam growing any further. They should take heart and deal one final blow. They themselves were at their service and would join in whenever it suited the Quraysh to strike. When asked, during a meeting, they issued the edict (against their own beliefs and knowledge: Shafi') that the religion that the Quraysh followed was certainly better than that followed by the Prophet. It is in reference to this that Allah revealed (*Al-Nisa'*, 51),

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَبِيلًا

“Have you considered those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in sorcery and the devil, and say about those who have disbelieved, “These are better guided on the path than the believers.””

(According to some historical reports], twenty of the Jews and some thirty of the Quraysh then proceeded to the House. Pressing their breasts against the walls of Ka`bah, they pledged to Allah that they would fight Muhammad until their last ounce of strength: Shafi`).

Not satisfied with the fire they had stoked at Makkah, a few of the Jews proceeded to the Ghatafan tribe of the Najd area and convinced them also that their best interests lay in joining forces with the Quraysh against the Prophet. They promised them half of the Khayber date crop if they assented. They received a positive response from the leader of the Ghatafan, 'Uyayna b. Hisn al-Fizari.

The Quraysh wrote to their ally Banu Asad. In response Talha b. Khuwaylid and those who followed him came and joined with them. A few other tribes, (such as Banu Sulaym: Asad) that had agreed to help them at times of war also joined in. All preparations completed, and help of the allies assured, Abu Sufyan, the commander-in-chief, marched out for Madinah (commanding 400 men, 300 horses, and 1000 camels loaded with goods: Shafi`). At Marr al-Zahran, a little out of Makkah, he was joined by Banu Sulaym who were

led by Sufyan b. `Abd Shams. A little later Banu Murra also joined in, led by Harith b. `Awf. Banu Ashja`, led by Mis`ar b. Rakhilah, then arrived. The settlers in the Makkan outskirts, known as Ahabish, came along too, in addition to the Banu Kinanah who were their allies. Some of the Tihama (people of the coastland: Asad) also joined the ranks and the size of the army swelled to numbers the like of which had never been seen before. Ibn Is-haq mentioned their numbers as reaching up to 10,000. (Other reports place the final figures as up to 15,000: Alusi). It was sort of a pan-Arab decision against Islam and Muslims, bolstered by Jewish mind and soul. The Qur`an referred to them as the hosts (or confederates). That was either 4th or 5th year after *hijrah*.

When the news of their intended joint action reached the Prophet he came out leaving `Ali ibn Talib in charge of Madinah. He consulted his Companions and Salman al-Farsi (a recently converted Persian Muslim: Shafi`) advised that they dig trenches (*Khandaq*) at places that were open for enemy intrusion which happened to be in one direction of the city. The other three sides were either difficult lava terrains or were covered with trees and orchards that made

them impassable for a large army, especially those on mounts.

Faced up with the prospects of meeting such a large army as was advancing, almost everyone agreed to the suggestion about the trench, a novel idea, and the digging began. The proposed trench, some 5000 feet long extended from the Sheikhyan mountains in the east to Al-Midhadh in the West. (Subsequently, it was extended up to the area where the Bat-han and Ratuna valleys met, totaling up to approximately 3.5 miles: Shafi`. Some Muslims dug a few other trenches at spots close to their quarters, including one as far away as near Quba: Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, `Ahad-e-Nabawi ke Maydan-e-Jung). The Prophet divided the work among his followers. Every group of ten men was required to dig a trench forty feet long, nine feet wide, and seven to nine feet deep. The Immigrants and the *Ansar* were allotted two distinct areas. The Prophet (who had pitched his tent near the work spot, remaining there during the digging which lasted some three weeks: `Ahad-e-Nabawi ke Maydan-e-Jung) took part in the digging and could be seen with muddied body. Salman Farsi was a strongly built man. Both *Ansar* and *Muhajirun* claimed him so the

Prophet decided, "Salman is of us, one of our household (*ahl al-bayt*)."

The Muslims were then passing through very difficult economic circumstances. The army was fed barley-paste cooked with a little butter. It was nothing but extreme hunger that made it palatable. But then came days when that went out of stock, and a few dates became luxury. When that luxury was also gone, they had to tie rocks to their stomachs to be able to stand erect. The Prophet was no exception. In fact, he had two rocks on his stomach. But spirits were high. When the diggers sang poetry in chorus, he joined in:

والله لولا الله ما اهتدينا * ولا تصدقنا ولا صلينا
إنا إذا قوم بغوا علينا * وإن أرادوا فتنة أبينا
فأنزلن سكينه علينا * وثبت الأقدام إن لاقينا

By Allah, if not for Allah, we would not be guided

Neither expended nor prayed.

The tribes have rebelled against us
And sought mischief, although we avoided.

Therefore, send down tranquility on us,

And set firm our feet when we meet.

At all events, the work went on at a goodly pace. It had to be completed

before the enemy arrived. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the time target was so kept (six days: Shafi`) that when the hosts arrived, they stood before the barrier staring at it in disbelief.

The Muslims numbered between 700-3000 against them (Ibn Kathir). Perhaps they kept reporting at the front and returning to Madinah and so numbers varied. (Many of the 3000 were hypocrites, who slipped away right when most required: Shabbir). Those that were less than fifteen of age were turned away. `Abdullah ibn `Umar, Zayd b. Thabit, Bara' b. `Azib and Abu Sa`id al-*Khudri* just made it in. (The Muslims boasted of 33 horses: Shafi`).

During the digging, Allah manifested a few miracles at the hands of the Prophet. E.g., when Jabir noticed the effects of hunger on him, he took his permission, went home, spoke to his wife and suggested that they prepare something. A little goat was slaughtered, and some barely pudding was cooked to go with it. Then Jabir went back to the Prophet and invited him to the meal. He observed secrecy because the food was just enough for a couple of men. But the Prophet announced the event and asked everyone to join in. They were at least

a thousand. That put Jabir and his wife in an embarrassing situation. But the Prophet supplicated over the food and everyone ate to his fill leaving behind enough for Jabir and his wife. They were even able to gift some to the neighbors.

Also during the digging, the Prophet informed `Ammar b. Yasir that he would be killed by a rebellious party. He was killed in the Siffin battle in which he had participated on `Ali's side.

At one point his Companions encountered a huge rock that they could not break. They sought the Prophet's help. He went down the trench, struck it three times. With the first strike he said, "Allah is Great. I have been given the keys to Syria. By Allah, I can see its pink palaces at the moment." Then he struck a second time and said, "Allah is Great. I have been given the keys to Persia and I can see at this moment the white palaces of Mada'in." Then he struck a third time and said, "Allah is Great. I have been given the keys to Yemen. By Allah, I can see the gates of San`a from this place."

[During the digging Zayd b. Thabit, (in his early teens: Au.) who was transporting mud fell asleep inside the trench. `Ammara b. Hazm play-

fully took away his arms. When he awoke he began to frantically search for them. The Prophet remarked, “Abu Riqad (meaning, “father of sleep”) you slept off to the loss of your armor?” Then he asked who had taken it. When `Ammara said he had, he admonished him over such practical jokes: Sayyid].

Finally, the digging over, women, children, and old men were gathered together and sent to the safety of a fort called Fare`. It belonged to Banu Haritha and was one of the strongest that the Muslims then had in their possession.

The Makkans and their allies had encamped at the place where flood waters of Rumah met between Juruf and Rughabah. The Ghatafan, accompanied by Banu Asad, came in shortly and encamped at the end of Naqma beside Uhud. Abu Sufyan remained in general command, while every one of the chiefs took turns to lead in the attacks every new day.

Muslims had their backs to Mount Sil` with Madinah at their rear, facing the trench, while the pagans were in Rumah flanked by between Juraf forests, and Naqa.

The pagans were of course disconcerted by the trench, but all the same, laid siege. They made several attempts

to cross the trench, but the Muslims showered arrows on them and held them back. Once the attempt was so determined that preventing them from crossing, the Prophet could not offer his `Asr Prayer on time, doing it after sunset. In fact, according to one report, adds Qurtubi, (found in Nasa'i, *Musnad* Ahmad, Tabarani and Bayhaqi: Au.), one of those days of severe engagement the Prophet could not offer his *Zuhr*, `Asr (and *Maghrib*: Shafi`) Prayers. Much after sunset he first prayed *Zuhr*, then `Asr, then *Maghrib* and then `Isha. (The report has been termed Hasan in *Tuhfah*, where the author says that it is strengthened by other reports of similar nature: Au.).

The Prophet (*saws*) said, “May Allah fill their homes and graves with fire, they prevented us from the Middle Prayer.”

However, adds Alusi, the forces remained on the two sides of the trench, each hurling stones, or shooting arrows at the other. The Muslim password was,

حم ، لا يُنصرون

“Ha. Mim. They will not be helped.”

Some of the valiant pagans did manage to cross the trench but fell to Muslim swords. One of them, `Amr

b. `Abd Wudd, a famous fighter, managed to cross the ditch along with a few of his companions. He and his men

Appeared at the Muslim side of the trench by jumping their horses over it. He challenged a duel, and the Prophet sent `Ali ibn Abi Talib. The two fought for quite some time (until dust covered them and the onlookers lost the vision of the two. When the dust cleared, they saw `Ali beheading the man: Qurtubi). Others helped in dispatching the rest to Hell.

As a result of various skirmishes, six Muslims were martyred. One of those struck was Sa`d b. Mu`adh. The arrow severed an artery in the foot. He supplicated: "O Allah, if there is going to be further encounters with the Quraysh, then let me live. But if there is going to be no further encounter with them let me die ... but do not deal me death until my eyes are cooled on account of Banu Qurazah." After the armies had moved off, a tent was pitched in the yard of the mosque at Madinah for Sa`d so that the Prophet could visit him whenever he wished. He died after the affair of the Banu Qurayzah. One of the Muslims died when a Jewish woman of Banu Qurayzah threw a millstone on him from a fort.

One of the pagans tried to cross the trench and fell into it. [The Muslims began to stone him. He said, "Killing me would be better than this (stoning). Let one of you come down so that I can fight him." So Zubayr b. al-`Awwam descended into the trench, fought, and killed him: Alusi]. Muslims brought back his corpse. The pagans offered 10,000 Dirham for his body. The Prophet said he was not going to trade in corpses nor was he in any need of their 10,000. He allowed them to take away his body. (According to one report he said, "We do not eat price of the dead": Alusi).

When the siege prolonged, and the Prophet felt the weight of their vast superiority in men and arms, and their undeterred onslaught, he sent for Sa`d b. Mu`adh and Sa`d b. `Ubadah, two *Ansari* leaders. He informed them of the on-going peace talks to which Ghatafan seemed to be agreeing to. He mentioned the condition. It was to hand over to Ghatafan a third of the Madinan dates of the current year. If they agreed to it, the Ghatafan promised they would depart. Everything had been more or less agreed to except for the final signature on the document. "As I see it," he explained to the two, "the pagans seem to have become like a

single arrow against you.” But the two disagreed. They said, “By Allah, we never bowed ourselves to anyone even when we fought for worthless things in pre-Islamic times. How can we do it after Islam?” According to Tabarani, they said, “We shall not give them a single date except by purchase or as offered to guests.” Following their opposition, the Prophet terminated the peace talks.

On their part, the Jews of Banu Nadir began to make efforts to break off the Jews of Qurayzah from the Prophet. They invited them to break the compact and join forces with the pagans. Huyayy b. Akhtab was chosen for this mission. He went and met Ka`b b. Asad of the Banu Qurayzah. (They numbered about 800 capable of bearing arms). Initially Ka`b refused to entertain Huyayy. Huyayy said, “Open (the door) for me O my brother.” Ka`b replied, “I will not. You are a man of evil omen. You are seeking me to break my pact with Muhammad. But I have experienced no evil from him to do so.” Huyayy said, “Let me in so that I refresh myself at your house and then return.” Ka`b replied, “No way.” So Huyayy taunted him, “Perhaps you are afraid that I’ll share your food of the day.” So Ka`b opened the gates for him. Huyayy began to persuade him. He

convinced Ka`b that the pagans were determined to destroy the Muslims root and branch. He also promised him that if the pagans withdrew, he would not, but rather, he and his men will enter into his fort to defend him against the Muslims in the event of a retaliatory attack. Finally, Ka`b gave in and news began to leak out of their treachery at that critical moment.

That was a difficult day for the Muslims: the day Banu Qurayzah decided to break the pact and join hands with the tribal forces against the Muslims. The danger was all the more great because they were right behind the Muslims and could deal a death blow from the rear. Madinan women and children were entirely at their mercy.

Zubayr was sent to gather news. He brought the worrisome report of their intended treachery. The Prophet then officially sent Sa`d b. Mu`adh (leader of the Aws), Sa`d b. ‘Ubadah (leader of the Khazraj), ‘Abdullah b. Rawaha and Khawat b. Jubayr to the Jews to confirm the news, but not leak it to the common folk if true. They went up to the Banu Qurayzah and talked out the issue. They found that they had decided to call off their treaty with the Prophet. (In fact, they

said, "Who? What Prophet? There is no treaty between us and Muhammad!" - Sayyid). [Sa`d b. Mu`adh was deeply upset. He had been their allies for so many years: Au.]. Only one of their families, Banu Sa`yah, disagreed with them and decided to stand by the pact. Another of their men, `Amr b. Sa`di disagreed too and said that so far as he was considered, he found no cause to break the pact with Muhammad.

When the news spread, the Muslims felt concerned about their women and children. But, with the massive army in front there was little they could do. The Qur`an depicted their situation (33: 10-11),

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ
الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ
الظُّنُونًا هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زَلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا

"When they came on you from above you and from below you; when the eyes shifted (in fear) and hearts reached the throats, and you assumed about Allah various assumptions. It was there that the believers were tried and shaken with a severe shaking."

Not to be discouraged, the Prophet took such steps as necessary. He posted troops to scout the Madinan outskirts. Salamah b. Aslam of Aws led a party of two hundred men on

mounts, while Zayd b. Haritha commanded another three hundred. They went about in rounds, raising their voices as they chanted *Al-lahu Akbar*. It drove fear into Jewish hearts, chicken-hearted as they ever were - and helped warn against any attempt at their women and children.

As luck would have it, some 20 camels loaded with food-stuff and fodder sent by a Jew to the Makkan army fell into Muslim hands and for a couple of days they had something to eat.

At last, after about a month's siege, Allah's help arrived. It came in two ways: One, in the person of Nu`aym b. Mas`ud who played the key role in weakening the unity of the pagans, and second, a severe storm, bearing freezing cold, that made life in the camps miserable.

Nu`aym b. Mas`ud was a Ghatafani. He went up to the Prophet, declared his faith in Islam, and offered help in Islam's cause. The Prophet told him to conceal his faith and pretend an outsider, for, as he said,

الحرب خدعة

"War is (the other name of) deceit."

He encouraged him to do what he could. Ibn Mas`ud went up to Banu

Qurayzah and convinced them that they could not depend on the Quraysh without the latter offering them some men as security, otherwise it was feared that they would back off without completing the mission, leaving them alone to face the Muslim ire. Next he went up to the Quraysh and told them that Banu Qurayzah were regretting over their role and that they were secretly planning to deceitfully spirit away some of their and Ghatafan men. They would then slaughter them to prove their loyalty to Muhammad. "So, if the Jews send you word that they need some men as ransom, you would know what to make of it." He also went up to Ghatafan to plant distrust in their hearts. The end result was that each of the parties began to look at the others as those about to outsmart them. (Abu Sufyan sent 'Ikrimah b. Abi Jahl along with one or two of the Ghatafan to the Banu Nadir to tell them that the siege had prolonged, and therefore, they should force-cross the barrier and attack the Muslims next day. It was time to get out of the stalled situation. Banu Nadir replied that the next day was Saturday, a day in which it was unlawful for them to fight. "Moreover," they said, "we shall fight only on the condition that you give

us a few of your men as hostages." That confirmed the pagan fears.

A second factor that disheartened the invaders, in fact, which froze their aspirations, was that one of those nights the winds picked up speed and soon became a typhoon overturning their cooking pots, blowing off the badly needed fires to beat off the cold, and ripping apart their tents. (Their horses pushed against each other wildly, and angels chanted *Allahu Akbar* at the peripheries of the camps frightening the already frightened invaders: Qurtubi).

According to other reports, writes Alusi, when they heard the chanting of *Allahu Akbar*, Tulayha b. Khuwaylid as-Asadi said, "Muhammad has now begun to cast magic. Escape. Escape." Finally, Abu Sufyan decided he had had enough. He summoned the chiefs and told them of his decision. ["Break up the camp," he said to them, "and march. As for myself, I am gone" – Muir in Majid], and leapt on his camel. Such was his haste that he forgot that the camel's forelegs were tied. Allah said (33: 9),

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ
جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا

"O you who have believed! Remember Allah's favor on you when

the hosts came against you, and We let loosed against them a wind and hosts that you did not see. And Allah is ever seeing of what you do."

Thus the tribulation of the Muslims ended and they were spared the evil consequences of a battle. Allah said, commenting upon the events (33: 25),

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَيْطِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا وَكَفَى اللَّهُ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيمًا

"And Allah repelled the unbelievers in their rage, not having achieved anything worthwhile. And Allah proved enough for the believers in (their) battle, and Allah is Powerful, Mighty."

The peaceful end was in response to the Prophet's supplications during the siege. He would to say,

اللَّهُمَّ مُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ سَرِيعِ الْحِسَابِ اللَّهُمَّ اهْزِمِ
الْأَحْزَابَ اللَّهُمَّ اهْزِمْهُمْ وَزَلِّزْهُمْ

"O Allah, Sender of the Book, Quick at reckoning, O Allah, inflict defeat on to the confederates. O Allah, defeat them, and shake them" (Bukhari).

The opposition to the Prophet remained thereafter, but the strength

of opposition suffered a paralyzing stroke. The wish to uproot Islam remained, but the courage to take meaningful action, had waned to reduce them to helpless onlookers. And the Prophet remarked, "Here onward we shall march against them. They shall not come against us anymore." Later events proved the veracity of these words.

(Back at Madinah, they had not removed their arms but Jibril came down in Dihya Kalbi's form to say to the Prophet, "Have you removed your arms? The angels have not. Allah orders you to proceed to Banu Qurayzah. We are going there ourselves": Qurtubi).

21. The winds resembling hurricane in their destruction, seemed to ferociously strike not only the pagans encamped a few hundred meters away, but also the Muslims - though less severely (Au).

22. The allusion is to angels (Alusi). They drove fear into the hearts of the unbelievers, but did not take active part in the skirmishes (Au.).

[10] When they came against you from above you and from below you,²³ when the sights swerved,²⁴ and hearts reached the throats,²⁵ and you were conjecturing upon Allah various conjectures.²⁶

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ
وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ
الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا ﴿١٠﴾

23. The allusion by those coming from above is to the Banu Quraizah, and by those from below is to the Quraysh and Ghatafan (Ibn Jarir). Zamakhshari however thought that by those coming from above the allusion was to the Ghatafan and by those coming from below it was to Quraysh and their allies.

The forts of Banu Qurayzah were above, in the north of the city of Madinah, while the Quraysh had come from below, the south of the city. However, when the Muslims went out of the town to face the pagans and took positions with Sil' mountains behind them, Banu Qurayzah forts fell behind them and the Quraysh and Ghatafan were in front of them. Hence Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman referred to the Quraysh and Ghatafan as above the Muslims, and Banu Qurayzah as below them, when speaking of their respective positions during the siege (Au.).

24. "Zagha" of the text is to be understood as "shakhasa" meaning, "fixed in horror" (Ibn Jarir).

25. That is, the hearts began to beat thunderously out of fear, as if reaching up to the throats (Ibn Jarir). It is an accurate description. When the hearts beat hard in extreme fear, a person feels it beating against his throat (Au.).

Musnad Ahmad and Ibn Abi Hatim's collection have a report coming from Abu Sa'id who said that some Companions told the Prophet of their extreme fear. What would he suggest they should say? He told them to say the words:

اللهم اسْتُرْ عَوْرَاتِنَا وَآمِنْ رُوعَاتِنَا

"O Allah, conceal our un-exposable parts, and calm down our fears" (Ibn Kathir).

26. The allusion is to conjectures such as, 'The Prophet will be overcome,' or, 'promises made to him were not true,' etc. (Ibn Jarir).

Hasan al-Busri said that there were various kinds of conjectures (some amounting to disbelief). For example, the hypocrites conjectured that

[11] *There it was that the believers were tested and shaken (with) a severe shaking.*²⁷ هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾

the Prophet and his men will surely be routed. On the other hand, true believers were firm of faith that what Allah and His Messenger had promised would prove true (Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir). There were others who were somewhat weak in faith. They suffered several kinds of doubts, which passed through their minds, sort of unwillingly, and hence, their faith itself was not questionable, and whose uncontrollable doubts and fears did not – in the practical sense - contradict the verse that followed (33: 12),

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

“When the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is sickness were saying, Allah and His Messenger did not promise us but deception.”

27. Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others quote the following. (Ibrahīm al-Taymi said: We were with Abu Hudhayfa when someone from Kufa asked, “O Abu `Abdullah. Did you see the Prophet? Were you his companion?” He said, “Yes, my cousin.” The young man asked, “How did you fare?” Hudhayfa said, “By Allah, we

just tried our best.” Said the young man, “Had we met him, we would not have allowed him walk over the earth. We would have carried him on our shoulders.”

The rest of the story is as found in Muslim:

Ibrahīm al-Taymi said: We were with Abu Hudayfah when a man said:

عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ: كُنَّا عِنْدَ حَدِيثِهِ. فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ: لَوْ أَدْرَكْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَاتَلْتُ مَعَهُ وَأَبْلَيْتُ. فَقَالَ حَدِيثُهُ: أَنْتَ كُنْتَ تَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ؟ لَقَدْ رَأَيْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَيْلَةَ الْأَحْزَابِ، وَأَخَذْنَا رِيحَ شَدِيدَةٍ وَقَفَر. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: “أَلَا رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينِي بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ، جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِيَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ؟” فَسَكَتْنَا. فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: “أَلَا رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ، جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِيَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ؟” فَسَكَتْنَا. فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: “أَلَا رَجُلٌ يَأْتِينَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ، جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَعِيَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ؟” فَسَكَتْنَا، فَلَمْ يُجِبْهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ. فَقَالَ: “فَم. يَا حَدِيثُهُ! فَأْتِنَا بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ” فَلَمْ أجدُ بُدًّا، إِذْ دَعَانِي بِاسْمِي، أَنْ أَقُومَ. قَالَ: “أَذْهَبَ. فَأَتَيْتُ بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ، وَلَا تَدْعُرْهُمْ عَلَيَّ” فَلَمَّا وَابَيْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ جَعَلْتُ كَأَنَّمَا أَمْشِي فِي حَمَامٍ، حَتَّى أَتَيْتُهُمْ. فَرَأَيْتُ أَبَا سُمَيَانَ يَصْلِي ظَهْرَهُ بِالنَّارِ، فَوَضَعَتْ سَهْمًا فِي كَيْدِ الْقَوْسِ، فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَرْمِيَهُ، فَذَكَرْتُ قَوْلَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: “وَلَا تَدْعُرْهُمْ عَلَيَّ” وَلَوْ رَمَيْتُهُ لَأَصَبْتُهُ. فَرَجَعْتُ وَأَنَا أَمْشِي فِي مِثْلِ الْحَمَامِ، فَلَمَّا أَتَيْتُهُ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ بِخَبَرِ الْقَوْمِ، وَفَرَعْتُ، فُرِرْتُ. فَأَلْبَسَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

وسلم من فضل عبادة كانت عليه يصلي فيها، فلم
أزل نائماً حتى أصبحت، فلما أصبحت قال: "فم.
يا تومأناً!"

"Had I met the Prophet, I would have fought hard and destroyed myself (in the battle)." Hudhayfa said, "Would you have done that? But I could see myself (among some twelve Companions) one night during the battle of the Ditch when a severely cold wind seized us! The Prophet (prayed for a while. Then he: Ibn Is-haq) turned and said, "Will someone bring us the news of what the enemy is planning to do? Allah will place him in my company on the Day of Judgment." But we remained silent, none of us responded. The Prophet (prayed for a little while more, then: Ibn Is-haq) turned and said, "Will someone bring us the news of what the enemy is planning to do? Allah will place him in my company on the Day of Judgment." But we remained silent, none of us responded. (The Prophet once again prayed for a while, then: Ibn Is-haq) turned and said, "Will someone bring us the news of what the enemy is planning to do? Allah will place him along with me on the Day

of Judgment." But we remained silent, none of us responded. (At this time he added, "I ask Allah that he be with me in Paradise." Yet no one responded because of fear, cold, and hunger: Ibn Is-haq). Finally he said, "Up, O Abu Hudhayfa, bring us the news of the people." (According to another report: "I clung to the earth in fear that he would ask me to go." He said, "Hudhayfa. Go into the people and find out what they are planning. But speak to no one until you have come back to me.")

So, there was no escape for me but to rise as he had named me. He said, 'Go to them and gather intelligence but do not alarm them against me.' So, I started off. And, in a moment I felt as if I was in a hot bathroom. I went in among them. I found Abu Sufyan warming up his back with the fire. I placed an arrow in my bow and was about to shoot when I remembered his words, "but do not alarm them against me." Had I shot at him, surely, I would have killed him. So, I returned. And, it was as if I was walking in a hot bathroom. I gave him the news about the people. When I was finished he gave me a shroud upon which he used to offer his prayers. I slept until the morning

[12] When the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease²⁸ were saying, 'Allah promised us not, nor His Messenger, but delusion.'²⁹

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢﴾

when I heard him saying, 'Rise, O sleeper.'"

Ibn Is-haq has the following addition: ".. I entered into the camp while the winds, Allah's forces, were battering them. There was nothing that it did not carry away in its run. Abu Sufyan stood up and said, 'People. Let everyone look carefully at the man next to him.' So I caught the man next to me and asked him, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'So and so, son of so and so.' Then Abu Sufyan began to speak. He said, 'People. By God, you are not in a good situation. Provisions are lost and Banu Qurayzah have deceived us. We have received some news from them that does not please us. And now we are struck by these terrible winds. Let us decamp and go. I am leaving.'"

Hakim and Bazzar have added to the above, ".. I went into them and found Abu Sufyan with a group of people around him. The other tribes had broken off. It was as if Abu Sufyan felt suspicious when I entered into the company; so he said, 'Let each of you question the man next

to him.' So I caught the neighbors on my right and left by their hands. Then I stayed for a while and returned to the Prophet.. I told him, 'Messenger of Allah. Several tribes have abandoned Abu Sufyan. He is left with a group of people warming themselves with the fire. Allah sent upon them the cold that He sent upon us. But we hope for rewards that they do not.'" According to a report in Hakim and Bayhaqi, as cited by Ibn Kathir, Hudhayfa met with some twenty turbaned riders while he was returning. They told him, "Give your companion (i.e. Muhammad) the good news that the confederates have broken up and are retreating."

28. Apparently, the allusion is to those who were weak of faith, neither believers nor hypocrites. There have been other explanations (Alusi).

29. The allusion is to a group of hypocrites. One of them, (Mut`ab b. Qushayr) spoke to an *Ansari*:

قال ابن زيد، قال: قال رجل يوم الأحزاب لرجل من صحابة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: يا فلان أرايت

إذ يقول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "إذا هلك قيصر فلا قيصر بعده، وإذا هلك كسرى فلا كسرى بعده، والذي نفسي بيده لتنتفنن كنوزهما في سبيل الله". فأين هذا من هذا، وأحدنا لا يستطيع أن يخرج يبول من الخوف؟ {ما عدنا الله ورسوله إلا غرورا} فقال له: كذبت، لأخبرن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خبرك، قال: فأني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فأخبره، فدعاه فقال: "ما قلت؟" فقال: كذب علي يا رسول الله، ما قلت شيئا، ما خرج هذا من فمي قط!

"Hey, so and so! Did the Messenger not say, 'If the Qaysar (Roman Emperor) is destroyed there will be no Qaysar after him, and if Kisra (the Persian Emperor) is destroyed, there will be no Kisra after him?' And, 'By Him in whose hands is my life, you shall surely spend their treasures in Allah's path?' But here we are, unable to leave the place to attend to a call of nature – out of fear. Indeed, Allah and His Messenger did not promise us but a delusion." The *Ansari* told him, "You have lied, and I shall surely report this to the Prophet." But when Mut'abb was asked by the Prophet to explain his statement, he said, "He is fastening a lie on me O Messenger of Allah, I did not say any such thing. This did not come out of my mouth.

So Allah revealed (9: 74),

يَجْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهُمْ بِمَا لَمْ يَتَّأَلُوا وَمَا تَقَمُّوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكْ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (التوبة ٧٤ -)

"They swear by Allah that they said no (such thing). But, in actual fact, they did say the word of unbelief, disavowed after their surrender (to Islam), and strived to achieve what they did not attain. And they were not resentful but (for the fact) that Allah had enriched them by His Grace, and (so had) His Messenger. Yet, if they repent, it will be better for them. But if they turn away (in refusal), Allah will chastise them with a painful chastisement in this world and in the next. And they shall not have in the land a protector or a helper."

Allah also said (9: 66),

إِنْ تَعَفُّ عَن طَائِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ تُعَذِّبْ طَائِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ

"If We forgive a party of you, We shall torment a party because they were criminals."

It is also reported that at the start of the digging the Companions disputed over Salman al-Farsi, saying, "Salman is of us." The Prophet said, "But rather, Salman is of us: peo-

ple of the house (of the Prophet).” ‘Amr b. ‘Awf said, “Salman was in our group: myself, he, Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman, Nu`man b. Muqarrin al-Muzani, and six others from the *Ansar* constituted our group. We were given forty feet. But when we reached Al-Sara’ during our digging we encountered a roundish rock that could not be budged. So We asked Salman to climb out to the Prophet to say, ‘Our iron has blunted, but we cannot break the rock. So what do you advice?’ The Prophet jumped into the trench, took the ax and struck it. It yielded a flash of light that lightened the two lavas of Madinah. He said *Allahu Akbar* and the Muslims repeated after him. Then he struck a second time and it yielded a flash of light that lightened the two lavas of Madinah. He said *Allahu Akbar* and the Muslims repeated after him. Then he gave it a third strike and it broke. It yielded a light which lightened the two lavas of Madinah. He said *Allahu Akbar* and the Muslims repeated after him. Then he explained. He said, ‘When I struck

the first time, the palaces of Hira and Kisra’s cities appeared to me in its light, like dogs’ teeth. Then Jibril told me that my followers will overcome them. When I struck the second time, the red palaces of the Roman lands appeared to me, like dogs’ teeth. Jibril told me that my followers will overcome them. Then when I struck the third time, the palaces of San`a appeared to me and Jibril told me that my followers will overcome them. So, give glad tidings.’ The believers said, ‘This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised.’ But the hypocrites said, ‘Can you see. He promises palaces of Kisra, of the Romans and of San`a, but in actual fact here you are digging a trench and cannot dare to climb out to attend to nature’s call.’ And Allah revealed (33: 12),

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

“When the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts was a disease, were saying, they promised us not but falsehood” (Ibn Jarir).

[13] When a group of them said,³⁰ 'O inhabitants of Yethrib,³¹ you have no standing.³² Therefore, return.' And a section of them was seeking leave of the Prophet,³³ saying, 'Verily, our houses are exposed;' though they were not exposed.³⁴ They were intending nothing but flight.

[14] But if an entry had been effected to them from its environs,³⁵ and sedition sought, they would have certainly responded to it,³⁶ and would not have tarried therein but briefly.

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِن يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿١٣﴾

وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَآتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوا فِيهَا إِلَّا بَيْسِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

30. Ibn Is-haq thought that the allusion was to Aws b. Qayzi and his followers (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir).

31. Yethrib was the name of a tract of land over a part of which the Prophet's city lay (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

It is significant that the hypocrites preferred to use the older name Yethrib rather than the name then current: Madinah (Au.).

32. That is, this is not the place you should be in (Ibn Jarir). Zamakhshari expresses the possibility that they meant to say that they would have no standing in Yethrib unless they adopted paganism and surrendered the Prophet to the confederates.

Another possible meaning is, "You have no standing with the Prophet" (Ibn Kathir).

33. Those were Banu Haritha (Ibn Jarir).

34. It is said that the Prophet actually sent a team to determine whether such a threat existed. But they found no sign of the enemy, and Allah revealed this verse (Ibn Jarir).

35. The textual *fitnah* is interpreted by Qatadah and Ibn Zayd as *kufir*. That is, if these hypocrites are invited to *kufir*, they would enter into it without any hesitation (Ibn Jarir).

36. Qurtubi mentions that Hasan, Suddi and Qutaybi thought the meaning is that if they had reneged, they would not have remained in Madinah long. (The Muslims would have finished them off).

[15] Although they had covenanted with Allah earlier (that) they would not turn their backs;³⁷ and surely, Allah's covenant is to be answered for.

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُؤَلُّونَ
الْأَدْبَارَ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

[16] Say, 'Fleeing will not profit you, if you fled from death or slaying; and, in that case (of flight) too, you will not be allowed to enjoy but a little.'³⁸

قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْفِرَارُ إِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنَ
الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَإِذَا لَا تُمْنَعُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
﴿١٦﴾

[17] Say, 'Who it is that can protect you from Allah, if He intended an evil for you, or intended mercy for you?' Indeed, they will not find for themselves a patron or helper besides Allah.

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِيكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ
إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً
وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا
نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

[18] Allah surely knows the hindering ones among you and those who said to their brethren, 'Come hither to us;³⁹ while they (themselves) come not to the battle but a little.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُعَوِّقِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ
لِإِحْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

Dahhak's opinion was that the textual *fitnah* is for a call to sedition (against the Muslims: Au.) to which the hypocrites would have immediately responded (Alusi).

37. Qatadah said that there were some people who had not participated in the battle of Badr. They had promised themselves that when next occasion arose, they would offer themselves to Allah's service (Ibn Jarir). But Ibn Is-haq's opinion was that the reference was to those who

had promised after Uhud that they would never show their backs during a battle (Zamakhshari).

38. At best they would then enjoy this life (Ibn Khaytham), but the whole of the life of this world is "but little" (Qatadah) - Ibn Jarir.

39. That is, they beckoned Muslims to join them in the shades to partake fruits and dainties, instead of joining the Prophet in the campaign (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

[19] Being niggardly towards you.⁴⁰ Then, when fear strikes,⁴¹ you see them looking at you, their eyes rolling like one who swoons of death. But when fear subsides, they assail you with sharp tongues,⁴² covetous of the good (things).⁴³ They had never believed, so Allah quashed their deeds; and that was ever easy for Allah.⁴⁴

أَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ
يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي
يُغْشَى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ
الْخَوْفُ سَأَلُوكُم بِاللِّسَانِ جَدَادٍ أَشِحَّةً
عَلَى الْخَيْرِ أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

﴿١٩﴾

40. That is, they wish to see no good happening to the Muslims (Mujahid – Ibn Jarir); although a general meaning of the hypocrites not wishing to spend anything in *Jihad* affairs, is also possible. Another possible implication is that they do not wish to spare any physical exertion for Islamic causes. It might also be noted in this context that miserliness (shuhh=bukhl) is an outgrowth of cowardice. Hence, in this *ayah*, Allah first mentioned cowardice and then miserliness (Razi in effect).

What the hypocrites meant by beckoning the Muslims to themselves is to give them the message that the Prophet, and the Companions he could count upon, were so few that they would be done away with by the onrushing pagans, after which things will be back to normal as they were in pre-Prophet times. One of the sentences they used with reference to the Prophet and his followers was

“*aklatu al-ra’s*” meaning, lit. “equivalent of a head;” implying, it might be a bit hard to break the whole-roasted beast’s head at the dinner table, but ultimately it can be finished off (Au.).

Another possibility is that, states Qurtubi, the allusion is to Banu Qurayzah who invited the hypocrites to join them (Qurtubi).

41. Majid points out that the textual “*khawf*” as used here carries the double meaning of fear as well as “fighting and slaughter.”

42. Demanding their share of the booty: Qatadah. But Ibn `Abbas thought the allusion is to their loosening of the tongue against the Muslims (Ibn Jarir). Another possible connotation of “*sa-laqukum*” is that they will press hard on you for the booty with their tongues, pleading. Nuhhas thought this meaning was more appropriate in view of the

[20] They think the confederates have not left,⁴⁵ and if the confederates should return, they would wish they were in the desert among the Bedouins seeking news about you.⁴⁶ And, if they were in your midst,⁴⁷ they would never fight but a little.⁴⁸

يَحْسِبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا وَإِنْ يَأْتِ
الْأَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوا لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ بَادُونَ فِي
الْأَعْرَابِ يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ أَنْبَائِكُمْ وَلَوْ كَانُوا
فِيكُمْ مَا قَاتَلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢٠﴾

words that follow concerning booty (Qurtubi).

43. The allusion by “good” is to booty (Ibn Jarir).

44. That is, since the weight of deeds depends on motives, it might sound difficult to judge the motives and quash the deeds. But, discovering the motives is easy for Allah (Au., with a point from Yusuf Ali).

If it is asked, writes Zamakhshari in effect, are the deeds of a hypocrite registered as worthy that they could be quashed? It can be answered that the Qur’anic statement here is meant to dispel the belief that the words of faith on the tongue are equivalent of belief in the heart. Besides, the statement also helps to warn others that the true foundation is faith in the heart; and that plenty of (apparent good) deeds without faith are like a building without a foundation which Allah will render so weightless that they will float in the air like dust particles.

45. That is, pagan and Jewish forces have not withdrawn completely: Mujahid, (but might reappear and launch attack: Au.) – Ibn Jarir; their fear was so high that although the pagans had withdrawn, they could not believe they had left (Qurtubi).

46. Hoping to hear that the Prophet and his Companions were exterminated (Ibn Jarir).

47. That is, during a second encounter with the presumed return of the confederates (Alusi).

48. That is, if they fought, they would have fought loosely, half-heartedly, because they lack faith in Allah and have no desire for rewards, which prompt a man to fight hard (Ibn Jarir)

Yusuf Ali summarizes the attitude of the hypocrites: “This completes the picture of the psychology of the Hypocrites, begun at verse 12. Let us analyse it. (1) When they first saw the enemy they were already in a defeatist mood, and thought all was over

[21] There surely was for you in the Messenger of Allah, an excellent model – for him who hopes for Allah and the last day, and remembered Allah much.⁴⁹

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ
لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ
اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

(verse 12). (2) Not content with disloyalty themselves, they tried to infect others, who made paltry excuses to withdraw from the fight (verse 13). (3) They were ready to betray the City to the enemy if once the enemy had gained entrance (verse 14). (4) They forgot all the promises of fidelity which they had previously sworn (verse 15). (5) In their paltry calculations they forgot that cowardice in war does not pay (verses 16-17). (6) Without taking much part in the actual defence, they were ready to talk glibly and claim a lion's share in the fruits of the victory (verses 18-19). (7) Even when the enemy had withdrawn, their cowardly minds were still afraid that the enemy would return, and were already meditating what they would do in that case: perhaps they would dwell in the deserts and spy on Madinah from a safe distance; and if caught in Madinah they would fight little and intrigue much.

“It was a miracle that with such men in their midst, the holy Prophet and his band won through.”

49. Was there not a good example in the Prophet who bore the tribulation through and through with exemplary patience, hard work, and trust in Allah? He placed himself not on par with the rest but above others in endurance, tying not one stone to his stomach as others, but two. Such example, however, is meaningful only to those who, like him, have unflinching faith in the bounties of the Hereafter and who remember Allah much, which in turn is a sure method of renewal of faith (Au.).

Mawdudi points out that apart from patiently enduring along with others, the Prophet did not even place guards for the protection of his family in Madinah after the Jews had betrayed and whose attack was imminent.

There has been difference in opinion over whether following the Prophetic example is *wajib* or merely desirable. Perhaps the best answer is that it is *wajib* in religious affairs, but commendable in worldly affairs (Qurtubi).

[22] And when the believers saw the confederates, they said, 'This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us; and Allah and His Messenger had spoken the truth.'⁵⁰ It increased them not but in faith and surrender.⁵¹

[23] Among the believers are men who remained true to what they promised Allah. So, of them are some who fulfilled his promise,⁵² while of them is one who awaits; they have not changed in the least.

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴿٢٢﴾

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن قَضَىٰ نَجْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾

50. "That is," Ibn `Abbas and Qatadah explained, "when the believers saw the pan-Arab forces before them, they interpreted it as fulfillment of an earlier promise." It had previously been revealed (2: 214),

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَاءُ وَزُلُّوا حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَىٰ نَصُرَ اللَّهُ أَلاَ إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

"Or do you reckon that you will enter Paradise, while (trials) similar to those (that visited others) before you, have not yet come to you? Suffering and adversity touched them, and they were shaken until the Messengers and those who had believed in them cried out: 'When (will come) Allah's help?' Lo! Allah's help is close" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

51. After the Prophet, this was the example set by his close associates,

worth emulation by the rest of the *Ummah* (Au.).

52. The translation of "nabh" follows Mujahid's understanding. (Bukhari has the same understanding: Ibn Kathir).

Some others have thought that the meaning of "qada nabhahu" means he remained true to his faith and commitment to it until his death. (This is from Arabic usage: Qurtubi). In this connection the following is reported (in Tirmidhi, [who declared it Hasan], Ibn Jarir, and Tabarani: Alusi):

عَنْ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَى ابْنِي طَلْحَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِمَا طَلْحَةَ: "أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالُوا لِأَعْرَابِيٍّ جَاهِلٍ سَلَّهُ عَنْ مَنْ قَضَىٰ نَجْبَهُ مَنْ هُوَ؟ وَكَانُوا لَا يَجْتَرُونَ عَلَىٰ مَسْأَلَتِهِ يُوقِرُونَهُ وَيَهَابُونَهُ، فَسَأَلَهُ الْأَعْرَابِيُّ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ، ثُمَّ سَأَلَهُ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ ثُمَّ سَأَلَهُ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ، ثُمَّ إِنِّي اطَّلَعْتُ مِنْ بَابِ الْمَسْجِدِ وَعَلَيَّ ثِيَابٌ خُضِرٌ فَلَمَّا رَأَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

وسلم قَالَ: أَيْنَ السَّائِلُ عَمَّنْ قَضَى نَجْبَهُ؟ قَالَ
الْأَعْرَابِيُّ أَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَذَا مِمَّنْ قَضَى نَجْبَهُ. (قال أبو عيسى:
هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ)

On the authority of Talha the Companions of the Prophet urged an ignorant Bedouin to, “ask him about who is meant by ‘qada nahbahu.’” They themselves did not have the courage to ask because of their awe of him and reverence. So, the Bedouin raised the question with the Prophet. But he did not pay attention to him. So he repeated his question, but he did not pay any attention to him. At that moment I happened to enter into the mosque. I had two green cloaks on me. When he saw me, he asked, “Where is the inquirer about ‘qada nahbahu.’” The Bedouin said, “Here I am O Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet said, “This is one of those who kept their promise.” (Reports close in meaning can be cited from Ibn `Asakir and Hakim: Alusi. It was declared trustworthy by Albani: Syed Ibrahim in f.n. of Shawkani). But of course, writes Qurtubi, the application is general: it was applicable to Talha, Sa`d b. Mu`adh, Anas b. Nadr, and many others.

Hakim has another report, declared *Sahih* by him, while Dhahabi nodded yes to another of similar nature. It says:

عن أبي هريرة - رضي الله تعالى عنه -: أن رسول
الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - حين انصرف من أحد
مر على مصعب بن عمير، وهو مقتول على طريقه،
فوقف عليه رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم -
ودعا له، ثم قرأ هذه الآية ثم قال رسول الله - صلى
الله عليه وسلم -: (أشهد أن هؤلاء شهداء عند
الله يوم القيامة، فأتوهم، وزورهم، والذي نفسي
بيده لا يسلم عليهم أحد إلى يوم القيامة إلا ردوا
عليه (هذا حديث صحيح على شرط الشيخين، ولم
يخرجاه: الحاكم).

As the Prophet was leaving Uhud, he passed by the corpse of Mus`ab b. `Umayr who lay dead. The Prophet stopped there, supplicated for him and recited, this verse (Among the believers are men who remained true to what they promised Allah. They did not change at all). Then he added, “I bear witness that these are martyrs in the sight of Allah. So, go to them and visit them. By Him in whose hand is my life, no one will say salam to them – until the Day of Judgment – but they will return him (the greeting)” – Shawkani.

Since Uhud took place earlier than the battle of *Khandaq*, one might explain that possibly the verse in

question was revealed earlier, or, the Prophet preceded the usage and Allah used them for His revelation (Au.).

It is also reported by Anas that Anas b. Nadr was absent from Badr. He said, "I was absent from the first battle the Prophet fought. If there happens to be a second fight, Allah will see what I will do." When Muslims suffered setback at Uhud he met Sa'd b. Mu'adh (in the battlefield) and said, "By Allah. I can smell the fragrance of Paradise from beyond Uhud." Then he went in and fought until he was martyred and Allah revealed this verse, "Among the believers are men who remained true to what they promised Allah. So, of them are some who fulfilled his promise, while of them is one who awaits..." His body was found with so many wounds that he could not be identified except by his finger tips, which is how his sister recognized him (Ibn Jarir).

This report is in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and others (Qur-tubi, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Jarir also reports that once Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan delivered

a sermon saying, "I have heard the Prophet that Zubayr b. al-'Awwam is one of those who kept their promise (*qada nabbah*)." Similar reports are in Tirmidhi, Ibn 'Asakir and Hakim (Alusi). Albani declared it trustworthy (S. Ibrahim in f.n. to Shawkani).

The report by Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan gains internal testimony from the fact that Zubayr b. al-'Awwam had fought against him siding with 'Ali and was killed in the battle (Au.).

Bukhari has a report on the authority of Kharijah b. Zayd who said, "When we began to write down the Qur'an (at 'Umar's instance: Au.), I missed a verse that I used to hear the Prophet recite but nobody seemed to know anymore except Khuzaymah b. Thabit al-Ansari, whose testimony the Prophet had declared as equivalent of two. The verse concerned was this one, 'Among the believers are men who remained true to what they promised Allah. So, of them are some who fulfilled his promise, while of them is one who awaits; they have not changed in the least.'" The report is also in Tirmidhi who rated it *Sahih* (Ibn Kathir).

[24] (Such trials are imposed) so that Allah may reward the truthful for their truthfulness⁵³ and torment the hypocrites if He will, or turn to them (in mercy).⁵⁴ Verily, Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ
الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] And Allah turned back the unbelievers in their fury,⁵⁵ no advantage did they gain. And sufficient was Allah for the believers in the battle.⁵⁶ And Allah was ever Powerful, Mighty.

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا
خَيْرًا وَكَفَى اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيمًا ﴿٢٥﴾

53. Trial of the faithful is the natural corollary of faith. As soon as someone says or believes he is faithful, he puts himself on the anvil: is he true in his claim? Trials, hidden behind every ease and adversity, follow him to the grave. Every success leads to higher level of faith, higher status in the sight of Allah, and yet heavier dosage of trials follow; and every failure bodes the fall, gradual, but certain. Such of them are given a few other chances, and, refusing to go up, suffer decline, ultimately reaching a point where one more step could turn them apostates. Some choose to effortlessly slide into hypocrisy (Au.).

54. "Or turn to them (in mercy)," i.e. cure them of their hypocrisy: Qatadah (Ibn Jarir).

55. Abu Sufyan went back to Tihama, 'Uyayna b. Badr to Najd and

the Banu Qurayza withdrew to their forts (Imām Razi, Qurtubi).

56. Ibn Is-haq reported that after the pagans had withdrawn the Prophet (*saws*) remarked, "No more will the Quraysh attack us hereafter, but rather, we shall attack them." The report is also in the *Sahihayn*. This came true. After the battle of the Ditch, pagans did not attack the Muslims ever. It were the Muslims who attacked them. Further, the Prophetic statement seemed to corroborate the Qur'an which said, as here in this verse, "And sufficient was Allah for the believers in the battle," which implied that 'they will not attack you anymore.' Hence too the Prophet used to say:

لا إله إلا الله وحده، أعزَّ جُنْدَهُ، ونَصَرَ عَبْدَهُ، وغَلَبَ
الأحزاب وحده، فلا شيءٌ بعده

"There is no deity save Allah the One; He kept His promise;

[26] He brought down those of the People of the Book who backed them (the pagans) from their fortresses and cast terror in their hearts: a party you were slaying, and a party taking captives.⁵⁷

وَأَنْزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ
مِنْ صَيَاصِيهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ
فَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ وَتَأْسِرُونَ فَرِيقًا ﴿٢٦﴾

helped His slave, honored His forces, defeated the confederates all by Himself, so there is nothing after Him.” (Ibn Kathir).

57. The allusion is to Banu Qurayzah, one of the three major Jewish tribes inhabiting in the vicinity of Madinah in well built forts of theirs. They were Jews of Arab descent whose forefathers had chosen to live in Arabia following banishment from Palestine at the hands of the Christians, and following the predictions that the final Prophet was to appear in Arabia. Sayyid Qutb gives us a short account of the other two tribes Banu Qaynuqa and Banu Nadir (there being a few other Jewish dwellings in and around Madinah: Au.): Banu Qaynuqa were the most courageous of the three. They immensely disapproved of Muslim win at Badr. The Prophet assembled them in their own bazars and said, “O Jewish people. Beware of Allah and believe in Him for you have known that I am the ‘sent one.’ You find this written in your books.” They replied, “Mu-

hammad! It looks like you consider us as your people. (We are not. We are a different nation: Au.). In any case, do not be misled by the fact that you battled a people who did not know how to fight. If you were to try us, you will discover that we are men.”

(This is how they answered – despite their peace treaty with the Prophet: Au.). When a veiled Muslim woman visited their jewelry market they persistently asked her to unveil. She refused. As she sat in a shop they tied her long skirt to a peg. When she rose up to go, her legs were exposed. They laughed. She cried for help. A passing Muslim responded and killed the Jew. Other Jews killed him. A few other Muslims jumped into the fray, but were restrained.

Following the incident, the Prophet laid siege to their forts. ‘Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Sallul came to their aid. He asked the Prophet to treat his allies lightly. The Prophet ignored him. But he thrust his hand into his coat of mail and repeated

his plea. The Prophet said, "Release me." Anger rose on his face. He repeated, "Woe unto you man, release me." But `Abdullah b. Ubayy said, "No by God. They have been on my side through thick and thin. I cannot abandon them. Are you going to cut them down in one stroke? I fear bad times for myself." So the Prophet said, "You can have them." The condition he placed was that they leave the town with everything that they liked to carry, but not arms." (They left Madinah with great pomp and show and went away to Khayber).

As for Banu Nadir, continues Sayyid, (who also enjoyed peace treaty with the Prophet, they were no less mischievous). In the fourth year after *hijrah* the Prophet visited them to settle a deal involving blood wit of two men which the Jews were supposed to share according to the treaty with them. Waiting for them, the Prophet sat under a wall. They jumped at the chance and asked one of their men to climb the roof and slide down a rock (or millstone) on him. The Prophet received warning revelation and quickly moved off. He announced war against them and they shut themselves up in their forts. `Abdullah ibn Abi Sallul sent them the word, "Do not surrender. We are with you. If you are fought, we

will fight alongside. If you are exiled, we shall follow you." But promises were not translated into words. So they lost heart and applied for peace. They bought their lives by agreeing to leave with all they could, but, once again, not arms. Some went to Syria, while others to Khayber. Their chiefs Sallam b. Abi al-Huqayq, Kinanah b. al-Rabi`, Huyayy b. Akhtab and others settled at Khayber. They were the ones who brought the combined pagan armies against the Prophet resulting in the siege of *Khandaq*.

58. It is reported of the Prophet that he was washing his head in the house of Zaynab bint Jahsh. He was only partly through, when Jibril came down and said, "May Allah forgive you. Angels have not removed their arms since forty days." According to other reports Jibril said, "Proceed to Banu Qurayzah, we are going there." So the Prophet put on his armor and started off (having appointed `Abdullah ibn Maktum (the blind) as his deputy at Madinah in his absence, handing over the flag to `Ali ibn Abi Talib: Ibn Kathir). He announced, "Let the men start off for Banu Qurayzah, and let them not do their *Asr* Prayer except at the Banu Qurayzah fortress." (Their fort was a few miles outside Madinah: Sayyid). Some people joined him on the way.

(Some of them offered their *'Asr* Prayer on the way, others did not. Those who did said, "The Prophet had only meant that we hasten to the fort. [He did not literally mean that *'Asr* Prayer should be offered at their fort alone]. But others refused, Praying only at the fort. The Prophet did not criticize either of the two parties: Ibn Kathir). He himself marched through the dwellings of Banu Ghanam with his eyebrows covered with dust. On the way he passed by the dwellings of Al-Surayn. He asked them, "Has anyone passed by?" They said, "Yes, Dihya Kalbi on a white mule." The Prophet said, "That was Jibra'il. He has been sent to shake the Banu Qurazyah fortress and drive fear into their hearts."

Some men joined him after *'Isha* Prayers, having started off before *'Asr*. (He had sent 'Ali earlier who, when the Prophet arrived at the fort, told him not to go nearer because he had heard the Jews say words that he would not like to hear. He replied that they will say no such thing if they saw him – Alusi).

In any case, having arrived there, the Prophet laid siege to their fortress and when they appeared on its wall, he called out, "O Banu Qurayzah, brothers of the monkeys." They re-

plied, "You were never indecent." According to other reports the Prophet used the harsh language when 'Ali complained to him that they had used such foul language for him, i.e. the Prophet, that he did not dare repeat before him.

The siege lasted a few days more than twenty, after which they sued for peace. Huyayy b. Akhtab had kept his promise he made to Ka'b b. Asad, and had entered their fort when the pagans lifted siege. When it was realized that the Prophet was not going to spare them, Ka'b addressed his people, "You are aware of what has befallen us. I present you three options. First, declare your faith in Muhammad, for, by God you know that he is the sent one that your books speak of." They said, "We shall not exchange the *Torah* for any other." He said, "Then kill your women and children and go down to fight. Without them you will have no hindering thought during the fight. If we are victorious, we shall take other women and have children." They said, "Kill these innocent ones? What kind of life will it be after them?" He said, "OK then. This night is going to be Saturday night. Most probably Muhammad and his men will be inattentive to us. So, let us go down and attack." They said, "We shall never

break the Sabbath. And you know what happened to those before us who dishonored it.” He remarked (in frustration), “From the day of your birth, not a single man of you ever passed a night resolved to do what he knows ought to be done.”

As the siege prolonged, they lost heart and sent word to the Prophet that they wished to discuss matters with Abu Lubabah. He had been their ally. When he went in, weeping women and children surrounded him. He was moved by the sight so that when they asked him what would happen to them if they decided to go down on condition that Muhammad decided their fate, Abu Lubabah signaled with his hand across the throat to indicate they faced slaughter. “By Allah,” said Abu Lubabah afterward, “I had not shuffled my feet before I realized that I had betrayed the Prophet.” (He was so ashamed that) he went to the mosque and tied himself to a post vowing that he would never untie himself until Allah had pardoned him. When the Prophet learnt of his vow he remarked, “Had he come to me I would have forgiven him. But now it is for Allah to decide his fate.”

During the discussions `Amr b. Sa`di escaped the fort, and as he was

heading somewhere, he was spotted by a Muslim, who knew him and so let him go. He went to the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah and spent the night there. However next day he disappeared, and, “to this day no one knows what happened to him.” When the Prophet was informed, he remarked, “That was a man whom Allah rescued because he was true to his word.” Some other reports say he had remained in the fort, bound and brought down but later his rope was found loose, and the man gone. Where did he go? No one ever came to know.

At last, after twenty-five days of siege, Banu Qurayzah finally decided to give up. The Aws expressed the hope that the Prophet would treat them as he had treated Banu Qaynuqa’ earlier. They were only expelled (and none killed) when `Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Sallul had pleaded for them. They were allies of Khazraj. (However, they decided to come down on condition that the Prophet should not judge them: Zama-khshari). So the Prophet asked (their delegation), “Would you like to be judged by one of your own men?” That is, one of the Aws? They agreed. He named Sa`d b. Mu`adh. After he was struck in the battle, the Prophet had instructed that he be

placed in Rufayda's tent. She had pitched a tent in the mosque's yard and was treating the wounded in hope of rewards. The Prophet used to visit him.

The story of Sa'd b. Mu'adh has been narrated in detail by 'A'isha. She said, as in a report preserved in Ahmad, "The day of the (march) of the Ditch I went out following them when I heard earth's tremor behind me. It was Sa'd along with his nephew Harith b. Aws carrying a shield. I sat down on the ground. As Sa'd passed by I noticed that the shield he wore was too small for him. I feared for Sa'd's sides (for the inadequacy of his armor). Sa'd was the most massive of men. Then I got up and slipped into an orchard. I found a group of people there. 'Umar was one of them, as also a man with a helmet on. 'Umar said to me, 'What has brought you here? By Allah, you are a courageous woman. What assures you peace from a tribulation of an unpleasant nature?' He kept reproaching me until I wished the earth would swallow me. Then the man in the helmet removed it from his head. It was Talha b. 'Ubaydullah. He said, "Umar! Today you have crossed the limits. Where is the escape from Allah's decree?"

"Now, Sa'd was struck with an arrow by a man of the Quraysh called Ibn 'Araqah. He had said, 'Take it from me. I am Ibn al-'Araqah.' It struck Sa'd at the median vein and cut it open. Sa'd said, "O Allah. If You have left any of the Quraysh raid [on Muslims] yet to take place then let me live. But if You have decided to prevent any war between them and us, then open it up, (that is, his wound). And, do not deal me death until my eyes have found their cool against Banu Qurayzah." This was because he was allied to them during the pagan years. (So he had expected them to stand by him during the siege). When he said those words, his wound ceased bleeding (Ibn Kathir).

So (when the Jews accepted him as the judge) he was brought down (to the foot of the fortress: Au.) on a donkey. As he got closer, they began to plead, "Sa'd! The Prophet has made you the arbiter for no other reason except that you should deal kindly with them." When they pressed on him several times he said, "A day has come for Sa'd when he will not care for anyone's censure in Allah's cause." When he arrived the Prophet said, "Rise up for your leader." Everyone stood up. When he was seated, (the Prophet said, "These people [pointing to the Jews] have

come down [the fort] accepting you as the arbiter”: Ibn Kathir).

Sa`d asked the people, “I am to understand that my judgment is acceptable to you.” They said, “Yes.” Then Sa`d asked looking in the direction where the Prophet was seated, “Is that incumbent on the one who is there?” He did not wish to name him out of respect. (He did not even turn towards where the Prophet was – out of respect: Ibn Kathir). In any case, the Prophet said, “Yes.” Sa`d ruled that their males be put to the sword, women and children enslaved and their wealth and property distributed. The Prophet remarked, “*Allahu Akbar*. He has judged by Allah’s judgment.” (This is a proof of the Prophet’s authenticity. If he had been a false Prophet, he would have opted to say that it were the Jews who had chosen Sa`d as the arbiter; thus placing the responsibility of the slaughter on him and them: Au.). The judgment was carried out, their men were killed, women and children enslaved and their lands were distributed among the *Muhajirun* who had been landless until then.

(Boys were checked for puberty. If they had grown pubic hair they were treated as adults, otherwise enslaved. One of those who escaped

death was `Atiyyah al-Qurazi. His case was doubtful. So they checked for the growth. It was not found and he was enslaved. The report is in several works which Tirmidhi treated as *Hasan Sahih*: Ibn Kathir).

Majid quotes Orientalists who are well-known for their disapproval of Islam and its Messenger: “The improvident Jews, whom the fate of their brethren should have taught to better purpose, had not calculated on the chances and necessities of a siege. Soon rendered to great distress, they sought to capitulate on condition of quitting the neighborhood even empty handed .. At last the wretched Jews, brought now to the last verge of starvation, offered to surrender, on condition that their fate should be decided by their allies the Aus.’ (Muir, op.cit., pp. 315-316). Thereupon Sa`d, the chief of the tribe of Aus, greatly incensed at perfidy of the Jews, adjudged that the men should be put to the sword, the women and children made slaves, and their goods divided among the Muslims. Regarding this apparently ‘harsh, bloody sentence,’ writes a Christian historian: ”It must be remembered that the crime of these men was high treason against the State, during time of siege; and those who have read how Wellington’s march

could be traced by the bodies of deserters and pillages hanging from the trees, need not be surprised at the summary execution of a traitorous clan.’ (LSK. Intro. p. LXV).”

There has been disagreement over their numbers. The figures range anything between 600 to 900. They were first shifted to the quarters of Harith’s daughter who was one of the Najjar. (This places a question mark on the reported figures. Such large numbers could not have been housed in a lady’s quarters unless she had an exceptionally large fenced area, which is very unusual, being functionally not very useful, yet expensive to maintain: Au.). In any case, the Prophet got trenches dug to which they were taken in groups to be kneeled near its edge and beheaded. Some of them asked Ka`b, “Where are they being taken O Ka`b?” He, (a leader most surely sore for dismissal of his advice: Au.), said in effect, “Should it be that at no juncture you should refuse to think? Can’t you see that the summoner does not cease? Can’t you see that he who goes does not return? It is, by God, slaughter.” Huyayy b. Akhtab was also brought. He had a very expensive shroud on. He had damaged it by tearing every part of it so that it could not be worn after him. When he saw the

Prophet he remarked, “By God, I do not blame myself for hating you. But whomsoever God dishonors is dishonored.” (So he remained a typical Jew until the end, blaming Yahweh for his personal choices: Au.). Then he turned to the people (the Jews) and said, “People. There is no escape from God’s command. It is His judgment and decree, and a massacre that was written against the children of Israel.” Then he sat down and his head was struck down.

‘A’isha reported that none of their women was killed except for one. She said, “By Allah. She was with me, conversing and laughing immoderately until noon while the Prophet was killing her menfolk in the market area, when someone called out her name, ‘O so and so.’ She responded, ‘Here I am.’ I said, ‘Woe unto you, what’s happening?’ She said, ‘I’m to be killed.’ I asked, ‘But why?’ She said, ‘For something I did.’ So she was taken away and beheaded.” ‘A’isha used to say, “I will never forget my amazement at her good spirits and loud laughter although she knew that she was about to die.”

Another interesting incident was concerning al-Zubayr b. Bata of the Banu Qurayzah. Thabit b. Qays b.

Shammas pleaded the Prophet that he be spared. This was in return of a similar favor that Al-Zubayr had done to Thabit in pagan days. He had been taken captive in the Bu`ath battle and was turned to Al-Zubayr. But he merely cut his hair and freed him. The Prophet replied that he could have him." So he went to Al-Zubayr and gave him the news. He thanked him for the return favor but remarked that life was not worth living without wife and children. So Thabit requested they be returned to him. That too was granted. But when Al-Zubayr was told about it he remarked that in a country like Arabia it was hard to live without one's property. Thabit went back to the Prophet and he granted that also. But when Thabit assured him of his property also, Al-Zubayr asked, "And what happened to the one whose face shown like a Chinese mirror the virgins looked into: Ka`b b. al-Asad?" He said, "Killed." Then he asked about another person and was told that he too had been dispatched. Then he asked about the (chiefs of) Banu Ka`b b. Qurayzah and Banu `Amr b. Qurayzah, and was told that they were all history. Al-Zubayr's Arab blood spoke out, "O Thabit. There is no fun in living after them. Better send me to death

so that I can in my love be with them." So he was beheaded. When Abu Bakr heard his last words he remarked, "Surely, he is with the beloved ones in the Fire." Another who escaped was Rifa`ah b. Shamwal al-Qurazi. Salma bint Aqyas – who had Prayed with the Prophet on both of the two Qiblas – requested him on grounds that Rifa`ah did good to his kin and ate camel's meat (prohibited to the Jews). The Prophet (*saws*) released him to her (Alusi).

Following his judgment Sa`d's wound opened up, although it seemed to have almost healed up. When he died, the Prophet visited him along with Abu Bakr and `Umar. `A'isha's report in Bukhari and Muslim says, "By Him in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, I could distinguish the difference between Abu Bakr's and `Umar's cries while I was in my quarters. They were, as Allah said about them (48: 29), 'Kind among themselves..'" `Alqamah asked, "Mother. How did the Prophet behave (during such situations)?" She replied, "His eyes never dropped a tear for anyone. But when faced with grief, he held his beard (hard)" [Ibn Kathir]. The Prophet said that the `Arsh shook at his death (Alusi).

Enslaved women and children were sent away to Najd where they were sold off in exchange of arms. (Their lands and property were largely divided amongst the *Muhajirun*: Zamakhshari). The Prophet chose to keep Rayhana bint `Amr, a kind of princess. He offered that she become a Muslim so he could marry her and she adopt the *Hijab*. But she chose to remain a Jew. However, later she embraced Islam and became a wife proper (Alusi).

Some 30-35 years ago, a Jewish university teacher in USA told an Iraqi, "We shall not forget Banu Qurayzah." The Iraqi student went about trying to find out who the said Banu Qurayzah were. He had never heard of any people so named (Au.).

Majid (and Shabbir) write: "Compare the Jewish laws concerning the treatment of the fallen cities: 'When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if its answer to you is peace and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to

the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Cananites and the Per'izzites, the Hivites and the Jeb'usites, as the LORD your God has commanded' (Deut. 22: 10-17)."

The above, points out Yusuf Ali, is the "more lenient" *Torah* punishment that Sa`d applied. The tougher punishment, which Banu Qurayzah deserved is stated in the last two verses of the above quote: "But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Cananites and the Per'izzites, the Hivites and the Jeb'usites, as the LORD your God has commanded" (Deut. 20: 16-17). Elsewhere it is explained that men,

[27] And He bequeathed upon you their lands, homes and wealth,⁵⁸ and a land that you have not treaded.⁵⁹ And Allah ever had power over all things.

وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا
لَمْ تَطَّوُّوهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] O Prophet! Say to your wives,⁶⁰ 'If you covet the life of this world and its adornment,⁶¹ then come, I will provide for you and set you free in a handsome manner.'⁶²

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدْنَ
الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ
وَأُسْرِحْكِنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾

women, children and animals are to be summarily killed, and property burned to ashes (Au.).

59. To what lands is the allusion? Opinions vary between the lands of Makkah, Khayber and those of the Romans. Ibn Jarir believes there is no need to specify what Allah left open.

60. "We now come to the subject of the position of the Consorts of Purity (azwaj mutahharat), the wives of the holy Prophet. Their position was not like that of ordinary women or ordinary wives. They had special duties and responsibilities. The only youthful marriage of the holy Prophet was his first marriage-that with Hadhrat Khadija, the best of women and the best of wives. He married her fifteen years before he received his call to Prophethood; their married life lasted for twenty-five years, and their mutual devotion was of the noblest, judged by spiritual as well as social standards. During her life he had no

other wife, which was unusual for a man of his standing among his people. When she died, his age was 50, and but for two considerations, he would probably never have married again, as he was most abstemious in his physical life.

"The two considerations which governed his later marriages were: (1) compassion and clemency, as when he wanted to provide for suffering widows, who could not be provided for in any other way in that stage of society; some of them, like Sauda, had issue by their former marriage, requiring protection; (2) help in his duties of leadership, with women, who had to be instructed and kept together in the large Muslim family, where women and men had similar social rights.

"Hadhrat Aisha, daughter of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, was clever and learned, and in *hadith* she is an important authority on the life of the Prophet.

Hadhrat Zainab, daughter of Khuzaima, was specially devoted to the poor; she was called the “Mother of the Poor”. The other Zainab, daughter of Jahsh, also worked for the poor, for whom she provided from the proceeds of her manual work, as she was skillful in leather work. But all the Consorts in their high position had to work and assist as Mothers of the Ummat. Theirs were not idle lives, like those of Odaliskes, either for their own pleasure or the pleasure of their husband. They are told here that they had no place in the sacred Household if they merely wished for ease or worldly glitter. If such were the case, they could be divorced and amply provided for” (Yusuf Ali).

61. (The *ayah* clearly substantiates that) love of this world (in preference of the Next: Au.) and its adornments is one of those factors that take a man away from Allah and His Messenger (Thanwi).

62. “By the time this verse was revealed .. the Muslims had conquered the rich agricultural region of Khaybar, and the community had grown more prosperous. But while life was becoming easier for most of its members, this ease was not reflected in the household of the Prophet who, as before, allowed himself and his

family only the absolute minimum necessary for the most simple living. In view of the changed circumstances, it was no more than natural that his wives were longing for a share in the comparative luxuries which other Muslim women could now enjoy: but an acquiescence by Muhammad to their demand would have conflicted with the principle, observed by him throughout his life, that the standard of living of God’s Apostle and his family should not be higher than that of the poorest of the believers” (Asad).

One cannot resist pointing out that Asad’s description of “his wives longing for a share in the comparative luxuries” – expression of an idea in which he is not alone - might lead those to some misunderstanding who are not aware of the economic conditions prevalent in Madinah during the life of the Prophet. The use of the word “luxuries” is justified if the allusion is to a square meal a day, and a pair of decent clothes. For, neither was there any well spread luxury any time among the Madinans of the Prophet’s time, nor were his wives longing for a share in such luxuries. It was biting poverty, perpetual hunger, and torn clothes that provoked the Prophet’s wives to ask for “a little more.” How many times did it not

[29] But if you seek Allah, His Messenger and the Abode of the Hereafter,⁶³ then surely, Allah has readied for those among you such as do good, a great reward.⁶⁴

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْدَارَ
الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْكُمْ
أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾

happen that the Prophet came in to ask if there was anything to eat, and he was told that there was nothing? What kind of life it must have been for his wives, whose husband had to mortgage his shield to a Jew for some barely in exchange? (Au.)

Qurtubi wrote: Allah (*swt*) gave our Prophet the choice between being a king-Prophet, which would have brought him keys of the treasures of the world, and, or a humble Prophet. He consulted Jibril who advised him to be a humble Prophet. When he had done that, that is, chosen the higher status of being a humble Prophet, Allah asked him to give his wives the choice of remaining with him (in the state in which he was) or leave. They chose to stay.

Majid quotes an Orientalist: “But in the simplicity of Arab life, artificial comforts, soon regarded by his followers as necessities of life, would to him have been irksome and weary. The Prophet was happier with his wives each in her small and rudely furnished cabin, than he would have been surrounded with all the delica-

cies and grandeur of a palatial residence’ (Muir, op. cit. p. 202).”

63. Majid quotes once again: “Though ‘now virtually Emperor of Arabia with Kings and Rulers of neighborhood states seeking his friendship, he never assumed the pomp and royalty but continued to live most simply, sweeping out his little house, mending his shoes and giving off any money he had over, when needs of his family were satisfied, to the poor widows and orphans of the Moslems who had fallen in battle.’ (Lady Cabbold, Pilgrimage to Mecca, p. 149).”

64. With reference to “*ajran* ‘*Azima*” (great reward), Imām Razi points out that something that is high is merely high. Similarly something broad is only broad. The same is true of depth. ‘*Azim* on the other hand, is something which is large and massive from all sides, and, in this case, from every aspect too.

The Ila

There are differences in opinion over what exactly prompted the revela-

tion of these verses. Some say they were revealed because of `A'isha asking the Prophet for something of this world, either increase in allowance, or something else. Others say it was because some of the Prophet were jealous of other wives. Another report (as in Qurtubi) says that one of his wives asked for a golden ring. He got her one of silver, plated with gold. She refused to accept anything less than golden. Other reports say that after the victories of Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzah, when everybody benefited from the flow of wealth, except his wives who suffered deprivation, they sought increase in allowance. So the Prophet withdrew himself from them for a month. This is known as "Ila" and this seems to be the most likely immediate cause.

[Altogether, his wives numbered nine, five from Quraysh: `A'isha bint Abi Bakr, Hafsa bint `Umar, Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan, Sawdah bin Zam`ah, Umm Salamah bint Abi Umayyah and four others from other tribes: Safiyyah bint Huyayy of Khayber, Maymunah bint al-Harith al-Hilaliyyah, Zaynab bint Jahsh al-Asadiyyah and Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith of Banu Mustaliq (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn al-`Arabiyy has mentioned in his *Ahkam al-Qur`an*, (as noted

by Mawdudi), that at the time the Prophet chose seclusion for a month, he had only four wives: Sawdah, `A'isha, Hafsa and Umm Salamah. But Thanwi writes that at that time he had nine wives, which is also implied by Ibn Jarir's listing, which means this verse must have been revealed in the 7th year A.H., and not in the 5th year, as thought by some.

It is also not clear as to when exactly did the incident of the Prophet's wives seeking greater allowance take place.

In any case, with the Prophet in seclusion, news spread and one day the Companions gathered at the mosque. They thought he had divorced all his wives. They sat there in a sort of state of mourning, none speaking to another. Then someone went up to `Umar and told him that something terrible had happened. He inquired whether the Ghassan tribe had attacked them. The man said, "Something worse. The Prophet has divorced his wives." `Umar hastened to the mosque. A report in Bukhari and Muslim – slightly shortened here - describes the rest. Similar reports are found in every major collection.

Jabir b. `Abdullah reported: Abu Bakr came and sought permission to

see Allah's Messenger. He found people sitting at his door. But he was not allowed in. Then came `Umar. He too sought permission but was not allowed in. Then both Abu Bakr and `Umar were allowed entry. The two entered and found Allah's Apostle sitting silent with his wives around him. `Umar said to himself, "Let me say something that will make the Prophet cheer up." So he said: "Messenger of Allah! I wish you had seen the daughter of Ibn Zayd when she asked me for additional allowance. I gave her a pain in the neck (meaning I slapped her on the neck)." Allah's Messenger smiled and said: "These are also around me as you see them, seeking additional allowances." At that Abu Bakr got up and to hit `A'isha, and `Umar stood up (to hit Hafsa) the two saying: "Do you ask Allah's Messenger what he does not have?" The Prophet restrained the two. His wives said: "By Allah, we shall not after this session ever ask Allah's Messenger for anything he does not have."

(Following that, the Prophet [*saws*] withdrew from them for a month). Allah revealed the verses offering the choice. So he began with `A'isha and said to her: "I would like to propose something to you, but I wish you will not be hasty in replying

but rather will consult your parents first." She asked what it was and he recited this verse: "O Prophet! Say to your wives.." She said: "Messenger of Allah. Do I consult my parents concerning you? I choose Allah and His Messenger. But do not inform your other wives of my decision." He replied: "Allah has not sent me as a harsh (person), but He has sent me to teach and make things easy. None of them will ask me but I will tell her of your choice."

According to other reports, when `Umar received the report of the Prophet's withdrawal, and that his wives were the cause, he went to Hafsa and told her, "Do not ask the Prophet for anything. Ask me for your needs." Then he went to `A'isha and told her, "Do not be misled by the fact that you are beautiful or that your husband loves you. Beware that Allah should reveal something about you." He also spoke to others of his wives. Umm Salamah chided him, "Ibn al-Khattab! Have you now begun to interfere in the affairs of the Prophet's wives?" (Ibn Jarir).

Thereafter the Prophet went to each of his wives presenting them the choice. They all chose Allah, His Messenger and the Abode of the Hereafter; but for a Bedouin woman who chose to

depart (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). According to reports, this woman used to visit the Prophet's wives and say, "I am a wretched woman." Some other reports suggest that mentally she was somewhat imbalanced (Alusi).

Ibn Jarir and Qurtubi do not name the woman who chose separation, but, if correct, she was not one of the nine named above (Au.).

Fiqh Rules

- The *ayah* is also known as "*ayah takhyir*" meaning, "the verse (giving) choice." The law of "takhyir" amounts to delegation of the right to obtain divorce. This happens when a man says to his wife, "You have the choice: either stay or leave." If she chooses to stay, nothing happens. If she chooses to leave, the separation is considered as first of the three "talaq bayen" – the irrevocable divorce. The husband can only get her back under a new marriage contract, new terms, new dower, etc., which means the woman can refuse a re-marriage, as against "*talaq al-rajai*" which gives the husband the right of return without a new marriage.

- Once a woman is given the choice, and she chooses separation, the choice cannot be overturned by either of the two parties. If the woman stays silent, it means she refused

to accept the delegation and so the words of the husband hold no legal value and the right of choice is annulled.

Sayyid Qutb has the following commentary to offer: The event (of the wives asking the Prophet for better allowances, Allah giving them the choice, and they choosing Allah and His Messenger), requires us to look and ponder from various angles. The event draws a clear picture of Islamic values, and the paths to be conscientiously treaded by the Muslims: while forging ahead on the paths of this world or the next. It plants deep into a Muslim's heart a few values that he must hold on as dear while dealing with this world and the next. It roots out any inclination there can be toward the world in the heart of a Muslim, or any preference for the present over the next. It eliminates any obstacle remaining in the heart that can come in between him and Allah's pleasure and approval.

The incident also illustrates for us the truth about the Prophet's this-worldly life – and of those who surrounded him. The outstanding point is that the life of the Prophet or his followers was like the life of any human being: without any mark of distinction. They had sur-

rendered themselves, but had not become super humans, or supra humans, nor did they become devoid of any of their human traits, characteristics, emotions or sentiments. Despite their rise as exemplary humans, despite achieving great spiritual heights, they remained humans in all respects. Their emotions, feelings and sentiments did not die in their hearts; but rather were cleansed of any contamination, to leave them pure and charming.

Most of us make the mistake of regarding the Prophet and his early followers as superhuman. We accord them a rank and position that is not real. We wish to see them free of every human weakness, imagining that in this manner we raise them to higher levels. In truth, we lower their status.

This error renders them unreal; a picture that is devoid of human feelings, traits and characteristics. This cuts them off us. We treat them as other than human: angels, or something else, distancing them away from us; placing them so far away or above that they cannot be imitated or followed. We fail to respond to their attractive personalities, for we do not look at them as real humans, who went through real situations,

and dealt with them in a down to earth manner.

Allah's wisdom is clear in that He chose Messengers from humans like us and not from angels or some other creation. This was in order that the relationship between them and other humans endures as real, and not as something only in the imagination; in order that their followers feel that their hearts too felt like they feel, and were subject to the same forces as they are subjected, despite the fact that they were far above them, although, close enough to be followed and imitated.

On close observance the event we are speaking of imparts countless lessons: the decision of the Prophet's wives - to the exception of none - to remain with him, to bear the hardship voluntarily, the Prophet's love and preference of 'A'isha in offering the choice, her request that her choice be not disclosed to other wives, the Prophet's reply that he had not been sent to make things difficult, making it easy for them to pass the test .. all these minor details, when kept in sight, bind us with the Prophet and His Companions, in humanity and create the desire in us to follow his example.

[30] O women of the Prophet!⁶⁵ Whosoever of you commits a flagrant indecency,⁶⁶ (should know that) her chastisement will be increased twofold; that is easy for Allah.

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَن يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] While whosoever of you remains obedient to Allah and His Messenger, and acts righteously, We shall grant her, her reward twice-over;⁶⁷ and We have readied for her a noble provision.⁶⁸

وَمَن يَفْعَلْ مِنكُنَّ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وِتْعَمَلْ صَالِحًا نُؤْتِهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

65. Some people of our contemporary world have construed that the verses from this point onward and the directives they contain, were specifically meant for the wives of the Prophet. Why, one wonders, common Muslim womenfolk are considered unworthy of the same level of piety and spiritual purification as the Prophet's wives? (Au.)

66. In view of the fact stated in verse 32 below, concerning their higher status among the believers, the term "flagrant violation" needs a special interpretation, and can only be applicable to minor dereliction (Au.). There is no need to stretch the mind. Far from a wife of the Prophet committing a flagrant indecency, (if someone is foolhardy enough to imagine that), even common Muslim women of those times did not commit any flagrant indecency (Shafi` paraphrased).

Ibn Kathir explained it as, "rebellious attitude (towards the Prophet) and any ill behavior." But Muqatil understood it as meaning "any disobedience of the Prophet, and demanding anything from him that would cause him inconvenience to fulfill (Shafi`).

However, if the words are taken in their literal sense, then it would be considered as a hypothetical statement, similar to the statement in another verse (Al-Zumar: 65), which stated, addressing the Prophet,

لَئِن أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ (الزمر - ٦٩)

"But if you commit association, surely, all your deeds would go vain" (Ibn Kathir).

67. The implication of two-fold rewards for several good acts, in comparison with two-fold chastisement for a single "flagrant indecency" is that rewards demand obedience to

[32] O women of the Prophet! You are not like other women⁶⁹ - if you are godfearing⁷⁰ - then do not be soft in speech,⁷¹ lest he in whose heart is disease should covet; but speak appropriate words.⁷²

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾

the fullest degree, while chastisement can descend for a single violation (Thanwi).

68. They will be in the company of Allah's Messenger, at the highest reaches of "Illiyun", above the rest of the dwellers of Paradise, in a place called Wasilah (Ibn Kathir).

69. That is, by virtue of you having been chosen by the Prophet, to be in his house, you have been placed on a higher footing with greater responsibilities, hence two-fold the reward, and two-fold the punishment upon neglect: you cannot ignore the fact that coming generation of Muslims are going to look upon you as models (Au.).

70. This parenthetical remark can be connected either ways so that one can read if he wished, "You are not like other women if you are godfearing," or, "If you are godfearing, then do not be soft of speech" (Razi). Another possible connotation is, Thanwi adds, "if you remain godfearing."

71. Thanwi has a brilliant note here. What the instruction purports to say is, to paraphrase with some modification, "do not speak in your normal voice" since normal female voice can be sexually provocative.

Not surprisingly, it is reported of some of the Prophet's wives that they used to place a hand on the mouth while speaking lest the listener felt any tenderness (Alusi).

And, to speak coarsely, to put off the speaker, is not bad manners on the part of a woman. It is bad manners to attract males to oneself (with a point from Thanwi).

In any case, the translation of the words "*la takhda'na*" as done here, reflect the understanding of Suddi and others (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others).

Majid comments and quotes: "The very sound of female voice is sometimes (enough) to excite passion in man, and he is, in many instances, sexually attached through the sense of hearing: 'We may attach consider-

[33] Remain in your homes,⁷³ do not make a dazzling display of the sort of the days of ignorance of former times;⁷⁴ offer Prayers (spiritedly and assiduously), pay the alms,⁷⁵ and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only wishes to remove all abominations from you, O Members of the Household,⁷⁶ and purify you to complete purification.⁷⁷

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ
الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ
الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ
وَيُطَهِّرَكُم تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

able impression to the voice and the music generally as a method of sexual appeal. On this point we may agree with Moll, "that sexual stimulation through the ears is greater than is usually believed." (Havelock Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p. 61). The sound of the voice, its timbre and vigour, its height or depth, its purity or sharpness often determine with unnecessary rapidity, love at first sight .. The great significance of the voice is disclosed by the large number of women who fall in love with singers.' (Forbate, op.cit., p. 62)".

72. Sayyid comments: Those were the directions for the wives of the Prophet, mothers of the believers, those that none could covet .. not even those who had disease in their hearts. That was at a time in Islamic history when piety was of the highest order, at a time when the social milieu had the Prophet in it. Yet they were told not to soften their tone, for, there is no guarantee of the

hearts maintaining their calm when they encounter excitable situations. And, musical voices can entice, can enchant, can excite. It was best therefore that the cause of enticement be rooted out.

Compare that situation with today's world when all kinds of enticements allure the people, when everything that is attempted is with the help of enticements, when a woman displays all sorts of temptations on her person. Everything you see is sex-oriented, and the whole atmosphere is sex tainted. Where is the purity of those times? How do we compare those times with ours when a woman is the other name of all that Islam loathes and wishes to purge?

73. Majid comments: "Islam enjoins strict isolation upon its womenfolk, which is not without parallel or precedent in the teachings of the ancient prophets of Israel: 'The women had indeed in the innermost part of the

houses their own apartment to which access was not permitted to men, or, in the case of wealthy people, or people of rank, they had a separate house to themselves.' (EBi., c. 2946). The rule was also observed, at any rate, in regard to the public worship, by the Jews and early Christians. 'In the early church the women were always separated from the men in public worship .. The practice may probably have come into the Christian Church without any formal enactment from the usage of Jewish worship, in which the women were (and are to this day) separated from the men.' (DCA. II. P. 1891)."

Sawda (ra) followed these directives literally. It is said that she did not leave her house after the Prophet until her death. The only time she came out was, as a narrator remarked, when she had to be taken out for burial. 'A'isha however used to perform Hajj every year. (In fact, all the Prophet's wives used to do that, except Sawda and Zaynab: Alusi). On 'A'isha, it was an obligation, since she was a scholar par excellence and had to be at Hajj sites for people's instruction. (In fact, one of those years 'Umar arranged Hajj for all of them, with 'Uthman b. 'Affan and 'Abdul Rahamn b. 'Awf supervising the caravan: Alusi).

The Jamal Battle

'A'isha also led a brief reform movement during the Caliphate of 'Ali, when she saw Islam facing a crisis. It culminated in an accidental battle between her followers and those of the forces of the government led by 'Ali. The battle is known as the battle of the Jamal (meaning "Camel" in reference to 'A'isha's camel which was provoking her followers to fight fiercely in her defense: Au.). Although peace had been worked out one evening, hypocrites and disgruntled elements forced the two parties into a battle by attacking each other from opposite sides at night. The battle could only end when her camel was hamstrung with her in the litter. She was taken to Basra by her brother Muhammad b. Abi Bakr from where she left for Madinah in the company of thirty women chosen by 'Ali, perhaps to thwart any recognition and attack on her life. The caravan was led and guarded by no less than Hasan b. 'Ali until they arrived at Madinah.

She found, Qurtubi writes, what was written in her fate and returned to Madinah rewarded for her efforts, despite the error she made in judging the political situation, for a mujtahid is rewarded twice over if correct, and once if wrong.

She would, however, whenever she read these verses, cry until her veil cloth was wet.

Alusi records that even `Ali was greatly moved when he entered the battle-field and found it strewn with the dead. He remarked, "Oh that I was dead before this and had become a thing forgotten." Further, Alusi writes, the reason why `A'isha was remorseful was not because she went out of her house, but because she had ignored – or made to ignore - the prediction of the Prophet who had once said when he was amongst his wives, "Perhaps, the dogs of Haw'ab will bark at one of you." According to some reports he said to her, "Beware that you should be the one, O Humayrah." Therefore, when, on her way to Busrah, accompanied by a huge following, she stopped at a watering place, and the dogs began to bark, she inquired what place it was. She was told that it was Haw'ab. She decided to pull back immediately. But some thirty Bedouins were produced who testified that the place was in fact not Haw'ab. It was the missed investigation, and the regret over the incident in general terms, that made her remorseful to cry over the *ayah* when she recited it. Finally, it was not her hatred of `Ali, as the *Shi'a* allege, that drove her to Bas-

rah. She had taken up the journey in search of justice. When asked, she said about `Ali, "By Allah there was nothing between me and him, except for the kind of (ambivalent) feeling a woman generally has for the in-laws." (This remark shows how honest she was. Had she been dishonest in the least, she would have said, "There was absolutely no ill-feeling between us." As for why did she start of at all, seeking justice, one must understand that she was a leader of the believers. It would have been, as some scholars have said, a major sin on the part of the *Ummah* as an *Ummah*, not to punish the murderer's of a *Khalifah*: Au.).

Women and Congregational Prayers

In connection with women ordered to remain in their houses, Ibn Kathir remarks that they may not venture out unless there is a good reason. And, of those that can be called as good reasons, one is to go to the mosque for obligatory Prayers, in view of the Prophetic injunction,

عن أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "لَا تَمْنَعُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ لِيُخْرِجَنَّ وَهِنَّ تَفَالَتْ" (أبو داؤد).

"Do not prevent Allah's female slaves from His mosques; yet, let them come without perfumes."

There are reasons why a woman should not leave her house too often. A *hadith* preserved by Tabarani in his Kabir, (with a chain that is trustworthy: Haythami) reports the Prophet as having said,

عن عبد الله بن مسعود عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "المرأة عورة وإنما إذا خرجت استشرفها الشيطان، وإنما أقرب ما تكون إلى الله وهي في قعر بيتها". رواه الطبراني في الكبير ورجاله موثقون: الهيثمي).

"A woman is a thing to be veiled. When she goes out, *Shaytan* peers at her. The closest she is to Allah when she is in the innermost part of her quarters."

Ibn Kathir also quotes a *hadith* from Bazzar, which, although uncertain of authenticity, has its support in other reports of the same nature. This one reports that a group of women went up to the Prophet (*saws*) and said, "Messenger of Allah! Men have overtaken women through (Allah's) grace (*fadh*) and through *Jihad* in the way of Allah. What could we do to reach up to the level of the *mujahidin*?" He answered, "Whoever of you sat back in her house – or words of that nature – "attains the status of the *mujahidin* in Allah's path."

Ibn Kathir however points out that the above is narrated by none through Thabit b. al-Bunani except

Ruh al-Musayyib. Haythami points out that it is a weak narration.

There are, we might point out, other *ahadith* that allow women to go to mosques. One in Muslim is on the authority of Ibn `Umar. It says,

عن عبد الله بن عمر أنه قال: سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: "لا تمنعوا نساءكم المساجد إذا استأذننكم إليها". (مسلم)

"Do not prevent your women the happy share of the mosques if they seek your permission to go there." At that, Bilal, ibn `Umar's son (moved by the changed attitudes of the women of his time) said, "By Allah, we shall prevent them." According to other reports he said he feared they would go wayward. But Ibn `Umar (his father) was so upset with the remark that he struck him hard on the breast and said, "I say, 'The Prophet says do not prevent', and you say, 'We shall prevent?' I will never talk to you again." It is said that thereafter he did not talk to him until death, which, as Ibn Hajr has pointed out, means one of the two must have died soon after the incident.

Another report in Bukhari and Muslim records the Prophet as having said,

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَكُمْ نِسَاؤُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَأُذِّنُوا لَهُنَّ (البخاري)

“If your women seek your permission to go the mosque at night, allow them.” According to *hadith* scholars, the Prophet added the words “at night” because then it was safer at night for women to move about without being recognized (Au.).

The above remains in force (i.e. the permission), writes Ibn Kathir, although it is undesirable for women to attend the mosques in view of the words that follow the above *hadith* as in Abu Da’ud (and treated trustworthy by Ibn Khuzaymah: Ibn Hajr in Fath). The words are,

”لا تمنعوهن المساجد وبيوتهن خير لهن“

“Do not prevent them although their houses are better for them.”

This aspect has been expressed more powerfully in another *hadith* preserved by Ahmad and Tabarani, declared trustworthy by Haythami except for a reporter in it who, in any case was trusted by Ibn Hibban. It is as follows:

عن أم حميد امرأة أبي حميد الساعدي أنها جاءت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالت: يا رسول الله إني أحب الصلاة معك قال: ”قد علمت أنك تحبين

الصلاة معي، وصلاتك في بيتك خير من صلاتك في حجرتك، وصلاتك في حجرتك خير من صلاتك في دارك، وصلاتك في دارك خير من صلاتك في مسجد قومك، وصلاتك في مسجد قومك خير من صلاتك في مسجدي“ قالت: فأمرت فبني لها مسجد في أقصى بيت في بيتها وأظلمه فكانت تصلي فيه حتى لقيت الله عز وجل. (رواه أحمد ورجاله رجال الصحيح غير عبد الله بن سويد الأنصاري ووثقه ابن حبان: الهيثمي).

Abu Humayd al-Sa`idi's wife reported that she went to the Prophet (*saw*s) and said, “Messenger of Allah. I love to pray with you.” He replied, “I know that you love to pray with me. But your Prayer within your inner chambers is better than your prayer anywhere in your house. And your prayer in your house is better than your prayer in your quarters. And your prayer in your quarters is better than your prayer in the mosque of your neighborhood. And your prayer in the mosque of your neighborhood is better than your prayer in my mosque.” So she got a prayer-niche built for herself in the farthest and darkest corner of her house in which she used to pray until death.

We might point out that the disapproval is also strengthened by `A'isha's words, “Had the Prophet

seen how today's women behave, he would have prevented them from going to the mosques." However, not everyone has agreed to use `A'isha's words to prevent women from mosques, even if they have thought it undesirable. Ibn Hajar notes for example, that Allah knew about the changes that were to take place in people's behavior and could have ordered the Prophet to prevent them altogether. In fact, `A'isha herself is on record not having discouraged anyone from going to the mosques. Indeed, if women had to be prevented from mosques for reasons of their indecent appearance, adds Ibn Hajar, they should have been prevented from entering into markets where freedom is more abused than elsewhere. Moreover, what `A'isha observed, involved a few women and not all. And a general rule cannot be abrogated because of what a few do.

In fact, it has been reported by Ahmad, although through a Mursal report that `Umar ibn al-Khattab's wife `Atikah bint Zayd, (a sister of Sa'id b. Zayd, one of the ten given the glad tidings of Paradise), used to visit the Prophet's mosque for *Fajr* and *'Isha* Prayers. She was told (perhaps by `Umar himself, as suggested by some *hadith* scholars, or Ibn `Umar the narrator), "Why do you come out,

when you know that `Umar does not approve of it, and feels jealous about it (*yugharu*)?" She asked, "And what prevents him from preventing me?" He answered, "The Prophet's words, 'Do not prevent Allah's female-slaves from Allah's mosques.'" According to another report `Umar used to say, "By Allah, you know that I do not appreciate it," and she would reply, "By Allah, I shall not stop coming until you disallow me." (Apparently, `Umar did not: Au.).

The opinion of the four *Fuqaha'* has been similar: old women could join the congregation at *Fajr*, *Mahgrib* and *'Isha*, when their exposure is less likely. The condition they place is that (a) they should have their husband's permission, (b) do not apply perfume, and (c) do not put on flashy dresses. Young women should better not come because they can cause *fitnah*. They point out that in view of (a) the Prophet ordering Umm Waraqah to lead women of her quarters, and (b) `A'isha and Umm Salamah leading women in their houses, it is *mustahab* (desirable) that women conduct congregational Prayers within their homes rather than go to the mosques. However, Abu Hanifa's students Abu Yusuf and Muhammad held the opinion that old women could attend all five prayers (Au.).

Sayyid adds, “Remaining within homes does not imply a strict stay put. The choice of words tells us with subtlety that for women home is the place where they find a state of rest, or repose. If they go out, it is because of unavoidable circumstances, but do not stay away for long. It is in her house that a woman is herself, (where she can relax), untouched by the filth outside, and in occupation that Allah has designed for her.

“This is the reason why, in its effort to prepare an atmosphere in the house where new plants sprout under a woman’s care, Islam has declared man the bread earner, making it obligatory on him, so that the mother is released from the worry, time and efforts that go with it, and pay full attention to the new generation. But, if she is burdened with the hardships of earning, with the fatigue that goes with it, punching her time at the place of work regularly, spending her energies there, then she cannot offer the best of her attention to home and its cares, to children and their needs.

“Homes of employed women miss the atmosphere of homes. They are more like hotels or inns in their atmosphere and are devoid of any fragrance found in a home. A true home

does not come into existence but at the hands of a woman, its warmth is never felt unless a woman takes charge of it. A woman working outside will not, in fact, add anything to the home but confusion, dimness and fatigue.

“Woman going out to earn is a measure to be resorted to only when dire needs demand. But, if people make use of her, despite their own ability to earn the needful, then, it is a curse that descends on people’s souls, conscience, and intellect. As for she going out, simply in order to mix with people, or to show off, or other such reasons, then, that is a step into animal’s sludge.”

74. To go about strutting among men, improperly dressed, making a show of their ornaments is, according to the commentators, *tabarruj*.

But what is the *Jahiliyyah al-Ula*? Some have thought that the reference is to the earliest *Jahiliyyah* – that which was prevalent in times between Adam and Nuh (*asws*) of duration some eight hundred years. Others have thought that the allusion is to the *Jahiliyyah* that was prevalent between Musa and `Isa. In contrast, the *Jahiliyyah* prevalent between `Isa and our Prophet is the *Jahiliyyah al-Ukhra* (Alusi and others).

Thanwi has another suggestion. Pre-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* was the *Jahiliyyah Ula*, while post-Islamic negligence of Islamic principles and teachings is *Jahiliyyah* (the latter *Jahiliyyah*; and the directive here is, do not enter into the *Jahiliyyah* (or *Jadidah*) to revive the *Jahiliyyah Ula* (or *qadimah*).

Majid comments: “*Jahiliyyah* denotes the time or state of paganism that preceded the advent of the holy Prophet – a way of life that is reasserting itself in the West. And there can be little doubt that this new paganism is far more licentious than its ancient variety.”

The above statement was issued some 60 years ago. How would Majid comment if he was told that the most advanced Western states treat such of their civilians who have sex with their daughters as just a little bit abnormal, where same sex marriages are being legalized, and whose leaders are so deceitful, and, hypocrites of such level of cunning, as to evoke repulsion in the sensible sections of their own societies? This is in sharp contrast to the *Jahiliyyah* previous to the Prophet, in which men were men; they were honest, courageous and upright. If one were to write a short account of things that happen in the “electrified West” of today

(Majid’s own words elsewhere), how would he react, when we, living in this age, are filled with disgust?

75. The directives were accepted whole-heartedly and put to action robustly. None of them ever kept any money on her hand at any time in her life, during or after the Prophet. Had the Prophet failed in his mission, but left behind just these nine women as his life-achievement, he could still be considered as a man unequaled by any other of the humankind; such was the exemplary lives these women led with him, and after him (Au.).

76. `Ikrimah was of the opinion that the Prophet’s wives were the only ones included in the term *ahl al-bayt*. But a study of other reports suggests that not only the term applied to other than them, but the directives herewith are for every Muslim woman, although they, the Prophet’s wives, were the first addressees. There are several reports in Ahmad, Ibn Jarir and others, although all with some defect or the other, but jointly strong enough to depend upon the gist, viz., other than the Prophet’s wives were included in the term *ahl al-bayt*. The report in Ahmad tells us the following: Shaddad Abu ‘Ammar said: I entered upon Wathila b. al-

Asqa'. There were people with him and were speaking of 'Ali. When they had left he said to me, "May I not tell you what I saw of the Prophet?" I said, "Please do." He said, "I went to Fatimah to inquire where 'Ali was. She said he had gone to the Prophet. So I sat there waiting for him until the Prophet came out with 'Ali, Hasan and Husain, holding each of them by his hand. He entered the house that way. Then he drew 'Ali and Fatimah closer, making them sit before him, and Hasan and Husain by his thighs. Then he threw a cloth or a shroud around and then recited this verse, "Allah only wishes to remove all abominations from you, O Members of the Household, and purify you to complete purification."

A report in Muslim confirms all other reports as authentic. It has 'A'isha saying,

عَنْ صَفِيَّةَ بِنْتِ شَيْبَةَ. قَالَتْ: قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ: خَرَجَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَدَاةً وَعَلَيْهِ مِرْطٌ مُرْخَلٌ، مِنْ شَعْرٍ أَسْوَدَ. فَجَاءَ الْحُسَيْنُ ابْنُ عَلِيٍّ فَأَدْخَلَهُ. ثُمَّ جَاءَ الْحُسَيْنُ فَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ. ثُمَّ جَاءَتْ فَاطِمَةُ فَأَدْخَلَهَا. ثُمَّ جَاءَ عَلِيٌّ فَأَدْخَلَهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: {إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا} - مسلم

"Once the Prophet came out with a striped cloak on, made of black hair. Hasan came and he took him in. Then Hussain came and he took him in. Then came

Fatimah and he took her in it. Finally, 'Ali came and he took him in too. Then he recited this verse, 'Allah only wishes to remove all abominations from you, O Members of the Household, and purify you to complete purification."

Nevertheless, another report as it appears in Muslim seems to expand the application of the term *ahl al-bayt* further than the above construe. It goes as follows:

قَالَ زُهَيْرٌ: حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ إِبرَاهِيمَ. حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو حَيَّانَ. حَدَّثَنِي يَزِيدُ بْنُ حَيَّانَ. قَالَ: زَانَطَلْتُ أَنَا وَحُصَيْنُ بْنُ سَبْرَةَ وَعُمَرُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ إِلَى زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمَ. فَلَمَّا جَلَسْنَا إِلَيْهِ قَالَ لَهُ حُصَيْنٌ: لَقَدْ لَقَيْتَ، يَا زَيْدُ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا. رَأَيْتَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. وَسَمِعْتَ حَدِيثَهُ. وَعَزَّوْتَ مَعَهُ. وَصَلَّيْتَ خَلْفَهُ. لَقَدْ لَقَيْتَ، يَا زَيْدُ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا. حَدَّثَنَا، يَا زَيْدُ، مَا سَمِعْتَ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. قَالَ: يَا ابْنَ أَخِي وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ كَبَّرْتَ سِتِّي. وَقَدَّمْ عَهْدِي. وَنَسَيْتَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي كُنْتُ أَعْي مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. فَمَا حَدَّثْتُمْ فَأَقْبَلُوا. وَمَا لَ، فَلَا تُكَلِّفُونِيهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: قَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا فِينَا حَاطِبِيًّا. بِمَاءٍ يُدْعَى حُمًّا. بَيْنَ مَكَّةَ وَالْمَدِينَةِ. فَحَمِدَ اللَّهُ وَأَتَى عَلَيْهِ، وَوَعظَ وَدَكَرَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: "أَمَا بَعْدُ. أَلَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ رَسُولَ رَبِّي فَأُجِيبُ. وَأَنَا تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ ثَقَلَيْنَ: أَوْلَهُمَا كِتَابُ اللَّهِ فِيهِ الْهُدَى وَالتَّوْرُ. فَخُذُوا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ. وَاسْتَمْسِكُوا بِهِ" فَحَثَّ عَلَيَّ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَغَبَ فِيهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: "وَأَهْلُ بَيْتِي. أَذْكَرْتُمْ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي. أَذْكَرْتُمْ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي. أَذْكَرْتُمْ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي". فَقَالَ لَهُ حُصَيْنٌ: وَمَنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ؟ يَا زَيْدُ أَلَيْسَ نِسَاؤُهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ؟ قَالَ: نِسَاؤُهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ. وَلَكِنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ بَيْنَ حُرْمِ الصَّدَقَةِ بَعْدَهُ. قَالَ: وَمَنْ هُمْ؟ قَالَ: هُمْ آلُ عَلِيٍّ،

وَأَلَّ عَقِيلٍ، وَأَلَّ جَعْفَرٍ، وَأَلَّ عَبَّاسٍ. قَالَ: كُلُّ هَؤُلَاءِ حُرِّمَ الصَّدَقَةَ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ.

Zayd b. Hayyan said, “Myself, Husain b. Sabrah, and `Umar b. Salamah went up to see Zayd b. Arqam. Husain said after we were seated, ‘O Zayd you certainly achieved great good things: you saw the Prophet, heard his words, fought with him, and Prayed behind him. Surely, O Zayd you achieved wonderfully good things. Narrate to us therefore, O Zayd, something that you (personally) heard from him.’ Zayd replied, ‘Dear cousin. By Allah I am advanced of age and have begun to forget things that I used to remember from the Prophet’s time. So, take what I narrate, and do not fret over what I do not.’ Then he said, ‘One day the Prophet stood up at the waters of Khumm between Makkah and Madinah (*Ghadir Khumm* of other reports: Au.), and said, after praises to Allah, “People! I am after all a human being. It is possible that my Lord’s messenger should arrive and I say welcome to him. I am leaving two weighty things behind me: First of the two is Allah’s Book. It has guidance and light. So hold fast unto

Allah’s Book.” He spoke quite a few words on Allah’s Book encouraging us to apply ourselves to it. Then he said, “My *ahl al-bayt*: I admonish you regarding my *ahl al-bayt*.” He said it three times. Zayd asked, ‘Who were his *ahl al-bayt*. Weren’t his wives his *ahl al-bayt*?’ He answered, ‘Of course they were his *ahl al-bayt*. But *ahl al-bayt* includes those who were prohibited from accepting charity.’ He asked, ‘Who are they?’ He replied, ‘The families of `Ali, `Aqil, Ja`far and `Abbas.’ He asked, ‘Were they all prohibited charity after him (i.e. after the Prophet)?’ He said, ‘Yes” (Ibn Kathir).

The Hanafiyy position however, points out Alusi, is that the entire Banu Hashim are *ahl al-bayt*, except of course those who died during pagandom.

Shabbir clarifies that *ahl al-bayt* are primarily the wives of the Prophet. But (since there was possibility his daughters, sons in law, and their children could be excluded by the later generations: Au.), the Prophet specifically took the four: Fatimah, `Ali, Hasan and Hussain into a cloak with himself in the center, so as to leave no doubt about it.

See *Surah Al-Ma'idah* note 188, of this work for other details of the report of *Ghadir Khumm* (Au.).

It is also recorded that after Hasan b. `Ali was appointed *Khalifah*, he was Praying in a mosque when someone – perhaps one of the Banu Asad – leapt at him with a dagger and missing the targeted part, but struck him at the hip. The wound took a month to heal at the end of which Hasan addressed the people from the pulpit saying, “People of Iraq, fear Allah in connection with us. We are your leaders and guests. And we are of the *ahl al-bayt* about whom Allah said, ‘Allah only wishes to remove all abominations from you, O Members of the Household.’” He repeated it several times and there was no one in the mosque but was in tears (Ibn Kathir).

77. The *Shi`a* have a curious way of interpreting the second part of this verse, which happens to have become their key passage: “Remain in your homes, do not make a dazzling display of the sort of the days of ignorance of the former times, offer Prayers (spiritedly and assiduously),

pay the alms, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only wishes to remove all abominations from you, O Members of the Household, and purify you to complete purification.” According to them, the term “*ahl al-bayt*” applies only to the male line coming through `Abbas and `Ali - the Prophet’s wives excluded. A second inference is that “*yutabhirukum tathira*” implies, (and hence is worthy of becoming a cardinal principle) that the Imāms arising out of them were sinless, incapable of sinning. But one will need a good amount of mind-stretching to ignore that the verse starts with “Remain in your homes,” (in feminine clause), which obviously cannot be applied to `Abbas or `Ali (Shafi`, modified). Further, if Sarah could be entitled to be “*ahl al-bayt*” of Ibrahim,

{ أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ { [هود: ٧٣]

[“ Are you amazed at your Lord’s ways? (when) Allah’s mercy and grace is upon you (O) *ahl al bayt*?!”: *Hūd*, 73], on what grounds can the wives of the Prophet be excluded? (Au.)

[34] And remember⁷⁸ what is rehearsed in your homes of Allah's revelations and the wisdom.⁷⁹ Surely, Allah was ever All-subtle, All-aware.

[35] Surely,⁸⁰ men who surrendered and women who surrender,⁸¹ believing men and believing women,⁸² devout men and devout women,⁸³ truthful men and truthful women,⁸⁴ patient men and patient women,⁸⁵ humble men and humble women,⁸⁶ charitable men and charitable women,⁸⁷ fasting men and fasting women,⁸⁸ men guarding their private parts and women guarding (them), men engaged much in Allah's remembrance and women engaged much in (Allah's) remembrance⁸⁹: Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.

وَأَذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ
اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا
﴿٣٤﴾

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ
وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ
وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ
وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ قُرُوجَهُمْ
وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا
وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

78. `A'isha and Umm Salamah, therefore, are known for having remembered the "dhikr" well. `A'isha especially, closest to the Prophet in his life, and closest to his spirit of life after him, narrated thousands of reports without which our understanding of the Islamic religion would have remained incomplete (Au.).

79. That is, the *Sunnah*.

80. Tirmidhi recorded a *Hasan Gharib* report on the authority of `Ummarah al-*Ansariyyah* that she said to the Prophet, "I do not see women addressed in the Qur'an. All the time it addresses women." So Allah revealed this verse (Qurtubi).

We also have a report in Ahmad coming from Umm Salamah.

حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن شيبه قال سمعت أم سلمة قالت: "قلت يا رسول الله ما لنا لا نذكر في القرآن كما يذكر الرجال قالت: فلم يرعني منه يوما إلا ونداؤه على المنبر - يا أيها الناس قالت وأنا أسرح رأسي فلففت شعري ثم دنوت من الباب فجعلت سمعي عند الجريز فسمعتة يقول: إن الله عز وجل يقول: إن المسلمين والمسلمات والمؤمنين والمؤمنات" (أحمد)

She said to the Prophet, "Why is it that we have not been addressed in the Qur'an as men have been addressed?" She said, "It was hardly a day, when I was doing my hair, that I heard him address the people from the pul-

pit of his mosque. I gathered my hair together and pressed my ear against the frond of the house's wall and heard him say, 'People, Allah has revealed, 'Surely, men who surrendered and women who surrendered.. to the end of the verse.'" The *hadith* is also in Nasa'i (Ibn Kathir).

81. Muslim is someone who comes into peace after having been at war (with his Creator), and who offers no resistance thereafter (to Allah's commands) - Zamakhshari.

82. *Mu'min* is someone who testifies to Allah, His Messenger, and all that demands testimony (Zamakhshari).

The words, "Surely, men who surrendered and women who surrendered, believing men and believing women" writes Ibn Kathir demonstrate that Iman and Islam are two different realities. Allah said about Bedouin Arabs (49: 14):

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ نُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُوتُوا أَسْلَمْنَا
وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

"Said the Bedouins, 'We believed.' Say, 'You have not believed, but rather, you have surrendered. Faith has not yet entered your hearts.'" And a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn* says,

"لَا يَزْنِي الزَّانِي حِينَ يَزْنِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ." (الصحيحين)

"A fornicator does not fornicate when he fornicates, while he is a believer." Iman departs from him during the act. Nevertheless, by consensus he does not become an unbeliever. Thus, faith is more specific than surrender (Ibn Kathir).

83. Qanit is someone who is actively engaged in obedience, all the time, consistently (Zamakhshari, Alusi).

Ibn Kathir defines it as "obedience accompanied by complete comfort and tranquility of heart."

84. Sadiq is someone who is true of intentions, words and deeds (Zamakhshari).

The Prophet (*saws*) has said, as recorded by Muslim,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "إِنَّ الصَّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ. وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ. وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَصْدُقُ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ صِدْقًا. وَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ، وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ، وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكْذِبُ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ كَذَابًا." (مسلم)

"Hold fast to truthfulness, for truthfulness leads to virtues and virtues lead to Paradise. A man keeps speaking the truth until he is written as 'the truthful.' And lies lead to sinfulness, and sinfulness leads to the Fire. A man

keeps speaking lies until he is written as ‘the liar’” (Ibn Kathir).

85. Sabir is someone who is steadfast in obedience as well as in abstinence (from the unlawful) - (Zamakhshari).

86. Khashi` is someone who is humble of heart and limbs (inwardly and outwardly) – Zamakhshari. It is also said that one is a Khashi` when he does not know who is on his right or left when he is in his Prayers (Alusi).

87. Mutasaddiq is one who purifies his wealth through charity (Zamakhshari). A *hadith* in the *Sahihayn* speaks of seven that will be provided with shade when there will be no shade except Allah’s. Of them, one would be someone who spent without his left hand knowing what his right hand spent. Another *hadith* says,

والصدقة تطفئ الخطيئة كما يطفئ الماء النار . رواه أبو يعلى ورجاله رجال الصحيح غير إسحاق بن أبي إسرائيل وهو ثقة مأمون

“Charity extinguishes sins just like water extinguishes fire” (Ibn Kathir). Haythami traced it as in Abu Ya`la’s collection whose narrators are all those that *Sahih* collectors used, except for one, who was trustworthy anyway (Au.).

88. Sa`im is someone who fasts ayyam al-bidh (3 days) of every month (Zamakhshari). This was the opinion of Sa`id b. Jubayr also.

Fasts are, as the Prophet has said, *Zakah* of the body (Ibn Kathir).

There is another possible connotation of the word “sa`im” as used in verse (19: 26),

إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا

“I have vowed a sawm for the All-merciful” meaning, I shall not speak to anyone.

In the words of Asad, “The term sa`im, usually rendered as ”fasting”, has here its primary connotation: “one who abstains [from anything]” or “denies to himself [anything]” cf. 19:26, where the noun sawm denotes abstinence from speech.”

89. Dhakirin are those who pass through no moment but are in remembrance of Allah - either in heart, or by the tongue, or both; or busy with recitation of the Qur`an or in search of knowledge (Zamakhshari).

A *hadith* recorded in Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu Da`ud, Nasa`i and Ibn Majah says that if a man awakens his wife deep in the night and the two offer two cycles of prayers each, then that

night they are written down as of those who “remember Allah much.”

Another transmission in Ahmad says,

عن أبي الدرداء قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: -ألا أنبئكم بخير أعمالكم؟ قال مكى: وأزكاها عند مليككم وأرفعها في درجاتكم وخير لكم من إعطاء الذهب والورق وخير لكم من أن تلقوا عدوكم فتضربوا أعناقهم ويضربوا أعناقكم؟ قالوا: وذلك ما هو يا رسول الله؟ قال: ذكر الله عز وجل. (أحمد)

“May I not tell you about the best of deeds, the most purifying with your Lord, greatest in raising your ranks, better for you than exchange of gold and silver between yourselves, that you meet your enemy tomorrow and they strike at your necks and you strike their necks?” They said, “Do tell us, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Remembrance of Allah.” [It is of Hasan status: Haythami]. Another *hadith* preserved by Ahmad records that upon being asked the Prophet said that it was that *Jihad*, fasting, Hajj, Prayer and charity that were best, which were

accompanied by remembrance of Allah (Ibn Kathir).

To sum up: Islam is surrender while Iman is conviction. They are intricately related. On the simplest plain they are like the two faces of a coin. Devotion arises out of a proper combination of the two: Iman and Islam. Truthfulness is the most prominent quality of someone endowed with the two. A liar (as Sayyid notes) does not belong to Islam. While truthfulness is a permanent quality, patience and perseverance appear in times of crisis. They indicate the depth of conviction. But neither is truthfulness a mere principle to be strictly followed, nor patience and perseverance should be stoic. There is something else to them: it is *khushu`*: fear tempered with love. Fasts help strengthen the above qualities, as well as demonstrate one’s complete surrender: body and soul. *Dhikr* is the atmosphere in which a believer lives: at work, at home, in markets, or gatherings. He carries his own environment with him. It is that of *dhikr* (Au.).

[36] And, it was not for a believing man nor a believing woman that when Allah and His Messenger had decided a matter, there should be any choice for them in their affair;⁹⁰ and whoever disobeyed Allah and His Messenger, surely strayed into a manifest error.⁹¹

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٣٦﴾

90. It is reported as cause of revelation that the Prophet sought Zaynab bint Jahsh's hand for his freed slave Zayd b. Haritha – (who was then about 45 year old: Au.). She as well as her brother refused. She thought she was better than him in lineage, (because he was a freed slave: Au.). Another report says Umm Kulthum bint `Uqbah b. Abi Mu`ayt, who belonged to the earliest emigrants (after Hūdaybiyya peace treaty: Sayyid) offered herself to the Prophet. He accepted her for Zayd which she accepted but not her homefolk who became angry and said they had initially agreed because they thought he was seeking her hand for himself. (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

It is possible, writes Sayyid, that the Prophet arranged this marriage after Zayd had divorced Zaynab.

(There were other freed slaves married to free women: Miqdad b. al-Aswad who married Daba`ah bint Zubayr, Salim who married Fatimah

the daughter of `Utbah, and Bilal who was the husband of a sister of `Abdul Rahman b. `Awf (Qurtubi).

In any case, ultimately Zaynab gave her consent and the Prophet married her off to Zayd offering, on his behalf, the following as bridal gift: 10 Dinars and 60 Dirhams as mahr, and, in addition, an outer shroud, a shirt and lower garment, a cloak, fifty measures of foodstuff and thirty measures of dates (Alusi).

The marriage gifts to her were fabulous when compared to what the Prophet offered his own wives, or his daughters, which shows how much he was pleased with the match (Au.)

There are two other reports in Ahmad recounted by Ibn Kathir. We take the version as in Haythami's Majma` al-Fawa'id, Abu Bazrah Aslami says there was a man called Julaybib who, when he encountered women, was played off and made fool of. I told my wife, "Do not let him enter upon you. If you did, I'll punish you

in such and such a way.” Now, if the *Ansar* had a widow, they would not marry her off without consulting the Prophet in hope that he might marry her himself. One of those days the Prophet (*saws*) said to a man, “Give me your daughter’s hand.” He said, “Gladly. I am honored, Messenger of Allah, a blessing for the eye!” He said, “But not for myself.” He asked, “Then for whom, Messenger of Allah?” He said “For Julaybib.” The man said, “Let me consult her mother.” He went to her and said, “The Messenger of Allah asks for your daughter’s hand.” She said, “Yes, blessing for the eye.” He said, “He is not asking her hand for himself, but for Julaybib.” She reacted, “Is it Julaybib? Is it Julaybib? By Allah, we shall not give her in marriage.

When the father got up to convey her refusal to the Prophet, the daughter asked her mother who it was who had proposed. Her mother told her who it was. She said, “Will you reject the Prophet’s proposal? Hand over my affair to him, he will not waste me away.” So the father went to the Prophet and told him what had happened. He said, “Get her ready,” and then married her off to Julaybib.

Then, the Prophet went out in one of his campaigns. When Allah (*swt*)

had given him victory, he said, “Do you miss anyone.” They said no. He said, “But to me Julaybib is missing.” He told them, “Look for him.” They found him by the side of seven men he had killed before they killed him. They said, “Messenger of Allah, here he is, by the side of seven he killed before they killed him.”

The Prophet went up to him and said, “He killed seven before he could be killed by them! He was of me and I am of him.” He said that twice or thrice. He took his head on his hands and he did not have a resting place but his hands until the grave was dug. Then he placed him in his grave.

Thabit added, “Thereafter, there was not a widow among the *Ansar* who spent more than she did” (his widow). And Is-haq b. Abdullah b. `Abdullah b. Abi Talha reported Thabit that he said, “Do you know how was it that the Prophet prayed for her?” He said, “O Allah, pour on her pouring and do not make her life laborious.” (Shorter versions of the reports concerning Julaybib are in Ahmad, Muslim and Nasa’i). It is said that when she consented to the Prophet’s choice, Allah revealed, “And, it was not for a believing man, nor a believing woman (that) when

Allah and His Messenger had decided a matter, there should be a choice for them in their affair” (Ibn Kathir).

Allah saying that He did not send the angels but for sakinah, was meant to shift the faith of the believers from angels to Himself. He sent the angels only for their sake, otherwise He was sufficient for them.

91. Sayyid adds his comments: The Prophet aimed to destroy the taboos of the pre-Islamic times and create a Muslim society whose members were to each other like the teeth of a comb, without anything to distinguish one from the other, except by piety. Before Islam, freed slaves were considered lower than the free. Zayd b. Haritha was one of them. The Prophet wished to establish complete social equality by marrying him to Zaynab, a proud Hashemite. He was starting reformation from his own home and his own clan.

According to a report the Prophet himself went up to her and told her that he wished this union. She replied, “I am not going to marry him.” He insisted, “Of course you are going to.” She asked, “May I not consult myself?” According to other reports she said, “I am better than him in lineage.”

While this was going on this verse was revealed, “It was not for a believing man nor a believing woman, that when Allah and His Messenger had decided a matter, there should be any choice for them in their affair...”

“Whatever the case,” writes Sayyid, “the verse established a rule that the first generation of Muslims accepted Islam wholeheartedly. The rule was none other than that they bend their will before Allah’s. This was the basic rule and the central principle of their lives. They realized that they, and all that they owned, belonged to Allah. He uses them as He wishes. He chooses for them what pleases Him. They are but a minor part of a large whole that He disposes as He will. He assigns them a role in the scheme of things. It is not they who choose their role. For, they do not know the whole scheme. If they are allowed to choose their role, they would choose otherwise, which would not fit into the scheme.

Therefore, it was reasonable for the earliest Muslims to surrender themselves, fully and wholly, without withholding anything. This put them in harmony with the rest of the created world. They began to float like planets and stars: each in its orbit, playing out their roles, without

slowing down or hastening – just in line with the rest of the celestial objects.

This allowed them to accept in good cheer whatever came their way by Allah's decree: neither hastily seeking the good, nor responding with grief to that which did not taste good. They waited for Allah's decree to descend in the manner of someone habituated to it, never surprised or disappointed with whatever descended, nor did they try to hasten up the results. They just walked the distance in the company of Allah's decrees, ending up where it ended. And they had no complaints, no regrets, no constriction, no pride, but always offering their best energies, wealth and efforts. They were dead sure that in this manner, they would be doing what Allah had willed, and that what Allah had willed would happen, and that every event is tied to a time and the final outcome has been designed and decreed.

Nevertheless, despite realization of the above, they did their best, expending all that they owned, without wasting time, not withholding any effort, nor any means that could be employed. Yet, they did not try what they were not capable of, had no power for, trying to be supermen,

and did not wish to be praised for what they were required to do, nor claiming to have done what they did not do.

It was this balance between Allah's decree, and the efforts of him who spent all the power that he possessed that produced the results. (It was also a fine balance between efforts and expectations). This was the balanced act that the mountains declared was beyond them and refused to bear."

(Sayyid's quote ends here).

How strong and deep the feelings against freed slaves (*mawali*: sing. *mawla*) were, at the time of the Prophet can be judged from the following incident which took place within one hundred years after the Prophet's demise. One of the *mawali* married a girl from the Banu Sulaym tribe. So, Muhammad b. Bashir – a Kharijite – traveled to Madinah to meet its governor Ibrahim b. Bishar b. Isma`il to complain of the marriage. The governor asked the *mawla* to present himself. When he came, he separated between the husband and wife, whipped the man a hundred lashes, and shaved his head, beard and eyebrows ("Duha al-Islam," Muhammad Amin). Incidents of this kind and many others that history has recorded and which led

[37] And when you were saying to him whom Allah had shown favor, and you had shown favor,⁹² 'Retain your wife to yourself and fear Allah.' You were concealing in yourself⁹³ what Allah was to disclose.⁹⁴ And, you were fearing the people although Allah had better right that you should fear Him.⁹⁵ So, when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her,⁹⁶ We gave her to you in marriage,⁹⁷ so that there should not be any hindrance for the believers with regard to the wives of their adopted sons,⁹⁸ when they have accomplished what they would of them. And, Allah's command had to be fulfilled.

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

to the struggle between the free and the former slaves (although many of good lineage) in the Abbasid state, tells us something about the level of reformation the Prophet achieved when he got a free woman married to a *mawla* (Au.).

92. The allusion is to Zayd b. Haritha. Allah (*swt*) had favored him by allowing him company of the Prophet and guiding him to Islam. Indeed, he was the earliest of believers. The Prophet (*saws*) had favored him by freeing him from slavery and then adopting him as his son. He was so close to him that he used to be referred to as "the beloved." In fact, even his son Usama was referred to as "the beloved, the son of the beloved." 'A'isha said, in a report preserved by Ahmad, that,

"Whenever the Prophet sent a group in campaign, he made him the leader if he happened to be among them; and that, had he remained alive, the Prophet would have surely declared him his successor" (Ibn Kathir).

A brief account concerning Zayd is as follows. He belonged to the North Arabian tribe of Banu Kalb. He was taken captive as a child, bought by Hakim b. Hizam b. Khuwaylid at the Makkan market. He gifted him to her aunt Khadijah. Khadijah gifted him to the Prophet before he was commissioned. He freed him and declared him his son. One of those days Zayd's uncle happened to be in Makkah. He looked hard at Zayd but was not too sure. He asked him, "What's your name lad?"

He answered, "Zayd." He asked, "Whose son?" He said "Haritha." He asked, "Whose son?" He answered, "Shurahbil Kalbi." He asked, "What's your mother's name?" He answered, "Su`da; and I was with my maternal uncles in Tayy." His uncle grabbed him and hugged him. He sent for his brother and others and they came. They asked him who his master was and were told that it was Muhammad ibn `Abdullah. So they went up to him and requested his release. He said, "Let him in. If he prefers you, you can take him." When he came he asked him, "Do you know who these people are?" He said, "Yes. This is my father, this is my brother and this is my uncle." The Prophet asked him, "What kind of man I was with you?" Zayd began to cry and asked, "Why do you ask that?" He replied, "I give you the choice. If you wish to go with them you are free. But if you decide to stay with me, then you know how I have been to you." He said, "I am not going to choose anyone else." His uncle pulled him and said, "Zayd! Do you prefer slavery to living with your father and uncle?" He said, "Yes, by God, if it is the slavery of Muhammad." At that the Prophet said, "Bear witness that I will inherit him and he will inherit me." Then onward he was always referred

to as Zayd b. Muhammad until Allah revealed (33: 5), "Call them by their father's names." It is said that he used to attend Quraysh circles too. (When the Prophet sought Zaynab's hand for him, he was already married with a lady called Umm Ayman, who had borne him Usamah: Asad). The Prophet had to find a match for Zaynab because she was one of the family, and husbandless (Au.).

Scholars have pointed out that since Zayd lost the honor to be referred to as Zayd b. Muhammad, and felt quite aggrieved about it, Allah compensated him by registering his name in the Qur`ān for Muslims to recite throughout history. No other Companion shares this honor with Zayd. (In the same vein we have another example. When the Prophet told Ubayy b. Ka`b that he had been ordered to listen to his recitation, he wept and asked, "Have I been named?") Zayd died in the Mutah encounter along with Ja`far and `Abdullah ibn Rawaha. They led the Muslim force in that battle and gained martyrdom one after another (Qurtubi).

93. Ibn Jarir documents Qatadah's strange opinion, seconded by none, to the effect that although the Prophet was exhorting Zayd to re-

tain Zaynab, he was (secretly) wishing that he should divorce her. He records another freakish report by Ibn Wahab (who was not a Companion) to the effect that once the Prophet went to Zayd's house and, as he stood at the door, a waft of wind played with the curtain, and he saw Zaynab with her face uncovered. (According to a version of Muqatil b. Hayyan, he saw her in a single gown, with no other apparel on: Qurtubi). She pleased him and the thought came to him that he should marry her. Qatadah's opinion is obviously weak, for, if the Prophet had to play double games, he would have played them on his adversaries at Makkah and Madinah. It is apparent from his life and character that he was artless, straight-forward and upright, who never said something that he did not mean. As for Ibn Wahab's story, he does not state the source of his story. By the criteria set by *hadith* scholars such reports belong to the trash. Hence no commentator ever took notice of them. The reports are incongruous too. Zaynab was closely related to the Prophet. They were from the same extended family. (She was a daughter of Umaymah, who was a daughter of `Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather; that is, a maternal cousin: Shabbir). He must

have been seeing her all the time, right from childhood, including in recent times since *Hijab* commandments were revealed a few months after her separation from Zayd. We might, however, remind ourselves that it was the habit of the earliest Muslim scholars to faithfully report everything they received, leaving it to the listeners to conduct their own research if they so wished, and accept or reject what they reported. So, Qatadah reported what he heard: whatever his source. But none of the major commentators such as Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Mujahid, Sa'id b. Musayyib, Sa'id ibn Jubayr or their students have said anything of this sort (Au.).

Alusi adds: Qadi `Iyad has similarly discounted the narrative of Ibn Wahab as a story spun for ears with a taste for gossip. In fact, there are a few more. One of them says that after his visit when the Prophet was returning, Zayd met him on the way who heard him say words that he couldn't make out. When he went home and was told by Zaynab of the Prophet's visit, he smelled something. He went back to him and said, "Apostle of Allah. Why did you not enter my house in my absence? Maybe you would have liked Zaynab, and I would have divorced her." Ac-

According to another story, Alusi continues, Zayd met the Prophet in the street and found him saying words of glorification to Allah. When he went home and learnt of the Prophet's visit to his house, he guessed that Zaynab must have entered his heart (hence the glorification). So he told Zaynab, "Why should I not divorce you so that the Prophet can marry you?" She replied, "I fear you will divorce me but he will not marry me." (Apart from contradiction between the various versions, an important element is missing: Who was it of the Companions who had accompanied the Prophet to Zayd's house to report what had happened? As for glorification, was there a time when the Prophet was not glorifying Allah, chanting His greatness, and seeking forgiveness? Finally, if Zayd had ever discovered in the Prophet any propensity for such behavior, he would have long back packed and joined his northern tribe - Au.).

None the less, one of the contemporary commentators has added his own "little bit" to the stories. He asserts that it was Zaynab who was in love with the Prophet since long, but had suppressed it and married Zayd simply because of the Prophet's insistence. These additions tell us how pre-disposed ears are to spicy stories (Au.).

Ibn Kathir discounts the above as well as a few others that he says the earlier scholars have transmitted, but through undependable chain of narrators.

Ibn al-'Arabi has pointed out that the Prophet saw Zaynab morning and evening. Why did he not fall in love with her until she had spent a few months with Zayd?

The explanation that 'Ali b. al-Husayn (Zayn al-'Abidin) offered is that (the Prophet, after having compelled Zaynab to marry Zayd) learned through Revelation that he would be required to marry Zaynab. But he felt quite uncomfortable about it, fearing people's comments that he married his adopted son's former wife. Therefore, when Zayd went to him complaining that Zaynab mistreated him, spoke to him roughly, humiliated him, and so on, he advised him to fear Allah and retain his wife (so that he may not have to marry her if she was divorced). So Allah said, "You were concealing in yourself what Allah was to reveal," that is, the fact that you will be required to marry her if she is divorced. "And, you were fearing the people although Allah had better right that you should fear Him," that is, you should have paid no attention to the expected

criticism of the people – in this case, the hypocrites. This, writes Qurtubi, is the right explanation which most commentators, such as *Zuhri*, Qadi Bakr b. `Ala al-Qushayri, Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabiyy and others have accepted. Hakeem Tirmidhi has stated in his *Nawadir al-Usul* that this is a gem of an explanation from `Ali b. Hussain. And Nuhhas said, adds Qurtubi, that the Prophet was at no fault for concealing the news in his heart that he might be asked to marry Zaynab. This can be deduced from the fact that Allah did not direct the Prophet to seek forgiveness, nor censured him in any other way.

`A'isha is reported in major *hadith* works that if the Prophet could conceal anything of the Revelation, he would have concealed this one, "You were concealing in yourself what Allah was to reveal. And, you were fearing the people although Allah had better right that you should fear Him. So, when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her, We gave her to you in marriage" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

On the topic under discussion, Abdullah al-`Ati's note, made in his "Family Structure in Islam" should be of some interest:

"This story (of the reported circumstances of the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab) is exciting, embarrassing, and extremely doubtful if not altogether incredible. It is exciting because it has stirred many critical comments and accusations by Western writers as well as counter accusations and comments by Muslim writers. It is embarrassing because a great many scholars have labored tirelessly to build a case for or against the person of Muhammad in order to confound truth with legend, innocently or otherwise, or to disentangle the one from the other. It is even more embarrassing to the social scientist who wants to choose between the sociological and the physio-psychological explanation.

"Choosing the former is closer to the norms of social science and usually promises a greater explanatory potential. But in this particular case, it may displease the conventional students of Islam who are in the habit of looking at everything related to Islam as divine, super-social, and above criticism, and also those who tend to view the builders of the Islamic system as socially insensitive distorters and the system itself as lax aberration.

“The story itself may be partly apocryphal, since it is not reported in the early sources. The Qur’ān relates only the essential facts. It tells of Zaynab’s reluctance to marry Zayd, and of the strained domestic life of the couple. In this version Muhammad exhorts Zayd to keep his wife and to be mindful of Allah – an admonition motivated by Muhammad’s fear of the people’s expected reaction to the dissolution of a marriage which he had encouraged. “Significantly, the Qur’ān criticizes the Prophet’s motive and reminds him to fear God’s displeasure, rather than that of the people.

“The Qur’ānic story concludes with Zayd’s divorce of Zaynab and her lawful re-marriage to Muhammad. Observers who examine the story in its social context find it incredible and suggest, according to Watt, that it ‘must be taken with a grain of salt.’ The story contains too many elements which do not accord with better verified circumstances: Muhammad’s life style, character and career, his community role and age at the time, his continued relations with both Zaynab and Zayd, before as well as after their unsuccessful marriage; Zaynab’s advancing age; the long institutionalization of adoption; finally, Muhammad’s sensitivity

to his contemporaries’ censure – all such considerations cast doubt on the story of a passionate stroke of love. Aside from the credibility or incredibility of the story itself, it is unlikely that an age-old social institution like adoption, could be abrogated for such transient personal motives” (p. 25-26, American Trust Publications).

94. Allah promised that He would reveal what the Prophet was concealing. So, Allah’s revelation should determine what it was that the Prophet was concealing: whether it was his love for Zaynab or it was his fear that Allah will oblige him to take Zaynab as his wife? The revelation informed us, although implicitly, that it was the latter, through words: “So, when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her, We gave her to you in marriage” (Rawa’i’).

95. ‘Ali b. Husayn said that Allah had informed the Messenger that ultimately Zaynab would be his wife (Ibn Jarir).

Thanwi’s comment might be noted: This directive applies to cases where a religious need is affected. If it is not affected, but rather, there is fear of commotion among the people, then, one might make note of it and not blindly disregard the people’s criti-

cism. A case in point is the intended reconstruction of the Ka`ba, to include the Hatim, but the idea was ultimately abandoned because it was legitimately feared that it would lead to *fitnah* among the laity. This is not the kind of fear of the people that is likely to be censured.

96. One of the implications of the words is, “when Zayd had no desire left in him for her.”

97. `Abdullah b. Jahsh reported that when `A'isha and Zaynab debated each other's position with reference to the Prophet, Zaynab would say, “And I was married to him up in the heavens” (Ibn Jarir). The report is also in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir).

Muslim, Nasa'i and Imām Ahmad recorded the following details. It speaks volumes about the faith and trust between the Prophet and Zayd. Anas b. Malik said, “When Zaynab had been through her waiting period, the Prophet told Zayd b. Haritha (her former husband), “Go to her, and give her my proposal.” He went up to her house and found her fermenting dough. When he saw her, as he himself said, “I was filled with awe,” (because she was going to be the Prophet's wife). He reported, “I could not dare tell her that the Prophet wished to take her as a wife.

So, I showed my back to her turning on my heels. I said, ‘Zaynab! The Prophet has sent his word to you.’ She replied, ‘I am not going to do anything of this sort without seeking to know my Lord's wish.’ Then she stood up in her Prayer-corner. But revelation came down and the Prophet entered into her house without seeking her permission (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

98. In pre-Islamic times an adopted son was treated as real with all the implications that went with such relationship. But Allah did not approve of real-time effects on relationship of such false premise. So He married his adopted son's former wife to the Prophet in order to leave no prejudice in the hearts of the believers against any such relationship. Such a measure was necessary in view of the custom being so deeply rooted (Ibn Kathir).

The implication of this piece is clear: It was not to appease the Prophet that he was given Zaynab in marriage, but rather to establish a rule (Razi).

Mawdudi adds: The deep rooted custom of treating an adopted son as real son, would have continued even if commandment declaring such a relationship as null and void had been

[38] There could be no inconvenience for the Prophet in what Allah imposed on him: the way of Allah with those who went earlier;⁹⁹ and Allah's command was a decree determined.¹⁰⁰

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ
اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَعْدًا مُقَدَّرًا ﴿٣٨﴾

sent down. Since no Prophet was to follow, Allah made His last Prophet to break the taboo, once and for all, most forcefully, to kill the custom and bury it in the sand.

This *ayah* places the doubting into a tight spot. If he believes that the Prophet authored the Qur'ān, then, what purpose did the *ayah* serve him when it said, "And you were concealing in yourself what Allah was to reveal. And, you were fearing the people although Allah had better right that you should fear Him"?

99. The allusion could be to the ways of the Prophets of past in matters of multiple wives: Da'ud and Sulayman are cases in point who had several wives (Kashshaf, Qurtubi), or could have a general import as pointed out by Asad, who writes, "the prophets who preceded Muhammad, in all of whom, as in him, all personal desires coincided with their willingness to surrender themselves to God.."

100. That is, Allah's decree had to come to pass. Nothing could have

prevented it or averted it. What He wills, takes place, and what He does not will, does not happen (Ibn Kathir). That is, way back before the creation, it had been decreed that the Prophet should marry Zaynab (Au.).

Imām Razi has an interesting note on *Qada' wa Qadr*. *Qada'* is that which is originally intended. *Qadr* on the other hand is that which occurs as its consequence, but not the purpose for which the command was originally promulgated. It is similar to a man traveling to a town. We can refer to his primary purpose as the *Qada'*. On the way he enters into a village (and might meet with an evil therein: Au.). This entry is by the *Qadr* that he had not intended as the primary purpose of the journey. *Qada'* is always good, while all that is evil in the world is by (Allah's) *Qadr*.

But this requires some more thought and reconciliation. The Prophet said in the famous *hadith* Jibril, "You should believe in *Qadr*: the good of it and the bad of it" (Au.).

[39] Those who deliver Allah's messages, and fear Him, and fear none other than Allah,¹⁰¹ - and sufficient is Allah as a Reckoner.

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,¹⁰² but Messenger of Allah and Seal of the Prophets.¹⁰³ And ever was Allah of all things knowing.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

101. (That should be the way believers should conduct themselves: fearless of any criticism and unmindful of the consequences: Au.). We have a *hadith* in Ahmad on the authority of Abu Sa`id al-*Khudri*. The Prophet said,

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا يَخْتَفِرُ أَحَدُكُمْ نَفْسَهُ. قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! كَيْفَ أَحَدُنَا نَفْسَهُ؟ قَالَ (بَرَى أَمْرًا، اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِيهِ مَقَالٌ، ثُمَّ لَا يَقُولُ فِيهِ. فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَقُولَ فِي كَذَا وَكَذَا؟ فَيَقُولُ: حَشِينَةُ النَّاسِ. فَيَقُولُ: فَأَيَّايَ. كُنْتُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَى (ابن ماجه: في الزوائد: إسناده صحيح رجاله ثقات)

“Let not one of you belittle himself in that he sees a commandment of Allah (that is being ignored) and which needs to be spoken against, but he does not say it. Allah will say (on Judgment Day), ‘What prevented you that you should speak out?’ He will reply, ‘My Lord, I feared the people.’ He will reply, ‘I had

greater right to be feared.’” The report is also in Ibn Majah and `Abdul Razzaq’s (Musannaf) – Ibn Kathir.

The above version is from Ibn Majah whose transmitters were trusted by Haythami.

102. Although the Prophet had sons, they all died in their infancy and so the description is accurate: he was “not the father of any of your men” (Ibn Jarir), but rather a spiritual father of his followers (Asad).

The *ayah* makes a statement as well as predicts the death in infancy of the Prophet’s future son Ibrahim, through Mariyah. She was a slave girl gifted to him by the Muqawqis of Egypt two or three years after the revelation of this verse. The Prophet’s earlier sons too, through Khadijah – Qasim, Tayyib and Tahir – had already died at Makkah in their infancy (Au.).

Thanwi, himself a *Sufi*, offers a rejoinder to the pseudo-*Sufis* among whom it is common that the Sheikh is regarded as the spiritual father, and one of the upshots is that a woman-disciple does not observe *Hijab* in his presence. This, warns Thanwi, is unacceptable. The Prophet was a true spiritual father of the *Ummah*, yet he observed the rules.

103. If it is asked, how could Muhammad be the final Prophet when he himself predicted that `Isa (*asws*) will appear at the end of times? The answer is that (`Isa was commissioned earlier than Muhammad: Ibn Kathir) his personal tenure is over. When he comes again, it will be as a follower of the *Shari`ah* brought by our Prophet (Kashshaf, Shafi` and others).

Finality of the Prophet

It might be noted that Allah did not say, “*Khatam al-Rusul*,” but rather “*KhatamunNabiyyin*.” *Khatamun-Nibiyyin* denies that there should be any rasul thereafter, for, every rasul is a *nabiyy*, but every *nabiyy* is not a rasul. The deduction, in view of the fact that a *nabiyy* is a lower order envoy than rasul, is that denial of the advent of any *nabiyy* is a greater denial of the advent of any rasul. There are numerous *ahadith* on the topic of our Prophet being the seal of the

Prophets. One in Ahmad has Ubay b. Ka`b reporting his father that the Prophet (*saws*) said,

عَنْ الطَّيْلِبِ بْنِ أَبِي بِنِ كَعْبٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: “مَثَلِي فِي النَّبِيِّينَ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنَى دَارًا فَأَحْسَنَهَا وَأَكْمَلَهَا وَجَمَلَهَا وَتَرَكَ مِنْهَا مَوْضِعَ لَبْنَةٍ، فَجَعَلَ النَّاسُ يَطُوفُونَ بِالْبِنَاءِ وَيَعْجَبُونَ مِنْهُ، وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْ تَمَّ مَوْضِعُ تِلْكَ اللَّبْنَةِ وَأَنَا فِي النَّبِيِّينَ بِمَوْضِعِ تِلْكَ اللَّبْنَةِ” . . . وَهَذَا الْإِسْنَادُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: “إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كُنْتُ إِمَامَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَخَطِيئَتُهُمْ وَصَاحِبَ شَفَاعَتِهِمْ غَيْرَ فَخْرٍ”. (قال أبو عيسى: هذا حديث حسن صحيح غريب.)

“My example among the Prophets is like that of a man who built a house, and did it well, complete and beautiful. However, he left the space of a single brick blank. So the people started going around the house admiring it but remarking, ‘Only if this blank space of a brick could be filled!’ Lo! Among the Prophets I am that brick.”

On the same authority, the Prophet also said, “On the Judgment day I shall be the leader of the Prophets, their speaker, and one to intercede – but no pride (in that).”

Tirmidhi declare it *Hasan Sahih*. The *Sahihayn* also have a similar version in their collections. Another report in Ahmad is on the authority of Anas. The Prophet said,

حدثنا أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ”إِنَّ الرِّسَالَةَ وَالنَّبُوَّةَ قَدْ انْقَطَعَتْ فَلَا رَسُولَ بَعْدِي وَلَا نَبِيَّ. قَالَ فَشَقَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَقَالَ: لَكِنَّ الْمَيْسِرَاتِ. فَقَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا الْمَيْسِرَاتُ، قَالَ رُؤْيَا الْمُسْلِمِ وَهِيَ جُزْءٌ مِنْ أَجْزَاءِ النَّبُوَّةِ“. (قال الترمذي: هذا حديث حسن صحيح غريب)

“Messengership and Prophethood have terminated. So, there will be no Messenger, nor a Prophet after me.” The narrator added, “That sounded a bit hard on the people. So he added, ‘Except for good tidings.’ They asked, ‘What are good tidings O Messenger of Allah?’ He answered, ‘A Muslim’s dreams. It is part of Prophethood.’ Tirmidhi declared it Hasan, *Sahib*, Gharib. (Meaning: through one chain of narration it is Gharib, but *Sahib* through another chain, while Gharib through a third chain: Au.).

Muslim and Tirmidhi have also documented that the Prophet said,

عن أبي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: فُضِّلْتُ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ بِسِتِّ: أُعْطِيتُ جِوَامِعَ الْكَلِمِ وَنَصِرْتُ بِالرُّعْبِ وَأَحْلَيْتُ لِي الْغَنَائِمَ وَجُعِلْتُ لِي الْأَرْضُ مَسْجِداً وَطَهوراً وَأُرْسِلْتُ إِلَى الْخَلْقِ كَافَّةً وَحْتَمَ بِي النَّبِيُّونَ (هذا الحديث حسن صحيح).

“I have been given preference over other Prophets in six things: I have been given short and

meaningful words, I have been helped through awe, booty has been made lawful for me, (bare) earth has been made a place of prostration and a means of cleanliness, I have been sent to the entire mankind, and (the series of) Prophets was terminated with me.”

A report preserved by Ahmad says,

”إِنِّي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ لِحَاتِمِ النَّبِيِّينَ وَإِن آدَمَ لَمُنْجِدَلٍ فِي طِينَتِهِ“ (أحمد)

“I was the seal of the Prophets with Allah, while Adam lay in dust.”

Zuhri has been recorded (in the *Sahihayn*: H. Ibrahim) as reporting,

عَنِ الرَّهْرِيِّ. سَمِعَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ مُطْعِمٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: ”أَنَا مُحَمَّدٌ. وَأَنَا أَحْمَدُ. وَأَنَا الْمَاجِي الَّذِي يُنْحَى بِي الْكُفْرُ. وَأَنَا الْخَائِشِرُ الَّذِي يُخْشَرُ النَّاسُ عَلَيَّ عَقِيبِي. وَأَنَا الْعَاقِبُ“ (مسلم)

“I have several names: I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am Mahi (the Eraser) who will erase unbelief, I am Hashir, (the Gatherer) after whom Allah will gather the people (on Judgment Day), and I am `Aqib (the last after whom there will be no Prophet)” - Ibn Kathir.

[41] O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembering. ¹⁰⁴ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And glorify Him morning and evening. وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

On the other hand, continues Ibn Kathir, those who stood up as false prophets, carried their own signs of falseness. They were utmost in falsehood, lies and immorality in all that they said or did, e.g., Musaylimah the Liar of Ymamah or Al-Aswad al-Ansi of Yemem. In contrast, Prophets were utmost in righteousness, truthfulness, wisdom, uprightness and justice in all that they said or did.

Mufti Shafi`, who has a whole book on the topic, adds the following here. The Prophet (*saws*) said,

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. قَالَ: "كَانَتْ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ تَسُوسُهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ، كُلَّمَا هَلَكَ نَبِيٌّ خَلَفَهُ نَبِيٌّ، وَإِنَّهُ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي. وَسَتَكُونُ خُلَفَاءُ فَيَكْثُرُونَ" (صحيحين)

"Children of Israel were led by prophets. Whenever a prophet died, another followed him. However, there will be no prophet after me. But there will be rightly guided caliphs: many of them."

The report is in the *Sahihayn* and other collections.

In his book, *Al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*, Imām Ghazzali has also stressed on this point and has said that whoever tries to interpret the verse in any other way is speaking the kind of junk that demands that he be declared unbeliever because the *Ummah* has reached consensus over the issue of the finality of the Prophet's Messenger-ship. Qadi `Iyad has expressed similar opinions in his *Shifa`*.

104. Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah have recorded through Abu Darda' the Prophet as having said,

"أَلَا أُتْبِئُكُمْ بِخَيْرِ أَعْمَالِكُمْ وَأَزْكَاهَا عِنْدَ مَلِيكِكُمْ وَأَرْفَعَهَا فِي دَرَجَاتِكُمْ وَخَيْرٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِتْفَاقِ الذَّهَبِ وَالْوَرِقِ وَخَيْرٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْ تَلْقَوْا عَدُوَّكُمْ فَتَضْرِبُوا أَعْنَاقَهُمْ وَيَضْرِبُوا أَعْنَاقَكُمْ؟ قَالُوا بَلَى، قَالَ ذَكَرُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى"

"Should I not tell you about the best of deeds, purest with Your Lord, highest in your ranks, better than that you be given gold and silver, and better than that you meet your enemy and you sever their necks and they sever your necks?" They asked, "What

is it Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “Allah’s remembrance.”

Another report of Ahmad, which Tirmidhi declared *Hasan Gharib*, has it that,

عن عبد الله بن بسر يقول: - جاء أعرابيان إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال أحدهما يا رَسُولَ الله أَيُّ النَّاسِ خَيْرٌ؟ قَالَ مَنْ طَالَ عُمْرُهُ وَحَسَنَ عَمَلُهُ. وقال الآخر يا رسول الله إن شرائع الإسلام قد كثرت عليّ فمُرني بأمر أتثبت به فقال لا ”يزال لسانك رطباً بذكر الله عز وجل“.

“Two Bedouins came to the Prophet. One of them said to him, ‘Messenger of Allah? Who is the best of the people?’ He answered, ‘He who lived long and whose deeds were righteous.’ The other said, ‘Messenger of Allah. Islamic laws are many upon us. So, tell me something to which I can hold fast.’ He replied, ‘Let your tongue be wet with the remembrance of Allah.’”

Imām Ahmad recorded the Prophet’s following words,

عن أبي سعيد: - عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال أكثروا ذكر الله حتى يقولوا مجنون. (وفيه دراج وقد ضعفه جماعة، وضعفه غير واحد، وبقيّة رجال أحد إسنادي أحمد ثقات: الهيثمي).

“Mention Allah so much in His remembrance that the people begin to say, ‘Crazy.’” (Haythami said that of the two narratives

in Ahmad, one has a good chain except for one narrator, declared weak by many: Au.).

Another report is from Tabarani whose status could not be checked. It says:

عن ابن عباس قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أذكروا الله ذكراً يقول المنافقون إنكم تراؤون

“Mention Allah so much that the hypocrites begin to say that you are trying to show off.”

Yet another report in Ahmad reports the Prophet as having said,

وعن عبد الله بن عمرو قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ”ما من قوم جلسوا مجلساً لم يذكروا الله فيه إلا رأوه حسرة يوم القيامة“. (رواه أحمد ورجال رجال الصحيح: الهيثمي).

“No people who got together in an assembly, in which they did not remember Allah, but will see it (as a source of) regret on the Day of Judgment.” (Haythami declared it as with a chain of narration of *Sahih* works: Au.).

Interpreting this verse, Ibn `Abbas remarked: “Allah did not declare any devotion as obligatory but placed a limit for it. Further, He allowed them excused in difficult situations. But not *dhikr*. He did not set any limit for it: a point at which it could be terminated, unless someone is

[43] He it is who confers blessing on you, and His angels (also),¹⁰⁵ to bring you out from darknesses into light; and He was ever Kind upon the believers.¹⁰⁶

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] Their greeting the day they meet Him will be 'peace;' and He has prepared for them a noble reward.

كَيْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ سَلَامًا وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٤٤﴾

overcome by circumstances. He said (4: 103),

فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ (النساء ١٠٣ -)

'Remember Allah, standing, sitting and on your sides.' It is to be done at night and day, on land and sea, while journeying and at home, in wealth and poverty, during health and illness, in open and in secret – in all situations and every circumstance. If you do this, He will send peace on you and angels will pray for you" (Ibn Kathir).

105. Peace by the angels implies their prayers for men's forgiveness. Allah said elsewhere (40: 7-9),

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ (غافر: ٧-٩)

"Those who bear the `Arsh and those that are around it, chant praises of their Lord. They believe in Him and seek forgiveness for those who have believed (saying), 'Our Lord! You have encompassed everything with mercy and knowledge.' Therefore, forgive those who repented and followed Your path, and save them from the punishment of the blazing fire. And, Our Lord, admit them into the gardens of `Adn that You have promised those who reformed: of their parents, their spouses, and their offspring. Verily, You are the Mighty, the Wise. And, save them from the evils'" (Qurtubi in parts, Ibn Kathir).

106. (The Companions were not blind followers, in the manner of the Western and Eastern masses following their leaders blindly: Au.). Imām Ahmad reports,

عن أنس قال: مر النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ونفر من أصحابه وصيبي في الطريق، فلما رأته أمه القوم خشيت على ولدها أن يوطأ، فأقبلت تسعى وتقول:

[45] O Prophet! We have sent you indeed as a witness,¹⁰⁷ a bearer of glad tiding and a war-ner.¹⁰⁸

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا
وَنَذِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

ابني ابني، وسعت فأخذته فقال القوم: يا رسول الله ما كانت هذه لتلقي ابنها في النار، قال: فخففهم (وهوّن عليهم الأمر) النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وقال: ”ولا الله يلقي حبيبه في النار.“ (رواه أحمد والبخاري ورجلها رجال الصحيح: الهيثمي).

Once the Prophet and a few Companions were passing by when a child tried to cross the street. When his mother noticed it, she feared his trampling and rushed forward crying out, ‘My child! My child.’ She hurried down and snatched it away. The Companions asked, ‘Messenger of Allah. This woman is not expected to throw her child into a fire!? The Prophet comforted them by saying, ‘No by Allah, He will not cast His beloved into the Fire.’” The report meets with the requirements of Bukhari and Muslim although none of the six preserved it. (Haythami regarded its transmitters as trustworthy: Au.). Nevertheless, a report in Bukhari says that once the Prophet saw a prisoner woman picking up her lost child and squeezing it to her bosom and breast-feeding it. He remarked, “By Allah, Al-

lah is kinder than this woman is upon her child” (Ibn Kathir).

107. Witness:

The Prophet was a witness over this *Ummah* in this life, and will be over all other nations on the Day of Judgment (Razi and others).

Some misguided people have conjectured that since the Prophet is alive in his grave, he witnesses the deeds of his followers. This is refuted by the *hadith* in major collections that on the Day of Judgment some people will come to him at the Pond but will be pulled away by the angels. He will protest,

يَا رَبِّ أَصْحَابِي. أَصْحَابِي. فَيُقَالُ: إِنَّكَ لَا تَدْرِي
مَا أَخَذْتُوا بَعْدَكَ

“My Lord, my companions, my companions.” He will be told, “You do not know what they did after you.”

How then can “shahid” be interpreted as one who watches over the deeds of his followers? Further, there is no contradiction between our position and the reports that tell us that this *Ummah’s* deeds are presented to

the Prophet on weekly basis. Such presentation, it might be noted, is of deeds, as a whole, and not of those who perform them so that he can know who does what (Alusi).

Shahid in fact carries several possible implications. One of them could be in the sense of the Prophet verbally and practically testifying to the truth of the Message he had brought (Mawdudi).

Yusuf Ali has the following commentary: "The Prophet was sent by Allah in five capacities. Three are mentioned in this verse, and the other two in the verse following. (1) He comes as a Witness to all men about the spiritual truths which had been obscured by ignorance or superstition, or by the dust of sectarian controversy. He did not come to establish a new religion or sect. He came to teach Religion. He is also a witness to Allah about men's doings and how they receive Allah's Message: see iv. 41 and n. 560. (2) He comes as a bearer of the Glad Tidings of the Mercy of Allah. No matter how far men may have transgressed, they have hope if they believe, repent, and live a good life. (3) He also comes as a Warner to those who are heedless. This life will not last. There is a Future Life, and that is all-important..

The two other capacities in which the Prophet was sent are here specified. (4) He comes as one who has a right to invite all men to repentance and the forgiveness of sins: but he does this, not of his own authority, but by the permission and authority given to him by Allah. This is said lest people may deify the Prophet as they did with other Prophets before him. The personal responsibility of each individual remains, but the Prophet can lead him on the Right and help him. (5) The Prophet also comes as a Light or a Lamp (Siraj) to illuminate the whole world. In lxxi. 16 and elsewhere the same word (Siraj) is used for the sun. The comparison is apt. When the sun appears, all the lesser lights pale before its light. And the Message of Islam, i.e., of the Universal Religion, is to diffuse Light everywhere."

108. Bukhari and Imām Ahmad preserved the following: `Ata ibn Yasar met with `Abdullah `Amr ibn al-`As and asked him to describe the Prophet as described in the *Tawrah*. `Abdullah said,

عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ قَالَ لَقِيتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَمْرِو
بْنَ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قُلْتُ أَحْبَبْتَنِي عَنْ صِفَةِ
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي التَّوْرَةِ قَالَ أَجَلٌ
وَاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمَوْصُوفٌ فِي التَّوْرَةِ بِبَعْضِ صِفَتِهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَحِزْرًا

[46] And a caller to Allah by His leave,¹⁰⁹ and a bright lamp.¹¹⁰

وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] And give glad tiding to the believers, that for them is from Allah a great bounty.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] And follow not the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and disregard the annoyance from them; place your trust in Allah; Allah suffices as a Disposer (of affairs).

وَلَا تَطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَدَعْ أَذَاهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

لِلْأُمِّيِّينَ أَنْتَ عَبْدِي وَرَسُولِي سَمَّيْتُكَ الْمُتَوَكَّلَ لَيْسَ بِقَطْرٍ وَلَا عَلِيظٍ وَلَا سَخَابٍ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ وَلَا يَدْفَعُ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَلَكِنْ يَغْفُو وَيَعْفُورُ وَلَنْ يَقْبِضَهُ اللَّهُ حَتَّى يُقِيمَ بِهِ الْمِيزَةَ الْعَوْجَاءَ بِأَنْ يَقُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَيَفْتَحَ بِهَا أَعْيُنًا عُمْيًا وَأَدَانًا صُمًّا وَهَلُوبًا غُلْمًا (البخاري)

“Such qualities have been described of the Prophet in *Tawrah* as a few of which are also in the Qur’ān. It says, “O Prophet, We have indeed raised you as a witness, a bearer of glad tiding, a warner, and a savior of the unlettered. You are My slave and Messenger. I have named you Mutawakkil: neither harsh nor severe, neither noisy in the markets nor one responding to evil with evil; but rather someone who overlooks and forgives. Allah will not deal him death until a crooked people have been straightened up by saying ‘there is no deity save Allah.’ Thus he will open

blind eyes, deaf ears, and closed hearts” (Ibn Kathir).

Bukhari has a similar report at another place but where he names ‘Abdullah b. Salam as the person who was asked, which sounds more accurate since it was ‘Abdullah ibn Salam (a former Jew: Au.), who knew the *Torah* (Shawkani). It is possible that ‘Abdullah b. ‘Amr heard from ‘Abdullah ibn Salam, since, in either case, this is not a statement of the Prophet (Au.).

109. A Prophet’s call is not like an invitation by an ordinary person. The words “by His leave” imply that he has the authority of Allah with him. His call is the call of Allah and opposition or rebellion to it is opposition and rebellion to Allah (Mawdudi).

110. Another possible rendition of “sirajan-munira” is “an illuminating lamp” (Au.).

[49] Believers! When you wed believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them,¹¹¹ then there is no waiting period that you have to count against them.¹¹² But make provision for them and release them in a goodly manner of release.¹¹³

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ فَمَا
لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُونَهَا فَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ
وَسَرَّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾

The word “muniran” has been added to the lamp because there can be lamps that do not burn (Kashshaf, Qurtubi). The words could connote an “ever burning, radiant lamp” (Au.).

The point to note is, says Razi, that the Prophet (*saws*) was not likened to a sun although brighter than it. It is because the sun does not lighten up other bodies as does a lamp which allows for other lamps to borrow light from it.

Nuhhas reported through his own chain of narrators that Ibn `Abbas said, “When this verse was revealed, the Prophet asked for `Ali and Mu`adh ibn Jabal (who were being sent to Yemen). He instructed the two, “Go - and give glad tiding, and do not make it difficult. This night it was revealed to me, ‘O Prophet! We have sent you indeed as a witness, a bearer of glad tiding and a warner” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The report has been declared weak by Haythami (S. Ibrahīm), but, be-

cause of circumstantial evidences, has been treated as trustworthy by jurists (Au.).

111. Figuratively, “muss” of the text is for intercourse (Au.).

Accordingly, (two) of the Imāms said that there can be no divorce before marriage. Imām Abu Hanifah however maintained that if a man said, “If I marry such and such a woman, or a group of them, they are divorced” then they would stand divorced as soon as he married them. But if he said, “So and so that I am marrying is divorced” then divorce will not take effect (Alusi). [There is a complicated explanation justifying the two opinions which might be seen in Ruh al-Ma`ani: Au.]. Imām Malik also allowed this, but on certain conditions. (Qurtubi). [`Umar, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Ibrahīm Nakha`i, Mujahid, `Umar ibn `Abdul `Aziz, and a few others also held a similar view. Further, the meaning of a man saying, “If I marry you, you will be divorced” is that he in-

tends to divorce her upon marriage.” Such a statement will take its effect: Mawdudi). Ibn `Abbas held an opinion opposed to this opinion. In fact, a *hadith* is also quoted to the effect. It says, The Prophet said,

عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ شُعَيْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ “لَا تَنْدُرُ لِابْنِ آدَمَ فِيمَا لَا يَمْلِكُ، وَلَا عَتَقَ لَهُ فِيمَا لَا يَمْلِكُ، وَلَا طَلَّاقَ لَهُ فِيمَا لَا يَمْلِكُ” (قال أبو عيسى: حَدِيثُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ)

“There is no vowing for the son of Adam for what he does not own, there is no freeing of (a slave) he does not own, and there is no divorce right for him in what he does not own.” It is in Ahmad, Abu Da’ud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah (Ibn Kathir).

[Ibn Kathir notes that it is weak, although Tirmidhi himself declared it *Hasan Sahih*. But it seems some others have also thought that it is weak: Au.]. Albani thought the *hadith* is trustworthy (S. Ibrahim). Ibn Mas`ud also believed that a woman could be divorced before marriage (Shawkani).

112. As a matter of context, it is reported in Bukhari that the Prophet married Maymunah bint Sharihil. When he entered upon her she brought her hand out, as if disap-

proving (his approach, or in defense). The Prophet) left the room immediately, and ordered Abu Usayd to equip her, accompany her back (to her people), and give her two striped cloaks as gift (Ibn Kathir).

Some reports say she sought Allah’s refuge from him and he said, “You have sought the refuge of the Great,” and released her. Yet other reports say (Shabbir) that she did not realize who he was and remained remorseful for the rest of her life (Au.).

There are various reports on this issue in other books of *hadith*, biography and history. Ibn Hajr deals with them. One version says that Sa`d b. al-Nu`man b. Jawn al-Kindi (an important figure of the northern region) came to the Prophet as a Muslim and (apart from other things) suggested, “Should I not offer you in marriage the most beautiful of widows (or a previously married woman) of the Arab world?” He accepted and Sa`d sent the woman. (She was previously married to a highly placed man of her distinguished tribe). The Prophet sent Abu Usayd to fetch her, who brought her and housed her in one of the forts of Madinah (probably because of her prominent position in her tribe). Neighborhood women began visiting her and speaking of

her beauty as they came out. However, as the Prophet entered upon her, the incident, as in Bukhari, took place, and she was sent away with gifts. Details differ from report to report. It is evident, that in keeping with his habit of not saying “no” to anyone, the Prophet married her when requested by a tribal chief, but was too sensitive to keep a woman who sought Allah’s refuge, even if unknowingly (Au.).

Considering the legal aspect involved in the verse, there is no difference in opinion, writes Ibn Kathir, that the “no waiting period” rule is for a situation when a woman is divorced before consummation - she can marry another man immediately – but it does not apply to the situation of death of a husband. If a man dies, before consummation of marriage, his wife has to still observe a waiting period (‘iddah) of four months and ten days.

And, according to the Hanafiyyah, the pair being together alone in a

closed quarters (dukhul) entails the law of consummation (Shabbir).

113. Sa`id b. al-Musayyib has been reported as saying that this verse abrogates verse 236 of *al-Baqarah* (which said):

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمْ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدْرَهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدْرُهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ
(البقرة - ٢٣٦)

“There is no sin upon you that you (should) divorce women you have not touched, nor have settled a dower upon them, (in which cases nothing is due from you). However, bestow (gifts) on them: upon the well-to-do according to his resources while upon the straitened according to his resources - a gift (made) in an honorable manner, due from those who (prefer to) do things well)” - Ibn Jarir.

But, it might be noted that the main theme of the above verse (of *al-Baqarah*) is dower rules, which are not abrogated (Au.).

[50] O Prophet, We have indeed made lawful to you your wives¹¹⁴ to whom you have given their dowers,¹¹⁵ as (also) those that your right hand owns out of (the captives) that Allah has given you as spoils of war. (Also lawful to you are) your daughters of your paternal uncle,¹¹⁶ daughters of your paternal aunts, daughters of your maternal uncle, daughters of your maternal aunts¹¹⁷ of those that migrated with you,¹¹⁸ as also any believing woman – if she bestows herself to the Prophet,¹¹⁹ and if the Prophet wishes to marry her, exclusively for you,¹²⁰ apart from the believers.¹²¹ We know what We have enjoined on them touching their wives¹²² and those their right hands own - that there may not be any inconvenience upon you. And, Allah was ever Forgiving, Compassionate.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ
الَّذَاتِي آتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ
مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَاتِ
عَمَّاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَاتِكَ
الَّذَاتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ وَامْرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِنْ
وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ
يَسْتَنْكِحَهَا خَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا
يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَّحِيمًا ﴿٥٠﴾

114. The intrigue in the verse is removed if we consider the fact the Prophet had nine wives at the time of revelation of this verse, while, ordinary believers were allowed only four (Au. with a point from Ma'arif). However, if it can be demonstrated that the Prophet did have nine wives at the time this verse was revealed – a point of contention - then it will have to be considered as a later revelation (Au.).

The dower of the Prophet's wives used to be around twelve and a half awqiyah, or, roughly, 500 Dirham (silver coins), except for Umm Habibah the daughter of Abu Sufyan

whose dower was paid by Najashi (at Abyssiniah) and which happened to be 400 Dinar (gold coins). Safiyyah bint Huyayy was another exception, for she was taken from the captives of Khayber. The Prophet freed her, and treated her freedom as her dower when he married her; which was also the case with Juwayriyyah, who had entered into a freedom pact with Thabit b. Qays al-Shammas. The Prophet paid the amount the two had agreed to, to him, and married her in return (Ibn Kathir).

115. The words, "whom you have given them their dowers," states a fact rather than a rule. The Prophet

had paid all his wives their dowers, in preference of keeping any debt on himself. The revelation acknowledges this, and says by implication that this is the correct way of doing things (from Shafi').

Although both partners in marriage are bound to receive equal satisfaction and enjoyment from each other, but in view of women's natural weakness, and their exploitation by man throughout the ages, Islam has protected women in a variety of ways. One of them is "dower." It is unique to Islam. In all other systems, either the woman pays out at marriage, or equally shares the costs. By using the word – as here - "*ujur*" (sing. *ajr*: wages), instead of the usual "mahr" (dower), the implication seems to be that since males take advantages of women in a variety of ways, the dower turns out to be, in reality, not a gift, but "wages" for the services she offers, and the exploitation she is subjected to (Au.).

116. Although the form "*ammika*" and "*khalika*" is singular, the meaning is plural. This is how the Arab usage is (Mufti Shafi').

117. This is the middle path. The Christians approve of only those matches where the two are genealogically at least seven lines apart. On

the other hand, the Jews allow marriage between a man and his neice (uncle-nephew) – Ibn Kathir.

Ibn Kathir's observation will surprise many Christians of today who marry almost anyone. There are occasional cases of brother-sister marriages defended in the courts of law.

118. (Although) a report says that the Prophet wished to marry Umm Hani bint Abu Talib, but who declined on grounds that she had not migrated along with him to Madinah, Dahhak used to say that the words, 'of those who emigrated with you,' are not a conditional clause to exclude believing women in general and allow daughters of paternal and maternal uncles and aunts alone who migrated (Ibn Jarir). The report however, as in Tirmidhi, concerning Umm Hani, is declared weak by Ibn al-'Arabiyy (the jurist) - Qurtubi.

Also, the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas and Ubay b. Ka'b was that this verse actually placed a limit on the number of wives the Prophet could have. He was not to add upon those that he had already married. He could although, if he wished, take captives of wars (Ibn Jarir).

119. It is believed that this was revealed in reference to Maymunah bint al-Harith who had gifted her-

self to the Prophet. (It is reported [through unchecked chains: Au.], that sometime in the seventh year after *hijrah*, she came to the Prophet on a camel and said, “This camel and what is upon it is for Allah and His Messenger”: Alusi). Some others have also been named such as Umm Shurayk and Zaynab bint al-Khuzaymah – the well-known Umm al-Masakin (Ibn Jarir). But none of these reports could be checked for their authenticity (Au.).

Imām Ahmad reports the following: Sahl b. Sa`d reported that,

عن سهل بن سعد: أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم جاءته امرأة فقالت: - يا رسول الله إني قد وهبت نفسي لك فقامت قياما طويلا فقام رجل فقال: يا رسول الله زوجنيها إن لم يكن لك بها حاجة فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم هل عندك من شيء تصدقها إياه فقال: ما عندي إلا إزارى هذا فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إن أعطيتها إزارك جلست ولا إزار لك فالتمس شيئا فقال: ما اجد شيئا فقال: التمس ولو خاتما من حديد فالتمس فلم يجد شيئا فقال له النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم هل معك من القرآن شيء قال: نعم سورة كذا وسورة كذا السور يسميها فقال له النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: قد زوجتكها بما معك من القرآن.

A woman came (into one of the Prophet’s assemblies) and said, “Messenger of Allah. I have gifted myself to you.” Thereafter she stood waiting for quite a while (without the Prophet an-

swering her. This is because the Prophet never said no to any request made to him. Perhaps he waited for someone else to respond: Au.). Thereupon a man got up and said, ‘Messenger of Allah, will you give her to me in marriage, if you do not wish to have her?’ He asked him, ‘Do you have something to offer her as a (marriage) gift?’ He said, ‘I have nothing beyond this single cloak that is on me.’ The Prophet said, ‘If you gave away your cloak, you will sit back without a cloak on you. Go and look for something.’ He said, ‘I have nothing else.’ He told him, ‘Search, even if it is an iron ring.’ He (went away and) searched but could not find anything. So the Prophet asked him, ‘Do you have anything of the Qur’ān with you?’ (That is, have you memorized any of it?). He said yes and named a couple of chapters. He told him, ‘I give her to you in marriage in return of what is with you of the Qur’ān’ (Ibn Kathir).

That is, the man was supposed to teach the woman what he knew of the Qur’ān as marriage gift (Au.).

Apparently, she was looking for a husband, and so decided she could

begin with the Prophet himself. This is evident from the fact that she did not react negatively to the Prophet's suggestion that another man, although a pauper, marry her (Au.).

Imām Ahmad also reports hearing Thabit saying, "I was with Anas while one of his daughters was with him. Anas said, 'A woman came to the Prophet and said, "Messenger of Allah, do you have any need of me?" Anas' daughter interrupted, 'How immodest she was?!' Anas retorted, 'She was better than you. She liked the Prophet and so presented herself to him.'" Bukhari also has this report in his *Sahih* (Ibn Kathir).

There is yet another case of a woman who proposed to the Prophet. (It is in Ahmad, and Haythamiyy approved its narrators: Au.):

عن أنس أن امرأة أتت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالت: يا رسول الله ابنة لي كذا وكذا ذكرت من حسنها وجمالها أتربك بما قال: "قد قبلتها" فلم تزل تمدحها حتى ذكرت أنها لم تصدع ولم تشتك شيئاً قط. قال: "لا حاجة في ابنتك". (رواه أحمد وأبو يعلى ورجالها ثقات: الهيثمي).

A woman went to him and described her daughter's beauty, good manners, and so forth, and informed him that the girl had decided to gift herself to him.

The Prophet said, "I accept her."

The woman continued praising her daughter until she said, "She has never been sick. In fact, she never suffered even a headache."

The Prophet said, "I have no need of her" (Ibn Kathir).

Reports suggest that the Prophet thought she was not pious enough to have 'never fallen sick.' The pious undergo trials of various kinds, and are, therefore, prone to sicknesses (Au.).

120. Qurtubi notes from Bukhari 'A'isha's opinion that it was Khawlah bint Hakim who had actually gifted herself to the Prophet. Ibn Kathir conjectures that perhaps she can be identified with Umm Hakim. Bukhari has a report which reports 'A'isha as saying,

كُنْتُ أَغَارُ عَلَى اللَّاتِي وَهَبَنَ أَنْفُسَهُنَّ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَقُولُ أَتَهَبُ الْمَرْأَةُ نَفْسَهَا فَلَمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى تَرْجِيءِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُؤَيِّ إِلَيْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَمَنْ ابْتَعَيْتِ بَعْدَ عَزَلَتِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ قُلْتُ مَا أَرَى رَبَّكَ إِلَّا يُسَارِعُ فِي هَوَاكَ (البخاري)

'I used to feel jealous of women who had gifted themselves to the Prophet until Allah revealed, "You may defer any of them you wish, or receive to yourself whom you wish.' When this verse was revealed, I said to him, 'It appears as though your

Lord hastens to follow your desires” (Qurtubi). However, Ibn Kathir adds that the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, as in Ibn Abi Hatim, and of Yunus b. Bukayr as in Ibn Jarir, was that although women who offered themselves to him were not few, the Prophet did not accept any of them. Though given the license by Allah, he did not use it since Allah had given him the choice by saying, “If the Prophet so wishes.”

At this point Ibn Kathir lists down the number of wives or women the Prophet ever had. They were thirteen in all. Six were from the Quraysh: Khadijah, `A'isha, Hafsa, Umm Habibah, Sawdah, Umm Salamah, Zaynab bint Jahsh, Zaynab bint Khuzaymah (also known as Umm al-Masakin: Mother of the Destitute), Safiyyah bint Huyayy, Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith, Maymuna bint al-Harith (who had gifted herself to him), a woman from Banu Bakr who opted for this world and separated when given the choice, and the woman from Jawn who was sent away by the Prophet because she sought refuge from him. He also possessed two slave girls: Rayhana bint Sham'un al-Nadariyyah, and Mariyah the Copt.

Of the two slaves, one opted to become a Muslim: Rayhana.

Maymuna is a disputed figure, and so is the Banu Bakr woman. The woman of Jawn is also not worth counting. The total works out to eleven, including Rayhana. Out of these, Zaynab bint Khuzaymah died in the Prophet's own life-time and so he left nine when he died, or ten including Rayhana (Au.).

Two classes from among the Westerners have relentlessly criticized the Prophet, down to this day, for having had plural wives: the priestly class who represent the religious, and the so-called intellectuals who represent the secular. One of the Christian priests referred to the Prophet as a pedophile. It is ironic, and perhaps befitting, that in recent years the clergy has been discovered so deeply embroiled in pedophile scandals that at one time a Dutch in Holland spat in the face of a nun in the street. Around two dozen priests – some holding high positions - have been implicated in USA alone. Pre-modern church history is not very bright either. As for the secular, they have been brought down to such levels by their leaders that today the only way a woman can satisfy her natural desires is by paying to her boy friend,

[51] You may put off¹²³ any of them you wish,¹²⁴ or receive to yourself whom you wish.¹²⁵ And, there is no blame on you to have set aside any (of them) you wished.¹²⁶ That is likelier to cool their eyes, they do not grieve, and are all satisfied with what you give them.¹²⁷ Allah knows what is in your hearts.¹²⁸ And Allah was ever Knowing, Clement.

تُرْجِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ مِنْهُنَّ وَتُؤْوِي إِلَيْكَ
 مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَمَنْ ابْتِغَيْتِ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا
 جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ تَقَرَّ أَعْيُنُهُنَّ
 وَلَا يَحْزَنَ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَا آتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ
 يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا
 حَلِيمًا ﴿٥١﴾

since for millions of them there is no hope of ever getting married. While these lines are being written news is out that in France (which has banned scarves worn by Muslim girl students in schools), a group of 66 men and women have been hauled to the court for pedophilic activities involving 45 children, some as young as two years old. A Christian priest who debated with a renowned scholar of our time, Ahmad Deedat, was caught red-handed with a harlot.

Allah’s punishment comes upon those who bear animosity towards His Revelation, although it takes time (Au.).

121. Accordingly, it is disallowed that any woman should say to a man, “I have gifted myself to you,” for her to become his wife. It has to be considered a marriage proper where dower is stated and the guardian accords his approval (Ibn Jarir).

122. To the effect that they cannot have more than four wives at a time (Mujahid) and that no marriage can take place without dower, approval of the custodian and the presence of two witnesses (Qatadah) – Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir.

123. The textual word “*turji*” could also be rendered as “set aside.”

124. That is, the Prophet (*saws*) was given the right to keep himself away from anyone of his wives, not giving her, her due time and attention, without divorcing her, if she agreed to the arrangement (Ibn Jarir). This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan and a few others, although Sha`bi believed that this was applicable to those women alone who had gifted themselves to the Prophet (Ibn Kathir).

125. The widely accepted meaning is that the Prophet was given the choice to divide his time between

his wives as he wished. He could stay away from some, giving greater time to others (Ibn Jarir).

The above is supported by `A'isha's report in Bukhari which says that if the Prophet wished to stay away a night from one of those women whose turn it was, he would seek her leave. To the question by the narrator regarding what answer she gave when he sought her permission to stay away, `A'isha replied, "Well. I used to say, 'If the matter rests with me, then I do not approve of anyone given preference over me'" (Ibn Kathir).

An equitable division of time is obligatory on those of his followers who have more than one wife. They must spend the night with them, even if one of them is undergoing her monthly course. He should not also make them share a quarter if they do not agree to such an arrangement. Mu`adh ibn Jabal for example, would not even drink water from the house of one whose turn it was not. When two of his wives died in plague, he drew a lot to determine which of the two was to be let down first into her grave (Qurtubi).

126. That is, come to an agreement with any of his wives that instead of divorcing her, if he wished, she could

remain his wife, for the honor, and not marry anyone after him (Ibn Jarir).

It is reported that this was the arrangement with Sawdah. When told that he wished to divorce her, she said she preferred to remain his wife, even if she received no time from him (Au.).

127. That is, having known that the arrangements with them had the approval of Allah, they would remain satisfied, uncomplaining, and not worrisome over what was going to happen next (Au.).

In the words of Shah `Abdul Qadir, with which Shabbir combines his own comments, and to which we add our own words, "As against common believers, who are required to divide their time equitably between their various wives, the Prophet was freed from any such binding. It is another thing that he divided his time meticulously between them. Impunity from any such binding, however, by the command of Allah, helped his wives to understand that primarily and basically, they had no such rights to make. This led to satisfaction with whatever they received and helped rid themselves of daily concerns over what they got or what they lost. Assured, on the other hand, of the re-

[52] Not lawful unto you are (any other) women after this,¹²⁹ nor is it for you to replace (any of) them for (other) wives,¹³⁰ even if their beauty pleased you,¹³¹ except those your right hand owns. And ever is Allah over all things Watchful.

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدُ وَلَا أَنْ تَبَدَّلَ
بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا
مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ رَاقِبًا ﴿٥٢﴾

lationship of permanence with the Prophet, in this world and the Next, by the previous passage forbidding the Prophet to divorce them, they could cause no anxiety to the Prophet at the home front, which could affect his concentration on affairs pertaining to the progress of his mission, or, conversely, turn their own attention as his mission-companions from the lofty to the mundane. Hence Allah's words, "That is likelier to cool their eyes, they do not grieve, and are all pleased with what you give them."

128. That is, Allah knows the preference that you keep in your heart for one wife over another. Accordingly, as reported by `A'isha, in a narrative of Ahmad,

عن عائشة قالت: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقسم بين نسائه فيعدل قال عفان ويقول هذه قسمتي ثم يقول اللهم هذا فعلي فيما أملك فلا تلمني فيما تملك ولا أملك.

"The Prophet used to equitably divide his time between his wives and then say, "This is the best

that I can do. Do not blame me for what You have the power (O Allah), but over which I do not have the power."

The report, also documented by the other four of the six collectors, has good chain of narrators (Ibn Kathir).

Mawdudi adds that in this passage a warning was hidden for the Prophet's wives: if they concealed any unhappiness in their hearts Allah would know it, as He would know if any of his Companions harbored any criticism, however slight, for he taking several wives.

129. According to Ibn Abbas, this *ayah* placed the limit on the number of wives the Prophet could have. After he had given them the choice to separate if they wished, but they had chosen Allah and His Messenger, he was not to marry anyone (over those he had at the time of revelation of this verse), as reward to his wives for their choice. However, others have thought that he could, if he wished, marry other women, such as those

specified here in the passage (Ibn Jarir).

This was also the opinion, writes Ibn Kathir, of Ubay b. Ka`b, Mujahid, `Ikrimah and Dahhak, Abu Saleh, Hasan and Qatadah. There have been other opinions too. The preferred opinion, adds Ibn Kathir, which was also roughly the opinion of Ibn Jarir, is that the Prophet was not to replace the nine he had at that time, nor add over them. The rule however, was in general terms, pertaining to the nine as a whole, which did not mean he could not divorce anyone of them. In fact, he had at one time divorced Hafsa, but took her back on `Umar's appeal, as stated in trustworthy reports. He had also separated himself from Sawdah, giving her no conjugal rights, though retaining her as his wife, on her request.

That said, it is apparent from reports of `A'isha and Umm Salamah, that this rule was subsequently abrogated and the Prophet was allowed to marry any other woman, although, he did not exercise this permission. Ahmad has a report – as also Tirmidhi (who declared it *Sahih*) and Nasa'i - from `A'isha - which says,

قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ "مَا مَاتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَتَّى أُحِلَّ لَهُ النِّسَاءُ" (قال الترمذي : هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ).

"The Prophet did not leave this world but Allah had made other women lawful to him." A similar report comes from Umm Salamah through Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir).

130. Although this is not the reason why this verse was revealed, nor does Ibn Jarir accept that such a practice existed, Qurtubi and others note that wife swapping was practiced in pagan days, and, even though the report, as in Bazzar is treated as *da`if*, it might still be presented to press the point about perversion of the Jahliliyy times. Zamakhshari, Razi and Qurtubi presented it in their works. It is said that `Uyayna b. Hisn al-Fizari entered into the Prophet's house without seeking permission. The Prophet remonstrated, "What about permission?" He replied, "Since the time I am conscious of things, I never sought anyone of the Mudar tribe's permission to enter upon him. Who is this bright woman next to you anyway?" The Prophet told him that it was his wife `A'isha. He suggested, "May I not give you in exchange my own much prettier wife?" The Prophet told him, "Allah has forbidden it." Ibn Kathir remarks however that the report is not trustworthy.

Nevertheless, it still reflects the culture of the time and the place women occupied in that social set up. It might also be pointed out that reports confirm instances of wife swapping in some cultures of our times, although on temporary basis, as also indirect arrangements that work to everyone's satisfaction, while everyone pretends to be ignorant of what really is going on (Au.).

Nevertheless, the above *ayah* does not imply that the Prophet could not divorce any of them if he so wished. Abu Ya'la has a report which Ibn 'Umar reports:

دخل عمر على حفصة وهي تبكي فقال لها: ما يبكيك؟ لعل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم طلقك إنه قد كان طلقك مرة ثم راجعك من أجلي والله لأن كان طلقك مرة أخرى لا كلمتك أبداً. رواه أبو يعلى والبخاري ورجال أبي يعلى رجال الصحيح كذلك رجال البخاري.

'Umar entered upon Hafsa and found her weeping. He asked, "What makes you weep? Perhaps the Prophet has divorced you. He had indeed divorced you ear-

lier but took you back because of me. By Allah, if he divorces you again I shall never speak to you" (Ibn Kathir).

The above report draws the commentary from Haythami that its chain is of reliable narrators (Au.).

131. Although the Companions have reported (though it is not a Prophetic statement), that the Prophet enjoyed sexual strength of forty men, as also the Prophet's own frank statement to the effect that women had been made lovable to him, the purpose of this particular clause seems to be to impress on the minds of the believers the complete humanness of the Prophet. What man, of any age, in fact, what woman, is not moved by women's beauty? The Prophet could have been thought to be an exception to the rule - simply because of the fact that he was the raised one. This clause works at this correction deep down at the psychological level, for, this thought lingering there, weakens a man's resolution to imitate (Au.).

[53] Believers! Do not enter the Prophet's houses except that you should be given leave for a meal, without waiting for its preparation. But when you are invited, enter. Then, when you have eaten, disperse, without seeking to remain for conversation. Surely, that was inconvenient to the Prophet but he is shy of you. But Allah is not shy of the truth.¹³² And when you ask them for anything, ask them from behind a curtain.¹³³ That is purer for your hearts and their hearts.¹³⁴ And it is not for you to cause pain to the Prophet,¹³⁵ nor that you should ever marry his wives after him.¹³⁶ Surely, that would be, in Allah's sight, an enormity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَاطِرِينَ إِنَّا هُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ فَاعِلُونَ فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَرْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] Whether you reveal a thing or conceal it, Allah is ever Knowing of all things.

إِنْ تَبَدُّوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تَخْفَوْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾

132. There are several reports explaining the context of revelation. One of them is narrated by Anas b. Malik. He said, as in a report in Bukhari, with a few details from other sources placed in brackets,

عن أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه أنه كان ابن عشر سنين مقدم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المدينة فكان أمهاتي يواظبني على خدمة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فخدمته عشر سنين وتوفي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وأنا ابن عشرين سنة فكنث أعلم الناس بشأن الحجاب حين أنزل وكان أول ما أنزل في أمي بنت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يزني بنت جحش أصبغ النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بها غروساً فدعا القوم فأصابوا من الطعام ثم خرجوا وبقي رهط منهم عند النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فأطالوا المكث فقام النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فخرج وخرجت معه لكي

يخرجوا فمشى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ومشيت حتى جاء عتبة حجرة عائشة ثم طرأتهم خرجوا فرجع ورجعت معه حتى إذا دخل على ربيته فإذا هم جلوس لم يقوموا فرجع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ورجعت معه حتى إذا بلغ عتبة حجرة عائشة وطرأتهم خرجوا فرجع ورجعت معه فإذا هم قد خرجوا فضرب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ببني وبيته بالسيتر وأنزل الحجاب

Anas b. Malik said that he was ten years old at the time the Prophet arrived at Madinah. "My mothers used to urge me to serve the Prophet. So I served him ten years so that I was twenty when he died. And, I know better than anyone when the Hijab

(commandment) came down. The first thing that came down in connection with the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab b. Jahsh was that the Prophet invited people to dinner (on the occasion of bringing in Zaynab bint Jahsh. I went around inviting everyone I came across). They ate (and after the dinner was over, most) people dispersed except for a few who remained with the Prophet. They lengthened the stay (conversing in a corner of the house while Zaynab sat on the other side, with her face to the wall). The Prophet stood up and I left with him hoping that they would leave. He began to stroll around, myself with him, up to the house of `A'isha (and other wives. One of them would greet him and say, 'How did you find your new wife?' According to some reports he would greet them first). Then he thought they had left, so he went back, myself with him. But when he entered, he found they were still sitting, not having got up. So the Prophet went back again (he was an extremely modest person), and I went back with him so far as the house of `A'isah. Then he returned, and myself with him. He found that

they had left. But, as I tried to enter, he threw the curtain between me and him. (He went in alone) and (the commandment concerning) *Hijab* was sent down" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The reports are in Bukhari, Muslim and in several other collection (Ibn Kathir).

133. This demonstrates, writes Qurtubi, that despite the fact that the whole of a woman is *`awrah* (requiring covering) including her voice, in times of need she might interact with men from behind a curtain.

It is reported that once the Prophet was having dinner with someone - with `A'isha as the third. During the partaking, `A'isha's hand touched that of the other man. (According to a report in Ibn Abi Hatim, the man was `Umar, and it were fingers that touched each other). The Prophet was somewhat displeased and this verse was revealed. Yet another reason cited is that `Umar used to tell the Prophet, "The good and the evil, all kinds of people enter upon you. I wish you could ask your wives to remain in *Hijab*," and this verse was revealed (Ibn Jarir).

Another report about `Umar is in the *Sahihayn*. It is as follows: He said,

قَالَ عُمَرُ بْنُ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ وَاقْتَمْتُ رَبِّي فِي ثَلَاثٍ فُقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ اتَّخَذْنَا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى فَتَرَلْتُ وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى وَآيَةُ الْحِجَابِ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ أَمَرْتَ نِسَاءَكَ أَنْ يَخْتَجِبْنَ فَإِنَّهُ يُكَلِّمُهُنَّ الْبِرَّ وَالْفَاجِرُ فَتَرَلْتُ آيَةَ الْحِجَابِ وَاجْتَمَعَ نِسَاءُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْعَبِيرَةِ عَلَيْهِ فُقُلْتُ هُنَّ عَسَى رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَرْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِنْكَ فَوَقَّعْتُ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ (الصحيحين)

“I concurred with my Lord on three occasions. First, when I suggested that the Prophet take the Station of Ibrahīm (as a place for Prayers). Allah revealed, ‘And take (O believers) Station of Ibrahīm (as a place) for Prayer.’ Second, I said to the Prophet, ‘Messenger of Allah, good and evil, all kinds of people enter upon you, so, if you could ask your wives to observe *Hijab*.’ Allah revealed verses concerning *Hijab*. And (some) of his wives got together because of their jealousy (against a wife of his) so I said to them, ‘If he divorced you all, Allah would replace you with those better than you,’ and Allah revealed this verse” (Ibn Kathir).

There are other reports which say that `Umar disapproved of the Prophet’s wives leaving their houses at all. Once he spotted Sawdah. Although well-clad, he recognized her

from her size: she was a big woman. He called out, “Sawdah. You cannot conceal yourself. So, look how you go out.” Sawdah immediately returned to the Prophet. He was having dinner and had soup-bowl in his hand. She told him what had happened. He received revelation. When it was over, he said, “Allah has allowed that you go out for your needs” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The report is in Bukhari (Ibn Kathir), and it is said that `Umar had said those words in the hope of hastening Allah’s revelation concerning *Hijab* (other commentators).

The Prophet of course was better knowing of the prevalent social conditions than `Umar, and knew of the need, but did not wish to act without a specific commandment from on High (Alusi).

134. If that was with ref. to the wives of the Prophet, then, how much more should it not be applicable to those lesser than them? (Shafi`).

135. Asma’ bint `Umays reports (a widow of `Ali’s brother Ja`far b. Abi Talib: Zamakhshari), that “`Ali wished to marry me while he already had Fatimah in his marriage. When she learnt of it, she (Fatimah) went to the Prophet (*saws*) and complained. He said, ‘It is not for her (i.e., bint

Qays) to annoy Allah and His Messenger.”

The report is in Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani).

(But Haythami did not approve it (Au.).

Similarly, `Ali wished to marry another woman, `Ikrimah's sister, Abu Jahl's daughter. The Prophet disapproved of that marriage also, and `Ali remained with one wife until Fatimah remained alive, i.e., a little more than six months after the Prophet (Au.).

136. The immediate cause of revelation of this part is that someone used to say that he would marry one of the wives of the Prophet after his death, naming her (Ibn Jarir).

The person who said so was identified as Talha b. `Ubaydullah, and the woman he named was, most probably, `A'isha (Ibn Kathir).

However, `Atiyyah reported that it seems there was an error in the identification. A man like him could not have said such a thing (Shawkani).

Qurtubi, who raised the issue of the reliability of `Atiyyah's report, adds that the implication is that Ibn `Abbas also said this; and strongly refutes that Talha could have said such a thing. In all likelihood, it was one of the hypocrites.

In any case, one other reason why no one was allowed to marry any of his wives after him was that they had chosen him and Allah over all else, and would be his spouses in Paradise since the rule is that, in Paradise, a woman will get the last man she lived with in spousal relationship in this world. Accordingly, Hudhayfah told his wife not to marry anyone after him if she wished to be his wife in Paradise (Qurtubi).

It is also reported of Abu Darda's wife that when she was proposed after Abu Darda's death, she declined on grounds that she wished to be Abu Darda's spouse in Paradise also (Au.).

It is also reported that the Prophet had taken a slave-girl called Qutaylah bint Qays al-Ash`ash. Although married to the Prophet, (she was still in Yemen: Alusi), someone married her after his death. Abu Bakr was greatly disturbed. But `Umar pointed out that she was not of those who had been given choice and had chosen Allah and His Messenger. In fact, she was no wife at all, only a slave-girl. Moreover, she was one of a tribe which had turned apostate after the Prophet's death. Finally, consummation had not occurred. That calmed Abu Bakr (Ibn Jarir).

The authenticity of the narration could not be verified (Au.).

To sum up this difficult passage, at least from one point of view, we might state briefly the notes of Ashraf `Ali Thanwi and Mufti Shafi` about a few specialties the Prophet (*saws*) enjoyed in reference to family affair, which the *Ummah* did not share with him:

(a) He was allowed to have more than four wives. (At the time of the revelation of this verse, the Prophet either had four wives, or had just married a fifth – Zaynab bint Jahsh: Mawdudi, reworded).

(b) He had the right to choose a captive woman for himself after a battle. Such a one was called “*safiyy*” (the chosen one) such as Safiyyah bint Huyayy whom he chose for himself (because she was the daughter of a chieftain: Au.).

(c) He was allowed to keep a slave-girl gifted to him, instead of making her a property of the state, which is the rule in Islam. That is, whatever is gifted to the head of an Islamic state belongs to the treasury and is not the personal gift to the ruler. But, when the ruler of Egypt sent him a slave girl Mairiyah, he kept her for himself and Allah allowed it.

(d) He was allowed to marry only those of the believing women who had migrated to Madinah. Those who did not were not lawful. This was the point Umm Hani had brought to remembrance. However, such condition was for the women of the Quraysh, not those who were from among the common Muslims.

(e) Women of the unbelievers, even though of the people of the Book, were not allowable to him as against his followers who can marry them.

(f) A believing woman could gift herself to him which is not allowed to the *Ummah* at large.

(g) He could temporarily or permanently cease giving conjugal rights to any of his spouses, but retaining them as his wives. This too is not allowed to his *Ummah*. His followers must provide their wives their conjugal rights: food, clothing, shelter, health-care, etc., and marital obligations, in an equitable manner. It is another thing that except for Sawdah, the Prophet did not exercise his right, but rather, treated them all equally.

(h) He was not allowed to divorce those wives that had chosen him and Allah - the nine that he had. (If this is accepted as the correct opinion, then, as Asad has pointed out, the

ayah in question must have been revealed not in the 5th year as assumed by some, but in the 7th year after *hijrah*, since it is then that he married Safiyyah of Khyber, to complete the nine: Au.).

(j) His wives were not allowed to marry after him.

Wives of the Prophet

Herewith a short account of the Prophet's marriages.

Peninsula Arabs mature earlier than other races and their sexual activities last longer, almost up to eighty. Girls as low as six year old are reported having matured. For boys the average is around thirteen or fourteen. (It could be as well earlier, but they are not likely to report). The urge picks up from sixteen onward and the peak lasts up to almost fifty when the decline begins. It is remarkable that the Prophet remained single until twenty-five, never having gone near a woman.

He remained with a single wife, for twenty-five years after the first marriage, although there was nothing in the social laws of the time to prevent him from having more wives, or slave-girls. In fact, he broke the norm when he chose not to take more. During his peak years, and his wife's

decline years, a dramatic change occurred in his attitudes. Instead of adding wives, he took to solitude in caves. If his wife had expected him to bring home contenders, she must have been surprised that he did not seem to even need her. For weeks he stayed away in solitude. His next marriage was only after the first wife was dead: when he was around 50. It is from this time onward – the decline time - that he began to take wives at a regular pace, adding ten until his death.

It might be relevant to note at the start that other explanations apart, it is a fair guess to say that he was fond of widows. But for a sole exception, all his wives were widows, or, divorced spinsters. This acquires a special significance when we consider that when he was told by Jabir b. `Abdullah that he had married a previously married woman (older than him), he remarked, "Why not a virgin who could play with you, and you with her?" (Jabir had explained that he had little sisters and so preferred a woman who could be motherly to them).

That to the Prophet his mission came first, even in conjugal matters, is apparent from the reply he made to `A'isha's criticism of Khadijah.

She said, "Will you not give up remembering an old woman, when Allah has bestowed on you better than her?" He snapped back strongly, "No, by Allah, He did not bestow on me anyone better than her. She believed in me when people rejected, testified while the people laid the lie, supported me with her wealth when the people denied, and she gave me children when no one else did."

The Prophet's contemporaneous adversaries thought he must be mad, under magical spell, a poet, sorcerer, and therefore, not a true Prophet. But no one ever said he was sensual, licentious, libertine, or erotic. This is because whatever else is said about the Arabs contemporary to him, no one has doubted that they were scrupulously honest, and a straightforward people. It was left to the ethical uprightness of the Western scholars and clergymen to use such appellations for the Prophet as the Arabs did not use. If the Prophet's contemporaries knew that he had nine wives, then they judged him by surrounding facts, and not by the harem size (a word his modern adversaries love to use). They took account of the facts of his own age and that of his wives. They knew that he fasted for days and weeks on, that half the time of his life he was in campaigns, that his

meager diet, both by choice as well as chance, was at times a cup of milk in place of a full meal (after a previous missed meal), that he gave away on a hungry day what could buy him a meal, and that he stood long hours at night for his wives to remind him that his swollen feet perhaps indicated that he had taken things a bit too far, and that, fed up with hunger, they protested, to be firmly told that they could leave, if they so wished, for, he had nothing better to offer. His contemporaries knew all this, as do the Western scholars. But, what can be done if a people choose fiction over facts, or create them out of their hooky brains?

The Prophet's first marriage was to Khadijah, a woman who proved to be an outstanding personality. Of course she could have had no difficulty in accepting her husband as a Prophet since she, more than anyone else, had observed him in all circumstances of life. But credit must be given to her for the moral and material support that she extended through and through their 25 years of life together. Consequently she was one of those whom the Prophet respected and loved. He held fond memories of her all his life. Many years after her death, in Madinah, he continued to send gifts to her friends. He used

to mention her so often that once `Ayesha felt irked and said something to the effect that she saw no point in recalling the memory of an old woman who had lost her teeth. The Prophet expressed his displeasure at the remark.

When she died, the Prophet was passing through the most difficult phase of his mission. Opposition to what he had brought was at its zenith. He did not have the right even to spell out his message within Makkan boundaries. With her gone, he had lost the comfort that a faithful wife provides a man who could draw little comfort from the events outside. He did not miss a supporter, comforter, and a friend alone, but he also missed the mother of his children. He had to fill the vacant house, even if he could not his vacant heart. But the choice of the next wife is completely intriguing. The person he chose, Sawdah, was over fifty years old, in fact, older than him and heavy of body. If the only reason to take in a woman of that age was that she was a strong follower, who, having lost two husbands was now alone, and faced the prospect of lonely years the rest of her life, then, obviously, it was a magnanimous move on his part, for, marrying a youngish woman, he could

have easily made other arrangements for Sawdah. Was his personal sacrifice necessary? This is the question that makes the marriage intriguing.

Later, in Makkah itself, the Prophet married a girl, the only virgin that he married. This was `Ayesha, either six or nine years old at the time of the engagement. She was the daughter of the first Muslim and a beloved childhood friend Abu Bakr. She did not enter the Prophet's household until she was either twelve or fifteen. This marriage seemingly served no immediate purpose since `A'isha remained with her parents for three to six years after engagement. But it proved to be the most fruitful for the mission. If her father laid down the foundation stones of an earthly empire, it was she who became one of the pillars of its intellectual and spiritual mansion. In the Prophet's company `Ayesha grew into a lady of exceptionally rich qualities, who looked at every aspect of his private and public life with a keen eye, and reported such details as were essential for the later scholars to work out the Law for generations to follow until the end of the world.

`A'isha is in her own person a testimony to the authenticity of the Prophet. She became a wife when

she was just nine, or maybe twelve, while the Prophet was around fifty-four. If one follows the way in which the mind of the detractors of Islam works (recently an American priest has publicly referred to the Prophet as a pedophile), then, she should have borne a life-long grudge against the Prophet. Granted she accepted the custom of the time and could not protest at the time of marriage, but she must have felt bitter that she was left a widow at 18, and, to add salt to injury, disallowed to marry after him. If she had resented being placed in such a position, and, had the Prophet been a false Messenger, she could have invented a verse, abrogating the Qur'anic verse which prohibited her and other wives from marrying after the death of the Prophet. If the Prophet had forged the Qur'an, as the Western scholars allege, then 'A'isha was no less incapable of the feat. Indeed, except that she did not say poetry, she was a literary giant of her time. Perhaps apart from 'Ali, another expert at eloquence, she had no equal in literary qualities. Forging a single verse, if the whole of the Qur'an was forged, could not have posed any difficulty to her. Yet, if a person of her intellectual capabilities accepted her lot as a spinster from eighteen until death fifty years later,

choosing to sleep alone by the side of her husband's grave, then, it could not have been without a firm conviction in the Messengership of the Prophet. This is what we mean by saying that she herself is a proof of the Prophet's authenticity.

The next lady the Prophet took into marriage was Hafsa, the twenty-seven year old daughter of his most powerful supporter after his uncle Hamza, and the second caliph after him, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. She had lost her husband at Badr and 'Umar had failed to find a suitable match for her. The Prophet rescued her. At one time, however, the Prophet wished to divorce her, although she was quite friendly to 'A'isha. But Jibril came down directing him to retain her because of her piety: 'She prays a lot and fasts much,' said Jibril.

Another lady that the Prophet married was the widow of another of his Companion, 'Ubaydah b. al-Harith. He was sent with 'Ali and Hamza to face three of the challenging Quraysh fighters in duels at Badr. 'Ali and Hamza slew their opponents but 'Ubayda received a serious wound. When he was picked up and brought to the Prophet, he placed his chin on the Prophet's foot and asked if he would be considered a

martyr. He died a few minutes later. The Prophet married his widow: Zaynab bint Khuzaymah. This was her third marriage and some reports suggest she was around sixty years old. The Prophet had once predicted that of his wives the one with the longest arm would die first. A statement of this sort about one of today's believers will drive them, (not to speak of the critics of the Prophet's plural wives), to recurring attacks of melancholy; but the ladies began to measure each other's arms to guess who would go first! Those were the Prophet's wives, high above aspersion of any kind by the meanly antagonists of the Final Messenger. It was Zaynab anyway, who died first - within a few months of the marriage - not because of a lengthy limb, but because of her long arm in charities. She had always been known, even before marriage, as Umm al-Masakin (mother of the destitute) because of her extensive charitable activities.

The next lady that he brought into his household was Umm Salamah. She had migrated to Abyssinia with her husband Abu Salamah. There they received false news of the acceptance of Islam by the Quraysh and returned. Back at Makkah once again they became the target of brutal persecution. They decided to get away

to Madinah. But hardly was the couple with its single child out of town, when the Makkans separated Umm Salamah and her child from Abu Salamah, saying he did not have them when he had entered Makkah several years ago. Undeterred, Abu Salamah left the wife and child behind and continued with his journey. A few months later, Umm Salamah managed to join him. At Badr, Abu Salamah received a wound. He recovered from it but at Uhud he was struck at the same spot. The Prophet (*saws*) visited him at his house after the battle. To his grief, he died in front of him. He had special regard for him and offered special burial-prayers for him. Some time later he sent word to his widow that he desired to take her into wedlock. She expressed her doubts and fears by saying that she suffered from jealousy (*ghirah*), was quite old, and had little children who would bother him. He waved away her concerns by saying, "As for your jealousy, Allah will cure it, as for your age, I am not young either, and as for the children, they belong to Allah and His Messenger."

The next woman, Zaynab bint Jahsh, was given to him in marriage by Allah Most High. She was the divorced wife of his adopted son, but to remove the social ban on marriage with

an adopted son's wife, Allah married her in the heavens.

The Prophet's marriage to Umm Habibah is another example of chivalry. Daughter of Abu Sufyan the staunch antagonist of the Prophet, she had entered Islam in its early days. She migrated to Abyssinia along with her husband to escape persecution - despite the fact that she was the daughter of a leader of Quraysh. Such was the frenzy against Islam at that time. In Abyssinia however, her husband turned Christian. They were separated and Umm Habibah was left destitute with a child in a land where, as Asma', her companion later described, each day was spent in fear of life. She could not return to the parents of the kind she had: Abu Sufyan and Hind. Hind was the woman who had chewed Hamza's heart at Uhud. When the Prophet, who was then in Madinah, learned of her plight, he sent a Companion to convey his offer of marriage. It was as brilliant a move as it was compassionate, the gesture of a person who was a father to his followers. The attractions of a husband who converted to Christianity, coupled with the daily worries of how to feed herself and conduct the affairs of life in an honorable manner, all alone, in a foreign Christian land,

could not be ruled out as causes of a woman's possible loss to Islam. The Prophet's offer certainly saved a soul. The offer pleased even the king of the land, Najashi, so much that he himself performed the matrimonial ceremony and offered a dower from his purse. Thus Umm Habibah became his wife while her father was leading the Makkans against the Prophet, in all their battles after Badr. It was her father who had inflicted the terrible defeat at Uhud. But, on hearing of how the Prophet came to his daughter's rescue, even he was moved and the remark: "He is the honorable one who can not be put to blush," escaped him. She joined the Prophet in Madinah only three or four years prior to his death. Those Westerners, and their foolhardy eastern slaves and parrots, who believe the Prophet created a harem, clearly need to see a doctor for sanity check. Fanaticism is quite close to insanity after all. And, it might further increase their frustration to know that after his own conversion to Islam in the 8th year after *hijrah*, Abu Sufyan offered his second daughter's hand also to the Prophet, but the offer was turned down on grounds that Islam did not allow a man two sisters in wedlock at one time.

[55] There is no sin upon them in (appearing freely before) their fathers,¹³⁷ or sons, or brothers, or sons of their brothers, or sons of the sisters,¹³⁸ or their womenfolk,¹³⁹ or whom their right hands own. And fear Allah (O wives of the Prophet).¹⁴⁰ Surely, Allah is ever a Witness over all things.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي آبَائِهِمْ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِمْ
وَلَا إِخْوَانِهِمْ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ إِخْوَانِهِمْ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ
أَخَوَاتِهِمْ وَلَا نِسَائِهِمْ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُهُمْ وَاتَّقِينَ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ﴿٥٥﴾

The Prophet married three more women. One was Juwayriyyah who was taken prisoner in a battle, but he took her in marriage instead of taking her a slave. The result was that a whole clan comprising of over a hundred families (perhaps a thousand souls) that had been taken slaves was redeemed by the masters because they could not bear to keep any member of a clan as slave which was related to the Prophet. It is strongly suspected that he had married her for this reason. Another lady he married was Safiyyah, the former wife of a Jewish chief Kinanah, slain because the treasures of Banu Nadir were too dear to him. When captured after the battle, the Prophet asked him about where had he concealed it. Kinanah expressed complete ignorance. The Prophet asked him if he was prepared to die if it was found that he had knowledge of it. He said yes. It was found in his premises and he was executed. (He was also ordered killed because he had killed a Companion

of the Prophet some time back). His wife Safiyyah was taken prisoner, but the Prophet married this diminutive woman and then redeemed her. She was so short that she could not fit into the eyes of some of the Prophet's wives. May Allah be pleased with her. Another lady whom he married was Maymunah bint al-Harith a 27 year old widow. He married her when he was in Makkah to perform `Umrah in the 7th year after *hijrah*. `Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, had suggested the alliance, perhaps to strengthen the family ties and win some Makkani families to the cause of Islam. The Prophet complied and requested the Makkans that they allow him to extend his stay for him to arrange his marriage-feast (walimah). They gallantly refused and insisted that he leave the city within the three stipulated days of the Treaty.

137. It is said that when the earlier verses concerning the veil came, some people went up to the Prophet

[56] Verily, Allah and His angels¹⁴¹ send blessings¹⁴² on the Prophet.¹⁴³ O those who have believed, invoke blessings on him and send him saLutations of peace.¹⁴⁴

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

to ask whether their sons and fathers were also to deal with their women from behind a curtain. In response, this verse was revealed (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi).

138. Alusi writes: This list does not mention paternal and maternal uncles because they are like the parents of a woman or perhaps they have been left out because there was no need to mention them after mentioning their sons.

139. That is, believing women.

140. That is, fear Allah and do not cross the boundaries of *Hijab* set forth for you (Qurtubi).

141. It might be noticed that Allah (*swt*) combined Himself and the angels in one pronoun: “(they) send blessing.” This is despite the fact that when a man combined the Prophet and Allah in one pronoun in his presence, he cut him short by saying, “Sit down. You are a poor speaker.” The man had said, “Whoever obeyed Allah and His Messenger found the true path, and whoever disobeyed the two, lost the way.” It has been

suggested as an answer that Allah combined Himself and the angels under one pronoun in this *ayah* by saying, “*yusallun*” to honor the angels. They are, so to say, so close to Allah that they could be mentioned together with Allah in one pronoun. Another answer is that it is for Allah to do as He will, but not allowable to His creations. Hence the Prophet interrupted the man who did so (Qurtubi).

Alusi adds that on one occasion the Prophet had also brought together his name and that of Allah in one pronoun. He said (in a trustworthy report of Tirmidhi and Ahmad: Au.),

ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ مَنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا لَا يُحِبُّهُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ وَمَنْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَتَقَدَّهُ اللَّهُ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ - صحيح البخاري

“Whoever possessed these three (qualities) tasted the sweetness of faith through them: He to whom Allah and His Messenger are dearer than all else besides the two...”

142. Earliest scholars have said that “*salah*” from Allah is His mercy for His creation, while that of the angels for humans refers to their seeking forgiveness for them. As for “*salah*” of the humans when sought in favor of the Prophets, it connotes seeking Allah’s peace and blessing for them (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Shafi` and others).

143. Allah wished to create a confluence of blessings on the Prophet. Hence, after “*salah*” of those on High (`alam al-`ulwi), He ordered “*salah*” of those of the lower world (`alam al-sufi) – Ibn Kathir.

Allah’s *salah* for His creation, adds Ibn Kathir, is not infrequent in the Qur`an. Allah said (in this *Surah* itself 33: 41-43),

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا (٤١) وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٤٢) هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا } [الأحزاب: ٤١ - ٤٣]

“O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembering. [42] And glorify Him morning and evening. [43] He it is who confers blessing on you, and His angels (also), to bring you out from darkneses into light; and He was ever Kind upon the believers.”

He also said (2: 155-157),

{ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٥) الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (١٥٦) أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ } [البقرة: ١٥٥ - ١٥٧]

“We shall surely try you with some fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. Give glad tidings then to those who endure in fortitude. Such as those who, when visited by an affliction say, ‘To Allah we belong and to Him we return.’ It is these on whom descends peace and mercy from their Lord. It is these (indeed) who are rightly guided.”

To add an example from a Prophetic statement,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَىٰ مَيِّمِنِ الصُّفُوفِ

“Allah and His angels send peace upon the right hand side of the rows (in Prayers).”

[Suyuti declared it *Sahih* in his *Jami` al-Saghir*: Au.].

According to another report, (in Bukhari and others), `Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa narrates that:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا أَتَاهُ قَوْمٌ بِصَدَقَةٍ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ فَأَتَاهُ أَبِي بِصَدَقَتِهِ فَقَالَ اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى آلِ أَبِي أَوْفَى

Whenever some people brought their charity to him (for distri-

bution), he would say, “O Allah send peace on such and such a folk.” Once, my father went up to him with his charity. (On that occasion also) he said, “O Allah send peace upon Abu Awfa’s household.”

Thus we see that the word “*salah*” has been used in the sense of peace and blessing in favor of other than our Prophet.

144. Ibn Jarir reports Qatadah, Ibrahīm and others as having said that when the verse, “Verily, Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O those who have believed, invoke blessings on him and send him salutations of peace” was revealed, his Companions asked, “Messenger of Allah, we know how to invoke peace upon you (as in *tashabhud*: Au.), but how do we invoke blessings on you?” (That is, they understood how *salam* was said, but did not know how *salah* was to be said: Au.). He was quiet for a while (until we wished we hadn’t asked him the question) and then answered,

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ
عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا
بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مُجِيدٌ

“Say, “O Allah send Your blessing upon Muhammad and upon

the family of Muhammad, as You sent peace upon Ibrahīm and upon the family of Ibrahīm. Indeed, you are Praiseworthy, Most Glorious. O Allah send Your benedictions upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent benedictions upon Ibrahīm and upon the family of Ibrahīm. Indeed, you are Praiseworthy, Most Glorious” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Alusi adds: It might be noticed that Allah (*swt*) urged the believers to send peace and blessing. But when they asked how it was to be done, the Prophet told them to ask Allah to do it: “O Allah send Your blessing ...” This is because firstly, we humans have no means to send peace and blessing, and, secondly, left to ourselves, we could not have done it as perfectly as Allah can do, and hence, “O Allah send Your blessing..” Therefore, some scholars have said that it is not allowed to say, “I send peace and blessing to the Prophet.”

The *hadith* above is in Bukhari coming through Ka`b b. `Ujrah. Other *Sunan* works have Ibn Abi Layla as saying, “Once, Ka`b b. `Ujrah met me and said, ‘May I not gift you something?’ And then narrated the above *hadith*” (Ibn Kathir).

There are many other reports on the virtues of sending peace greetings to the Prophet. One in Ahmad says that a man said to the Prophet,

أَجْعَلُ لَكَ صَلَاتِي كُلَّهَا؟ قَالَ: { إِذَا نُكْفِيَ هَمَّكَ ،
وَيُعْفِرُ لَكَ ذَنْبَكَ } .

“Messenger of Allah. How would it be if I made all my *salah* (i.e., peace formula) for you?” He answered, “In that case, Allah will take care of all your worries (of the world), and your sins will be forgiven.”

The report is also in Tirmidhi who declared it trustworthy.

Another narrative in Ahmad has `Abdul Rahman ibn `Awf say,

خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَاتَّبَعْتُهُ حَتَّى
دَخَلَ نَخْلًا فَسَجَدَ فَأَطَالَ السُّجُودَ حَتَّى خَفْتُ أَوْ
حَشِيتُ أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ قَدْ تَوَفَّاهُ أَوْ قَبِضَهُ قَالَ فَجِئْتُ
أَنْظُرُ فَرَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ فَقَالَ مَا لَكَ يَا عَبْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ قَالَ
فَذَكَرْتُ ذَلِكَ لَهُ فَقَالَ إِنَّ جِبْرِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ
لِي أَلَا أَبَشِّرُكَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ لَكَ مَنْ صَلَّى
عَلَيْكَ صَلَّيْتُ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ سَلَّمَ عَلَيْكَ سَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ -
فسجدتُ لله عز وجل، شكرًا“

“The Prophet came out (of his house) and I followed him as he entered an orchard. He went into prostration and made it so long that I began to wonder whether he was dead. So I closed in on him to find out what was hap-

pening. He raised his head and asked, “What’s the matter with you O `Abdul Rahman?” I told him of my fears. He said, “Jibril came to me and said, ‘May I not give you the glad tidings? Allah has said, ‘Whoever sent peace to you, I shall send peace to him, and whoever greeted you with blessings, I shall greet him with blessing.’ And, so I made this (long) prostration in gratitude.”

Nasa’s report has Allah saying:

عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَاءَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ وَالسُّرُورُ يُرَى فِي وَجْهِهِ فَقَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَى السُّرُورَ فِي وَجْهِكَ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُ أَتَانِي مَلَكٌ فَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَمَا يُرِضِيكَ أَنَّ رَبَّكَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ إِنَّهُ لَا يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكَ أَحَدٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ إِلَّا صَلَّيْتُ عَلَيْهِ عَشْرًا وَلَا يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْكَ أَحَدٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ إِلَّا سَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ عَشْرًا قَالَ بَلَى

“Abu Talha’s father reported that one day the Prophet emerged with a joyful face. They said, ‘Messenger of Allah, we see joy in our face?’ He answered, ‘An angel came down from the heavens and said, “Muhammad! Does it not please you that Allah Most High says, ‘None will send peace to you from among your followers but I shall send him peace ten times, and none will send salam but I shall greet him with ten salams?’” I said, ‘Yes it does.’”

Haythamiyy remarked that the narrators of this *hadith* are trustworthy (Au.).

Another narrative is in Tirmidhi, who declared it *Hasan Gharib Sahih*, as also in Ahmad, which reports the Prophet as having said,

الْبَخِيلُ مَنْ ذَكَرْتُ عِنْدَهُ فَلَمْ يُصَلِّ عَلَيَّ

“A miser is one before whom I was mentioned but he did not say the peace formula for me.”

Yet another report in Ahmad has Abu Hurayrah transmit the Prophet's words,

مَا جَلَسَ قَوْمٌ مَجْلِسًا لَمْ يَذْكُرُوا فِيهِ رَبَّهُمْ وَمَنْ يُصَلِّوا
عَلَيَّ نَبِيِّهِمْ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - إِلَّا كَانَ تَرَةً
عَلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنْ شَاءَ أَحَدُهُمْ اللَّهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ
عَفَا عَنْهُمْ

“No people got together in a gathering, without mentioning Allah's name therein, nor sending peace to their Prophet (peace be upon him), but it will be a source of grief on the Day of Judgment. If He wished He will forgive them, or if He wished He will punish them.”

Tirmidhi rated it as *Hasan Sahih* (Au.).

In view of the above *ahadith*, it has been said that to say the peace formula is obligatory at least once in

a lifetime, just like the testimony. (Others have held that it is *wajib* to send peace in a gathering at least once when his name is pronounced, even if repeatedly: Kashshaf, Mufti Shafi'). Further, there are moments at which it is all the more becoming of a Muslim that he should send him peace. A report in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i has 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr say that he heard the Prophet say,

إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ الْمُؤَدِّنَ فَقُولُوا مِثْلَ مَا يَقُولُ ثُمَّ صَلُّوا عَلَيَّ
فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ بِمَا عَشَرًا ثُمَّ
سَلُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِي الْوَسِيلَةَ فَإِنَّهَا مَنْزِلَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَا
تَنْبَغِي إِلَّا لِعَبْدٍ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ
أَنَا هُوَ فَمَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ لِي الْوَسِيلَةَ حَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ

“When you hear the callers call (for Prayers), repeat his words. Thereafter, send your peace greeting to me. For, whoever sent peace to me will have Allah send him peace ten times over. Subsequent to that, you should ask Allah for the means of access (*wasilah*) for me. It is a rank in Paradise which does not behoove anyone but a single person. And I hope to be that person. Therefore, whoever asked the means of access for me, will enjoy my intercession.”

(Another occasion to say the salam is while entering the mosque and leav-

ing it). The Prophet (*saws*) himself used to say the peace formula when entering or leaving the mosque. And yet another occasion for saying salam is when one spots a *Masjid*. `Ali ibn Abi Talib said, “When you see a mosque, send peace greeting to the Prophet.” It is also desirable that one starts one’s supplications with peace formula and end with the peace formula. `Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “A supplication is hung between the earth and the heaven until you send peace to your Prophet.” The narrative is preserved by Tirmidhi.

So also, Friday is a special occasion to say the peace formula. The Prophet said, as in a report of Ahmad,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ أَيَّامِكُمْ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ فِيهِ خُلِقَ آدَمُ ،
وَفِيهِ قُبِضَ ، وَفِيهِ النُّفُخَةُ ، وَفِيهِ الصَّعْقَةُ ، فَأَكْثَرُوا
عَلَيَّ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ فِيهِ ، فَإِنَّ صَلَاتَكُمْ مَعْرُوضَةٌ عَلَيَّ ،
قَالُوا : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَكَيْفَ تُعْرَضُ عَلَيْكَ صَلَاتُنَا
وَقَدْ أَرَمْتَ ؟ يُقُولُونَ قَدْ بَلَيْتَ ، قَالَ : إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ
عَلَى الْأَرْضِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ أَجْسَادَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

“The best of your days is Friday. It is on this day that Adam took birth, and it is on this day that he died. The Trumpet will be blown on this day, and mankind will swoon. Therefore, say the peace formula a lot in it. Your salam is presented to me.” They asked, “Messenger of Allah. How can

the greeting be presented to you when you would have become dust and perished?” He answered, “Allah has made it unlawful for the earth to decay the bodies of Prophets.”

This is a trustworthy narrative preserved by Abu Da’ud, Nasa’i, and Ibn Majah.

Abu Da’ud has preserved another narrative. The Prophet said,

لَا تَجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قُبُورًا ، وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا قُبُورِي عِيدًا ، وَصَلُّوا
عَلَيَّ ، فَإِنَّ صَلَاتَكُمْ تَبْلُغُنِي حَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“Do not render your homes graves (meaning, where no Qur’ān is recited, no Prayer is offered: Au.). And do not make my grave a place of regular visit. However, send peace to me, for your peace saLūtatīon reaches me wherever you might be.”

(The *hadīth* is weak, but seems to gather strength from similar weak reports as in `Awn al-Ma`bud: Au.).

Then there are angels who go about picking up peace greetings addressed to him. Imām Ahmad has on the authority of Ibn Mas`ud recorded that the Prophet said,

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مَلَائِكَةً سَيَّاحِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُبَلِّغُونِي
عَنْ أُمَّتِي السَّلَامَ

“Allah has angels who go around in the land, conveying the salam of my *Ummah* to me.”

Nasa’i also preserved it. Hayathmi traced it as also in Al-Bazzar and declared its narrators as worth trusting (Au.).

Nevertheless, the following narrative, says Ibn Kathir, is not trustworthy. It says,

من صلى عليَّ عند قبري سمعته ومن صلى علي من بعيد بليغته

“I hear the peace greeting of one of you near my grave, while he who does it from a distance, has it conveyed to me.”

But Ibn Hajar writes in Fath that it is a trustworthy report, and offers one or two other equally authentic traditions in support (Au.).

There is another *hadith* worth reporting on this topic. It says,

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيَّ إِلَّا رَدَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ رُوحِي حَتَّى أُرَدَّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامَ

“No Muslim sends me salam but Allah restores my soul so that I can respond with a salam to him.”

The report is in Abu Da’ud and Nawawi declared it *Sahih* in his al-Adhkar.

Significantly, continues Ibn Kathir, it is reported of Hasan b. Al-Hasan b. ‘Ali that when he saw someone frequenting visits to the Prophet’s grave, he remarked, “Man, you and someone in Spain are not but equal with reference to him.” That is, the *Salah wa Salam* of everyone – no matter where he is - is conveyed to him.

We might also convey, says Ibn Kathir, Khatib al-Baghdadi’s note. He said, “I have seen the writings of Imām Ahmad. He wrote the Prophet’s name so often but without writing the peace formula. I am told that he used to say out the words by mouth.”

We may also point out that although in general terms there is no sin in sending peace to other than a Prophet in those specific words, such as to say,

قال أبو بكر صلى الله عليه

“Abu Bakr said, Allah’s peace be upon him.”

But, by consensus, such usage is undesirable to the point of being forbidden.

So also, it is not desirable to say when ‘Ali’s name is spelled:

عليه السلام

“On him be peace,” but rather, should say,

رضي الله عنه

“May Allah be pleased with him,” since, this is the formula in use for all Companions, including those who were senior and superior to him: Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman.

In practice, the peace formula has been reserved for Prophets (Kashshaf). Finally, it is also said that one might not say when a Prophet’s name is spelled,

”صلى الله عليه“ - فقط

nor,

”عليه السلام“ - فقط

but rather, he should say,

صلى الله عليه و سلم

or,

عليه الصلاة والسلام

That is, one should combine the words of *salah* and salam.

Additionally, the following *hadith* is reported but it is either forged or untrustworthy:

من صلى عليّ في كتاب، لم تزل الصلاة جارية له ما دام اسمي في ذلك الكتاب

“Whoever mentioned salam in a book, the salam will be perpetually written in his favor so long as my name remains in the book.”

Ibn Kathir’s comments end here, some of which had been quoted by Qurtubi.

The above however, of combination of *salah* and salam is not a strict requirement. One could say for instance:

اللهم صل على محمد

“O Allah send peace to Muhammad.”

This is based on notes in Alusi, Thanwi, and Shafi’ - who quotes Nawawi.

As for *salah* on the Prophet during the sitting posture (*tashahhud*) in the Prayers, apart from Shafe’i, who declared it *wajib*, most other scholars have considered it strongly desirable, but not *wajib* (Qurtubi, Shafi’).

Finally, in our times an innovation is spreading around in the Indo-Pak area. They say to a person traveling to Madinah, ‘Say my salam to him.’ Or, ‘say salam to the Prophet on my behalf.’ This is out of ignorance that his or her salam is conveyed to the Prophet whenever he or she says the peace formula (Au.).

[57] Surely, Allah has cursed those who affront Allah¹⁴⁵ and His Messenger,¹⁴⁶ in the world and Hereafter. And He has prepared for them a humiliating chastisement.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿٥٧﴾

145. How could one affront Allah? It is to say, writes Zamakhshari, as the pagans said, “Angels are Allah’s daughters,” or, as the Jews said, “Allah’s hands are bound,” or, as the Christians said, “Allah is one of the three,” or, “the Messiah was the son of God.”

A *hadith* of the *Sahihyan* expounds this issue further.

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُؤْذِينِي ابْنُ آدَمَ يَسُبُّ الدَّهْرَ ، وَأَنَا الدَّهْرُ بِيَدِي الْأَمْرُ أَقْلِبُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ

Allah (*swt*) said, “Adam’s son affronts Me. He curses the time while I am the Time. I interchange its nights and days” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

146. Ibn `Abbas and others said that the allusion by pain to the Messenger was to the criticism leveled against the Prophet for marrying Safiyyah b. Huyayy b. Akhtab (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Kathir adds that that might be true, but the application is general.

The Orientalists would not deny themselves their share of Allah’s anger. To this day they raise questions

concerning the legitimacy of the Prophet choosing Rayhana for himself after the Banu Nadir affair, saying he took a captive from among the women-captives, while, moments ago, so to say, her men had been slaughtered. But they fail to understand Arab character of quickly forgetting the past, and adjusting to the present, stoically. Rayhana, an Arab, although Jewish, was no exception. Sirah books are full of such practical ways of dealing with life’s misfortunes. A quick example is that of Abu Jahl. When Ibn Mas`ud went up to behead him, he instructed him to slit the neck in a way that when kept among heads, it should stand high!

There were other instances of annoyance to the Prophet. When he sent an expedition placing Usama bin Zayd at the head, he was criticized (because of Zayd’s youth – he was just 18 – and because there were senior Companions in the expedition force). The Prophet (*saws*) ascended the mimber and said, “If you object

[58] Surely those who cause pain to the believing men and believing women,¹⁴⁷ without they having earned it,¹⁴⁸ have surely borne (upon themselves) a slander and a clear sin.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغَيْرِ
مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا
مُبِينًا ﴿٥٨﴾

to Usamah as the leader, then, you had also objected to his father (Zayd, his freed slave) as a leader. By Allah, he deserved to be an Amir and was the dearest of people to me. And surely, this one (Usama) is also dearest of people to me.” It is reported by scholars such as Ahmad, Abu Da’ud and others that while Zayd was as fair as cotton, Usama was extremely dark. When he was little, the Prophet used to clean his nose and mouth. It is said that Usamah was (one of) the causes of apostasy of the Arabs (of the outlying areas). During the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet stopped for a while at `Arafat, waiting for Usamah to join. When Usamah appeared, they said, “Is this the one he was waiting for?” – belittling him. They became apostates immediately upon the death of the Prophet. `Umar used to grant Usamah 5000 Dirham while to his own son `Abdullah he would allot 2000. Once `Abdullah protested, saying, “You do that while I have been in more battles than he.” `Umar answered, “Usamah was dearer to the Prophet than you were,

and his father was dearer to him than your father was” (Qurtubi).

(Zayd had married others earlier to marrying Zaynab. It is possible that Usamah’s mother was dark: Au.).

147. Ahmad and Tirmidhi have preserved a report from the Prophet, which was declared *Hasan Gharib* by Tirmidhi. It says,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مُعَقَّلٍ الْمُرِّيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي أَصْحَابِي اللَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي أَصْحَابِي لَا تَتَّخِذُوهُمْ غَرَضًا بَعْدِي فَمَنْ أَحَبَّهُمْ فَبِحُبِّي أَحَبَّهُمْ وَمَنْ أَبْغَضَهُمْ فَبِابْغِضِي أَبْغَضَهُمْ وَمَنْ آذَاهُمْ فَقَدْ آذَانِي وَمَنْ آذَانِي فَقَدْ آذَى اللَّهَ وَمَنْ آذَى اللَّهَ أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يَأْخُذَهُ

“Allah, Allah, in reference to my Companions. Allah, Allah, in reference to my Companions. Do not take to criticizing them after me. Whoever loved them, loved them in my love. Whoever, hated them, hated them in my hatred. Whoever hurt them, hurt me. Whoever hurt me, hurt Allah. And whoever hurt Allah, is likely that He will be taken to task” (Ibn Kathir).

[59] O Messenger! Say to your wives, your daughters,¹⁴⁹ and the believing women, (that they should) lower down their veils over themselves,¹⁵⁰ so it is likelier that they will be distinguished and not affronted.¹⁵¹ And Allah ever was Forgiving, Compassionate.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَلزَّوْجَاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ
ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥٩﴾

Bazzar has reported the Prophet (saws) as having said,

دعوا لي أصحابي لا تسبوا أصحابي

“Leave alone my Companions, do not curse them.”

Haythami said its narrators are those of the *Sahih* collections (Au.).

`A'isha has been preserved by Ibn Abi Hatim as reporting that once the Prophet addressed his Companions and asked,

عن عائشة قالت: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لأصحابه “أي الربا أربي عند الله؟” قالوا الله ورسوله أعلم قال: “أربي الربا عند الله استحلال عرض امرئ مسلم”

“Which is the worst of usury?”

They said, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “The worst of usury in the sight of Allah is to attack the honor of a Muslim without right” (Ibn Kathir).

While the first half could not be traced, this second half of the nar-

rative has the approval of Haythami (Au.).

148. Fudayl has said, “Look! It is not allowable that you should hurt a dog or a pig. What then is your opinion about believers in Allah?” (Zamakhshari).

149. In all, the Prophet had four daughters – all through Khadijah. (The *Shi`ah* deny that the Prophet had any daughter other than Fatimah. They say other daughters were offspring through Khadijah and issues of previous husbands. Their ignorance is of such order that they failed to notice that Allah used the word in plural: daughters - Alusi).

The Prophet's Daughters:

First was Zaynab. She was married to her maternal cousin Abu al-`Asi b. al-Rabi`. She died in the 8th year after *hijrah*. The Prophet buried her. Second was Ruqayyah. She had been married to Abu Lahab's son `Utbah, (while another of his daughter was married to his second son) but had

not left their houses for his house. When the Qur'ān revealed saying, "Abu Lahab's hands be destroyed" (*Surah Masad*), he said to his sons, "My head is unlawful to your head if you do not divorce them." So `Utbah divorced her. Subsequently `Uthman married her. At the marriage ceremony, Quraysh women sang,

أَحْسَنُ شَخْصَيْنِ رَأَىٰ إِنْسَانٌ ... زَوْجِيَّةً وَبَعْلَهَا عُثْمَانُ

"The best of two persons that a person saw were Ruqayyah and her husband `Uthman."

She migrated to Abyssinia (when persecuted. The Prophet said about her and `Uthman when they migrated: "The first pair to migrate in Allah's way after Ibrahim": Au.). Her first pregnancy was a miscarriage. Second pregnancy resulted in a son called `Abdullah. When he was six, a rooster pricked his face while he was asleep. He died of the wound. Thereafter she did not bring any child. She migrated to Madinah along with `Uthman and was sick when the Prophet started for Badr seventeen months after *hijrah*. He told him to stay back to look after her. She died while the Prophet stood (facing the Quraysh) at Badr. When Zayd b. Haritha arrived bringing the good news of victory to the Madinans, `Uthman was leveling her grave.

A third daughter was Umm Kulthum. She had been married to another of Abu Lahab's son `Utaybah. She too was divorced upon Abu Lahab's instruction, and she too the Prophet married off to `Uthman after Ruqayyah was dead. This is the reason why `Uthman was nicknamed "Dhun Nurayn" ("he of two Lights"). She died in the ninth year after *hijrah* and was lowered down into the grave by the Prophet himself. The last of his daughters was Fatimah. She took birth five years before the Prophet was commissioned and was married to `Ali in the second year after *hijrah*, in *Ramadan*. She survived the Prophet but was the first of his household to die after his own death, dying six months after him (Qurtubi).

150. What is a *jilbab*? A word not uncommon in pre-Islamic times, Qurtubi defines it as a cloak that covers the whole body. Ibn Kathir describes it as a cloak that women wear over their outer veil-covering (*khimar*). Zamakhshari says it is a piece of cloth bigger than a *khimar*, and smaller than a cloak, which women pull down over their faces on the one side, and with the other they cover the front part of their body. It is said, adds Zamakhshari, "When a woman's face gets uncovered, you better pull down your own cloak on your face."

The earliest commentators disagreed over the exact manner of Muslim women “letting down” their jilbab. Ibn `Abbas said that they should pull down the outer cloak to cover the head and the face leaving a hole open for one eye. (When asked to explain) Ibn `Awn demonstrated it, to whom Muhammad had demonstrated it, to whom Abu `Ubaydah had demonstrated. Ibn `Awn covered his head with his cloak. Then he wrapped it around his face covering the nose and one eye, and then pulled it down from the top to cover or nearly cover the two eyebrows. Another report of Ibn `Abbas says that free women used to wear what slave-girls wore. Allah instructed them to cover their foreheads. Qatadah said something similar (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Ibn Sirin said, “I asked `Ubaydah al-Salmani about it. He said that she should take one end of the cloak and cover everything above the brows, then twist it around the head, and bring it forward to cover the nose” (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi, Alusi and all others, in different words or in parts). Hasan said she should cover half her face. `Umar used to say, “What would go wrong if a woman came out of her house - if she has to come at all - she comes out with an old worn out cloak taken from

her housemaid, so that she returned but could not be recognized who she was?”! (Qurtubi).

The Veil

Women’s veil was nothing foreign to the Christian or Jewish cultures until recent times. Writes Uta Ranke-Heinemann in a work critical of the Church: “.. he (Clement of Alexandria) does make it clear how they (women) should dress: ‘Women should be completely veiled, except when they are in the house. Veiling their faces assures that they will lure no one into sin. For this is the will of the Logos, that it befits them to be veiled in prayer (Paedagogous III, 79, 4).’” [Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 127-8]. Parenthical words by Au.).

The above author also quotes:

“The commandment for women to be veiled applied above all to the realm of the sacred. The Apostolic Constitution (II, 57 – composes ca. 380) laid down that women could take Communion only while wearing the veil. In his famous Response to the Bulgarians in 866 (C.E.) Pope Nicholas I also called for women to wear the veil in church. In the sixth century the Church even demanded that women’s hands be veiled: ‘A woman may not approach the Eu-

charist with bare hands' (Mansi 9, 915)." [Ibid, p. 128].

And,

"Invoking a supposed regulation of the Apostle Paul ... Chrysostom bade women 'be veiled not only at the time of prayer, but continuously' (Twenty-sixth Homily on 1 Cor. 11:5)." [Ibid, p. 128].

And,

"Like Chrysostom, Ambrose too ordered women to go veiled in the streets: 'Let the woman cover her head, so as to secure her modesty even in public. Her countenance should not be readily offered to the eyes of a young man, and for that reason she should be covered with marriage veil' (On Penncce I, ch. 16)" [Ibid, p. 129].

Yusuf Ali comments, "The object was not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation. In the East and in the West a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women. This can be traced back on the earliest civilisations. Assyrian Law in its palm-iest days (say, 7th century B.C.), enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and

women of ill fame: see Cambridge Ancient History, 111. 107."

Separation of women from everyday humdrum of economic struggle has been the norm from the time of Adam, in every age, and every culture, Roman or Chinese, Aztecs or Indian, ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, Judaic or Christian. In Judaism women cannot to this day intermingle with men in the Synagogue. Irksome to modern Jews, they are separated with a curtain. In pre-modern churches, women were not allowed into the Church without a scarve covering the head. In Shakespearean times, women of noble families wore the veil in public. It is only since about 200 years that they began to appear in public without the veils. Two factors have played important role in bringing out women into streets, offices, shops, fields and factories. (1) the spread of material culture, which believes and tolerates only material development of man and society, and (2) two world wars after which shortage of labour was a constraining factor in rebuilding nations in rubble (Au.).

Mufti Shafi` Deobandi's comments could be summarized here:

Covering of the body has been inherited from the first pair Adam and

Hawwa. According to all religious traditions, once their private parts became visible, Adam and Hawwa kept themselves covered in Paradise, although husband and wife, with no third human around.

The Qur'ān told us about Shu'ayb's two shepherd daughters that they stood apart and gave the reason why they stood apart: men were crowding around the well. Then, when one of them came to invite Musa to her house, it was not on her own, but on the invitation of her father. Similarly, and although *Hijab* verses had not yet been revealed, we find reported that Zaynab sat facing the wall while there were guests in the Prophet's house. Hence, in all cultures, to remain naked even when privacy is assured, is disapproved. In Islam, if someone prayed naked, in a dark night, at home, with no other human around, his prayer is not valid. In fact, to uncover the body, in private, without any physical or *Shari'ah* need is also disallowed in Islam.

Verses revealed in the Qur'ān pertaining to *Hijab* are spread in two chapters: this *Surah* and *Surah Nur*. Among them, according to consensus, the first to be revealed was the 53rd verse of this chapter, while

those of the *Surah Nur* were the last to be revealed, around 6th year after *hijrah*.

To put it briefly, we can say that the veil, *Hijab*, or *'awrah* are of three levels. (a) Women should ordinarily remain at home. (b) But it is unthinkable that they will not need to go out. Therefore, when they do so, they should cover their whole body, head to foot, exposing an eye. (c) At a third level they should cover the same parts of the body (as under item "b") against those they cannot marry.

Many people argue that the face is not included in *Hijab*. But the question that arises is, if the face is not included, what was the point in asking the Prophet's wives to interact with men from behind a veil. If the face is excluded, what was the point in the curtain?

Some people have tried to project verse 53 as applicable to the Prophet's wives alone. But, one may ask, for what reason should common women be considered incapable of rising to high moral and spiritual levels? Why should they be considered lower in spiritual abilities than the wives of the Prophet should have been asked to remain in full *Hijab*, but other, common women not? Sabuni adds:

How could the veil have been necessary for the mothers of the believers whom the believers could never marry, but not the common women whom they can marry? (Rawa'i').

Thus there are various levels of *'awrah* depending on the kinds and classes of men a woman interacts with. Her whole person is *'awrah* against a ghayr mahram (against whom there is no legal prohibition for her to marry, at any time in her life). This is the position of the four *Fuqaha'* and almost all classical scholars. The only difference is that as against the other three (Ahmad, Malik and Shafe'i), Abu Hanifah declared that the face and hands are not included in *Hijab* so long as there is no fear of *fitnah*. *Fitnah* is defined as a man looking at a woman with shahwah (carnal desire). If that happens, then she must cover her face. Thus, in a way Abu Hanifah did not digress much from the position held by the other three Imāms.

Shami writes in his *Radd al-Muhtar*: "If there is fear of shawah (carnal look), it is prohibited for a man to look at a woman's face at any time. Thus, looking at the face is lawful under the condition of lack of shahwah. That, significantly, was in those times. As for our times, it is prohib-

ited altogether to look at a young woman's face unless it is for identification or some such unavoidable reason. With reference to Prayers, a young woman should not be allowed to Pray along with males with her face uncovered (Shafi'). This is the reason why many women cover their faces during Hajj rites, even in the Grand Mosque, despite the ban on covering the face while in the consecrated state (*ihram*) – Au.

Interestingly, inspired by, or put to shame by Muslim women in full *Hijab*, some Jewish women have, particularly in Israel, began to don the Burqah, fully covering their faces. They are derided as Talibanis – from the strictly Islamic group called Taliban (Au.).

151. It is said that in early Islam as women – both free as well as slaves - went out by the evenings to attend to nature's call (there were no toilets within the homes then: Qurtubi), they encountered men who teased them. The specific manner of covering themselves distinguished free women from slave-girls, who were thus spared molestation (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir). Hence the following verse chiding the hypocrites who teased and taunted women as they passed by them (Au.).

[60] If the hypocrites do not desist, those in whose hearts is a disease¹⁵² and those who stir agitation¹⁵³ in Madinah, We shall surely urge you on against them,¹⁵⁴ then they will not remain your neighbors,¹⁵⁵ but for a short while.¹⁵⁶

لَئِن لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
مَّرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِبَنَّكَ
بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٦٠﴾

152. *Surah* Al-Tawbah had identified ten types of hypocrites. The allusion here, according to `Ikrimah, Abu Salih and Ibn Zayd, is to the type that commits adultery; and the allusion by 'the disease in the hearts' is to the predisposition to extra-marital sex (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

153. The allusion by "irjaf" is to sedition, agitation, and rumors that the hypocrites caused and spread, until they lost all hopes of Islam being overcome, and their numbers began to dwindle (Au. from Ibn Jarir).

A popular pastime for the hypocrites was to spread rumors such as: 'a Muslim expedition has lost such and such a battle,' or, 'so many are reported to have been killed,' etc. (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Thanwi).

In Mawdudi's words, "The allusion is to such people who, in order to cause panic among the Muslims and to lower their morale, used to spread rumors in Madinah to the effect that the Muslims had suffered such and

such a serious setback, that a huge army was gathering together against them at such and such a place, that Madinah was under threat of a sudden attack, etc. They had other pastimes besides this. They would concoct and spread stories about the domestic life of the Prophet's household and of other prominent Muslims so as to plant suspicion among the commonfolk and destroy the moral influence of those implicated."

154. While a close second meaning is "stir you against them," Ibn `Abbas said it means, "We will make you prevail over them" – Ibn Jarir.

155. A beautiful way of making a commonplace statement, namely, they would be thrown out of Madinah (Au.).

156. However, they remained in Madinah, to survive even after the Prophet's death, giving us a rule that while a promise should be kept, a threat need not be necessarily executed (Thanwi).

[61] Accursed wherever found,¹⁵⁷ seized and cut down to pieces.

مَلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا تَقِفُوا أَخِذُوا وَقْتِكُمْ بِهَا
﴿٦١﴾

[62] Allah's way with those who went earlier, and you shall never find any alteration in Allah's way.¹⁵⁸

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ
تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] People ask you concerning the Hour. Say, 'The knowledge of it is with Allah (alone).' And what will teach you (that) perhaps the Hour is close!

يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ
قَرِيبًا ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] Indeed, Allah has cursed the unbelievers and has prepared for them a Blaze.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا
﴿٦٤﴾

[65] Abiding therein forever. They shall not find (therein) a friend nor a helper.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَا يَجِدُونَ وِلِيًّا وَلَا
نَصِيرًا ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] The day their faces are turned about in the Fire, they saying, 'Only if we had obeyed Allah and had obeyed the Messenger.'

يَوْمَ تَقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يَا
لَيْتَنَا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] And they would say, 'O our Lord! Indeed, we obeyed our leaders and our great ones, but they led us astray from the way.'

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا
فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] O our Lord! Inflict them with double the punishment, and curse them with a great curse.'

رَبَّنَا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنَّهُمْ
لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٨﴾

157. Asad comments: "In classical Arabic, the term la`nah is more or less synonymous with ib`ad ('removal into distance' or 'banishment'); hence, God's la`nah denotes 'His rejection of a sinner from all that is good' (*Lisan al-'Arab*) or 'exclusion from His grace' (Manar II, 50). The term mal'un which occurs in verse

61 below signifies, therefore, 'one who is bereft of God's mercy.'"

158. Just as there has been no change in physical, natural laws that organize and run the universe, there has not been, and will not be anytime in the future, any change in moral laws too (Au.).

[69] Believers! Do not be like those who annoyed Musa.¹⁵⁹ But Allah cleared him of what they uttered. He was highly esteemed in Allah's sight.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ
آذَوْا مُوسَىٰ قَبْرَهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا وَكَانَ عِنْدَ
اللَّهِ وَجِيهًا ﴿٦٩﴾

159. Majid quotes, "Moses had to suffer 'many indignities and insults from a rebellious and recalcitrant people, even from his closest relatives, who were jealous of his leadership' (VJE, p. 442).

Yusuf Ali adds: "The people of Moses often vexed him and rebelled against him and against God's Law. Here the reference seems to be to Num. xii. 1-13. It is there said that Moses's own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron spoke against Moses because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. God cleared Moses of the charge of having done anything wrong: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." Miriam was afflicted with leprosy for seven days as a punishment, after which she was forgiven, as also was Aaron. "This is the Old Testament story. The holy Prophet was also attacked because of his marriage with Zainab bint Jahsh, but not by his own circle, his motives were of the highest (order) and were completely vindicated as we have seen."

Ahmed has preserved, as also the Shaihayn, that once when the Prophet (*saws*) divided the booty, someone objected saying,

إن هذه القسمة ما أريد بها وجه الله عز وجل ..
فذكرت ذلك للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فاحمر وجهه
وقال: رحمة الله على موسى قد أودى باكثر من هذا
فصبر.

"Allah's good pleasure was not sought by this division." This was conveyed to the Prophet. His face reddened (with anger) and he remarked, "May Allah show mercy to Musa. He was given greater pain than this, but he observed patience."

(Haythami treated this and similar reports with some skepticism: Au.). Other reports, as in Ahmed and Abu Da'ud have it that the Prophet once remarked,

عن عبد الله بن مسعود قال: قال رسول الله صلى
الله عليه وسلم لأصحابه: لا يبلغني أحد عن أحد
من أصحابي شيئاً فأني أحب أن أخرج إليكم وأنا
سليم الصدر قال: وأتى رسول الله صلى الله عليه
وسلم مال فقسمه قال: فمرت برجلين وأحدهما
يقول لصاحبه: والله ما أراد محمد بقسمته وجه الله

ولا الدار الآخرة فتثبت حتى سمعت ما قالوا ثم أتيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقلت: يا رسول الله إنك قلت لنا لا يبلغني أحد عن أحد من أصحابي شيئا وإني مررت بفلان وفلان وهما يقولان كذا وكذا قال: فاحمر وجه رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وشق عليه ثم قال: دعنا منك فقد أودى موسى أكثر من ذلك ثم صبر

“Let not anyone of you convey anything to me about my Companions. I wish to carry a clean heart as I come out before you.” But, thereafter some goods came to him and he distributed them. Then I (the narrator) passed by two men, one of whom was saying to his companions, “By Allah, Muhammad did not aim at Allah’s approval, nor at the Hereafter through this division of his.” I stayed there until I heard what the two were saying. Then I went to the Prophet and told him, “Messenger of Allah. You have said, ‘Let not anyone of you convey anything to me about my Companions. I wish to carry a clean heart as I come out before you.’ Now, I passed by so and so and they were saying such and such a thing. The Prophet’s face became red, as it was quite hard on him (to hear that). He said, ‘Spare me of you. Musa was given greater pain than this but

he remained patient” (Ibn Kathir and Shawkani in part).

Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Zayd, and others reported the following as their own statements which is strengthened by a *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurayrah:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ مُوسَى كَانَ رَجُلًا حَيِيًّا سِتِيرًا لَا يَرَى مِنْ جِلْدِهِ شَيْءٌ اسْتَحْيَاءَ مِنْهُ فَأَذَاهُ مَنْ آذَاهُ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فَقَالُوا مَا يَسْتِيرُ هَذَا التَّسْتِيرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عَيْبٍ يَجْلِيهِ إِمَّا بَرَصٌ وَإِمَّا أُذْرَةٌ وَإِمَّا آفَةٌ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُبْرِئَهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا لِمُوسَى فَخَلَا يَوْمًا وَحْدَهُ فَوَضَعَ ثِيَابَهُ عَلَى الْحَجَرِ ثُمَّ اغْتَسَلَ فَلَمَّا فَرَغَ أَقْبَلَ إِلَى ثِيَابِهِ لِيَأْخُذَهَا وَإِنَّ الْحَجَرَ عَدَا بِتَوْبِهِ فَأَخَذَ مُوسَى عَصَاهُ وَطَلَبَ الْحَجَرَ فَجَعَلَ يَقُولُ تَوْبِي حَجَرٌ تَوْبِي حَجَرٌ حَتَّى انْتَهَى إِلَى مَلَأٍ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فَرَأَوْهُ غُرِيَانًا أَحْسَنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ وَأَبْرَاهُ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ وَقَامَ الْحَجَرُ فَأَخَذَ تَوْبَهُ فَلَبَسَهُ وَطَفِقَ بِالْحَجَرِ صَرْبًا بِعَصَاهُ فَوَاللَّهِ إِنَّ بِالْحَجَرِ لِنَدَبًا مِنْ أَثَرِ صَرْبِهِ نَلَاثًا أَوْ أَرْبَعًا أَوْ خَمْسًا فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ آذَوْا مُوسَى فَبَرَّاهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَجِيهًا (البخاري)

“Musa was a shy man and careful about covering himself. He would never bare any part of his body out of modesty. But some of the Israelites offended him saying, ‘nothing prevents him from exposing his body to this extent but some kind of defect: either it is leprosy, scrotal hernia, or some other problem.’ Allah (*swt*) wished to clear Musa of what they alleged. One day,

assured of privacy, Musa took out his clothes, placed them on a stone and began to bathe. When he was finished he went for his clothes. But the stone began to roll away along with the clothes. Musa took his rod and ran after it saying, 'O stone! My clothes. O stone! My clothes.' The chase ended with a group of Israelites. They saw him naked and found him best of Allah's creation. Thus he was cleared of their allegation. The stone halted. He put on his clothes and began to strike the stone with his rod. And, by Allah, the beating left marks on the stone, either three or four or five." Then the Prophet added, "It is in this reference that Allah revealed, 'Believers! Do not be like those who annoyed Musa. So Allah cleared him of what they uttered. He was highly esteemed in Allah's sight'" (Ibn Jarir).

Bukhari and Muslim have preserved this report. Muslim's version has it at the start that, "The Israelites used to bathe naked with some of them looking at the private parts of others. But Musa would bathe alone. They said, 'Surely, there is some defect in him ..'" (Qurtubi).

Time has taken a full circle. Western Jews and Christians bathe naked before each other. In fact, it is reported that in hostels, girls bathe and walk back naked to their rooms (Au.).

Another instance of the Israelites annoying their Prophet is when Qaroon became envious of him and sent a prostitute in an assembly to allege that Musa had an affair with her. However, when she stood face to face with him, she retracted her earlier statement and confessed that the whole thing had been framed. A third instance of annoying Musa is that when Haroon died, the Israelites alleged that Musa had killed him. They said, "He was more lenient with us than you, and loved us more than you" (Ibn Jarir). The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim. In other words, there were many instances of the Israelites causing pain to (the greatest of) their Prophet (Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Qurtubi points out that if one is assured of privacy, he could bathe naked, even in a pond. However, it is preferable to remain covered. It is reported that Hasan b. 'Ali entered into a pond with a cloak around. When questioned, he said, "I covered myself from One who sees me but Whom I do not see."

[70] Believers! Fear Allah and say words aimed at the truth.¹⁶⁰

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] He will set right your deeds for you and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, has surely achieved a great triumph.

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾

As to how could Musa say to a lifeless stone, “O stone! My clothes!?” The answer is: it is because the stone was behaving not like a lifeless thing, but very much like one that had life.

160. The translation of the textual “sadida” is influenced by Zamakhshari’s understanding. Literally, however, it means to aim at being straightforward and unambiguous. That is, adds Qurtubi, words whose apparent meaning is the intended one. Asad put it as, “literally, ‘a saying that hits the mark,’ i.e., is truthful, relevant and to the point.”

The Islamic directive in this regard is in contrast to the modern civilized man, who says one thing but means another. He gives his words a construction that supports double-speak. In today’s Western world this is such an outstanding quality

that speeches receive standing ovation more for saying the opposite of what is intended than for making a clear statement. One is a poor statesman if he speaks out his true intentions. It can be safely said that when a Muslim politician makes a statement, one might carefully note his words, because that is exactly how he is going to keep it, no less, nor more, while, when a Western politician makes a statement, one might carefully examine the words, because he has stated therein how he is not going to keep it (Au.).

Zamakhshari also points out that this urging to aim at the truth is in contrast with the previous verse where it was said that the believers should not annoy the Prophet, which can happen through false allegations.

[72] Indeed, We offered the Trust¹⁶¹ to the heavens and the earth and the mountains,¹⁶² but they declined that they should bear it, and were afraid thereof.¹⁶³ But Man undertook it. Indeed, he was quite unjust, quite foolish.¹⁶⁴

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

161. There have been various opinions explaining what “*amanah*” stands for. It has been said that the allusion is to the testimony. `Ali ibn Abi Talib’s opinion was that the allusion by *amanah* is to Prayers. (His countenance would change its hue at the time of Prayers. When asked he would explain, “The time has come for being true to the trust”: Alusi).

Ubay b. Ka`b said that a woman’s private part is her *amanah*. Ibn Mas`ud said that the reference was to wealth, property, and things handed over in trust. He is also reported to have said that it is the Islamic obligations in general, but the most difficult was that which is related to wealth. Abu al-Darda’ said the allusion was to major abLution after sexual intercourse, i.e., if you wished you bathed, if you did not, you did not, nobody would know about it (Qurtubi).

Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Qatadah and others said that the allusion by the textual “*amanah*” is to obligations declared mandatory by Allah,

and the limits set by His commands. Notwithstanding the various opinions, the great majority throughout the ages has accepted this last opinion as the correct interpretation (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi and others).

In short, the *amanah* in question is for what the humans know, or have been taught by the Revelation and placed with the as a trust. Acting against them will be the opposite of *amanah*, i.e., *khiyanah* in Arabic, or dishonesty in English (Au.).

It appears that when inanimate objects were asked to carry the burden of *amanah*, they understood that it would imply receiving freedom of the will, and therefore cringed at the idea, realizing that with the freedom to choose and the power to act, they might err. But man hastened to carry the burden and thus implicitly accepted to have freedom of the will. Singificantly, there is hardly any difference in opinion that the root cause of all human catastrophe, and,

to a limited scale, of the natural also, at least on the earth, is man's freedom of will. He has always acted wrongly. Yet, no thinker ever suggested that it would have been better if man did not have this power. Thus the burden of *amanah* remains with the humanity, by choice, and a great reality is concealed in Allah's words viz., "But Man undertook it. Indeed, he was very unjust, very foolish" (Au.).

A contemporary commentator has said that the reference by trust is to *khilafah*. But none of the *Salaf* have said any such thing. In fact, they never believed in the *khilafah* (of modern concept), nor spoke of it any oftener than they spoke of the earth's roundness. Secondly, if it is *khilafah* that is meant, then the next question would be: over whom was the *khilafah* to be exercised, if the heavens and the earth were to bear it? In other words, if the heavens and the earth had accepted the burden of *khilafah*, over whom would they have exercised their sovereignty to fulfill its demands of *khilafah*? (Au.).

Majid comments: "(Trust) i.e., moral responsibility, which is human sense of answerableness for all acts of thought and conduct. Its first and foremost prerequisite is freedom of choice, which is the real function

of a human being as a moral agent. The 'trust' referred to is obviously the trust of free choice or accountability."

Yusuf Ali writes: "The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise. There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise."

In Asad's words, ".. the most convincing .. (mentioned in Lane I, 102, with reference to the above verse) are 'reason', or 'intellect', and 'the faculty of volition' – i.e., the ability to choose between two or more possible courses of action or mode of behavior, and thus between good and evil."

Ibn Jarir, and, following him Ibn Kathir, present several *ahadith* with reference to *amanah*, one of which has Haythami's approval. It says,

قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: "إن الأمانة والوفاء نزلا على ابن آدم مع الأنبياء، فأرسلوا به، فمنهم رسول الله، ومنهم نبي، ومنهم نبي رسول، ونزل القرآن وهو كلام الله، ونزلت العربية والعجمية، فعملوا أمر القرآن وعلموا أمر السنن بألسنتهم، ولم يدع الله شيئا من أمره مما يأتون وما يجتنون وهي

الحجج عليهم، إلا بينه لهم. فليس أهل لسان إلا وهم يعرفون الحسن والقيح، ثم الأمانة أول شيء يرفع ويبقى أثرها في جذور قلوب الناس، ثم يرفع الوفاء والعهد والذمم وتبقى الكتب، فعالم يعمل، وجاهل يعرفها وينكرها ولا يحملها، حتى وصل إلي وإلى أمتي، ولا يهلك على الله إلا هالك، ولا يغفله إلا تارك. فالحذر أيها الناس، وإياكم والوسواس الخناس، فإنما ييلوكم أيكم أحسن عملا

The Prophet said: “Trust and Compact came down to the children of Adam with the Prophets; they were sent with it. Some of them were Allah’s Messengers, others Prophets, yet others Messenger-cum-Prophets. Then the Qur’ān was sent, which is Allah’s speech; and Arabic and non-Arabic (languages) came down. So they knew the Qur’ānic command and the *Sunan* in their language. Allah did not leave anything that was obligatory on them or was prohibited, but it was explained to them – leaving them no excuse; so that there was none of the people of the tongue but who knew the difference between good and bad. Then it happened that the Trust was first removed from people’s hearts so that a tiny point of it remained in the depth of their hearts. Then the word of honor, compacts, and sense of responsibility happened to be taken away.

“The books remained. The knowledgeable acted (according to the demands of Trust). As for the ignorant, he knew, but denied and refused to carry the burden – until the affair came down to me and to my *Ummah*.

“And none will destroy himself before Allah, except he who is bent on it; and none will abandon it but he who is heedless. So beware O people. And, be warned of the whisperings of the Devil. You are being tried to discover which of you is fair in practice.”

Ibn Kathir declares the above as pretty weak, but adds that it has supporting statements of the Prophet, i.e. bits and pieces of statements here, contained in *Sahih ahadith*.

Finally, we have the famous *hadith* preserved by Bukhari:

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ وَهَبٍ حَدَّثَنَا حَدِيثَنَا قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - حَدِيثَيْنِ رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَهُمَا وَأَنَا أَتَشْطُرُ الْآخَرَ ، حَدَّثَنَا « أَنَّ الْأَمَانَةَ تَزَلَّتْ فِي جَذْرِ قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ ، ثُمَّ عَلِمُوا مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ، ثُمَّ عَلِمُوا مِنَ السُّنَّةِ » . وَحَدَّثَنَا عَنْ رَفِعِهَا قَالَ « يَنَامُ الرَّجُلُ النَّوْمَةَ فَتُنْقِضُ الْأَمَانَةَ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ ، فَيَظَلُّ أَتْرَافَهَا مِثْلَ أَتْرِ الْوَكْتِ ، ثُمَّ يَنَامُ النَّوْمَةَ فَتُنْقِضُ قَبِيضَ أَتْرَافِهَا مِثْلَ الْمَجْلِ ، كَجَمْرِ دَخَرْتَهُ عَلَى رِجْلِكَ فَتَفْطُ ، فَتَرَاهُ مُتَهَيِّئًا ، وَلَيْسَ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ ، فَيُضْبِحُ النَّاسُ يَتَّبِعُونَ فَلَا يَكَادُ أَحَدٌ يُؤَدِّي الْأَمَانَةَ ، فَيُقَالُ إِنَّ فِي بَنِي فُلَانٍ رَجُلًا أَمِينًا . وَيُقَالُ لِلرَّجُلِ مَا أَعْقَلَهُ وَمَا أَطْرَفَهُ وَمَا أَجْلَدَهُ . وَمَا فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةِ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ إِيْمَانٍ » [صحيح البخارى]

Zayd b. Wahab reported: Hudhayfah told us that the Prophet spoke of two things to us, of which I saw one fulfilled, while I wait for the other to happen. He said, "Trust came down into the roots of men's hearts. Then they learned the Qur'an and learnt the *Sunnah*." And he spoke to us about they being withdrawn saying, "A man will take a nap and the Trust (*amanah*) will be withdrawn from his heart so that its effect will remain in the like manner of a light (darkish) patch. Then he will take a nap and it will be withdrawn so that its effect will be left like a rough area as the effect of hard work on the hand, like a spark which you stamped with your foot to put it off, so that you see him as an outstanding person, although there is nothing (of any worth) in him.

"Then the people will deal with each other but you will hardly find a man who would honor the trust so that it will be said, 'There is one among so and so who is trustworthy.' And it will be said about a man, 'How clever? How smart? And, how pretty!' But he will not have a grain of belief in his heart."

Another of interest is as follows:

عن عبد الله بن مسعود، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "القتل في سبيل الله يكفر الذنوب كلها - أو قال: يكفر كل شيء - إلا الأمانة، يؤتى بصاحب الأمانة فيقال له: أذ أمانتك. فيقول: أنى يا رب وقد ذهب الدنيا؟ فيقال له: أذ أمانتك. فيقول: أنى يا رب، وقد ذهب الدنيا؟ فيقال له: أذ أمانتك. فيقول: أنى يا رب وقد ذهب الدنيا؟ فيقول: اذهبوا به إلى أمه الهاوية. فيذهب به إلى الهاوية، فيهوي فيها حتى ينتهي إلى قعرها، فيجدها هنالك كهيتتها، فيحملها فيضعها على عاتقه، فيصعد بها إلى شفير جهنم، حتى إذا رأى أنه قد خرج رأت فهوى في أثرها أبد الأبدين"

On the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, the Prophet said, "Being killed in the way of Allah expiates all sins - or he said, expiates everything - except for trust (*amanah*). The man (with the responsibility) of trusts (not honored) will be brought forth and said, 'Return the trust.' He will say, 'Aye my Lord, the world is gone.' He will be told, 'Return the trust.' He will say, 'Aye my Lord, the world is gone.' He will be told, 'Return the trust.' He will say, 'Aye my Lord, the world is gone.' He will say, 'Take him to his abode, the Hawiyyah.' He will be taken to the Hawiyyah and (given a push) he will begin to plunge until he lands at its bottom. There he will find the like of it (i.e. trusts). He will lift

it to his shoulders, and begin to climb with it to the edge of *Jab-annum*; until when he thinks that he would be getting out, he will slip and fall back - that happening eternally.”

Ibn Kathir says that the report has a good chain of narrators.

On the topic, we add the following. One is from Tirmidhi and others. It says:

أَدِّ الْأَمَانَةَ إِلَى مَنِ اسْتَمَنَّكَ وَلَا تَخُنْ مَنْ خَانَكَ

“Honor the trust unto he who trusted you and, do not deceive him who deceives you.”

Tirmidhi declares it as Hasan. However, Haythamiyy judged the version in Tabarani as *Sahih*.

Yet another on this topic is in *Musnad* of Ahmad and others, about which Haythamiyy said that one of the narrators in the chain was declared weak by Nasa’i, but whom Ibn Ma`een considered trustworthy. It says:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ مَا خَطَبَنَا نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - إِلَّا قَالَ « لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ وَلَا دِينَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ » .

Anas b. Malik said that the Prophet never addressed us but he said, “There is no faith in him

who has no *amanah*, and there is no religion in him who does not keep the promise.”

Also see *Surah Al-Nisa*, note no. 180 of this work for some other details (Au.).

162. One might note that the offer was made in turns from the highest to the lowest: heavens, earth, mountains (Au.).

163. This refusal, points out Razi, was not the kind of refusal that Iblis had committed. His refusal was against a command, whereas these inanimate objects were, sort of, consulted. Secondly, his refusal was out of pride whereas theirs was out of humbleness.

164. Ibn `Abbas is severally reported, as also Dahhak that, Adam was told, “Will you undertake it (the *amanah*) in good spirit?” He asked, “And what is being in ‘good spirit’?” He was told, “If you did well, you will be rewarded, but punished if you went awry.” He accepted. But it was not between *Asr* and *Maghrib* times but he had already sinned which resulted in his removal from Paradise. According to other reports he was told that the heavens and the earth and the mountains had refused to undertake the trust. But he volun-

teered all the same (Ibn Jarir). [We have translated a few words as they appear in other reports: Au.].

The report is in Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn al-Anbari, Ibn Abi Shaybah and others including Hakim who declared it trustworthy (Shawkani). And, of course, the *ʿAsr* and *Maghrib* of above reference is to the *ʿAsr* and *Maghrib* of the other world. The above also impacts that it was freedom to choose that led the inanimate objects to shrink back from the undertaking (Au.).

Ibn Kathir adds: A report in the *Sahihayn* tells us on the authority of Hudhayfah that:

???

There is another report in this connection worth reproducing. On the authority of ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAmr, the Prophet said,

”أربع إذا كن فيك فلا عليك ما فاتك من الدنيا:
حفظ أمانة، وصدق حديث، وحسن خليفة، وعفة
طعمة“

“If you are endowed with four characteristics, then it does not matter what you miss out of this world: Honoring the trust, truthful talk, good character, and lawful food” (Ibn Kathir). Haythami did not grant it his full approval (Au.).

Compare this with the characteristics of a hypocrite described by the Prophet: “When he is entrusted he fails, when he speaks he lies and when he quarrels he speaks bad words” (Au.).

Shawkani makes a useful addition, which, after its correction by S.Ibrhaim is as follows: The Prophet said, i.e., “There is no faith in him who has no *amanah*, and he has no religion who has no covenant.” (That is, who does not keep his promise: Au.). The narrative was declared trustworthy by Albani.

Compare this with the characteristics of a hypocrite described by the Prophet: “When he is entrusted he fails, when he speaks he lies and when he quarrels he speaks bad words” (Au.).

Amanah in fact, adds Ibn Kathir, is of such a high value that one might not swear by it. The Prophet (*saws*) said, as in a report of Ahmad, “Whoever swore by *amanah* is not of us.”

Ibn Kathir also narrates the report of Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali in his *Kitab al-Zuhd*, that it was either Khunas or Jabalah b. Suhaym who said, “I was returning with Ziyad b. Hūdayr from Jabiyah that I said during a conversation, ‘No, by the *amanah*.’” Ziyad began to weep and weep. I began to

[73] That He may chastise hypocritical men and hypocritical women, polytheistic men and polytheistic women,¹⁶⁵ and so that Allah may turn (in mercy) upon believing men and believing women.¹⁶⁶ And ever Allah was All-forgiving, All-compassionate.¹⁶⁷

لِيُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ
وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

wonder whether I had committed a great fault.” (It was because early in Islam swearing by the *amanah* was considered a sin (Au.).

165. That is, Man’s acceptance of the Trust became the cause of the chastisement of the hypocrites and pagans (Imām Razi, Qurtubi, Alusi and others).

166. Hasan said that the implication is that these two classes of human beings, hypocrites and unbelievers, did not keep the trust, while those who kept it were the believers (Ibn Jarir).

In other words, to acknowledge the Oneness of one’s Creator is to prove true, and to refuse is to dishonor the

greatest of trusts that man is entrusted with (Au.).

167. Some people have thought that “zalum and jahul” are fond expressions rather than those expressing anger or criticism (Shabbir).

It may be noted that in contrast to man’s two qualities: injustice and foolishness, Allah (*swt*) brought two of His own Qualities: very forgiving (of man’s injustices), very kind (in face of his foolishness). Further, Allah knew that man is unjust and foolish, yet entrusted him with the *amanah*, in knowledge that He will respond to him with forgiveness and kindness, if he fell short (Razi).





Surah 34

Sabā'

(Sabaens)

Makkan¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] All praise is for Allah to whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. His is the praise in the Hereafter, and He is the All-wise, the All-aware.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَلَمْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْحَبِيرُ ﴿١﴾

[2] He knows that which goes into the earth and that which comes forth from it, that which descends from the heaven and that which ascends to it.² He indeed is the All-merciful, the All-forgiving.

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْعَجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْعَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

1. The chapter is Makkan by consensus, except for a single verse – number 6 - that some have thought is Madinan (Qurtubi).

“To Him rises the good word”, or the souls, or good deeds (that rise up) could all have been alluded to (Razi, Qurtubi and others in parts).

2. That is, what goes into the earth of the seeds or the dead, what comes out of it of the vegetation, or living beings; what comes down from the heaven of Allah’s mercy, such as rains, or angels, or the Revelation, and what ascends into it of the good word as mentioned in 35: 10):

Asad puts it in contemporary terms, “This definition comprises things physical and spiritual: waters disappearing underground and reappearing; the metamorphosis of seed into plant, and of decaying plant into oil and coal; traces of old artefacts and entire civilizations buried in the earth and then reappearing within the sight and consciousness of later

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ

[3] But said those who disbelieved, 'The Hour will never come upon us.' Say, 'Yes indeed, by my Lord, it shall surely come upon you – (brought by the) Knower of the Unseen – not absent³ from Him is an atom's weight⁴ in the heavens nor in the earth, neither smaller than that nor greater, but it is in a clear Record.⁵

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ
بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ
عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا
فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣﴾

[4] That He may reward those who believed and worked righteousness. Those - for them is forgiveness and a generous provision.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

generations of men; the transformation of dead bodies of animals and men into elements of nourishment for new life; the ascent of earthly vapours towards the skies, and their descent as rain, snow or hail; the ascent towards the heaven of men's longings, hopes and ambitions, and the descent of divine inspiration into the minds of men, and thus a revival of faith and thought and, with it, the growth of new artefacts, new skills and new hopes: in short, the endless recurrence of birth, death and re-birth which characterises all of God's creation."

3. This is how Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, and Qatadah understood the word "ya`zubu" of the text – as in Ibn Jarir; reflecting Allah's Quality: the Shaheed (Au.).

4. As noted earlier, "dharrah" alludes to a very small ant, or the speck of

dust that is visible when a ray of light penetrates a dark room. Adoption of its modern meaning, atom, although correct, is actually more for reasons of sound than sense.

It is noticeable that the words, "neither smaller than that .." imply, perhaps for the first time in human literature, the concept of sub-atomic particles. Further, the behaviour of sub-atomic particles is unpredictable, as demonstrated by the 'two-slit' experiments, commonly conducted in college laboratories, leads to the conclusion that Allah's control works at the quantum level, otherwise, the appearance of an orderly universe is ruled out. The order on one side, and disorderly behavior of sub-atomic particles on the other, is paradoxical (Au.).

5. That is, the "Lawh al-Mahfooz" (Alusi).

[5] As for those who strove in Our signs, to frustrate (Us), those, for them shall be a painful chastisement of a foul nature.⁶

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ
لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رَّجْزٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٥﴾

[6] On the other hand,⁷ those who have been given the knowledge see that what has been sent down to you by your Lord is the truth, and guides to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable.⁸

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ
مِن رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٦﴾

6. Asad writes: “The particle min (lit., “out of”) which precedes the noun *rijz* (“vileness” or “vile conduct”) indicates that the suffering which awaits such sinners in the life to come is an organic consequence of their deliberately evil conduct in this world.”

7. In its brevity, the Qur’ān uses “waaw” to express, apart from its standard meanings of “and,” “while,” “but,” “yet,” “although,” etc., several other meanings, such as, “for,” “further,” “moreover,” “to be sure,” etc. At this point, “on the other hand” seems to fit quite well (Au.).

8. Sayyid comments on “And guides to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable: “The path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable is that path which He has approved for His creation, and has chosen it for the humans so that their footsteps may match with the footsteps of the material world in which they live. The

path is none other than the system which rules over all that is there in the universe including human life. Human life then, cannot sever its relationship with the universe which provides it with the basis of existence as well as the system that governs its continuation.

“(It) guides on to the ‘path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable,’ by creating in the hearts of a believer clear perceptions with regard to his own existence, his relationships (with the world around him), and the laws (that govern the world). It tells him about his place in it, his role, and the nature of relationship between its various parts, in their joint effort towards the realization of Allah’s will, and His wisdom in their creation; and towards the realization of the harmony between various elements as the whole journeys to its ultimate destination.

[7] But said those who disbelieved, 'Shall we point you to a man⁹ who will inform you that when you are torn to complete tearing, you will surely be (raised) in a new creation?'¹⁰

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ يُبَشِّرُكُمْ إِذَا مَزَقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿٧﴾

“(It) guides to the ‘path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable,’ by correcting man’s modes and manners of thought, placing them on a sound footing; those that agree with the created world on the one side, and with his own natural instincts on the other. It helps the human beings to understand well the laws that govern the world, how they could be made use of, and how to respond to its demands without clashing with it, or running into a conflict with it.

“(It) guides to the ‘path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable,’ with the help of its own methods of training which prepare an individual to conform with the society, and prepare the society to conform with the individual, thus creating a harmony which extends to all the creations that inhabit the globe. But more, it prepares all the creations to fall in harmony with the nature of the universe in which they live. And all this is achieved with extreme ease and comfort.

(It) guides to the ‘path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable,’ – a guid-

ance that consists of a system of laws which is in accord with human nature, his circumstances of life, and its economics, in harmony with the laws of the universe that govern the rest of the creations. In the process, man does not break away from them with his own organizations and laws. He is after all, only one of the many communities that inhabit this world.”

9. Qurtubi draws our attention to the derision hidden in alluding to a prominent figure of Makkah in words, “Shall we point you to a man..” (as if he was just any man, unworthy of any term better than this: Au.)

10. The pagans contemporary to the Prophet (*saws*) could be pardoned for thinking that Allah (*swt*) will resurrect after, “you are torn to complete tearing.” But many Muslims contemporary to us fail to notice that the promise, as in the Qur’an and prophetic traditions, is not about recreation after a complete tearing resulting in disintegration of the body into bits and pieces. But

[8] What! Is he fastening a lie against Allah, or is there in him madness?' Nay! But those who believe not in the Hereafter are in chastisement and in a far stretched error.¹¹

أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَمْ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلِ
الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ
وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ ﴿٨﴾

rather, the promise involves an earth that will be completely destroyed, leaving no trace on it of any traces of biological life whatsoever: no bones, no fossils, no living forms, however slight, on the surface or buried deep inside with its life arrested by Time. The earth will undergo such massive geological and physical changes as will juggle together its every single atom, to leave mountains moving like clouds and the waters – a source of life – on fire. When the present sun will be gone, the stars will disappear and a new universe brought into existence governed by entirely new set of laws. It is from that “new” situation, when the earth will be held in one hand, and the universe folded around another, that Allah will “resurrect the dead” from atoms (Au.).

11. Asad thinks that this is in reference to the tortuous life of those who

reject Allah’s call. However, since, not all such societies ‘definitely’ suffer such consequences as alluded to in the verse, we may take his following, but brilliant note as a point for further brooding. He writes: “The construction of this phrase (fi al-`adhaabi wa dalaalim ba`aeed: Au.) points definitely to suffering in this world (in contrast with the suffering in the hereafter spoken of in verse 5 above): for whereas the concept of “aberration” (Asad’s rendering of “*dalaal*”) is meaningless in the context of the life to come, it has an obvious meaning in the context of moral and social confusion – and, hence, of the individual and social suffering – which is the unavoidable consequence of people’s loss of belief in the existence of absolute moral values and, thus, in an ultimate divine judgment on the basis of values.”

[9] Have they not considered what lies before them and what lies behind them of the heaven and the earth?¹² If We wished We could make the earth swallow them, or cause a fragment of the heaven crash upon them.¹³ Surely, in that is a sign for every slave who turns (to Allah) repentant.¹⁴

أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ نَشْأًا نَحْسِفُ
بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطُ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسَفًا
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ
مُّنِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾

[10] We definitely bestowed a bounty on Da'ud from Us:¹⁵ 'O you mountains, sing praises with him,¹⁶ and O birds (you too).¹⁷ And We softened for him the iron.¹⁸

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي
مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرُ وَأَلْنَا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ ﴿١٠﴾

12. If reference to the words, “what lies behind them of the heaven and the earth,” Qatadah has remarked that the justification is that wherever you look, (not only to the left or right, or front), but also at the rear, you see the earth and the heaven (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

In other words, there is no madness in the Messenger of truth, but it could be in those who are surrounded by signs all around them, that they find it impossible to escape from, but cling to illogical notions (Au.).

Asad again, “.. how can anyone be so presumptuous as to deny the reality of resurrection and life after death, seeing that it is a phenomenon beyond man’s experience, while, on the other hand, everything within the universe points to God’s unlimited creative power.”

13. “This allusion is to unpredictable geological and cosmic occurrences – earthquakes, the fall of meteors and meteorites, cosmic rays, and so forth..” (Asad).

14. That is, signs that are a personal gift of Allah to a slave of His, for, they are not visible, although they surround the humankind, except to those who establish a Master-slave relationship with Him. On the other hand, if they decide that they can “work out things” all by themselves, “including the discovery of signs - if there are any,” to them, the challenge is: do it if you can. The key to discovery of higher truths is bondage to the slavery of the Creator (Au.).

15. So, there is no limit to bestowal of signs upon those who turn to Him. Da'ud (*asws*) was one of them. He was an “oft-turning” person to Allah (28: 34). So He conferred

upon him such signs and miracles as no one will ever achieve by himself: iron was made wax for him (as a material gift) and, hearts of mountains and birds were softened for him (as spiritual gift), so that when he sang his Lord's praises they joined him in chorus in a language and voice that he could understand and derive ecstatic pleasure from (Au.).

Majid comments: "This may also refer to the greatness of David as a king. After the death and defeat of Saul at the hands of the formidable Philistines, 'Israel rallied to David as the one possible saviour, though the succession was disputed by a rival faction; and under David's leadership the supremacy of Hebrew kingdom was decisively established, the Philistine power was shattered and the hostile tribes were forced to become David's tributaries.' (UHW. I. p.447)."

Mawdudi adds: "This is an allusion to the countless favours with which Allah had blessed the Prophet David (*asws*). He was an ordinary young man of the tribe of Judah, living in Bethlehem. In a campaign against the Phillistines he slew the giant Goliath. This increased his esteem among the Israelites, and ultimately he was made a king over the whole of Israel, having first been made a ruler

over Hebron. He took Jerusalem and made it the capital of his kingdom whose boundaries extended between the Gulf of 'Aqabah in the east and river Euphrates in the west. In addition, he was divinely bestowed with knowledge and wisdom."

16. "Sing praises": This is how Ibn 'Abbas, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman, Abu Maysarah, Mujahid, Dahhak and others understood the textual "aw-wibi" (Ibn Jarir).

17. It is reported that Da'ud's beautiful recitation of the Zabur created such effects that the mountains, birds and other animals sang along with him. In Sayyid's words, "It seems Da'ud had attained such high quality of Praises for his Lord that the veils between him and Allah's other creations stood removed. They all sang in a chorus with him. This was the special blessing that was bestowed upon him."

The Prophet (*saws*) said about Abu Musa al-Ash'ari's recitation as he heard him recite the Qur'an one night,

أَعْطِي مِزْمَارًا مِنْ مَزَامِيرِ آلِ دَاوُدَ

"Indeed he has been given a musical voice that was given to Da'ud's folks" (Bukhari and Muslim: Ibn Kathir).

[11] That, 'You fashion wide coats of mail,¹⁹ and measure well the links.²⁰ And do you all act righteously,²¹ for indeed I am, of what you do, seeing.'

أَنْ اَعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ
وَأَعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ
﴿١١﴾

[12] And unto Sulayman (did We subject) the wind: its morning course a month('s journey) and its evening course a month('s journey).²³ And We made fount of molten-copper flow for him. And of the Jinn who worked before him by the leave of his Lord,²³ whoever of them swerved away from Our command, We made him taste chastisement of the Blaze.

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عُدُوهُمَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُهَا
شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ
مَنْ يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَنْ يَزِغْ
مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ
﴿١٢﴾

The above implies that the skill went down the line.

18. The allusion is not allegorical, but real, to a miracle. It was not melting of the metal for ease of moulding but rather softening of it in his hands, so that he bent it to the shape of his desire with ease – yet another of the special blessings bestowed on Da'ud (Sayyid).

It is said that making armour was Da'ud's means of sustenance also (Ibn Kathir).

19. The apparent meaning is efficient design and skilled manufacture of the armour. But Imām Razi thinks that the directive is not to spend time on the manufacture of the armour beyond an acceptable limit of time and quantity. In different words, "qaddir" is for spending just

the right time and efforts. The rest of the time should be devoted to the counsel that follows: "And do you all act righteously."

20. It is said that it was Da'ud who first made chained armours. Earlier, it were shields (made from beaten sheets of iron) that were in use (but they were heavy: Au.) - Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir.

21. Either the whole family has been addressed, or perhaps the plural form has been adopted for reverence (Alusi).

22. That is, it covered two month's course in a day's time, morning to evening (Ibn Jarir).

23. That is, of the Jinn some were subjected to him to help him in construction works.

[13] Fashioning for him whatever he would²⁴ - of castles,²⁵ images,²⁶ basins like water-troughs,²⁷ and anchored cooking-pots.²⁸ 'Exercise thanks²⁹ O House of Da'ud. Few indeed of My slaves are grateful.'³⁰

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبٍ وَتَمَاثِيلٍ
وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَاسِيَاتٍ اعْمَلُوا
آل دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ
الشُّكُورُ ﴿١٣﴾

24. That is, the Jinn worked for Sulayman, joining hands in whatever he wished to build or manufacture.

25. "Mihrab" is the front part of any (significant) building, place of worship, or prayer-hall. Metaphorically, it can be used for any constructed place, such as mosques, medium sized palaces, or even villas (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir from the *Salaf*).

26. According to *Lisan al-'Arab*, "timthaal" (pl. *tamaatheel*) is for every artefact that may have been made to resemble a living creation of Allah.

'Atiyyah al-'Awfi, Dahhak and Suddi's opinion was that the allusion is to pictures (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

It might be asked, 'How could Sulayman have been allowed to make pictures when it is disallowed in our religion?' The answer is, it was perhaps not forbidden in his *Shari'ah*, for, after all, this is not a moral issue such as truthfulness, or lies, (that have remained unlawful throughout the ages in every *Shari'ah*). Further, Abu al-'Aaliyyah has said that (it is

not necessary that those were human figures, but rather) pictures of non-living objects, such as natural sceneries, or, if of living beings then, headless (Zamakshari).

Qurtubi comments: Reports from the Prophet (*saws*) on this topic lead us to believe that all kinds of pictures are prohibited in Islam, except for some designs on clothes. Indeed, there are a few *ahadith* that do not allow even for this exception. One is in Muslim which says that,

”إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ هَذِهِ الصُّورِ يُعَذَّبُونَ. وَيُقَالُ لَهُمْ:
أَحْيُوا مَا خَلَقْتُمْ“

“Artists will be punished in the Hereafter and told, ‘Now, blow life into these.’

Another *hadith* of *Hasan Ghareeb Saheeh* status in Tirmidhi says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ: ”تَخْرُجُ عَنْقُ مِنَ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَهَا عَيْنَانِ
تَبْصِرَانِ وَأُذُنَانِ تَسْمَعَانِ وَلِسَانٌ يَنْطِقُ بِشَيْءٍ لِيَّ:
وَكَلَّتْ بِثَلَاثَةِ: بِكُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ، وَبِكُلِّ مَنْ دَعَا مَعَ
اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ، وَبِالْمُصَوِّرِينَ.“

“A neck will rise out from the Fire on the Day of Judgment, with two eyes that will see, two ears that will hear, and a tongue that will speak. It will say, ‘I have been given custody of three: Every stubborn tyrant, every one who evoked a deity other than Allah, and, those who made pictures.’”

Exempted however, adds Qurtubi, are dolls for children. `A'isha herself used to play with them and the Prophet did not object.

Another narrative preserved by Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi, narrated by Abu Talha says,

عن عبيد الله بن عبد الله بن عتبة، أنه سمع ابن عباس يقول: سمعت أبا طلحة يقول سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: “لا تدخل الملائكة بيتاً فيه كلب ولا صورة تماثيل.” (قال أبو عيسى: هذا حديث حسن صحيح).

“Angels do not enter a house which has a dog or graven images.”

The following is also preserved:

عن سعيد بن أبي الحسن. قال: جاء رجل إلى ابن عباس. فقال: إني رجل أصور هذه الصور. فأفتني فيها. فقال له: اذن مني. فدنا منه. ثم قال: اذن مني. فدنا حتى وضع يده على رأسه. قال: أتبتك بما سمعت من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم. سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول “كلُّ مُصَوِّرٍ في النارِ. يجعلُ له، بكلِّ صورةٍ صَوَّرَهَا، نفساً فتُعَذِّبُهُ

في جهنم”. وَقَالَ: إِنْ كُنْتَ لَا بُدَّ فَاعِلًا، فَاصْنَعِ الشَّجَرَ وَمَا لَا تَفْسُ لَهُ (مسلم)

Sa'id ibn Abi al-Hasan narrated that a man went to Ibn `Abbas and said, “I make pictures. So tell me about it.” He said, “Come nearer.” He went nearer. He told him, “Come nearer.” He went nearer until Ibn `Abbas placed his hand on his head and then said, “Let me tell you what I heard from the Messenger of Allah. I heard him say, ‘Every artist will be in the Fire. Every picture that he made will be turned into a body that will torture him in Hell.’

“Then he added, ‘If you have to do it at all, then make trees and other lifeless objects’ (Au.).

Mawdudi devotes a goodly space to the topic. Herewith in short: “Some people have argued that since picture-making was allowed during the time of Sulayman, it should be allowable in our *Shari`ah* also. But, this argument is not tenable. The prohibition was equally there during his times too. *Torah* had already been revealed to Musa and contains unambiguous references to picture making and its prohibition. E.g. ‘Thou shall not make unto thee graven images, or any likeness of

anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth below or that is in the water under the earth (Exod. 20:4)'. And, 'Ye shall make no idols, nor graven images, nor rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it (Levi. 26:1)'. And, 'Lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth' (Deut. 4: 16-18).'

"Further, a strong argument cannot be built on the basis of a simple word like "*tamaatheel*" which has unclear connotations, especially in the light of the strongly worded prohibitions in the Prophetic traditions. A *hadith* preserved in Bukhari tells us that once a few of the Prophet's wives were around him. They were talking among themselves and 'A'isha tells us that,

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنَّ أُمَّ حَبِيبَةَ وَأُمَّ سَلَمَةَ ذَكَرْنَا كَنِيسَةً رَأَيْنَاهَا بِالْحَبَشَةِ فِيهَا تَصَاوِيرٌ فَذَكَرْنَا لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ إِنَّ أَوْلَيْكَ إِذَا كَانَ فِيهِمُ الرَّجُلُ الصَّالِحُ فَمَاتَ بَتًّا عَلَى قَبْرِهِ مَسْجِدًا وَصَوَّرُوا فِيهِ تِلْكَ الصُّورَ فَأَوْلَيْكَ شِرَارُ الْخَلْقِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ (البخاري)

Umm Habibah and Umm Salamah casually mentioned that they had been into a Church in Abyssinia where they had found pictures (of humans). The Prophet remarked, "The custom among the past peoples was that when one of their righteous men died, they built a house of worship over his grave and decorated it with pictures. On the Day of Judgement these people will be the worst of creations in the sight of Allah."

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported the Prophet,

إِنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الْمُصَوِّرُونَ

"The most severely punished on the day of Judgment would be those who made pictures." (*Sahihayn*)

'A'isha reports the following:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ حَشَوْتُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَسَادَةً فِيهَا تَمَاثِيلُ كَأَنَّهَا مُرْقَةٌ فَجَاءَ فَقَامَ بَيْنَ الْبَابَيْنِ وَجَعَلَ يَتَغَيَّرُ وَجْهَهُ فَعُلْتُ مَا لَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ مَا بَأْسُ هَذِهِ الْوِسَادَةِ قَالَتْ وَسَادَةٌ جَعَلْتُهَا لَكَ لِتَضَطَّجِعَ عَلَيْهَا قَالَ أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَا تَدْخُلُ بَيْتًا فِيهِ صُورَةٌ وَأَنَّ مَنْ صَنَعَ الصُّورَةَ يُعَذَّبُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَقُولُ أَحْبَبُوا مَا خَلَقْتُمْ

"I made pillows – sort of small cushions - for the Prophet that had pictures. He entered and sat down between the two entranc-

es. Then his countenance began to alter. She inquired, "What's wrong with us, Messenger of Allah?" He asked, "What about these cushions?" She answered, "Well, cushions I made so that you could rest on them." He said, "Have you not known that angels do not enter a house in which there are pictures and that whoever made a picture will be tormented on the day of Standing and told, 'Now. Give life to what you made'" (Bukhari).

"Some people try to make a distinction," continues Mawdudi, "between a photograph and a painting, whereas the *Shari'ah* forbids the picture itself without discussing the process or methods of how such pictures are made. Yet others have argued that the forbiddance was meant to put an end to idol worship in early Islamic days; but since such a risk does not exist anymore, the prohibition should go. This argument is also untenable because there is no *hadith* that gives us the reason as being proffered now. Furthermore, the statement that paganism has been obliterated has no basis in reality. Paganism and polytheism of all sorts thrive in our contemporary world. Finally, that pictures lead to idol-worship, saint-worship, etc., could

be only one of the reasons for its prohibitions; there are other ill-effects that are done away with by the prohibition. Pornography and obscenity are cases in point. Pictures are also used for misleading the masses and spreading discord among nations."

To the above we might add that far from decorating their homes with pictures, a report preserved by Bukhari reports 'Umar as having said to the People of the Book,

إنا لا ندخل كنائسكم، من أجل التماثيل التي فيها
الصور

"We do not enter your Churches because of the pictures you have there."

As for discord that Mawdudi spoke of, we could cite a single example from thousands: While relaying the event of the destruction of the Trade Centre buildings, live on the TV, CNN, America's most popular channel showed Palestinians celebrating the event. The announcer remarked: "We shall never forget this celebration." Later it was discovered that the TV station had introduced an older film that depicted celebrations of some other occasion. The moment was used to sow permanent hatred of the Muslims in American minds. It achieved high level of success. There is no disputing the fact that no single

element has done so much damage to the Islamic religion and its culture as the TV (Au.).

27. That is, the basins were as large as cisterns.

28. The cooking cauldrons were so large that they were, because of their weight, sort of anchored to the ground (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Abu Bakr Ibn al-`Arabi said that in pre-Islamic times the pots of `Abdullah b. Jud`an were also so large that one had to climb a ladder to look in. Tarafah b. al-`Abd has a poetical line describing them. Ibn al-`Arabi also reports having seen similarly large pot in one of the ribaat (*zaawiyah*: Sufi resort) in Abu Sa`eed to serve the *Sufis* since they all – without exception – shared meal from one pot (Qurtubi).

The details about Sulayman's activities confirm (the historical accounts) that Da`ud established the kingdom, while his son Sulayman attended to its development (with a point from Razi).

29. To act righteously, in obedience of Allah, is to act according to the demands of gratefulness (Muhammad ibn Ka`b: Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Majah has recorded the Prophet (*saws*) as Sulayman's mother having said to him,

يَا سُلَيْمَانُ لَا تُكْتِرِ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ النَّوْمِ
بِاللَّيْلِ تَمْرُكُ الْعَبْدَ فَقِيرًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Sulayman! Do not sleep much at night. Long sleep during the night will leave a man destitute on the Day of Judgment” (Ibn Kathir).

But Haythamiyy remarked that the above report does not have a strong chain (Au.).

30. In Asad's words, 'I.e., even among those who consider themselves God's servants – for “truly grateful [to God] is only he who realizes his inability to render adequate thanks to Him” (Zamakhshari).'

Sayyid points out that if we fail to thank Allah for his numerous benefits, in fact, even fail to realize the blessings spread around us, it is because we are used to them and have taken them for granted. It is only when we miss one of them that we realize the great benefit. (Like a cut on a finger makes us realize how much we utilize that particular spot: Au.). We experienced this, continues Sayyid, when once (in the prison) the only access to the sun we had was through a hole the size of a coin. We (the inmates) would make the best use of it so long as it lasted, taking the place in turns. We would take

[14] Then, when We decreed death upon him, nothing indicated to them his death but a creature of the earth that kept gnawing at his staff. It is only when he fell that the Jinn saw clearly that, had they known the Unseen, they would not have continued in the humiliating torment.³¹

فَلَمَّا فَصَّيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ
مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا
خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَن لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ
الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴿١٤﴾

the shine on our faces, hands, feet, and everywhere. And, I shall never forget the day when I was out and allowed full exposure to the sun, one of us saying, “Good Lord! Here is our sun. It still rises.” How many other blessings do we not receive, every moment that pass by us, yet, for how many of them do we truly feel thankful?

(“*Shakoor*” is superlative of “*shakir*”, that is, those who thank a lot). So, “*Shakoor*” is someone who says thanks with his heart, tongue, and limbs of the body. Such a one is engaged in “*shukr*” all his time.

Ibn ‘Abbas said that “*Shakoor*” is someone who thanks in every situation. Suddi said that he is someone who says thanks upon thanks. It is also said that “*Shakoor*” is someone who feels he can never be grateful enough. It is said that ‘Umar heard someone say, “O Allah, make me of the few.” He asked him what it meant. The man replied, “I have

heard Allah say, ‘Few indeed of My slaves are grateful.’ So I supplicate that He make me of those few.” ‘Umar remarked, “Everybody seems to know more than ‘Umar” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi).

That gratitude is expressed with the help of deeds, is well illustrated by a *hadith* in Muslim. When the Prophet’s feet were swollen because of his long standing in Prayers at night, ‘A’isha asked, “Should you do that when Allah has forgiven your past and future sins?” He asked back, “Should I not be a grateful slave?” (Qurtubi)

31. Various reports coming from the *Salaf* give us to understand that the Jinn boasted before men that they interacted with, and knew, the Unseen. They were, however, subjugated by Sulayman who put them – despite their dislike – to the completion of the Temple that Da’ud had begun to build but had died before completion. Sulayman used to su-

pervise their works from a certain spot, standing erect, supported by his staff. (One report says he would be seated on a chair reclining on a staff: Qurtubi). He died in that state, but the staff kept him supported. However, insects began to gnaw at the staff, until when it became hollow. One day it broke and Sulayman's corpse fell. It is then that the Jinn knew that they were labouring all the time in fear of Sulayman, although he was dead. And the men realized that the Jinn could not have known the Unseen.

Nevertheless, none of the reports of the above kind reaches a *hadith* status, except for one, which, although it is not directly on the same lines, yet which has been declared weak by Haythamiyy (Au.).

That apart, that the Mosque was not completed but after Sulayman's death does not sound correct in view of a report in Nasa'i and other works, of *Sahih* rank, which reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

أَنَّ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنَ دَاوُدَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا بَنَى
بَيْتَ الْمَقْدِسِ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَلَالًا ثَلَاثَةً: سَأَلَ
اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُكْمًا يُصَادِفُ حُكْمَهُ فَأُوتِيَهُ وَسَأَلَ
اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ فَأُوتِيَهُ
وَسَأَلَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حِينَ فَرَغَ مِنْ بِنَاءِ الْمَسْجِدِ أَنْ
لَا يَأْتِيَهُ أَحَدٌ لَا يَنْهَهُهُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةُ فِيهِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَهُ مِنْ
حَطَبِيَّتِهِ كَيَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ.

“When Sulayman b. Da’ud built the Temple, he asked during its construction for three things: A judgment that matches with His (Allah’s own) judgment: he was given it; he asked that he should be given a kingdom that should not be the share of anyone else after him: he was granted it; he asked after he had finished construction of the Mosque that no one should come to it, moved by no other desire but prayers in it, but he should emerge out of his sins like the day his mother gave him birth.”

The strange manner, however, of the death of a Prophet and king, who enjoyed power over the Jinn, birds and winds, comes as a climax to remind us that ultimately all power belongs to Allah. He does as He will. Further, admittedly, there could have been one or two accessory buildings that were completed after Sulayman had finished the main building (Au.).

Asad’s note might not express accurately the understanding of Muslim scholars in general, but it is, once again, worthy of consideration: “In the elliptical manner so characteristic of the Qur’ān, stress is laid here, firstly, on the limited nature of all empirical knowledge, including the result

[15] There was a sign indeed for (the people of) Saba'³² in their dwelling-place: two gardens to the left and to the right.³³ 'Eat of your Lord's providence and give thanks to Him': a good land,³⁴ and a Lord All-forgiving.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّاتٍ
عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ
وَأَشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

﴿١٥﴾

of deductions and inferences based on no more than observable or calculable phenomenon, and, secondly, on the impossibility to determine correctly, on the basis of such limited fragments of knowledge alone, what course of action would be right in a given situation. Although the story as such relates to 'invisible beings', its moral lesson (which may be summed up in the statement that empirical knowledge cannot provide any ethical guidelines unless it is accompanied, and completed, by divine guidance) is obviously addressed to human being as well."

32. Ibn Jarir traces out several reports, coming through different chains, of the content that the Prophet was asked about Saba' and explained that it was the name of a person who lived in Yemen in historical times. Qurtubi, as well as Ibn Kathir trace a *hadith* as in Tirmidhi which was declared *Hasan Ghareeb* by him. It is as follows (*Tuhfah*, no. 3275):

عَنْ فَرَّوَةَ بْنِ مُسَيْبِ بْنِ الْمُرَادِيِّ قَالَ "أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَلَا أَقَاتِلُ مَنْ أَدْبَرَ

مِنْ قَوْمِي بَيْنَ أَقْبَلٍ مِنْهُمْ؟ فَأَذِنَ لِي فِي قِتَالِهِمْ وَأَمَرَنِي،
فَلَمَّا خَرَجْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ سَأَلْتُ عَنِّي مَا فَعَلَ الْغُطَيْيَنِي
فَأَخْبَرَ أُنِي قَدْ سِرْتُ، قَالَ فَأَرْسَلْ فِي أَثَرِي فَرَدَدَنِي
فَأَتَيْتُهُ وَهُوَ فِي تَغَرٍّ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ فَقَالَ: ادْعُ الْقَوْمَ
فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ مِنْهُمْ فَأَقْبَلْ مِنْهُ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يُسَلِّمْ فَلَا تَعْجَلْ
حَتَّى أُحْدِثَ إِلَيْكَ، قَالَ وَأَنْزَلَ فِي سَبَبِي مَا أَنْزَلَ، فَقَالَ
رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا سَبَبُ أَرْضٍ أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ؟ قَالَ لَيْسَ
بِأَرْضٍ وَلَا امْرَأَةٍ وَلَكِنَّهُ رَجُلٌ وَلَدَ عَشْرَةَ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ
فَتَيَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ سِتَّةٌ وَتَشَاءَمَ مِنْهُمْ أَرْبَعَةٌ، فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
تَشَاءَمُوا فَلَحِمٌ وَجَذَامٌ وَعَسَانٌ وَعَامِلَةٌ، وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
تَيَامَنُوا فَالْأَزْدُ وَالْأَشْعَرِيُّونَ وَجَمِيرٌ وَمَذْحِجٌ وَأَتَمَارٌ،
وَكَئِنَّهُ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَتَمَارٌ؟ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
مِنْهُمْ حَتَنَعُمْ وَبَجِيلَةٌ"

Farwah b. Musayk al-Muradi (al-Ghutayfiyy) said, "I went to the Prophet and asked, 'Messenger of Allah, should I not fight those who delay (in responding to this message) with the help of those who have hastened (to it)?' He allowed me to fight against them giving me the command over them. After I had left him, he asked about me as to what had the Ghutayfiyy done. He was told that I had left. He sent someone after me and got me back. So I

went to him while he was with some of his Companions. He said, 'Invite your people and accept it from whosoever embraces Islam. As for those who do not accept Islam, do not hasten against them until I let you know.' He (the narrator) said that revelation came down about Saba (those very days). So someone asked, 'Messenger of Allah. What is Saba': a place or a woman?' He answered, 'Neither a woman nor a place, but a man who produced ten sons of the Arabs of whom six settled in Yemen while four others in Syria. Those who went to Syria were Lakhm, Judhdham, Ghassan and `Aamilah, while those who settled in Yemen, were: Azd, Ash`aroon (or maybe Ash`ariyyun), Himyar, Kinda, Madh-hij, and Anmar.' One of the men asked, 'Messenger of Allah what about Anmar?' He replied, 'Khath`am and Bajeelah are of them.'"

Ibn Kathir adds: Saba' (in usage) refers to kings and people of Yemen, Tubaaba`ah (pl. of Tubba`) were part of them, as also Bilqis (contemporary to Sulayman). As for ten sons of Saba', it does not necessarily mean direct descendants, but rather his progeny over several generations.

The *Ansar* were the descendants of the Saba', who were scattered by the burst of the dam (that we shall discuss presently).

Saba'

Arab history is traced back in the ancient past to two persons: `Adnaan and Qahtaan. The opinion prevalent among the genealogists is that the `Aad, Thamood, Jurham, `Amaaleeq, Himyar, and the rest of the historical tribal names we encounter were, what are known as, `Arab-`Aaribah: sons of `Adnan and Qahtan, some 3000 years before Islam. While `Adnan's progeny spread all over the Arabian Peninsula, Qahtan and his progeny settled in the Yemen. They gave rise to a people known as the Saba', who occupied the South Western Arabia, centering around an ancient walled town called Ma'arib (which had a circumference of six miles in its heyday), about 1200 m (4000 feet) above the sea level in Wadi San`a. (According to 1975 census there were 70,000 inhabitants in and around the town - which still carries the same name). The civilization they created peaked about 1500 years before the Prophet's advent, and at one time penetrated into the Horn of Africa, or, what is known today as Eritrea. Bilqis, Prophet Sulayman's

contemporary, who belonged to the Himyarites, was roughly of this period. The Ma'arib dam that was built, and the floods that the Qur'an spoke of, refer to a time some 1000 and 900 years respectively before the Prophet. The dam had surface covered with stones and mortared, and was at least 16 m. high, 60 m. broad and 620 m. wide, no doubt its construction a mammoth feat. Twice the year the water was let down for irrigation of the lands. Several canals, dozens of sleuths and hundreds of subsidiaries ending with water distributors helped cover a large area of irrigation. Remains show that it was a pretty complicated network of irrigation. The dam had to be expanded several times because of flooding which implies that the area experienced heavy rains. The plantation was so extensive that a horseman needed more than a month to cross them, and, in doing so, he found himself continuously in the shadow of trees.

Their religion was largely polytheistic paganism. Although not too common, but, as if to provide proof to the Qur'anic statements in this regard, modern excavations reveal that throughout their history monotheism prevailed among a section of the population. It could be termed as the

Cult of the Merciful. The older inscriptions are free of explicit marks of Judaism or Christianity. Their presence can be traced in later epochs.

Some 600 years before the Prophet, Romans besieged Ma'arib but despite assaults could not take the town. But it seems they laid waste the neighborhood and destroyed the renewed irrigation works of the oasis.

At the height of its development, in the 8th century BC, the kingdom of Saba' maintained colonies along trade routes leading to Palestine, and Ma'arib, (some 60 miles off San'a, and 3900 feet above sea level). It was the capital and one of the wealthiest cities of ancient Arabia. It was the meeting-place of the trade routes connecting the frankincense lands with the Mediterranean ports. The construction for which the city that was particularly famous was the great Sadd Ma'arib (i.e., Ma'arib Dam).

Majid quotes several authorities about Ma'arib and its dam: "This remarkable engineering feat, together with the other public works of the Sabaeans, reveal to us a peace-loving society highly advanced not only in commerce but in technical accomplishment as well.' (Hitti, op. cit., p.55) 'The failure of the dam at Mar-

ib was at once an effect and a cause of the national decay . . . The dam at Marib is now in much the same condition as when Houdani (A.D. 848) saw it.' (EBr. XIX. P. 785) 'West of Marib are the ruins of the dam which figures so prominently in Arabic tradition. These show a very solid construction with several sluices. It was destroyed by a flood' (II. P. 184). This deluge marks an epoch in the history of South Arabia. The waters subside, the lands return to cultivation and prosperity, but Ma'arib lies desolate and the Sabaeans have disappeared forever, except to point a moral or to adorn a tale' (Nicholson, op. cit. p. 16). According to a Muslim chronicler, 'subsequently God destroyed the dam and tore up the rocks, the pavilions, the trees, and the canals, casting the sands over them. And when they who were below the dam saw its destruction, and they could do nothing to it, they fled to the tops of the hill with their families and cattle. And the water surged over the dam through an abundance of rain: and the water issued from the interstices burrowed by the rats . . . And it is related that the torment of the inundation occurred about four hundred years before Islam . . . but God knows best.' (Redhouse, op. cit., I. PP. 55-56) 'The chroniclers report that a rat

turned over a stone which fifty men could not have bridged, and thus brought about the collapse of the entire dam.' (Hitti, op. cit., p. 65). Referring again to this 'memorable event immortalized in Islamic literature says Hitti:- Al-Isfahani, . . . puts the tragic event four hundred years before Islam but Yaqut comes nearer to the truth when he assigns it to the reign of the Abyssinians. The ruins of the dam are visible to the present day . . . The final catastrophe alluded to in the Koran must have taken place after 542 and before 570."

Mawdudi adds: "Since antiquity this Arabian nation has been well known to the rest of the world. Ur inscriptions of 2500 B.C. mention it by the name of Sabom. Then in the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions and also in the *Bible* it has been mentioned several times (see, for instance, Psalms 72:15; Jeremiah 6:20; Ezekiel 27:22, 38: 13; Job 6:19). The Greek and Roman historians and the geographer Theophrastus (288 B.C.) have mentioned it continuously for many centuries of the Christian era since before Christ.

"Its home was the south-western corner of the Arabian Peninsula, now called al-Yemen. Its rise to prominence started in 1100 B.C. In

the time of the Prophets David and Solomon the Saba'ians had become world famous as a wealthy people. In the beginning they were a sun-worshipping nation. Then, when their queen affirmed faith at the hand of the Prophet Solomon (965-926 B.C.), probably most of them became Muslims. But then in some unknown later period they again began to worship gods and goddesses like Almaqah (the moon-god), 'Athtar (Venus), Dhat Hamim, Dhat Bad'an (the sun-god), Harmatam or Harimat and many others. Almaqah was their chief deity, and the kings made claim to the people's obedience as representatives of this deity. Many inscriptions have been unearthed in the Yemen which show that the whole land abounded in the temples of these gods, especially of Almaqah, and thanksgiving services for them were held at every important event.

As a result of the modern archaeological researches about 3,000 inscriptions have been discovered which throw a good deal of light on the history of this nation."

33. Zamakhshari points out that it is not just two gardens that are meant, but rather, a vast stretch of land on both sides of the mountains over which flourished flush green gardens

stretching up to maybe hundreds of miles. The boundaries (of the thousands) of them were so close that they were like two vast gardens. Qurtubi traces it as an opinion of Qushayri.

34. "The good land": because irrigated by an intricate system of (hundreds of dams, the largest being known as the Ma`aarib), dykes, canals and ducts, it yielded its produce in abundance. The weather was so moderate that no insect – flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, ants, lice etc. - ever annoyed them unreasonably. The two gardens yielded fruit so plentifully that it is said – notably by Qatadah - that a woman with a basket on her head would pass through one of their gardens and emerge at the other side with the basket full of fruits having fallen into it, without she having to pick any (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir).

That could be a hyperbole, but abundance is ascertained. However, the above reminds one of the abundance of fish in some rivers in the United States where, to a camera's eye, jumping fish land into passing boats, so that, over less than 10 minutes of sailing on water, a boat bags 13 large fishes without the boatmen doing anything about it except mechanically sailing the boat. In fact,

[16] But they turned away;³⁵ so We sent upon them the flood of the `Arim³⁶ and We gave them in lieu of their two gardens, two (other) gardens bearing Araak fruit (trees),³⁷ athel (bushes),³⁸ and a few lote trees.³⁹

فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ
وَبَدَّلْنَاهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَى أُكُلِ
حَمْطٍ وَإِثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ ﴿١٦﴾

in the skit shown, the boatmen had to cover their heads with their hands in fear of the jumping fish falling on their heads. All around, the fishes were jumping out and back into water in continuous frivolity (Au.).

35. It is widely reported that altogether no less than thirteen Prophets were raised among them. However, adds Alusi, it is possible that they had appeared over long periods before Jesus Christ, but the decision to chastise them through the destruction of the dam came later, a couple of centuries before the appearance of our own Prophet.

36. Opinions of the earliest authorities varied over the meaning of `Arim between (a) name of a dam [that Bilqis had built, at a place called Ma'arib, three travel-stations from San`aa], (2) name of a valley which held the waters of the dam, and, (c) the word is equivalent of violence (*sayl al-`arim* meaning, violent floods: Ibn Jarir); as well as (d) heavy rains (Alusi).

In any case, “*sayl*” of the text refers

to the dam burst that was caused by a multiple of factors: heavy, incessant rains, weakening of the dam by age, and damage caused by rats that burrowed into its walls. When it burst, the rushing waters destroyed all that lay in its path, leaving behind it the irrigation system in ruins. The tribes dispersed (Au.).

37. Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan, Qatadah and Dahhak said that in their opinion “*khamt*” is for Araak tree (which bears a bitter fruit) – Ibn Jarir.

Lane explains in his grand Lexicon that if it is pronounced as now in the Qur`an namely, “*ukulin khamtin*” it should mean Araak tree, but if pronounced a “*ukulu khamtin*” (an unpopular reading: Ibn Jarir) then, as “bitter fruits.” In either case the fruit of the Araak genus can both be edible as well as too bitter for the mouth, depending on its variety (Au.).

38. Or, tamarisk bushes. In rendering the “*athl*” of the Qur`an as “*athel*,” we are influenced by Merriam Webster’s Dictionary which defines

[17] Thus We recompensed them for that they disbelieved. And, do We ever recompense any (that way) but the ingrate?⁴⁰

ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا
الْكَافِرَ ﴿١٧﴾

athel as: “a small drought-resistant evergreen tree (*Tamarix aphylla*) native to southern and western Asia but now widely planted as an ornamental or shelter-belt tree in warm dry regions (as of the southwestern United States and Australia); broadly: any of several other trees or shrubs of the genus *Tamarix*” (Au.)

39. That is, when the Saba' denied the message, Allah caused the dam wall to collapse sending the waters crashing through the valleys that destroyed all that came in the way: houses, trees, everything. Subsequently, the dam was repaired, but the former glory could not be restored. Neither the irrigation system could be revived, nor were there enough people to attempt revival. Gradually, the gardens turned into semi forests (Au.).

Asad writes: “The date of that catastrophe cannot be established with any certainty, but the most probable period of the first bursting of the Dam of Ma'arib seems to have been the second century of the Christian era. The kingdom of Sheba was largely devastated, and this led to the

migration of many southern (Qah-tan) tribes towards the north of the Peninsula. Subsequently, it appears, the system of dams and dykes was to some extent repaired, but the country never regained its earlier prosperity; and few decades before the advent of Islam the great dam collapsed completely and finally.”

40. That is, none do We recompense in this way, but the ingrate (Alusi).

Such punishment, however, did not visit any in the past but a nation that rejected its Prophet. Muslims do not in the normal circumstances receive such punishment. Punishment to Muslims in this world takes different forms. Ibn Khayrah, a companion of 'Ali, stated,

جزاء المعصية الوهن في العبادة، والضيق في المعيشة،
والتعسر في اللذة، قيل: وما التعسر في اللذة؟ قال:
لا يصادف لذة حلال إلا جاءه من يُعَصِّصه إياها

“The recompense of a sin appears in the form of slackness in devotional prayers, constriction in provision, and difficulty in (obtaining) delight.” He was asked, “What is meant by difficulty in delight?” He answered,

[18] And We placed between them and the towns which We had blessed,⁴¹ (other) apparent towns,⁴² and We determined the journey therein (saying),⁴³ 'Travel therein by nights and days, in peace.'

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرَى ظَاهِرَةً وَقَدَرْنَا فِيهَا السَّبِيلَ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيًّ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

“He does not obtain a lawful thing, but there comes (upon him) what takes away the delight from it” (Ibn Kathir, Alusi and Shafi` combined).

The punishment was the immediate reward. Greater punishment is reserved for the unbelievers in the Hereafter. The rule, once again, can be different for Muslims. They could be punished here in this world and forgiven in lieu in the Hereafter (Au.).

Qatadah said that if Allah wishes to honor a Muslim, He accepts his good deeds, but if He wishes his humiliation, He holds back the punishment for his evil deeds in order to punish him in full in the Hereafter. It is reported that one of the Companions saw a woman passerby and his eyes followed her (to some distance). As he came across a wall (of an orchard) he crashed into it and received injury on the face. He went up to the Prophet with his bleeding face and told him what had happened. He explained,

إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ خَيْرٍ عَجَلَ لَهُ عُقُوبَةَ ذَنْبِهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِذَا أَرَادَ بَعْدَ شَرٍّ أَمْسَكَ عُقُوبَةَ ذَنْبِهِ حَتَّى يُؤَافِيَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَأَنَّهُ عَيْرٌ عَبْرٌ أَبْتَرُ (أحمد ، والطبراني ، والحاكم ، والبيهقي في شعب الإيمان عن عبد الله بن مغفل - قال الهيثمي : إسناده جيد .

“When Allah wishes to honor a slave, He hastens the punishment for his sins in this world. But if He wishes his humiliation, He withholds the retribution until He will recompense him in full on the Day of Standing, as if He is a tail-less donkey” (Ibn Jarir).

Haythami declared its chain of transmission as good (Au.).

41. The allusion is to the Syrian lands (Ibn Jarir).

42. That is, Arab towns that were strewn across Yemen and Syria on the highway (Ibn Jarir). They were called apparent towns because they were right on the road that connected Yemen with Syria (Ma`arif).

43. That is, the Arab towns were so closely placed that if a traveler left one of them by noon, he arrived at the next town by evening, and if he

[19] But they said, 'Our Lord. Lengthen (the distance) between (the stages) of our journeys;'⁴⁴ and (thus) they wronged themselves. So We made them (but) tales⁴⁵ and tore them to an utter tearing.⁴⁶ Indeed in that are signs for every persevering, grateful (person).⁴⁷

فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا
 أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَقْنَاهُمْ
 كُلَّ مَرْزِقٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ
 شَكُورٍ ﴿١٩﴾

left by evening, he arrived at another by dinner time - freeing him from the need to carry any provision (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

44. That is, (although they might not have prayed in so many words: Shab-bir, Mawdudi), in their arrogance they wished the ease of journey provided by Allah removed, so that they could encamp in deserts and encounter some of the hardships that travelers normally faced – for fun and adventure. So, Allah punished them, for their disbelief and their hubris by sending down the floods (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir from Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan and others).

In this they imitated the Israelites who rejected the comforts of Mann and Salwa and readily exchanged them for earthly products (Kashshaf, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

45. Their dispersal became proverbial. When circumstances scatter a people in the lands, it is said, "they scattered, Saba'-like" (Qurtubi).

46. So Saba' became a tale, and its tribes were scattered all across the lands. `Aamir al-Sha`bi said that the Ghassaan went to Syria, the *Ansar* settled in Yethrib, Khuza`ah went to Tihama, and Azd to `Umman.

47. There are signs for such of the believers who are persevering and grateful, in situations when they pass through such trying times. They render thanks when in ease, and bear patiently when in difficulties. The Prophet has said as in a report of Bukhari and Muslim, with the words here as in Muslim,

”عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ. إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ. وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ
 لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ. إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَّاءٌ شَكَرَ. فَكَانَ
 خَيْرًا لَهُ. وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَّاءٌ صَبَرَ، فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ“

“Amazing is a believer’s affair. Indeed, all his affairs are good for him. And this is not for everyone but for a believer alone. If ease touches him he gives thanks and that is good for him. But if difficulties visit him he observes patience, and it is good for him.”

[20] Surely, Iblis proved true his assumption about them and so they followed him.⁴⁸ (all) but for a group of believers.⁴⁹

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ
إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

48. The allusion is, state Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others, to his statement at the time of Adam's creation when he said (7: 16,17),

فِيمَا أَعْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ثُمَّ
لَأَنْبِتَنَّهُمْ مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ
وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

(He said), "Now that You have led me to misguidance, I shall most certainly sit in ambush for them all along Your Straight Path. Then I shall come on them from their front, their rear, their right and their left, and You will not find many of them grateful (to You)."

According to a report in Ibn Abi Hatim, Satan had promised at the time he was sent down from Paradise that he will not depart from a son of Adam so long as there is soul in him, deluding him, promising him, and deceiving him. Allah said in response,

وعزتي لا أحجب عنه التوبة ما لم يُعْرِغِرْ بالموت،
ولا يدعوني إلا أجبتة، ولا يسألني إلا أعطيتة، ولا
يستغفرني إلا غفرت له

"By My honor and greatness. I shall not hold back My forgive-

ness so long as he does not start gurgling at death, will not invoke Me but I shall respond to him, will not ask Me but I shall grant him, and will not seek forgiveness but I shall forgive him" (Ibn Kathir).

49. Although the import is general, among the Saba' too there seems to have been believers in one God, who survived through the ages. Mawdu-di provides us the details: "History shows that in ancient times there lived among the Saba'ians a small group of people who believed in one God, shunning all other gods. The inscriptions that have been discovered in the ruins of Yemen as a result of modern archeological research point to the existence of this small element. Some inscriptions of the period about 650 B.C. indicate that at several places in the kingdom of Saba there existed such houses of worship as were exclusively meant for the worship of dhu-samavi (i.e. Rabb as-sama': Lord of the heavens). In some places this Deity has been mentioned as Malikan dhu-samavi (the King who is the Owner of the

[21] Yet he had no power over them whatsoever; but that We might know who believes in the Hereafter as against him who is in doubt thereof;⁵⁰ and your Lord is Watchful over everything.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ
مَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ
وَرَبُّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] Say, 'Call on those you allege (as deities) apart from Allah. They own not the weight of an atom in the heavens, nor in the earth. They do not have any partnership in either, nor has He any helper from among them.'

قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا
يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَمَا هُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ شَرِكٍ وَمَا لَهُ
مِنْهُمْ مِنْ ظَهِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] And, intercession will not avail with Him, except for him to whom He grants leave;⁵¹ till, when terror is removed from their hearts, they will say, 'What did your Lord say?' They will reply, 'The Truth;⁵² and He is the All-High, the All-great.'

وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ
لَهُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُزِعَ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا
قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ
﴿٢٣﴾

heavens). This remnant of the Sabaians continued to live in Yaman for centuries afterwards. Thus, in an inscription of 378 A.D. also there is found mention of a house of worship that was built in the name of Ilah dhu-samavi. Then in an inscription dated 465 A.D. the words are Bi-nasr wa rida ilah-in ba'l samin wa ardin (i.e. with the help and support of that God Who is the Owner of the Heavens and the earth). In another inscription of the period dated 458 A.D., the word Rahman has been used for the same God, the actual words being bi-rida Rahmanan (i.e. with the help of Rahman)."

50. That is, *Shaytan* has not been given the power to physically force anyone to a path. At best he has the ability to suggest, incite, provoke, and mislead in order that Allah may know who follows His guidance in preference to *Shaytan's* promptings. It never happens that *Shaytan's* way appears open, but rather, the other road – the road to salvation – is always plainly and clearly visible (Shabbir in substance).

51. As Allah said elsewhere (53: 26),

وَكَمْ مِنْ مَلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا
إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَىٰ

“And how many angels are there whose intercession profits not aught except after Allah grants leave unto whom He will and approves.”

hadith literature also conforms this. For example, the well-known *hadith* which reports the Prophet as saying that when the entire mankind will be presented (and the standing takes long) he will go to the “Praiseworthy Station” (al-Maqam al-Mahmood) in order to be allowed to intercede on behalf of mankind, so that the process of Reckoning might be started. He said,

فَأَسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَى رَبِّي. فَيُؤْذَنُ لِي. فَأَقُومُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ.
فَأُحَمِّدُهُ بِمَحَامِدِ لَا أَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ الْآنَ. يُلْهِمُنِيهِ اللَّهُ. ثُمَّ
أَجِرُّ لَهُ سَاجِدًا. فَيُقَالُ لِي: يَا مُحَمَّدُ ارْفَعْ رَأْسَكَ.
وَقُلْ يُسْمَعُ لَكَ. وَسَلْ تَعْطَهُ. وَاشْفَعْ تُشَفِّعْ”

“I will seek my Lord’s permission. I will be allowed. I will stand before Him and praise Him with words of Praises that I do not have the power now, that Allah will inspire me with. Then I will fall in prostration. I will be told, ‘O Muhammad, raise your head, and speak, you will be heard, seek, and you will be given, and seek intercession, you will be granted” (Ibn Kathir).

52. There have been several interpretations. One, the allusion is to those who seek permission to intercede. But when they are actually allowed to intercede, terror overtakes them in apprehension that their intercession might fall in favor of a wrong person resulting in Allah’s anger evoked against them. When they recover from the terror, they ask the angels – who bring down the permission to them – ‘What did your Lord say?’ They reply, ‘the Truth’ (Qurtubi).

The lesson is that if intercession is so difficult to obtain from those who are qualified to intercede, how could the unbelievers depend on false deities to save them from the chastisement of the Hereafter? (Qurtubi)

In Asad’s words, “As is evident from the sequence.. this passage relates, in particular, to the attribution of divine or semi-divine qualities to saints and angels and to the problem of their ‘intercession’ with God.”

Second possible meaning is, as understood by Hasan al-Busri, (seconded by Zayd b. Aslam) who interpreted “*fuzi`a*” (lit., “fear is removed”) as meaning “*kushifa*” (i.e., “uncovered”). Consequently, the verse can be paraphrased in the following manner, “When the coverings of doubts and skepticisms in the hearts of the

unbelievers are removed, which happens only when Satan departs and false hopes leave them, at the time of death, it is then that they seek to know in some seriousness, "What did your Lord say?"

Three, the allusion is to the revelation of a verse or more by Allah. In the heavens its release sounds like iron chain (steel: Ibn `Abbas) struck on rock. The occupants of the heavens are struck by extreme fear and when they regain their calm, they ask, "What did your Lord say?" (This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas: Ibn Jarir).

Fourth, the allusion is to the issue of commands generally. (This was the opinion of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud and others: Ibn Jarir). In this connection *hadith* records have a few related reports. One in Bukhari says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ يُبْلَغُ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ الْأَمْرَ فِي السَّمَاءِ صَرَبَتْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِأَجْنِحَتِهَا خُضْعَانًا لِقَوْلِهِ كَالسَّلْسِلَةِ عَلَى صَفْوَانٍ قَالَ عَلِيُّ وَقَالَ غَيْرُهُ صَفْوَانٍ يَنْقُدُهُمْ ذَلِكَ فَإِذَا فَرَّخَ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِي قَالَ الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ فَيَسْمَعُهَا مُسْتَرَفُو السَّمْعِ وَمُسْتَرَفُو السَّمْعِ هَكَذَا وَاحِدٌ فَوْقَ آخَرَ وَوَصَفَ سُفْيَانُ يَبْدُوهُ وَفَرَّخَ بَيْنَ أَصَابِعِ يَدِهِ الْيُمْنَى نَصَبَهَا بَعْضَهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ فَرَّخًا أَدْرَكَ الشَّهَابُ الْمُسْتَمِيعَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرِيَهَا بِهَا إِلَى صَاحِبِهِ فَيُخْرِقُهُ وَرَبَّمَا لَمْ يُدْرِكْهُ حَتَّى يَرِيَهَا إِلَى الَّذِي يَلِيهِ إِلَى الَّذِي هُوَ أَسْفَلَ مِنْهُ حَتَّى يُلْقُوَهَا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَرَبَّمَا قَالَ سُفْيَانُ حَتَّى تَنْهَيَهَا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

فَتُلْقَى عَلَى فَمِ السَّاحِرِ فَيَكْذِبُ مَعَهَا مِائَةً كَذِبًا فَيُصَدِّقُ فَيُشَوَّلُونَ أَمْ يُخْبِرُنَا يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا يَكُونُ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَوَجَدْنَاهُ حَقًّا لِلْكَلِمَةِ الَّتِي سَمِعْتُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

"When Allah decrees an affair in the heaven, angels beat their wings in submission to His words making a sound like a chain striking a smooth rock. When fear is removed from their hearts they ask, 'What did your Lord say?' He answers him who had asked, 'The Truth. He is the All-high, the All-great.' This is also heard by the one who steals the hearing. And, those who steal the hearing are like that: some over the others – Sufyan (one of the narrators) demonstrated it by holding one hand over the other, with fingers outspreading. So he hears the word (sometimes a meteorite strikes him before he can receive it, but at other times he passes it on before he is struck), and casts it on the one below him, the other one casts it on the next one below him, until (the last one) casts it on to the tongue of a magician or fortune-teller. Then he (the magician or fortune-teller) mixes it with a hundred lies so that it is said (by those who hear him), 'Did he not tell us about such and such a thing, on such and such a

day?’ referring to the word that had been heard from the heaven” (Ibn Jarir in short, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir adds the following report from Ahmad:

عن عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ. قَالَ: أَحْبَبْتَنِي رَجُلًا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ أَتَتْهُمْ بَيْنَمَا هُمْ جُلُوسٌ لَيْلَةً مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رُمِي بِنَجْمٍ فَاسْتَنَارَ. فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ”مَاذَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ، إِذَا رُمِيَ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا؟“ قَالُوا: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. كُنَّا نَقُولُ وُلِدَ اللَّيْلَةَ رَجُلٌ عَظِيمٌ. وَمَاتَ رَجُلٌ عَظِيمٌ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ”فَاتَهَا لَا يُرْمَى بِهَا لِمَوْتٍ أَحَدٍ وَلَا لِحَيَاتِهِ. وَلَكِنْ رَبَّنَا، تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى اسْمُهُ، إِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا سَبَّحَ حَمَلَةَ الْعَرْشِ. ثُمَّ سَبَّحَ أَهْلَ السَّمَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ. حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ التَّسْبِيحُ أَهْلَ هَذِهِ السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا. ثُمَّ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُونَ حَمَلَةَ الْعَرْشِ لِحَمَلَةِ الْعَرْشِ: مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ؟ فَيُخْبِرُونَهُمْ مَاذَا قَالَ. قَالَ: فَيَسْتَنْخِرُ بَعْضُ أَهْلِ السَّمَاوَاتِ بَعْضًا. حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْحَبْرُ هَذِهِ السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا. فَتَخْطَفُ الْجِنُّ السَّمْعَ فَيَقْدِفُونَ إِلَى أَوْلِيَانِهِمْ. وَيُرْمُونَ بِهِ. فَمَا جَاءُوا بِهِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَهُوَ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ يَقْرَفُونَ فِيهِ وَيَرِيدُونَ.“

On one of those occasions, when the Prophet sat with his Companions at night, they witnessed a falling star. He asked, ‘What would you say to this in pre-Islamic times?’ They

said they thought a great person must have taken birth or died.’ He told them, “No, it is not flung at the birth or death of a person. But when Allah decrees an affair, the bearers of `Arsh begin to chant His glory. They are followed by the inhabitants of the heaven immediately below it, until their glory-chanting reaches the heaven closest to the earth. Then, those in the heaven closest to the `Arsh seek to know what was said – from the bearers of the `Arsh. Then (some of) the bearers of the `Arsh ask (others of) the bearers of the `Arsh, ‘What did your Lord say?’ They inform them. Then the inhabitants of the heavens inform those of the next heaven until it reaches the heaven closest to the earth. At that point the Jinn steal off (a word) and they are struck (with a meteorite). So, whatever they bring down of it (the original command), is true. But (in actual fact) they divided it up and adulterate it.” The report is also in Muslim and Nasa’i

[24] Say, 'Who provides for you out of the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'Allah.⁵³ And (so), either we or you are upon right guidance or in manifest error.⁵⁴

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
قُلِ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوْ فِي
ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] Say, 'You will not be questioned about what we committed, nor will we be questioned as to what you do.'

قُلْ لَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْأَلُ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

53. Yusuf Ali's note deserves attention: "There are six propositions introduced here with the word "Say", at verses 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 30. They clearly explain the doctrine of Unity (verse 22), the Mercy of Allah (verse 24), man's Personal Responsibility (verse 25), the Final Justice of Allah (verse 26), Allah's Power and Wisdom (verse 27), and the Inevitability of the Judgment, by which true values will be restored (verse 30)."

54. Ibn Jarir and Qurtubi discuss the "or" of the passage, "either we or you are upon right guidance or in manifest error," and offer various solutions since, after all, there is no doubt that the believers are on right guidance, while the unbelievers are in obvious error. So, why is there the element of doubt expressed in "or"?

One explanation is: when you say to a dishonest person, e.g., "one of us is a liar," he knows what exactly you mean. Another explanation is that

the "waaw" of the text is "waaw al-muwaalaah" which offers the meaning, "Indeed, we are on right guidance while you are in manifest error." They support this meaning with poetical citations.

Another possible connotation is, "We both cannot be rightly guided. One of us is in error. So, look carefully at your own position."

Today, with the loss of knowledge and the faith which issues from it, this last mentioned is a meaning that is lost upon many Muslims. They cannot understand the exclusiveness, and are ever ready to strike a chord of unity with the antagonists of Islam, on the premise that, after all, others also have some truth (Au.).

Yusuf Ali makes an emphatic statement: "Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, are incompatible, one with another. In this matter we can make no compromise. It is true that in men there may be various degrees

[26] Say, 'Our Lord will bring us together, then He will judge between us with Truth. Surely, He is the (true) Judge,⁵⁵ the All-knowing.

قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Say, 'Show me those you have joined with Him as associates.⁵⁶ Nay; rather, He is Allah, the All-mighty, the All-wise.'

قُلْ أَرُونِي الَّذِينَ أَجَعْتُمْ بِهِ شُرَكَاءَ كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And, We have not sent you but for all mankind: a harbinger of good tiding and a Warner; but most of the people do not know.⁵⁷

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

of good or evil mixed together, and we have to tolerate men as our fellow-creatures, with all their faults and shortcomings. But this does not mean that we can worship Allah and Mammon together. Wrong is the negation of Right as light is of darkness. Though there may be apparently varying depths of darkness, this is only due to the imperfection of our vision: it is varying strengths of light as perceived by our relative powers of sight. So we may perceive the Light of Allah in varying degrees according to our spiritual vision. But in simple questions of Right or Wrong, we are faced by the Categorical Imperative."

Razi offers us another point: We may note the article "upon" in "upon right guidance" and the article "in" as it appears in the words "in manifest error." The implication is that the former is high above the lat-

ter (from where he can see his path clearly) while the latter is in a deep abyss (not sure where he is)."

55. The rendering of "Fattaah" as Judge is following Ibn 'Abbas' understanding as in Ibn Jarir, Shawkani and others.

56. But of course, when He said, "Show me those you have joined with Him as associates," He knew those that were associated with Him in his times, but, in reality, the objective was to identify their error in association.

57. A plain truth about the Messenger and the Message, but unobvious to even some Muslims. Some Muslims of our contemporary world believe in the parochial nature of our Prophet's mission, and in the Qur'an as the book for Muslims, just as every religious denomination has its own (Au.).

The statement anyway, is echoed several times in the Qur'an. Allah said (25: 1),

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ
نَذِيرًا (الفرقان - ١)

"Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His slave, that he may be a warner unto the worlds."

And (7: 158),

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا (الأعراف
١٥٨ -

"Say, 'O people, verily, I am Allah's Messenger towards you all."

And `Ikrimah reported `Ibn `Abbas as saying, "Allah gave the Prophet preference over those of the heavens and those of the earth." They asked him, "How did Allah give him preference over the prophets?" He replied, "Allah said (14: 4),

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ
(إبراهيم - ٤)

'And We did not send a Messenger but in the language of the people, so that he could make (it) clear to them.' Whereas, He said at this point (34: 28),

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ (سباء - ٢٨)

'We have not sent you but for all mankind.'

And, adds Ibn Kathir, the statement of Ibn `Abbas can be corroborated with a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn* which says,

أَخْبَرَنَا جَابِرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أُعْطِيتُ خَمْسًا لَمْ يُعْطَهُنَّ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي
نُصِرْتُ بِالرُّعْبِ مَسِيرَةَ شَهْرٍ وَجُعِلَتْ لِي الْأَرْضُ
مَسْجِدًا وَطَهُورًا فَأَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَدْرَكْتُهُ الصَّلَاةَ
فَلْيُصَلِّ وَأَجَلْتُ لِي الْمَعَائِمَ وَمَنْ نَحَلَ لِأَحَدٍ قَبْلِي
وَأُعْطِيتُ الشَّفَاعَةَ وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُبْعَثُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ خَاصَّةً
وَيُبْعَثُ إِلَى النَّاسِ عَامَّةً (البخاري، مسلم)

"I have been given five things that none of the Prophets before me were given: I have been helped with fright from a distance of one month; the whole of the earth has been made for me a place of prostration and a means of purification, so that, anyone of my *Ummah* who encounters (the time) for Prayer, may Pray (anywhere); war spoils have been made lawful unto me while they were not lawful for anyone before me; I have been bestowed with the (Grand) Intercession; and, a Prophet used to be sent to a specific people, while I have been sent to whole of mankind."

[29] *And they say, 'When will this promise (come to pass) if you are truthful?'*⁵⁸

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] *Say, 'For you (there is) appointment of a day, from which you cannot remain behind by a single hour, nor can you get ahead.'*

قُلْ لَكُمْ مِيعَادٌ يَوْمَ لَا تَسْتَأْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] *And said those who disbelieved, 'We will never believe in this Qur'ān, nor in that which was before it.'⁵⁹ If you could see when the wrongdoers will be held before their Lord, throwing back on one another the word (of blame), those that were deemed weak saying to those that waxed proud, 'Had it not been for you, we should have been believers.'*⁶⁰

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِحَدَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] *Those wh waxed proud will say to those that were deemed weak, 'Was it we who kept you back from guidance after it had come to you? Rather, you have been guilty.'*

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَىٰ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

58. That is, the promise of punishment. Allah said elsewhere (42: 18),

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ (الشورى - ١٨)

"Those who believe not in it seek to hasten it, while those who believe are fearful of it, and know that it is the very truth."

59. This is to console the Prophet that if they reject you now, then they are in the footsteps of past nations, who also greeted Allah's revelations with disdain, and rejected in a similar summary manner (Razi and others in sum).

Although the Makkans used to consult the People of the Book, and vaguely believed that they had received Allah's revelation at one time (Qurtubi, with addition); which point was strengthened by the fact that a few signs of the Prophet could be found in their Scriptures also, but they decided, all the same, that they would rather deny all (Zamakhshari).

Yusuf Ali reminds us of a historical reality that is often ignored: "To the Pagans all scriptures are taboo, whether it be the Qur'ān or any Revelation that came before it. The peo-

[33] Said those who were deemed weak to those who waxed proud, 'But rather, (it was your) day and night plotting wherewith you bid us to disbelieve in Allah, and set up equals to Him.' They will conceal remorse when they see the punishment.⁶¹ And We shall place shackles around the necks of those who disbelieved. Will they be recompensed but for what they were doing?

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا
بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَنْ
نَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا وَأَسْرُوا
النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ
فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

ple of the Book despised the Pagans, but in their arrogant assumption of superiority, prevented them, by their example, from accepting the latest and most universal Scripture when it came in the form of the Qur'an. This relative position, of men who fancy themselves on their knowledge, and men whom they despise but exploit and mislead, always exists on this earth."

60. "This is how those who deemed themselves weak will react in that terrifying and humbling situation, well aware that what is expected to come next could be much worse. That day they will express themselves confidently, and so will speak out aloud. So long as they were in this world, they did not have the opportunity to face them - their leaders - as freely, without any constraints and fear of retaliation, as this day. Their weak-

nesses, their subservience, and their self-abasement had prevented them from face to face encounters in the previous life. They had sold out their God-given freedom, the honor that Allah had bestowed on them, and the perceptions that He had granted them. But today, all those valuable bestowals are behind them. In front of them is the sure prospect of chastisement. And, therefore, they speak out fearlessly: "Had it not been for you, we would have been believers!" (Sayyid).

61. "Asarra" is one of those words which carry reversible connotations. In this case, the usage can be understood as either meaning "conceal" or "evince" (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi). For a slightly larger note on the word, see *Surah Yunus* of this work, note 81.

[34] And never did We send a Warner into a town but its affluent ones declared, 'Indeed, we are, in what you have been sent with, disbelievers.'⁶²

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

62. Ibn Abi Hatim recorded through Abu Razeen (in a report whose authenticity could not be verified: Au.):

عن أبي رزين قال: كان رجلان شريكان خرج أحدهما إلى الساحل وبقي الآخر، فلما بعث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كتب إلى صاحبه يسأله ما فعل، فكتب إليه أنه لم يتبعه أحد من قريش إنما اتبعه أراذل الناس ومساكينهم، قال: فترك تجارته ثم أتى صاحبه، فقال: دلني عليه، وكان يقرأ الكتب أو بعض الكتب، قال: فأتى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: إلام تدعو؟ قال: "أدعو إلى كذا وكذا" قال: أشهد أنك رسول الله، قال صلى الله عليه وسلم: "وما علمك بذلك؟" قال: إنه لم يبعث نبي إلا اتبعه أراذل الناس ومساكينهم، قال: فنزلت هذه الآية، {وما أرسلنا في قرية من نذير إلا قال مترفوها إنا بما أرسلتم به كافرون}

"There were two men partners (in business). One of them went to the shores while the other remained. When the Prophet appeared, the other one wrote to this one with regard to his (the Prophet's) achievements so far. This one wrote back that none of the Quraysh had followed him; it is the lowly ones and poor people who have followed him. So, (the reporter said), he terminated his business and came back to his

partner. He told him, 'Lead me to him.' (The reporter) added, 'He used to read the Scriptures, or some of them.' So he went up to the Prophet and asked, 'What do you call people unto?' He replied, 'To such and such things.' He said, 'I testify that you are a Messenger of Allah.' He asked, 'What led you to this (belief)?' He said, "No Prophet was raised but it were the lowly of the people and their poor ones who followed him.' Then this *ayah* was revealed, 'And never did We send a Warner into a town but its affluent ones declared, 'Indeed, we are, in what you have been sent with, disbelievers.' So the Prophet sent him the word (to him), 'Allah has revealed to attest your statement.'"

And this is what Heraclius had remarked when in reply to his question, 'Are the lowly ones following him or the noble ones?' he was answered that it were the lowly ones who were following him (Ibn Kathir).

[35] *And they said, 'We are more in wealth and progeny, and we shall not be chastised.'*⁶³

وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] *Say, 'Indeed, my Lord extends the provision unto whom He will, and restricts. But most of the people know not.'*⁶⁴

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُقَدِّرُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] *And, neither your wealth nor your progeny are the things that will bring you nigh to Us in nearness;⁶⁵ except for he who believed, did righteous deeds⁶⁶ – they it is, for whom is double the reward⁶⁷ for that they did – and they shall be in lofty chambers, in peace.⁶⁸*

وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِي تُقَرَّبُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَن آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جِزَاءٌ الضَّعْفُ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْعُرُوفَاتِ آمِنُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

The above report of Abu Razeen is also in Ibn Abi al-Mundhir's collection (Shawkani).

“So let not their wealth and children amaze you. Allah desires only to punish them therewith in the life of this world and that their souls should depart while they are in a state of disbelief” (Ibn Kathir).

63. That is, not for nothing have we been given preference over you in matters of wealth and progeny. Those who are so treated in this world, will not be treated differently in the Next (Qurtubi with addition).

64. That is, wealth and progeny are no signs of Allah's approval of your ways in this world, nor of a goodly end in the Hereafter (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi). How many pious have not been there who led a life of wants, and how many immoral perverts have not been there who led a life of luxury?! (Imām Razi in substance).

Allah said elsewhere about their error (23: 55-56)

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُم بِهِ مِن مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ، نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (المؤمنون - ٥٥، ٥٦)

“Do they think that by the wealth and offspring with which We extend them, We hasten to them the good things? Nay, they perceive not.”

65. How could wealth and children be thought of as the means for attaining closeness to Allah, asks Razi, when in actual fact, they engage a man in “other than Allah?”

And (9: 55),

فَلَا تَعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِمَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَرْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ (التوبة - ٥٥)

But rather, writes Ibn Kathir, the parameters are different. A *hadith*

of *Musnad*, Muslim, and Ibn Majah (narrated by Abu Hurayrah in Muslim) explains what it is:

”إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى صُورِكُمْ.
وَلَكِنَّ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ“ (مسلم)

“Verily, Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your faces, but rather looks at your hearts.”

66. Another possible interpretation, expressed by Zamakhshari is that, it is not any wealth and any children that take one nearer to Allah, but rather, it is that wealth which is freely spent in the way of Allah, and those children that are brought up on Islam, taught knowledge, and trained to obey, that help achieve the objective of nearness to Allah. In short, none draws any advantage from wealth and children but the pious.

The Prophet advised `Amr b. al-`Aas in words,

”يا عمرو نعماً بالمال الصالح للمرء الصالح“. (قال الهيثمي: ورجال أحمد وأبي يعلى رجال الصحيح).

“O `Amr, a blessing is that wealth which is (in the hands of) a righteous person” (Au.).

67. “Double the reward” is an inaccurate translation adopted for want of a better alternative. Otherwise, this grammatical construction, as

pointed out by Zamakhshari, lends the meaning of “double, and double, and double .. the rewards,” another way of saying, “many fold rewards.”

While agreeing with the above, Qurtubi offers other possibilities but yielding near about the same meaning.

68. These chambers will be made of pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones (Qurtubi).

We have a *hadith* in Ibn Abi Hatim which sheds some light on what these chambers are. `Ali reported the Prophet (a tradition whose authenticity could not be traced: Au.),

عن علي رضي الله عنه قال، قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ”إن في الجنة لعرفاً ترى ظهورها من بطونها وبطونها من ظهورها“ فقال أعرابي: لمن هي؟ قال صلى الله عليه وسلم: ”لمن طيب الكلام، وأطعم الطعام، وأدام الصيام، وصلى بالليل والناس نيام“ (أخرجه ابن أبي حاتم).

“In Paradise there are chambers whose inside will be visible from outside and the outside from inside.” A bedouin asked, “Whom are they meant for?” He answered, “For him who spoke good words, fed the food, fasted a lot, and prayed at night while people slept” (Ibn Kathir).

Although we are not sure the above is allusion to glass palaces, one might

[38] As for those who strove in Our signs, (trying to) frustrate (Us), those shall be brought into chastisement.

وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] Say, 'Indeed, my Lord extends the provision unto whom He will of His slaves and restricts (it) for him.⁶⁹ And, whatever thing you expend, He will replace it.⁷⁰ He is the best of providers.'⁷¹

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

remind that despite great advances in glass technology, at its zenith but in a stalled situation since a decade or two, villas, far from palaces, could not be constructed entirely out of glass. At best, huge buildings can be clad from the outside with glass, (which in most cases have to be, by necessity, reflective, allowing view from any one side alone), but with all inner structure and divisions from concrete, steel, wood and aluminum. To the question, what are the possibilities of mankind ever constructing buildings entirely from glass, the answer from someone who is in the business of architectural glass and aluminum, and has the latest technology at his service, is that it is zero.

the Hereafter is greater in rank and greater in excellence."

In other words, just like there are grades and ranks in this world, there are grades and ranks in the Hereafter: some will be in "lofty chambers, in peace," while others at the bottom-most part of Hell. And, the best of the people in this world is, as a *hadith* of Muslim, conveyed to us by `Abdullah b. `Amr b. al-`Aas says,

”قَدْ أَقْلَحَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ، وَرَزَقَ كَفَافًا، وَتَنَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِمَا آتَاهُ“ . (مسلم)

“Succeeded he who became a Muslim, was given just enough (for survival) and then Allah granted him contentment over what He gave him” (Ibn Kathir).

69. As Allah said elsewhere (17: 21),

انظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَلَآ آخِرَةَ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا (الإسراء - ٢١)

“See then how We give preference to some over others. But surely,

70. That is, the rewards of whatever you spend are brought back to you – both in this world as well as in the Next. As for this-worldly reward, it can either be in material terms, or in terms of contentment, which is a

treasure that never empties. Nevertheless, one might not throw away all he has in charity. Mujahid is reported to have said that if someone has what supports his life, then, let him take the middle-path, for provision has been divided (in a certain measure). What he has been given might be little, out of which he might spend as if he has been given a lot, to suffer poverty in the end (Zamakhshari).

The Problem however, is not that of generosity, but of miserliness. Hence Razi, Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir cite Prophetic traditions that encourage spending. One of them (as preserved by Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad: H. Ibrahīm) says (in words as in Muslim),

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ يُصْبِحُ الْعِبَادُ فِيهِ، إِلَّا مَلَكَانِ يَنْزِلَانِ. فَيَقُولُ أَحَدُهُمَا: اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِ مُنْفِقًا خَلْفًا. وَيَقُولُ الْآخَرُ: اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِ مُتْسِكًا تَلْفًا".
(الصحيحين)

Abu Hurayrah reports, "There is not a day in which slaves do their morning but two angels come down. One of them says, 'O Allah, grant compensation to him who spends;' and the other says, 'O Allah grant destruction to him who withholds.'"

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir cite another *hadith*: The Prophet has reported

to us from Allah, as in a *hadith* (of Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah and Ahmad: Hussain b. Ibrahīm),

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ يَبْلُغُ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنْفِقْ أَنْفِقْ عَلَيْكَ". (الصحيحين)

Abu Hurayrah reports the Prophet, "Allah said, 'Son of Adam, spend, I shall spend on you.'"

Qurtubi offers a trustworthy *hadith* on the topic taking it from Daraqutni,

غن جابر (بن عبدالله) عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "كل معروف صدقة. وما أنفق الرجل على نفسه و أهله كتبت له صدقة وما وقى به عرضه فهو صدقة و ما أنفق الرجل من نفقة فعلى الله خلفها إلا ما كان من نفقة في بنیان أو معصية". قال عبد الحميد قلت لإبن المنكدر: "وما وقى به الرجل عرضه؟". قال: يعطي الشاعر وذا اللسان.

Jabir reports that the Prophet said, "Every good deed is a charity. And what a man spends on himself and his family, it is recorded as charity including what he spends in defense of his honor, which is also charity for him. And whatever a man spends, it is for Allah to bring back, except for what he spent on a building or in a sin." Jabir was asked about what was meant by "what he spends in defense of his honor?" He replied, "(For example) he

gives to a poet, or someone with a loose tongue.”

Other reports however, adds Qurtubi, explain that the amount one spends on a house which is essential for him, will be compensated for.

Ibn Kathir adds: Once the Prophet (*saws*) told Bilal,

”أنفق يا بلال ولا تحش من ذي العرش إقلالا“.

“Spend O Bilal, and do not fear from the Possessor of the *Arsh* diminution.”

(The report was collected by Tabarani. Haythami however declared a narrator weak: Au.).

According to another tradition reported by Hudhayfah and found in Ibn Abi Hatim and Hafiz Abu Ya'laa's collections, the Prophet said,

ألا إن بعد زمانكم هذا زمانا عضوضا يعرض الموسر على ما في يده حذار الإنفاق، وقد قال الله تعالى: {وما أنفقتم من شيء فهو يخلفه} وسيد شرار الخلق يبائعون كل مضطر، ألا إن بيع المضطرين حرام، المسلم أخو المسلم، لا يظلمه، ولا يخذله، إن كان عندك معروف فعد به على أخيك، ولا تزده هلاكاً إلا هلاكه.

“Lo, after this will be biting times when the affluent one will hold with his teeth (what he has) in

fear of expenditure while Allah has said, ‘And, whatever thing you expend, He will replace it.’ And, the worst of the evil ones from among the creation will trade with the most desperate person. Remember, trading with the desperate ones is unlawful. A Muslim is a brother unto another Muslim. He does not wrong him, and does not humiliate him. If you happen to possess a good thing, take it to your brother, but do not (on the contrary) augment destruction upon his (present) destruction.”

The *hadith* however, adds Ibn Kathir, is weak. (But the prediction has come true: Au.).

71. The best of provisions is that, writes Razi, which (a) is not delayed beyond the time of need, (b) is not lesser than the exact requirement, and (c) does not entail reckoning. Further, the use of the term “providers” in the plural – while there is only one provider, Allah – is purely allegorical, like saying, “Allah comes down,” or, “Allah is with the slaves,” etc. At best the term “providers” has been employed to reflect on the various means that Allah (*swt*) adopts to provide His creations.

[40] And, the day He gathers them together and then say to the angels, 'Was it you that these were worshipping?'⁷²

وَيَوْمَ يَجْمَعُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ
أَهْؤَلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] They will reply, 'Glory to You. You are our Protector apart from them. Nay rather, they were worshipping the Jinn.⁷³ Most of them were believers in them.'

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّنَا مِنْ دُونِهِمْ بَلْ
كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ بِهِمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ
﴿٤١﴾

[42] This day then, no power do some of you hold of benefit or harm to others. And We shall say to those who wronged, 'Taste the chastisement of the Fire that you used to cry lies to.'

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَفَعًا وَلَا
ضَرًّا وَتَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ
النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And when Our verses are read out to them as clear evidences, they say, 'This is not but a man who wishes to avert you from what your forefathers worshipped.' And they said, 'This is not, but a forged lie.' And said those who disbelieved of the Truth when it came to them, 'This is (nothing) but clear magic.'⁷⁴

وَإِذَا تَنزَّلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا
كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤَكُمْ وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ
مُفْتَرَى وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا
جَاءَهُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤٣﴾

72. If we consider the fact that since angels are the means that Allah employs, worship of angels could imply worship of the material means so powerfully prevalent in our times (Au.). In any case, as pointed out by Qurtubi, there was a clan – Banu Mulayh belonging to the Khuza`ah tribe – which worshipped the Jinn, claiming that they could see them and that they were angels, Allah's own daughters.

73. It is the Shayaatin who used to beautify for them the worship of other than Allah (Ibn Kathir).

74. Yusuf Ali's commentary on the verse runs as follows: "Apart from the worship of Evil in the guise of the Powers of Light, there is another form of false worship, which depends on ancestral tradition. "Why," it is said, "should we not do as our fathers did?" They reject a new prophet of Truth simply because his teaching does not agree with the ways of their ancestors. The answer to this is given in verse 44 below. But meanwhile the rejecters' objection to new Truth is stated in three forms: (1) our ancestors knew nothing of

[44] *And We have not given them any Books to study; nor did We send them before you any warner.*⁷⁵

وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] *Those that preceded them (also) cried lies, yet they did not attain a tenth of what We gave them.*⁷⁶ *But they cried lies to My Messengers. (See) then, how was My repudiation!*

وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا بَلَّغُوا مِعْشَارَ مَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿٤٥﴾

this; (2) the story of inspiration is false; it is merely an invention; we do not believe in inspiration; (3) when in some particular points, the new Truth does work wonders in men's hearts, they account for it by saying it is magic. 'The third objection is merely traditional. What is magic? If it was merely deception, surely the Truth has proved itself to be above deception. The second objection is answered by the fact that the Messenger who comes with new spiritual Truth is acknowledged to be truthful in other relations of life: why should he be false where his preaching brings him no gain but much sorrow and persecution?'

75. That is, among the Quraysh. In fact, no Messenger had been raised among the Arabs in general, in recent memory. Isma'il's ministry was an ancient affair (Au). And, therefore, they should have been especially grateful to Allah, who did not deny them what others were blessed

with, namely Jews and Christians, by sending this Messenger. On that account they ought to have made the best use of the Messenger raised among them, and of the Book that he brought (Mufti Shafi').

76. The opinion attributed to Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah, (also Suddi and Ibn Zayd: Ibn Kathir) is that the Makkans were not given a tenth of the power, material wealth, and the length of life that the earlier unbelievers were given. Yet consider, how was their end!?' (Ibn Jarir).

This is in the same vein, writes Ibn Kathir, as another verse which says (46: 26),

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِيمَا إِنْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (الأحقاف - ٢٦)

"Surely, We had firmly established them with that wherewith We have not established you therewith. And We had assigned them hear-

[46] Say, 'I exhort you to one (thing) only: that you stand up for Allah in pairs and singly⁷⁷ and then reflect:' there is no madness in your companion.⁷⁸ He is no more than a warner to you of an impending severe chastisement.⁷⁹

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَثَرَىٰ وَفَرَادَىٰ ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] Say, '(If) I have asked you any wage, it is yours. My wage is only upon Allah. And He is over all things a Witness.'

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

ing, sights and hearts; but availed them not their hearing, sights, nor the hearts aught, because they were denying Allah's signs; and (consequently), that (very thing) surrounded them which they were mocking."

To Imām Razi, another connotation is possible. To paraphrase, "And laid the lie those who were before the Quraysh, while they, the earlier ones, did not attain a tenth of what these, the Quraysh, have attained" where, the allusion is to the excellence in language they possessed and signs of the Prophet's veracity that the Quraysh were shown. In short, the earlier ones did not receive a tenth of the evidences that the Quraysh have, yet, they suffered destruction for their disbelief; so, what about these?

77. In ones and twos, but threes were left out, for, as an English proverb goes, two is company, three is crowd

- larger the number, lesser is the intellectual content of a pool. If you have a hundred people before you, and you want everyone to understand what you are saying, you will have to bear in mind the lowest of intellect among them to successfully communicate your ideas. In contrast, if it is not simply communication of an idea, but discussion of some sort is involved, then, one might remember that crowds are always not quite rational (Au.).

Yusuf Ali comments with another aspect in mind: "A crowd mentality is not the best for the perception of the final spiritual truths. For these, it is necessary that each soul should commune within itself with earnest sincerity as before Allah: if it requires a Teacher, let it seek out one, or it may be that it wants the strengthening of the inner convictions that dawn on it, by the support of a sympathiser

[48] Say, 'Verily my Lord casts the Truth:⁸⁰
the Great Knower of the Unseen.'

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَمْزِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَالَمِ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Say, 'The truth has come, and falsehood
will neither originate (anything) nor repeat
(it).'⁸¹

قُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ ﴿٤٩﴾

or friend. But careful and heart-felt reflection is necessary to appraise the higher Truths.”

78. What the Quraysh meant perhaps is that the Prophet exhibited signs of madness by not seeing where his true tribal and personal interests lay, and that the very nobleness of his teachings promised its failure (Au.).

79. We have a *hadith* that speaks of the closeness of the Hour. It is in Ahmad declared trustworthy by Haythamiyy. Buraydah reports: One day the Prophet (*saws*) came out and called out three times saying,

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ! أَنْتَدِرُونَ مَا مَثَلِي وَمَثَلِكُمْ قَالُوا اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ قَالَ إِنَّمَا مَثَلِي وَمَثَلِكُمْ كَمَثَلِ قَوْمٍ خَافُوا
عَدُوًّا يَأْتِيهِمْ فَبِعَثُوا رَجُلًا يَرِيئُهُمْ فَبَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ كَذَلِكَ
أَبْصَرَ الْعَدُوَّ فَأَقْبَلَ لِيُنْدِرَهُمْ - أَرَاهُ قَالَ خَشِيَةَ أَنْ
يُذَرِكَهُ الْعَدُوُّ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَنْذِرَ قَوْمَهُ فَأَهْوَى بَنُوهُ (أَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ ! أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ! أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ !)

“People! Do you know the example that fits me and you? It is the example of a people who feared their enemy that should pounce upon them. So they sent a man to watch out. While he was thus en-

gaged, he spotted the enemy. So he went back (to them) to warn them but was afraid that the enemy will seize them even before he could reach his people. So he signaled with his garment (and said), ‘People! They are upon you. People! They are upon you’ – three times” (Ibn Kathir).

80. The allusion is, according to Qatadah and Ibn Zayd, to Revelation (Ibn Jarir). Another possible connotation is, ‘He casts the Truth in the hearts of the truthful’ (Razi).

81. That is, whatever is ‘other than God,’ cannot make anything appear, or, re-generate (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir from some of the *Salaf*).

In a deeper sense, “I.e., in contrast to the creativeness inherent in every true idea, falsehood – being in itself an illusion – cannot really create anything or revive any value that may have been alive in the past” (Asad).

82. That is, the Prophet has not worked out the guidance or the means of salvation he is offering with

[50] Say, 'If I should go astray, then I would go astray against myself. But if I am rightly guided, then it is by what my Lord reveals to me.⁸² He indeed is the Hearer, the Ever-nigh.'⁸³

قُلْ إِنْ ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِي وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فِيمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] And, if you could see when they will be smitten with fright; but (there will be) no escape.⁸⁴ And they will be seized from a place nearby.⁸⁵

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ فَرَعُوا فَلَا قَوَّةَ وَأُخِذُوا مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] And they will say, 'We believe in it (now).' But, how could they receive (faith)⁸⁶ from a place far off?⁸⁷

وَقَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَكُمُ النَّاصِرُونَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

his own mind: it is Allah's own bestowal.

83. Yusuf Ali explains: "If it could possibly be supposed that the Prophet was a self-deceived visionary, it would affect him only, and could not fail to appear in his personality. But in fact he was steady in his constancy and Faith, and he not only went from strength to strength, but won the enduring and whole-hearted love and devotion of his nearest and dearest and of those who most came into contact with him. How was this possible, unless he had the Truth and the inspiration of Allah behind him? This is the fifth and last argument in this passage."

84. This is how Ibn `Abbas explained the term "fawta", viz., "escape," as in Ibn Jarir.

Report concerning the above is in Ibn abi al-Mundhir also (Shawkani).

85. Although Ibn Jarir keeps it open, the preferred opinion is that this seizing will be on the Day of Judgment (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir), and the import is, writes Razi, they will not be able to flee, but rather, will be seized from a place close at hand.

86. "Tanawush" is different from its close synonym "tanaawul" in that the former implies an easy attaining, or what does not involve any effort (while the latter would need some effort). The implication is, the faith that was being offered to them in the world, was within easy reach. But now, in the Next world, that easy reach has become a distant wish (Au.).

[53] Seeing they denied it earlier. And they are casting at the Unseen from a place far off.⁸⁸

وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَذْفُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ
مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] And a barrier is placed between them and what they desire,⁸⁹ as was done with the likes of them earlier.⁹⁰ They were (also) in a doubt disquieting.

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ كَمَا فُعِلَ
بِأَشْيَاعِهِمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ
مُرِيبٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

87. An alternative understanding is that the textual word “tanaawush” is for return. That is, how can they be returned to the world of “the past,” to facilitate them to repent? This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

88. Ibn Jarir points out that several interpretations are possible: (a) they are conjecturing about the Prophet that he is either a sorcerer, a soothsayer, or a poet (Mujahid), (b) they are conjecturing that there will be no raising after death, no reckoning, no rewards or punishments (Qatadah), (c) they cast aspersions against the Qur`an from a distance (Ibn Zayd).

Note the contrast. Allah casts the truth. The unbelievers also cast, but they cast that which is insubstantial, which is what “bi `l ghayb” implies here (Razi).

Asad adds: “The obvious implication is that man’s fate in the Hereafter will be a consequence of, and invariably conditioned by, his spiri-

tual attitude and the manner of his life during the first, earthly stage of his existence. In this instance, the expression ‘from far away’ is apparently used in a sense similar to saying like, ‘far off the mark’ or ‘without rhyme or reason’, and is meant to qualify as groundless and futile all negative speculation about what the Qur`an describes as al-ghayb (‘that which is beyond the reach of human [or created being’s] perception’): in this case, life after death.”

89. Hasan, Mujahid, Qatadah and others interpreted the verse as meaning, a barrier will be placed between the unbelievers and their wishes to believe in Allah and return to the world to lead a righteous life (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Or perhaps, a barrier will be placed between their wishes and the outcome of the wishes (Au.).

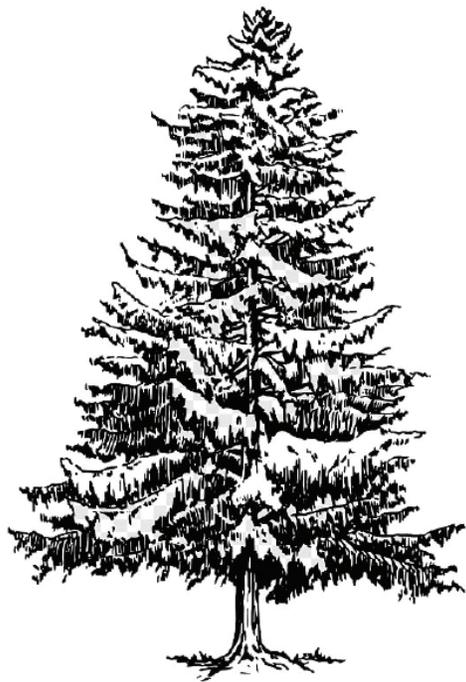
90. As says another verse, points out Ibn Kathir (40: 84-85),

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْا بُأْسَنَا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَكَفَرْنَا بِمَا كُنَّا
 بِهِ مُشْرِكِينَ. فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنْفَعُهُمْ إِيمَانُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا بُأْسَنَا
 سُنَّتَ اللَّهُ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ فِي عِبَادِهِ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ
 الْكَافِرُونَ (غافر - ٨٤-٨٥)

"So, when they saw Our chastisement they said, 'We believed in

One God and renounce those we were associating.' But their belief could not profit them when they had seen Our chastisement. Such has been the way of Allah with His slaves. And lost - then and there - were the unbelievers." **بَقِيَّتُهَا**





Surah 35

Fātir¹

Makkan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] All praise to Allah,² Originator³ of the heavens and the earth,⁴ Appointer of angels (as) messengers; with wings: twos, threes, and fours.⁵ He adds to the creation as He will.⁶ Surely, Allah has power over all things.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنَى
وَتُثَلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَرِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

1. The chapter has also been called as “*Surah al-Malā’ikah*” (Zamakhshari, Alusi).

2. “When we praise Allah, it means that we understand and bring to mind that His glory and power are exercised for the good of His Creation, and this is the subject-matter of the *Surah*” (Yusuf Ali).

3. Ibn `Abbas is reported to have said that he did not know what “*Fatir*” was until he happened to be near two Bedouins disputing over a water-hole. One of them said to the other,

أنا فطرتهَا

“I originated it” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). The word has its root in “*fatara*” which means “to split,” as well as “to create” (Qurtubi).

Allah is the Originator in the sense of having created without a previous example, and without a previously existing set of physical laws (Alusi).

Yusuf Ali comments: “As man’s knowledge of the processes of nature advances, he sees how complex is the evolution of matter itself, leaving out the question of the origin of Life and the spiritual forces, which are beyond the ken of experimental science. But this knowledge itself becomes a sort of “veil of Light”: man becomes so conscious of the proximate causes, that he is apt, in his pride, to forget the primal Cause, the ultimate hand of Allah in Creation.. The word *fatara* here means the creation of primeval matter, to which further creative processes have to be

added by the hand of Allah, or Allah 'adds to His Creation as He pleases', not only in quantity, but in qualities, functions, relations and variations in infinite ways."

4. Majid gives a reason why a re-statement of the stated is necessary: "The earliest heathen gods were the personifications of the heaven and the earth. Hence the need for emphasizing that they are mere created beings. Even the Jews with their heritage of monotheism were led, under the sway of Platonic ideas, to conceive of creation 'as carried into effect through intermediate agencies, not very distinguishable from sub-deities.' (JE. IV. p. 338)."

Today's scientists propose that the universe is "a free lunch", that is, it came out of nothing. This is justified in the following curious manner: Firstly, we know that everything exists in pairs: positive and negative. For example, we have matter and antimatter. Now, before the big bang nothing existed but only energy. This positive energy must have had its negative partner. That partner is gravity which is assumed as negative energy. This negative energy cancels out the positive energy, and we end up having a universe out of nothing! Physicists say, on the other hand,

that it is observed in the laboratories that during experiments sub-atomic particles pop up suddenly from nowhere. They have no mass, and no energy. But their physical effects are measurable. They come into existence all by themselves, for a micro-second, and disappear. This proves that the universe could have come into existence by itself.

One wonders how much of the above stated in scientific works is given credence by their authors themselves, or, is it for public consumption alone? (Au.).

5. That is, some of them have a pair of wings, others two, or three, or four. But there is no limit. During the night of the Flight to the heavens our Prophet saw Jibril with six hundred wings (Zamakhshari), between each of the wings was a distance of the east and the west (Ibn Kathir).

The above report, as in Ibn Abi Hatim and in *Kitab Al-Adab* of Bukhari, has the following words in Arabic:

أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَأَى
جِبْرِيلَ لَهُ سِتْمِائَةِ جَنَاحٍ

There is another report in Abu al-Sheikh, as also in *Kanz* to the effect that the Prophet saw Jibril at *Sidratu al-Muntaha* with six hundred motley colored wings (Au.).

[2] Whatsoever of mercy Allah opens for the people, has no withholder thereof; and what He withholds has no releaser of it⁷ thereafter,⁸ and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.⁹

مَا يَفْتَحُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾

[3] O people, recall Allah's blessings upon you. Is there a creator other than Allah to provide you out of heaven and earth? There is no deity save He. Where then are you being diverted?

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] But if they cry lies to you, then Messengers before you were also cried lies to. And, to Allah are the affairs returned.

وَإِنْ يَكْذِبُواكَ فَقدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٤﴾

Majid comments: “The figures are not designed to express actual number of wings. They are symbolic of the different orders of those beings so unlike the creatures of the earth... In the Bible also there is a mention of certain winged heavenly beings, known as seraphim, attending on God and proclaiming His holiness:- ‘I also saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he fly.’ (Is. 6: 1-2).”

of Asad, “the process of creation is continuous, constantly expanding in scope, range and variety.”

7. It is in this vein that the Prophet is reported to have supplicated in words as reported by Bukhari, Ahmad and others:

عَنْ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ وَرَادٍ كَاتِبِ الْمُغِيرَةِ بْنِ شُعْبَةَ قَالَ أَمَلَى عَلَيَّ الْمُغِيرَةُ بِنُ شُعْبَةَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِلَى مُعَاوِيَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - كَانَ يَقُولُ فِي دُبُرِ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ مَكْتُوبَةٍ ”لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ ، وَهُوَ الْحَمْدُ ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ، اللَّهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا أَعْطَيْتَ ، وَلَا مُغْطَى لِمَا مَنَعْتَ ، وَلَا يَنْفَعُ دَا الْجِدِّ مِنْكَ الْجِدُّ.“

6. That is, there can be other creations with more than six hundred wings (Suddi – Ibn Kathir). But clearly, the allusion is to increase in all kinds of quantities and qualities in the creations (Zamakhshari). In the words

Warrad, who was Mughira b. Sho`ba's secretary, wrote on his behest to Mu`awiyah that the Prophet used to say after every of the five daily Prayers,

“There is no deity save Allah, the One. He has no partners. His is the

kingdom and for Him the praise; and He has power over all things. O Allah, there is no withholder of what You grant, and no granter of what You withhold. And no possessor of good fortune can be of any benefit when faced with Your will.”

Muslim has a slightly different version of the above report, as also Ahmad. It is said that the Prophet used to say these words of supplication during his deep bows (*rukū*). The actual words are:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا لَكَ الْحَمْدُ مِنْ أَسْفَلِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلِ الْأَرْضِ
وَمِنْ أَسْفَلِ مَا شِئْتَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهُ أَهْلُ النَّوْءِ وَالْمَجْدِ
لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا أَعْطَيْتَ وَلَا مُعْطِيٍّ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْتَفِعُ
ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْكَ الْجُدُّ

“O our Lord, Yours is the praise (in quantities) filling the heavens and the earth, and filling whatever else You wish after them, worthy of praise; there is no withholder of what You grant, and no granter of what You withhold. And no possessor of good fortune can be of any benefit when faced with Your will” (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi notes: Ibn al-Mundhir has recorded from `Amir b. Qays that, “There are four verses of the Qur’ān on the strength of which I do not care how I do my morning or my evening:

مَا يَفْتَحُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا
يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

i) “Whatsoever of mercy Allah opens for the people has no withholder thereof; and what He withholds, has no releaser thereof after Him.”

A second says,

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسَكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ
يُرِيدُكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ لِفَضْلِهِ

ii) “And, were Allah to visit you with an affliction, there is no remover thereof, save He. And, if He wished you any good, there is none to bar His bounty” (10: 107).

And a third:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

iii) “And there is no creeper on the earth but upon Allah is its provision” (11: 6).

Finally,

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

iv) “Allah will place ease after hardship” (65: 7).

Sayyid Qutb has a passage the likes of which make his commentary stand out from others. Here is a shortened version, “Whatsoever of mercy that Allah opens for the people, has no withholder thereof; and what He withholds has no releaser of it thereafter: This single short verse puts an end to every doubt concerning the

powers in the heavens and earth, binding man wholly to the power of Allah. On one hand, it drives into him disillusionment against every hope of mercy from any quarter of the universe, connecting him, on the other hand, with the mercy of Allah. It shuts all the doors of the heavens and earth, opening for him Allah's door alone. It blocks every path in the heavens and the earth, leaving open the way to Allah alone.

“And Allah's mercy appears in so many forms that they defy counting. Man is unable to take account of it all in his little self and what goes to make it. He cannot take account of all that Allah has bestowed of His mercy by way of honoring him, by way of the things He subjected to him: from above, from below, and from every side. But of course, those that a man realizes are but a meager few of those that he does not know.

“Allah's mercy appears in those things that are prohibited as well as in those that have been declared lawful. When Allah opens up His mercy, the person concerned discovers it in everything, in every situation, in every condition, and in every place.. He finds it in his self, in his disposition, in things surrounding him, wherever he happens to be, and in

whatever condition he happens to be, even when he is in the process of enduring all that the people consider as a stroke of misfortune. On the other hand, he misses the mercy we are speaking of, if Allah withholds it, in every thing, in every situation, in every condition, and in every place, even if he possesses all that the people reckon as the means of happiness and satisfaction.

“There is no blessing but it turns into a curse - if Allah disconnects it from His mercy. And there is no distress but it becomes a blessing - if it is accompanied by Allah's mercy.. Man may rest on a bed of thorns – blessed with Allah's mercy – and behold, it is a cushion. He might rest on a bed of silk – but Allah has withheld His Mercy – and behold, it is a bed of thorns. He could be struggling against all odds – but is in Allah's mercy – and behold, they are the simplest of things to endure. On the other hand, he might be attempting one of the easiest things – but is without His mercy – and behold, it is one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish. He passes through dangerous situations, but experiences peace and comfort, if in Allah's mercy, while without it, he indulges in the most simple of things, yet they prove distressful.

“There is no hardship with Allah’s mercy at hand. Hardship contains in it being withheld; even if a man is in the darkness of prison cells, or undergoing severe torture, or engulfed by flames of destruction. And there is no peace without it, even if a man is in the best of blessings, and material comforts. It is within the soul that springs of blessings and comforts sprout – by Allah’s mercy; and from within the soul scorpions of worry, anxiety, fatigue, hardship, distress and plight sting, when one is without Allah’s mercy.

“This is the door which, when open, could close all other doors, windows, and every opening. But no worry, for, it is the door to ease, comfort and prosperity. On the other hand, if this door is closed, but rest of the doors are opened, all the windows, and all the openings, but it will be of no use, for, it is going to mean constriction, pain, worries, and afflictions.

“This bestowal descends, but if there is constriction in provision, in housing, in livelihood, or, life happens to be rough and the resting place harsh – yet, no matter, for, they are of little consequence. In reality it is luxury, comfort, peace and blessing. On the other hand, if this bestowal is held back, but is followed by material

ease, and by everything that sounds pleasant, yet it is no use. It will prove to be stressful, constricting, wretched and full of tribulation.

“Wealth and progeny, health and strength, power and prestige ... all these become sources of worry, exhaustion, distress and hardship – if Allah’s mercy is withheld. But if Allah opens the doors of His mercy, then the same things are sources of comfort, pleasure, satisfaction, and contentment.

“It is by Allah’s mercy that you feel His mercy. Allah’s mercy always encompasses you, overwhelms you, circumscribes you, but it is your awareness of it that turns it into a mercy. Your hoping to get it, and experience it - that is His mercy. It is your faith in it, and expectations of it in every affair, which is the true mercy. Torture is true torture when you feel you are veiled from it, or you doubt its coming. But it is that kind of torture that a believer never experiences for, *‘None despairs of Allah’s mercy but an unbelieving folk.’*”

8. Imām Razi understood it as “after Him.” That is, who can release after Allah withholds it? (Zamakhshari). Our rendering follows *Jalalayn*, Alusi and others (Au.).

[5] O people, Allah's promise is true; therefore, let not the life of the world delude you, and let not the (great) Deluder¹⁰ delude you concerning Allah.¹¹

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ﴿٥﴾

[6] Indeed, Shaytan is an enemy to you; so treat him as an enemy. He only calls his party¹² so that they may be among the companions of the blaze.

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٦﴾

[7] Those who have disbelieved, for them is a severe chastisement. As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them is forgiveness and a great reward.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٧﴾

Mawdudi writes: “This is to remove the pagan beliefs that there are beings or agencies other than Allah responsible for providing, or for obtaining from Allah, wealth, health, progeny, etc. This has been emphasized in many parts of the Qur’an to release the people from the shame and humiliation of begging at every door and at every shrine.”

9. “He is All-mighty and so can grant what He wills, but is also All-wise, and so grants in accordance with the demands of wisdom” (Mawdudi).

10. Ibn `Abbas has said that the allusion by “the Deluder” is to *Shaytan* (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Everyone agrees that *Shaytan* is the enemy to the humans, but few seem

to live up to their own assertions. Fudayl b. `Iyad used to say to himself, “O liar! O slanderer! Fear Allah. Do not curse *Shaytan* in public while you befriend him in private” (Qur-tubi).

11. “That is, he deludes you concerning Allah to the effect, (e.g.), He does not exist, or, if He exists, He does not take interest in the affairs of the world, or, if He does, it is not people’s guidance or misguidance that interest Him to be sending Messengers, or, if He did send, then, He is too merciful to punish the defaulters” (Mawdudi).

12. Ibn Zayd said that the allusion by “his party” is to those who befriend *Shaytan* or follow him (Ibn Jarir).

[8] Is he, then, for whom the evil of his conduct has been decked out fair, so that he looks at it as good (equal to the rightly guided)?¹³ For, Allah leads astray whomsoever He will, and guides whomsoever He will;¹⁴ so let not your soul waste (itself) in grief over them. Surely, Allah knows well all that they do.

أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَلَا تَذْهَبُ تَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَاتٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[9] Allah it is who sets loose the winds so that they stir up the clouds, then We drive it to a dead land; then We revive thereby the earth after its death. Even so (will be) the resurrection.¹⁵

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَمُسُقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَيِّتٍ فَأُحْيَيْنَاهُ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ ﴿٩﴾

13. Can someone who decides to use his potentials in a manner that defies reason and logic, opts to use the power of choice he is given wrongly, and then, remains determinedly on the course, despite open evidences against what he chooses, be equal, in this life and in the final outcome - to him who follows the guidance when it becomes clear to him? (Shabbir).

“Indeed, Allah created His creation in darkness, then He cast His Nur on them. So, whosever received out of that Nur, found guidance, while whoever missed it, missed. That is why I say that the Pen has dried on Allah’s knowledge” (Ibn Kathir).

14. Ibn Abi Hatim recorded the following *hadith* in reference to this verse:

We have traced the *hadith* to Ahmad and many collections, but took it from Tirmidhi who declared it Hasan, but which Ibn Hibban declared *Sahih*, as in *Tuhfah* (Au.).

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الدَّيْلَمِيِّ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَمْرٍو يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- يَقُولُ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ خَلْقَهُ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ فَأَلْقَى عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نُورِهِ فَمَنْ أَصَابَهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ النُّورِ اهْتَدَى وَمَنْ أَخْطَأَهُ ضَلَّ فَلِذَلِكَ أَقُولُ جَفَّ الْقَلَمُ عَلَى عِلْمِ اللَّهِ

15. Ibn Kathir writes: When Allah (*swt*) will decide to quicken the dead, He will send down rain from below the *‘Arsh* that will cover the whole earth. With that the bodies will begin to grow from within the graves as crops grow. Says a *Sahih hadith* (which can be traced in Bukhari and Muslim):

It reports `Abdullah ibn `Amr as having heard the Prophet say,

[10] Whoever seeks power and glory, (may know that) all power and glory belongs to Allah.¹⁶ Unto Him rises the good word,¹⁷ and good deeds raise it up.¹⁸ As for those who plot evils, for them is a severe chastisement.¹⁹ And it is their plot that is sterile.²⁰

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ
يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ
يَرْفَعُهُ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَكْرُ أُولَئِكَ هُوَ يُبْوَرُ

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عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ-
قَالَ «كُلُّ ابْنِ آدَمَ يَأْكُلُهُ التُّرَابُ إِلَّا عَجَبَ الدَّنْبِ
مِنْهُ خُلِقَ وَفِيهِ يَرْكَبُ»

“The whole of Adam’s sons is decimated by the earth except for the tail bone (coccyx) out of which he is created and out of which he will be recreated” (Ibn Kathir).

The above is Muslim’s version (Au.).

We have earlier pointed out the findings of the embryologist that the first bone to be formed in the fetus is the tail piece of the backbone. Bukhari’s version is as follows:

“There will be a spell of forty between the two blows (of the Trumpet). He (Abu Hurayrah) was asked, ‘Forty days?’ He said, ‘I reject it.’ He was asked, ‘Forty months?’ He said, ‘I reject it.’ He was asked, ‘Forty years?’ He said, ‘I reject it.’ Then he continued, He will send down rain from below the *‘Arsh* that will cover the whole earth and then the bodies will begin to grow from within the

graves as crops grows. There is not a bone in the humans but is decimated except the tail-bone upon which the creations will be raised on the Day of Judgment” (Au.).

While explaining the above *hadith* in Fath, Ibn Hajr points out that according to a version in the collections of Hakim and Abu Ya`la, the word “mustard seed” (khardal) has been used in place of “tail-bone,” which, in the language of the ancients stood for the smallest of matter imaginable, or, in today’s parlance, a sub-atomic particle. The original is as follows:

وَفِي حَدِيثِ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ عِنْدَ الْحَاكِمِ وَأَبِي يَعْلَى قِيلَ
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا عَجَبُ الدَّنْبِ قَالَ مِثْلُ حَبَّةِ خَرْدَلٍ

16. “The immediate allusion is to the chiefs of the Quraysh who thought they were defending their honor and glory, threatened by the message of the Prophet which brought the people to one social and political level without any discrimination. Their age-old prestigious position as leaders of the Arabs was at stake. But

they are being told that their honor and glory was false, based on untrue premises, and therefore, unendurable. True and lasting power and glory lay with Allah alone, the true Dispenser, in this world and in the next” (Mawdudi).

“True honor and glory take root in the heart before they appear in outward forms. It is a reality, which when it takes its pace in the hearts, raises a person from resorting to any means that could lead a man to bending knees before ‘other than Allah.’ It is a reality wherewith a man raises himself above his own carnal self; above fear of the people and above covetousness against the people. Whoever possessed this, cannot be humiliated or humbled by anyone. It is people’s base desires, their covetousness and greed that makes them mean and shorn of self-respect. It is by overcoming these base qualities that a man can achieve honor and glory. It is not gained through pride, arrogance, or oppression of the people, but rather, it is gained through humility before Allah, through His fear, and through thoughts of His presence in open and in secret” (Sayyid).

17. This then is the way to attaining true power and glory: right beliefs accompanied by righteous deeds.

A soul ennobled by moral power, will glide through all hurdles of the Hereafter in complete dignity (Au.).

Mukhariq b. Sulaym reported that once `Abdullah (ibn Mas`ud) addressed them saying,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْمُخَارِقِ بْنِ سُلَيْمٍ ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ ،
عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ ، قَالَ : إِذَا
حَدَّثْتَكُمْ بِحَدِيثٍ أَتَيْتَكُمْ بِتَصْدِيقِ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابِ
اللَّهِ إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا قَالَ : سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ، وَلَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، وَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ ، قَبِضَ عَلَيْهِنَّ
مَلَكٌ فَضَمَّهُنَّ تَحْتَ جَنَاحِهِ وَصَعَدَ بِهِنَّ لَا يَمُرُّ بِهِنَّ
عَلَى جَمْعٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِلَّا اسْتَعْفَرُوا لِقَائِلِهِنَّ حَتَّى
يَجِيءَ بِهِنَّ وَجْهَ الرَّحْمَنِ ، ثُمَّ تَلَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ { إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ
الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ }

“When we narrate a *hadith*, we bring forth a Qur’ānic *ayah* in evidence. When a Muslim says, ‘Glory to Allah and by His Praise: Praise to Allah, there is no deity save Allah, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is Blessed,’ then, an angel takes the words, places them under its wings and rises up to the heavens, so that it does not pass by any group of angels but they seek forgiveness for him who said those words until he presents it before the Rahman.” Then `Abdullah read out this verse” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir adds the following from *Musnad* of Ahmad: Nu`man b. Bashir reports the Prophet,

عَنِ النَّعْمَانِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ مِنْ جَلَالِ اللَّهِ مِنْ تَسْبِيحِهِ وَتَحْمِيدِهِ وَتَكْبِيرِهِ وَتَهْلِيلِهِ يَتَعَاطَفْنَ حَوْلَ الْعَرْشِ لَهُنَّ دَوَائِبُ كَدَوِيٍّ النَّحْلِ يُذَكِّرُونَ بِصَاحِبِهِنَّ أَلَا يُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ لَا يَرَالَ لَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ يُذَكَّرُ بِهِ

“Those who mention ‘Allah’s greatness, His glory, His Praise, His oneness,’ have those around the `Arsh – who have a buzzing like the buzzing of the bees – mention the person who says these words. Would not one of you then then like it that there should always be something by Allah, by which he could be remembered?”

Although only a few words have been specified in the *hadith*, every good word is included in “al-kalim al-tayyib”, such as words of admonition, wisdom, etc. (Razi).

In view of this and other verses of the Qur`an, writes Thanwi, the rule that can be worked out is: testification at the heart’s level is an essential requirement for the initial acceptance of the “al-kalimah al-tayyibah”. Thereafter, righteous deeds are the condition for the fuller acceptance of all the “al-kalimat al-tayyibat.”

And righteous deeds are those, adds Shafi`, which are performed in accordance with the requirements of *Sunnah*.

18. This is how Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah and others understood this verse (Ibn Jarir), wherein “the good word” is Allah’s remembrance, which however are not free to ascend by themselves. It is such deeds as are the demands of Islam, which, when performed, take the good word to Allah, to be stored as those deserving rewards. Hasan and Qatadah added that Allah (*swt*) does not accept good words without good deeds (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

What’s the connection between the previous verse and this one? The answer is that the earlier passage spoke of the source of power, glory and honor (`izzah) which humans strive for, reminding that they belong to Allah alone. How can they be obtained? The answer came next: through good word rising to Allah. But how do good words rise up to Him? It is through good deeds. It is righteous believers who are granted `izzah. Allah identified them elsewhere when He said (63: 8),

وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“For Allah is the `izzah (power, glory, honor), for His Messenger, and for the believers” (Razi, re-structured).

On another plane of meaning, good deeds flow out of good intentions.

[11] Allah created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then He made you in pairs. And no female conceives nor delivers but with His knowledge. And, no one whose life is prolonged, has his life prolonged, nor is his lifespan diminished, but is in a Record.²¹ Surely, that is easy for Allah.

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ
 جَعَلَكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا
 تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُّعْمَرٍ وَلَا
 يُنْقَصُ مِنْ عُمْرِهٖ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتَابٍ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ
 عَلٰى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿١١﴾

By the use of one word “makr”, evil intention was identified. With this intention as the fount, all deeds that flow out are foul. Hence “yamkuruna al-sayyi’at” (they plot evil deeds) - Au.

19. The allusion is to those who take active interest in obfuscating the message of Islam (Au.).

20. Asad explains, “It appears that in this context.. both the noun makr (lit., ‘a scheme’, or ‘scheming’, or ‘plotting’) and the verb yamkurun (lit., “they scheme” or ‘plot’) have the connotation of ‘devising false [or ‘fallacious’] arguments’ against something that is true. Since the preceding passage refers to God’s creativeness and, in particular, to His power to create life and resurrect the dead (verse 9), the ‘evil deeds’ spoken of above are, presumably, specious arguments meant to ‘disprove” the announcement of resurrection.”

21. The meaning that Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Zayd attributed to the verse is that no one reaches his old age, nor

does another has his original age diminished, but is already recorded in a Book. In simpler words, everyone attains the lifespan allotted to him: whether it is someone who attains old age (to complete his term), or it is someone who dies young (having attained the decreed term) – both attain the lifespan decreed for them, neither one enjoying an increase nor the other suffering decrease.

A minor opinion is that lifespan can be increased or decreased. But the opinion of Ibn `Abbas is nearer to being correct (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

With due respect to the above, we might point out that there are a few reports that apparently seem to be declaring increase or decrease in lifespan as possible. One is in Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Da’ud. It says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ
 اللّٰهِ - صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَقُولُ « مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ
 يُبَسِّطَ لَهُ فِي رِزْقِهِ ، وَأَنْ يُنْسَأَ لَهُ فِي آثَرِهِ ، فَلْيَصِلْ
 رَحْمَتَهُ »

“Whoever wishes that his provision be increased and his lifespan lengthened may extend help to his kinsfolk” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

This alternative interpretation has been seconded by a few other scholars, as in Ibn Hajr’s *Fat-h*. In fact, there is a *hadith* in Ahmad reported by `A’isha of trustworthy status, to this effect. It says,

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَهَا إِنَّهُ مَنْ أُعْطِيَ حَظَّهُ مِنَ الرَّفْقِ فَقَدْ أُعْطِيَ حَظَّهُ مِنْ خَيْرِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَصَلَةُ الرَّحِمِ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَحُسْنُ الْجَوَارِ يَغْمُرَانِ الدِّيَارَ وَيَرِيدَانِ فِي الْأَعْمَارِ

The Prophet (*saws*) told `A’isha, “Surely, he who was given kindness was given a good share of this life as well as of the Hereafter. And, doing good to the kin, good manners and good behavior towards the neighbor, build the world (on healthy lines), and cause increase in lifespan.”

But this contradicts with some *ahadith*, one of which – as in Muslim – says,

عَنْ حَدِيثَةِ بِنِ أَسِيدٍ يَبْلُغُ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ « يَدْخُلُ الْمَلَكُ عَلَى النَّطْفَةِ بَعْدَ مَا تَسْتَقِرُّ فِي الرَّحِمِ بِأَرْبَعِينَ أَوْ حَمْسَةَ وَأَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَشَقِيٌّ أَوْ سَعِيدٌ فَيُكْتَبَانِ فَيَقُولُ أَيُّ رَبِّ أَدَكَّرَ أَوْ أُثْنَى فَيُكْتَبَانِ وَيُكْتَبُ عَمَلُهُ وَأَثَرُهُ وَأَجَلُهُ وَرِزْقُهُ ثُمَّ تُطَوَّى الصُّحُفُ فَلَا يَزَادُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَنْقُصُ ».

Hudhayfah b. Asid reported the Prophet (*saws*) as having said, “The angel enters upon the fetus forty or forty five days after it is settled in the womb and asks, ‘My Lord, blessed or wretched?’ One of them is decreed. Then he asks, ‘My Lord, male or female?’ One of them is decreed. Similarly his deeds, his lifespan, his death, his provision, are all written down. Then the scrolls are rolled back, so that nothing is added and nothing decreased” (Alusi, Shawkani).

A possible reconciliation is that in particular reference to lifespan, there could be two decrees. Say one of 100 years, while the other of 80, known only to Allah alone, and not even to the Angel of Death. Where no two options are decreed, it is known as “the irrevocable decree” (*Qada’ al-mubram*) while one which goes with options, is known as a “conditional decree” (*Qada’ al-mu`allaq*). In case of a man’s age, it can be said that the decree goes something like this: if he performs certain righteous deeds, he is allowed to attain his 100 years; if he fails, he dies at 80. Obviously, the above Qur’anic verse is speaking of this lifespan, known to Allah alone, in which there can be no increase or decrease; but what the angel knows

can undergo increase or decrease, depending on which of the two he has in his record.

Alusi adds that statements of the Prophet such as, in reference to Tarawih Prayers, “I was afraid it would be declared obligatory on you,” or his fear of Dajjal (although he knew he will appear at the end of the world: Au.), also lend credence to this theory. It can be supported by another Qur’ānic verse which says (13: 39),

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

“Allah erases what He will and confirms. And with Him is the Umm al-Kitab (Mother of the Book, [Lawh al-Mahfuz – the Preserved Tablet]).”

Another possible interpretation is that by increase in lifespan the allusion is to “*barakah*” in time, so that a man is able to achieve within his stipulated time what another could in longer years.

Also see note 77 under *Surah al-Ra’d* for further discussion, and perhaps the final word.

In any case, writes Mawdudi, to say, on the basis of the statistics that infant mortality has been reduced, or that the average lifespan has been extended, etc., is incorrect. Everything falls under Allah’s decree.

As far as science is concerned, it has not been able to discover why the body should age although cells continue their activities throughout life. In other words, the cells of the young and old work as vigorously. Yet, one, the young, is physically vigorous, while the other, weak. In fact, the cells do not seem even to be immediately aware of the body’s death. If taken off a warm body, it continues to multiply in cultures. (Culturing is a process in which living cells are taken from a body and kept in a solution of nutrients under certain conditions. In this situation the cells replicate a certain number of times. Having completed their cycle of replication, lasting about 45 to 50 replications, the dead man’s cells die off, just as a living body’s cell would when cultured) - Au.

[12] *And not alike are the two masses of water:*²² *this one is sweet, potable, and pleasant to drink, while the other is salty, bitter; yet from each you partake tender flesh and extract ornaments that you wear.*²³ *And you see the ships plough therein in search of His bounty, haply that you may give thanks.*

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ
سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِنْ كُلِّ
تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً
تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَآخِرَ لِيَتَّبِعُوا
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

22. “Bahr” of the text is not necessarily for an ocean. It is for any large mass of water. So, the comparison could be either between two large masses of water: one, smaller, containing sweet water, and the other, larger with bitter water. Or the comparison could be between the sea and the river. But this supposition offers a difficulty. Normally pearls are not extracted from rivers. The answer is that this is a misconception. Pearls are indeed occasionally extracted from rivers. Alusi reports that precious stones are picked up after floods, but discounts that they can be “extracted” (Au.). Yusuf Ali comments on extraction from the sea and rivers: “Such as pearls and coral from the sea, and such delicately tinted stones as the Aqiq (carnelian), the agate, the goldstone, or other varieties of quartz pebbles found in river-beds, and considered as gems. Many such are found in the Ken river in Banda District (in India). Some river sands also yield minute quanti-

ties of gold. In large navigable rivers and big Lakes like those of North America, as well as in the sea, there are highways for shipping and commerce.”

Qurtubi notes that springs of sweet water can be found right in the middle of the oceans, but he sees the possibility that the allusion by extraction of pearls could be only to one, i.e., the ocean, and cites another example from the Qur’an itself (ref. 28: 73); the main point being not “the place of extraction” but the “fact of extraction” (Alusi).

Nevertheless, in addition to these discussions, one may not overlook the allegorical allusion that is there to believers and non-believers. Although both are of some profit to others of the creations, but sweet water (believer) is after all sweet water. The unbeliever may relinquish pearls, (of course not without so much efforts after him), but life is unthinkable without sweet water.

Not equal are the two: the bitter and the sweet water, the unbeliever and the believer (with points from Razi and Alusi).

For the extraction of pearls from sea water, see *Surah* al-Rahman (no. 55), note number 17.

23. To refer to ornaments as “libs” (something that is worn), connotes that whatever is put on the body is, technically, of the category of “libas.” Accordingly, Ibn Sirin says he asked ‘Ubaydah whether using silken sheets for beds was counted as “libs” and he answered, “Yes” (Qurtubi).

For someone who would wish to attempt similar paraphrasing of the whole of the Qur’ān (for the common people’s understanding), we offer as sample Thanwi’s rendering of the first eight verses along with his parenthetical remarks, slightly modified:

“All praise to Allah, Originator of the heavens and the earth, who appointed angels as messengers (who have wings: twos, threes and fours. (However, He is not bound to threes and fours but) rather adds to the creation as He will (so that some of them have hundreds of wings). Surely, Allah has power over all things. (He has such unassailable power that) whatsoever of mercy Allah opens for the people (such as rains, crops, etc.), has no

withholder thereof; and what He withholds has no releaser of it thereafter. (He alone can do it because) He is the All-mighty, the All-wise. O people (just as He is All-mighty, He is also All-merciful. His bestowals are uncountable; therefore), recall Allah’s blessings upon you (consequently, thank Him, and one way of expressing thanks is to have faith in Him as One God; think), is there a creator other than Allah to provide you out of heaven and earth? There is no deity save He (so worship Him alone). Where then are you being diverted? But if they cry lies to you (then, worry not O Muhammad), for Messengers before you were also cried lies to. (Secondly, you must not forget that) all affairs are returned to Allah (He will suitably deal with them, why should you over-vex yourself now?) O people, Allah’s promise (of the affairs returning to Him) is true; (so) it should not happen that the life of the world deludes you, and let not the (great) Deluder (Satan) delude you concerning Allah (for you to assume that ‘if I am returned to my Lord, I shall have good things’). Indeed, *Shaytan* is an enemy to you; so treat him as an enemy. He only calls his party so that they may be among the companions of the blaze. Those who (fell into delusions

[13] He makes the night enter into the day and the day enter into the night; and He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running to an appointed term. This your Allah is your Lord; His is the Kingdom. As for those you call upon other than Him, they own not so much as the husk of a date-stone.²⁴

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي
اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلًّا يَجْرِي
لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ
وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْ
قِطْمِيرٍ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] If you invoke them, they do not hear your invocation, and, even if they heard, they cannot respond to you. And, on the Day of Standing they will disown your association (of them with Allah);²⁵ and none can inform you (O Prophet) like Him who is All-aware.

إِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ وَلَوْ
سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ
﴿١٤﴾

and) disbelieved, for them is a severe chastisement. As for those who (did not fall prey to him and so) believed and did righteous deeds, for them is forgiveness (for the errors they committed) and a great reward (for their good deeds. Now, when the unbeliever will be chastised, and the believer rewarded, then, in terms of the final outcome) is he for whom the evil of his conduct has been decked out fair, so that he looks upon it as good (equal to the rightly guided)? (As for how any intelligent man can treat evil as good, the answer is) Allah leads astray whomsoever He will (by making him unreasonable), and guides whomsoever He will (by leaving in tact his power of reasoning). So, (since it is by Allah's will that they are guided or misguided) let not

your soul waste (itself, O Muhammad) in grief over them. Allah surely knows well all that they do (and will deal with them suitably when they return to Him)."

24. As one splits a date, he finds thin fibrous filament that separates the seed from the pulp. This is qitmir. No human could have thought of using this word. No one ever pays attention to it while splitting a date - the mind is preoccupied with the fruit's flesh (Au.).

25. "The Qur'an states in many places that all the false objects of worship - whether saints, angels, relics, fetishes, or deified forces of nature - will 'bear witness' against their one-time worshippers on Resurrection Day, and will 'disown' them." (Asad).

[15] O people! You are the ones that are in need of Allah, while Allah is the Self-sufficient, the Praiseworthy.²⁶

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] If He will, He can take you away and bring about a new creation.

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] And that is not at all hard upon Allah.

وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿١٧﴾

[18] And no bearer of burden shall carry the burden of another,²⁷ and if a heavily laden soul should call another to her burden, nothing of it will be borne, even though he be near of kin.²⁸ But you can warn only those who fear their Lord in the Unseen and perform the Prayer. And whosoever purified himself,²⁹ purifies for the sake of his own soul, and to Allah is the journey's end.

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَإِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ جِهْلِهَا لَا يَحْمِلَنَّ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَمَنْ تَرَكَىٰ فإِذَا يَتَرَكَىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

[19] Not equal are the blind and the seeing.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] Nor the darknesses and the light.

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] Nor the shade and the torrid heat.

وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ ﴿٢١﴾

26. Allah is the Self-sufficient, the Praiseworthy: If someone construes the idea that Allah is “Al-Ghaniyy” in the material sense, then the attribute “Al-Hamid” offers the correction that Allah is Praiseworthy by Himself, independent of praise. If the creations have been asked to chant His praises, it is to establish His greatness and love in their hearts and minds (Au.).

27. This does not contradict the verse which says (29: 13),

{وَلْيَحْمِلْنَ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَتَقَالًا مَع أَثْقَالِهِمْ} [العنكبوت: ١٣]

“They shall surely carry their own loads, and loads besides their own loads” because, the allusion in this verse is to the sin of misleading others (Alusi).

28. (We have a *hadith* of *Sahih* status coming from the Prophet directly on this topic: Au.). It has been preserved in Tirmidhi, Abu Da’ud, Sa’id b. Mansur, Nasa’i, Ibn Marduwayh and Bayhaqi in his *Sunan*. It is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي رِمْتَةَ قَالَ انْطَلَقْتُ مَعَ أَبِي نَحْوَ النَّبِيِّ - صَلَّى
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
 وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ لِأَبِي « ابْنُكَ هَذَا ». قَالَ إِي وَرَبِّ
 الْكَعْبَةِ قَالَ « حَقًّا ». قَالَ أَشْهَدُ بِهِ. قَالَ فَتَبَسَّمَ
 رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - ضَاحِكًا مِنْ
 ثَبْتِ شَبَهِي فِي أَبِي وَمِنْ حَلْفِ أَبِي عَلَيَّ. ثُمَّ قَالَ «
 أَمَا إِنَّهُ لَا يَجِيئُ عَلَيْكَ وَلَا تَجِيئُ عَلَيْهِ ». وَقَرَأَ رَسُولُ
 اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - (وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ
 الْأُخْرَى)

Abu Rimthah reports: “I was in the company of my father as we walked up to the Prophet. The Prophet asked my father: ‘Is this your son?’ He replied, ‘Yes, by the Lord of the Ka`bah. It is the truth, I testify.’ The Prophet smiled at my likeness with my father, and at my father’s swearing. Then he added, ‘Well, you will not be held responsible for any of his misdeed, nor he for any of your misdeed.’ Then he recited this verse, ‘And no bearer of burden will carry the burden of another’” (Shawkani).

Ikrimah commented that a father will go to his son, remind him of his past good deeds and then request him for a single good deed or take away a single evil deed from him in order to lighten his burden. But the son will refuse. He will try his wife,

his friends, and others, but no one will be ready to offer any relief, on grounds that although he was seeking something pretty simple, they feared the same thing as he feared (Qurtubi).

The above report is in Ibn Abi Hatim; as Allah (*swt*) said (80: 35-37),

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ، وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ، وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ،
 لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ

“On the Day when man will flee from his brother; his mother and father; his wife and children; for every man that day will be an affair that will occupy him (wholly)”
 - Ibn Kathir.

Asad adds: “Thus, any transfer of moral responsibility from one person to another is shown to be impossible. Whereas the first part of the above statement implies a negation of the Christian doctrine of ‘original sin’ with which mankind is supposedly burdened, the second part categorically refutes the doctrine of the ‘vicarious atonement’ of that sin by Jesus Christ.”

29. That is, he who purified himself of the filth of disbelief, Association, worship of other than Allah, and lived a righteous life (Au.).

[22] And not equal are the living and the dead.³⁰ Allah makes to hear whomsoever He will; you are not going to make hear those who are in the graves.³¹

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Surely, you are no more than a warner.

إِنَّ أَنْتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

30. This is a comparison between a believer and an unbeliever at the spiritual level (Ibn Jarir).

“The likeness of the two groups is like the blind and the deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in likeness? Will you not receive admonition?” – Ibn Kathir.

Undeniably, spiritual qualities have their effects. We find Qatadah saying, as Ibn Jarir notes, “A believer is alive: alive of sight, alive of intention, alive in deeds. In contrast, an unbeliever is dead: dead of sight, dead of heart and dead in deeds.”

Sayyid adds: “Not equal are the blind and the seeing; nor the dark-nesses and the light; nor the shade and the torrid heat; and not equal are the living and the dead: There is commonality between the natures of disbelief and of blindness, darkness, heat and death; as there is commonality between the natures of faith and light, sight, shade and life.

The *ayah* is in the same vein as (6: 122),

{ أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأُحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ } [الأنعام: ١٢٢]

“What? Can one who was dead, then We gave him life and appointed a Light whereby he strides among the people, be like he who is in darkneses out of which he cannot emerge? Thus We have decked out fair for the unbelievers what they do.”

“Faith is light: it is light in the heart, light in limbs, and light in senses and feelings. It is a light that shows the truth of the things, values, and events, and how they are related. A believer sees with the help of this light – Allah’s own light – and thus sees the truth of the things and knows how to interact with them so that he is not obfuscated on the way, nor staggers as he advances (toward his goal).

Or (11: 24),

{ مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَى وَالْأَصْمَى وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ } [هود: ٢٤]

[24] We have indeed sent you with the truth, a bearer of glad tiding and a warner. And there has not been an Ummah but a warner has been among them.³²

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

“Faith is sight that sees. It experiences the true seeing, neither loosened nor disjointed. It leads its master on to a bright path, endowed with confidence and sense of satisfaction.

“Faith is a deep shade under which the soul finds comfort, and the heart its contentment. It is the shade from which doubts, skepticism and perplexity have departed.

“And faith is life: life of the heart and feelings; life in the objectives and directions; as it is also the name of constructive activities, fruitful, well-aimed, without any dullness or cooling of passions, neither any indulgence nor wastefulness.

“Disbelief on the other hand is blindness: blindness in the heart, blindness from seeing the evidences of truth, blindness from the ability to see the truth, and the true relationships, truth in values, in men, in events and in things in general.

“Disbelief is darkness - indeed, dark-nesses. When people are distanced from the light of faith, they fall into the pits of darknesses of a variety of

kinds that prevent them from seeing the reality of great many things around them.

“Disbelief is intensive heat. It enflames the heart with the flames of perplexity, anxiety and instability; and lack of sense of surety with regard to activities and ultimate purposes. It leads directly to the flames of Hellfire, to the scorching heat of the chastisement.

“Disbelief is death: deadness of the conscience. It is severance from the sources of true life and severance from the path that leads to the ultimate purposes. It results in the inability to do the right things and to respond to those that are the sources of Truth.”

31. That is, they are spiritually as dead as those in the grave (Qurtubi).

32. If it is asked, writes Zamakhshari, has there been any warner between (the five to six hundred) years that elapsed between `Isa (*asws*) and our Prophet?, the answer is, so long as traces of a previous Prophet's warn-ings are present in a people, one can

[25] And if they give you the lie, then those who were before them also gave the lie; messengers came to them with clear signs, with Scriptures and the illuminating Book.

وَإِنْ يَكْذِبُواكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمِ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Then I seized those who disbelieved, so how (terrible) was My disapproval!

ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Have you not considered that Allah sends down out of heaven water? We brought out therewith fruits of diverse hues. And in the mountains are tracks³³ white and red; their colors of diverse shades, and (other mountains) raven dark.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَعَرَايِبُ سُودٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And, of the people, beasts and cattle (too) there are various hues.³⁴ Such is (Allah's creation). Indeed, from among His slaves, it is scholars who (truly) fear Allah.³⁵ Verily, Allah is All-mighty, All-forgiving.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

say they have had their warner. (What Zamakhshari meant is, so long as the Message of a previous Prophet remains uncorrupted amongst a people, it can be said that they were not without a warner: Au.).

uncorrupted. It is logically not necessary that a new Prophet should be raised in every land, among every generation of people.”

For a detailed discussion of this issue one might refer to *Surah Yunus*, note 76. We reproduce its summary here: “Two points may be noted in this connection. First, a single Prophet is enough for any land – beyond his own - to which his message reaches. Second, no new Prophet need be raised so long as the message of a previous Prophet remains in them,

33. That is, narrow passes; alternatively, streaks, as a streak in the sky (from Lane’s Lexicon).

34. Yusuf Ali displays depth of his learning: “Everyone can see how Allah’s artistry produces from rain the wonderful variety of crops and fruits: golden, green, red, yellow, and showing all the most beautiful tints we can think of. And each undergoes in nature the gradual shading off in its

transformation from the raw stage to the stage of maturity.

“These wonderful colours and shades of colours are to be found not only in crops but in rocks and mineral products. There are the white veins of marble and quartz or of chalk, the red laterite, the blue basaltic rocks, the ink-black flints, and all the variety, shade, and gradation of colours. Speaking of mountains, we think of their ‘azure hue’ from a distance, due to atmospheric effects, and these atmospheric effects lead our thoughts to the glories of clouds, sunsets, the zodiacal light, the aurora borealis, and all kinds of Nature’s gorgeous pageantry.

“In the physical shapes of human and animal life, also, we see variations in shades and gradations of colours of all kinds. But these variations and gradations, marvellous though they be, are as nothing compared with the variations and differences in the inner or spiritual world.”

With a point from Shabbir, we might add the following: Such then are the varieties in the creation of Allah. How then can you, O Prophet, wish that all people become one variety: those devoted wholeheartedly to Allah? Indeed, it is only the Gnostics, the true scholars of Qur’an and *Sun-*

nah, who know Allah by His Attributes, who truly fear Allah.

35. The translation reflects the understanding of Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir. The latter remarks that it is scholars alone who truly understand Allah’s Names and Attributes, and hence it is they alone who fear Him in the true sense of the word. Ibn Mas`ud has said,

لَيْسَ الْعِلْمُ بِكَثْرَةِ الْحَدِيثِ ، وَلَكِنَّ الْعِلْمَ عَنْ كَثْرَةِ
الْحَشْيَةِ

“Knowledge is not the name of excessive narratives but rather that of excessive fear of Allah” (Ibn Kathir).

Rabi` b. Anas has remarked, “He who does not fear Allah, is not a scholar.” Sa`d b. Ibrahim was asked about the leading scholar of Madinah. He replied, “He who feared (Allah) most” (Shafi’).

When `Ali ibn Abi Talib was asked about who a true scholar was, he replied,

إِنَّ الْفَقِيهَ حَقَّ الْفَقِيهِ مَنْ لَمْ يَقْبِطِ النَّاسَ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ
اللَّهِ، وَلَمْ يُرْجِصْ لَهُمْ فِي مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ، وَلَمْ يُؤْمَسِّتْهُمْ مِنْ
عَذَابِ اللَّهِ، وَلَمْ يَدْعِ الْقُرْآنَ رَغْبَةً عَنْهُ إِلَى عَيْبِهِ؛ إِنَّهُ لَا
خَيْرَ فِي عِبَادَةٍ لَا عِلْمَ فِيهَا، وَلَا عِلْمَ لَا فِئَةَ فِيهِ، وَلَا
قِرَاءَةَ لَا تَدَبَّرُ فِيهَا

“A truly knowledgeable one is he who does not despair the people

[29] Those who recite the Book of Allah, offer the Prayers (correctly and assiduously), and expend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly,³⁶ hope for a bargain which will never fail.³⁷

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً
يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّنْ تَبُورَ ﴿٢٩﴾

of Allah's mercy, who does not make it easy for them to disobey Allah, who does not make them feel secure against His chastisement, who does not abandon the Qur'ān, turning away from it, inclined to other than it. Surely, there is no good in devotion devoid of knowledge, no knowledge which lacks understanding, and no recitation without contemplation" (Qurtubi).

And Ibn Abi Hayyan al-Taymi has reported from someone, that of scholars there are three kinds:

- (a) knowledgeable of Allah and knowledgeable of His commands;
- (b) knowledgeable of Allah, but not knowledgeable of His commands; and,
- (c) knowledgeable of Allah's commands but not knowledgeable of Allah.

Of the three, it is only the first kind, who is a true scholar. It is he who truly fears Him (Ibn Kathir).

Mufti Shafi` notes from Abu Hayyan on the authority of Ibn `Atiyyah that the meaning that the *ayah* lends is not that none other than scholars fear Allah, but rather, the emphasis by the "inna" of the text is to stress the point that it is the main characteristic of scholars that they fear Allah; which does not mean a non-scholar cannot share this characteristic.

From Thanwi once again we have a wise remark: The explanation about why some scholars are found lacking "khashiyyah" is that if their knowledge is of the doctrinal nature, then their fear is also of the doctrinal nature, but if it is related to the inner condition (hal: spiritual state), then their fear is also of the same type (hence vibrant and visible).

36. It is recommended that if the deeds are obligatory, they should be carried out in the open. Prayers for example, are followed after announcement from the minarets. *Zakah* should also be given in open.

[30] So that He may pay them their wages in full, and increase upon them out of His bounty, indeed He is All-forgiving, All-appreciative.

لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ
عَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] And that which We have revealed to you of the Book is the Truth, confirming that which was before it, surely Allah is, with respect to His servants, well acquainted, fully observant.

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ
الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ
لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] Then We gave the Book in inheritance to such of Our servants as We chose. Of them are some who wrong their own souls, of them some who are on the middle course, while some who are, by Allah's leave, forerunners in good (works).³⁸ That is the great bounty.

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ
مُتَّقِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ يُأْتِن
اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٣٢﴾

This encourages others to follow the example. Supererogatory acts on the other hand, are special deeds. And special deeds earn special status in the sight of the people. This can corrupt the intention which should be none other than earning Allah's good pleasure. Therefore, they should be performed in secret (with some modification from Shafi').

37. "They hope," because one can never be sure that his deeds have met the conditions of acceptance. Yet "it is a bargain" which has Allah's promise that it "never fails," as against worldly trade which carries the possibilities both of profit as well as of loss. It will never fail because, as Shafi' puts it, "fastening good hope on Allah" should pay in the end, even

if the deeds fail the acceptance test. Chances of total failure are further reduced in view of the words that follow, "So that He may pay them their wages in full, and increase upon them out of His bounty, indeed He is All-forgiving, All-appreciative" (Au.).

38. Ka'b al-Ahbar is severally reported as having said that the allusion by the words, "Of them are some who wrong their own souls, and of them some on the middle course, while some who are, by Allah's leave, forerunners in good (works)," is entirely to the followers of the Prophet, (who inherited the Book from previous nations), and whose all three classes mentioned here will be (ultimately) in Paradise. Abu Darda' also seems

to have believed that the allusion by those who wrong themselves is to the sinners of this *Ummah*. They will all be (ultimately: Shabbir) in Paradise (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

It can be added in explanation of the three categories that those who wrong themselves are those who do not record well in terms of doing what they are commanded but rather commit some of the forbidden. Those in the middle are those who do not fall short of the commandments, shun the forbidden totally, but who might commit some of the undesirable things (*Makruh*) or fall short in some of the desirable ones (*mustahabb*). In complete contrast are the outrunners who not merely attempt what they are commanded to do, but also attempt those deeds that are desirable (*mustahabb*). They shun the forbidden as well as the undesirable (*Makruh*). In fact, they will rather forbid unto themselves some of the permissible (*mubahat*), out of fear of falling into the forbidden, or because of preoccupation with religious affairs: Shafi` – Ibn Kathir.

On the other hand `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, `Abdullah in `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Mujahid, Hasan and Qatadah believed that of the three

kinds, the allusion by those who transgresses their own souls, is to the hypocrites who will enter Hellfire, while the other two classes of this *Ummah* will enter Paradise. In evidence they pointed to the following verse (56: 8-11)

وَكُنتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً. فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ. وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ. وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ. أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ.

“And you will be three groups: Then the people of the Right hand side - and what about the people of the Right hand side! And the people of the Left hand side - and what about the people of the Left hand side! As for the outrunners, they are outrunners. They are the ones brought nigh.” (Ibn Jarir).

The opinion that prevailed in this regard, however, is the one which has been expressed in the first paragraph above (Shawkani, Shafi` and others). That is, as expressed by Ka`b al-Ahbar (Au.).

We have (an interesting: Au.) report (in Hakim, Tabarani, and Ibn Marduwayh: Shawkani) coming through `Uqbah b. Suhban. He said he asked `A'isha about this verse. She said, “As for the forerunners, they are those who died during the Prophet’s life and those whom he gave the good tiding of Paradise. As regards those

on the middle course, the allusion is to those who followed the forerunners in close imitation. As for those who wronged themselves, well, they are people like us and those who followed us. And, all will be in Paradise.”

“So,” said the narrator, “note how she placed herself among us common folk (although she was of the “sabiqun”) - Ibn Kathir, Shawkani.

Qurtubi has a long list of opinions concerning the three categories mentioned here which he takes from Thu`alibi's commentary:

فقال سهل بن عبد الله : السابق العالم والمقتصد المتعلم والظالم الجاهل وقال ذو النون المصري : الظالم الذاكِر الله بلسانه فقط والمقتصد الذاكِر بقلبه والسابق الذي لا ينساه وقال الأنطاكي : الظالم صاحب الأقوال والمقتصد صاحب الأفعال والسابق صاحب الأحوال وقال ابن عطاء : الظالم الذي يحب الله من أجل الدنيا والمقتصد الذي يحبه من أجل العقبى والسابق الذي أسقط مراده بمراد الحق وقيل : الظالم الذي يعبد الله خوفا من النار والمقتصد الذي يعبد الله طمعا في الجنة والسابق الذي يعبد الله لوجهه لا لسبب وقيل : الظالم الزاهد في الدنيا لأنه ظلم نفسه فترك لها حظا وهي المعرفة والمحبة والمقتصد العارف والسابق المحب وقيل : الظالم الذي يمزج عند البلاء والمقتصد الصابر على البلاء والسابق المتلذذ بالبلاء وقيل : الظالم الذي يعبد الله على الغفلة والعادة والمقتصد الذي يعبد على الرغبة والرهبة والسابق الذي يعبد على الهيبة وقيل : الظالم الذي أعطي فمغ والمقتصد الذي أعطي فبذل والسابق الذي منع فشكر وآثر يورى أن عابدين التقيا فقال :

كيف حال إخوانكم بالبصرة ؟ قال : بخير إن أعطوا شكروا وإن منعوا صبروا فقال : هذه حالة الكلاب عندنا ببلخ ! عبادنا إن منعوا شكروا وإن أعطوا آثروا وقيل : الظالم من استغنى بماله والمقتصد من استغنى بدينه والسابق من استغنى بربه وقيل : الظالم التالي للقرآن ولا يعمل به والمقتصد التالي للقرآن ويعمل به والسابق القارئ للقرآن العالم به والعمل به وقيل : الظالم الذي يحب نفسه والمقتصد الذي يحب دينه والسابق الذي يحب ربه وقيل : الظالم الذي ينتصف ولا ينتصف والمقتصد الذي ينتصف وينصف والسابق الذي ينتصف ولا ينتصف

Sahl b. `Abdullah said that the allusion by the term “zalim” is to the ignorant, by “muqtasid”, to the seeker of knowledge, and by “sabiq” to the scholar.

Dhun Nun al-Misri said, “Zalim” is someone who remembers Allah merely with his tongue, “muqtasid” is he who remembers with his heart, and “sabiq” is someone who never forgets Him.

Al-Antaki said, “Zalim” is the man of words, the “muqtasid,” man of deeds, and “sabiq,” the man of states.

Ibn `Ata' said, “Zalim” is one who loves Allah for the sake of this world, “muqtasid” who remembers Him for the sake of the Hereafter, and “sabiq” someone who trampled upon his own objectives (of life) in search of the

Grand Objective – (i.e. Allah).

It has also been said that “Zalim” is someone who worships Allah out of fear of the Fire, “*muqtasid*,” he who worships Him yearning for Paradise, and “sabiq,” he who worships Him for His pleasure, and for no other reason.

It has also been said that, “Zalim” is he who gave up the world because he wronged himself by abandoning its due, namely, knowledge and love, “*muqtasid*” is the Gnostic, and “sabiq” is the Lover.

Another opinion has been that, “Zalim” is one who cries out in tribulations, “*muqtasid*,” he who is patient when facing tribulations, and “sabiq” who draws pleasure out of them.

It has also been thought that “Zalim” is someone whose devotions are carried out in heedlessness, out of habit, “*muqtasid*,” he who is devoted because of inclination (to Him), and “sabiq,” he who worships out of awe.

It has also been said that “Zalim” is one who, when given, withheld it, “*muqtasid*,” he who, when given, gave out, and “sabiq,” he from whom it was withheld and

he rendered thanks.

It is said that two devotees met. One of them asked the other, “How are our brothers in Basra?” He replied, “Very well: if they are given they render thanks, but if denied, they are patient.” The first one remarked, “This is the way of the dogs with us in Balkh. As for our devotees, if (provision) is denied they render thanks, but if given, they pass it on to others.”

It is also said that “Zalim” is someone who seeks sufficiency through wealth, “*muqtasid*,” is he who attains it on the strength of his religion, and “sabiq” someone who attains it by the Power of his Lord.

It is also said that “Zalim” is one who reads the Qur’ān but does not live by it, “*muqtasid*,” is he who reads it and lives by it, and “sabiq,” someone who reads it, undertands it, and lives by it.

It was also said that “Zalim” is a man who loves himself, “*muqtasid*,” he who loves his religion, and “sabiq,” he who loves his Lord.

It is also said that “Zalim” is someone who seeks justice but

[33] Gardens of Eternity they shall enter into, (where) they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls,³⁹ and their apparel there will be of silk.⁴⁰

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُحَلِّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ
أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسَهُمْ فِيهَا
حَرِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

does not render justice, “*muqtasid*,” he who seeks justice and renders justice, and “*sabiq*,” he who renders justice but does not seek justice.

We have quoted at length to impress upon our readers the spirit of Islam that prevailed in the previous generations of Islam. It is useless to look for an equivalent of above in any religious literature (Au.).

39. This has been stressed in the *hadith* also. One in Muslim says, Abu Hazim said:

عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ قَالَ كُنْتُ خَلْفَ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَضَّأُ
لِلصَّلَاةِ فَكَانَ يَمُدُّ يَدَهُ حَتَّى تَبْلُغَ إِبْطَهُ فَعُلْتُ لَهُ يَا
أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ مَا هَذَا الْوُضُوءُ فَقَالَ يَا بَنِي فَرُوحٍ أَأَنْتُمْ هَا
هُنَا لَوْ عَلِمْتُ أَنَّكُمْ هَا هُنَا مَا تَوَضَّأْتُ هَذَا الْوُضُوءَ
سَمِعْتُ خَلِيلِي - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَقُولُ « تَبْلُغُ
الْحُلِيَّةُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ حَيْثُ يَبْلُغُ الْوُضُوءُ ».

I was behind Abu Hurayrah while he was attempting abLūtion. He would stretch his hand until it reached his armpit. I asked, “O Abu Hurayrah, what kind of abLūtion is this?” He answered,

“O people of the Banu Farrukh (a tribe), are you here? Had I known you were here I would not have made this kind of abLūtion. I have heard my friend say, ‘A believer’s ornaments will reach up to where abLūtion (water) reaches.’” (Banu Farrukh were new in Islam, and had Abu Hurayrah known the presence of one of them, he would have made the standard kind of abLūtion, in order to impress on the observers its articles of obligatory nature: Au.).

40. A *hadith* of Bukhari says,

عَنْ ثَابِتٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ الزُّبَيْرِ يَخْطُبُ يَقُولُ قَالَ
مُحَمَّدٌ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - « مَنْ لَبَسَ الْحَرِيرَ
فِي الدُّنْيَا لَمْ يَلْبَسْهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ ».

Zayd b. Thabit says he heard Ibn Zubayr say in a sermon, “I heard the Prophet (*saws*) say, ‘He who wore silk in this world will not wear it in the Hereafter.’”

(Ibn Kathir presents shorter versions of both the *ahadith* above).

Ibn Abi Hatim has a narrative which

[34] And they will say, '(All) praise to Allah who removed from us all grief.⁴¹ Surely our Lord is All-forgiving, All-appreciative.

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ
إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

reports Abu Umamah as saying that while describing the dwellers of Paradise and the ornaments they will wear, the Prophet said,

مُسَوَّرُونَ بِالذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ مُكَلَّلَةٌ بِالذَّرِّ وَعَلَيْهِمْ
أَكَالِيلٌ مِنْ ذَرٍّ وَيَأْقُوتُ مُتَوَاصِلَةً وَعَلَيْهِمْ تَاجٌ كَتَّاجِ
الْمُلُوكِ سَبَابِ جُزْدٍ مُزْدٍ مَكْحُولُونَ

“They will be adorned with gold and silver bangles embossed with pearls. They will have garlands on, set with peals and rubies. And they will have crowns like the crowns of kings: with no hair (in the pubic area), beardless, with kohl in their eyes” – Ibn Kathir.

41. There have been several interpretations with reference to the textual “hazn” (grief), such as: the grief of loss of worldly comforts, grief of death, several kinds of grief that a man will undergo from the time of Resurrection until final entry into Paradise, etc., which all seem to be correct to Ibn Jarir since an all-inclusive meaning seems to have been intended. Nevertheless, Hasan’s remark, which he made while discussing another verse, is worth reproducing. He said,

عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ الْمُخْتَارِ، عَنِ الْحَسَنِ، فِي قَوْلِهِ تَعَالَى
: { وَإِذَا حَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا } قَالَ:
إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَوْمٌ ذُلٌّ، ذَلَّتْ مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ الْأَسْمَاعُ
وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْجُجُورَ، حَتَّى يَحْسِبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ مَرَضَى،
وَإِنَّهُمْ لِأَصْحَاءَ الْقُلُوبِ، وَلَكِنْ دَخَلَهُمْ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ
مَا لَمْ يَدْخُلْ غَيْرَهُمْ، وَمَنْعَهُمْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا عِلْمُهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ، فَقَالُوا: { الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا
الْحَزْنَ } وَاللَّهُ مَا حُزْنَهُمْ حُزْنَ الدُّنْيَا، وَ لَا تَعَاظَمَ
فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا طَلَبُوا بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ، أُنْبَكَاهُمْ الْخَوْفُ مِنَ
النَّارِ، وَإِنَّهُ مَنْ لَمْ يَتَعَرَّ بِعِزَاءِ اللَّهِ، تَقَطَّعَ تَمْسَهُ عَلَى
الدُّنْيَا حَسْرَتًا، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَبِرْ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَةٌ إِلَّا فِي
مَطْعَمٍ وَمَشْرَبٍ، فَقَدْ قَلَّ عِلْمُهُ، وَخَصَرَ عَدَابَهُ.

He said discussing verse 63 of Al-Furqan, ‘When the ignorant address them they say, “Salam,”’: “Believers are a humble people. Their sight, hearing and limbs of the body are so humbled that the onlookers assume that they must be sick. But there is no disease in them. They are the healthiest of people at heart. But rather, fear has entered into them – absent from others. Their knowledge of the Hereafter prevents them from indulging in this world. It is they who will say, ‘(All) praise to Allah who has put us away from all grief.’ By Allah, their ‘hazan’ is not grief over this world. What

[35] Who by His bounty has lodged us in the everlasting Abode,⁴² wherein no fatigue touches us, nor touches us therein any weariness.'

الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نُصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

﴿٣٥﴾

they relinquish in return of Paradise is nothing worthwhile in their sight; it is the fear of the Fire which makes them cry. Surely, he who does not seek glory by the Glory of Allah, will have his heart torn to pieces in regret over what he misses of the world. He who does not see Allah's blessings but in food and drink, is little of knowledge, and is close to chastisement" (Qurtubi).

The opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, as in Ibn Abi Hatim and Hakim, who declared it *Sahih*, was that the allusion by "hazn" is to the Fire (Alusi).

A *hadith* in Ibn Abi Hatim reports the Prophet (*saws*) as having said,

”لَيْسَ عَلَى أَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَخَشْيَةَ فِي قُبُورِهِمْ، وَكَأَيِّ بِأَهْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يُؤْمُونَ مِنْ قُبُورِهِمْ يَنْقُضُونَ عَنْ رُءُوسِهِمْ يُقُولُونَ: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ.“ وفي رواية يُقُولُونَ: ”الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ“

“Believers in oneness of Allah will not feel fear and estrangement in their graves. As if I can see believers in Allah's oneness rising up from their graves, clear-

ing out dust from their heads saying, “There is no deity save Allah.”

According to another version (in Tabarani, ‘they will be’), saying, ‘(All) praise to Allah who removed away from us all grief“ (Kashshaf, Ibn Kathir).

But of course, adds Razi, the allusion is to all kinds of grief that one has to face throughout his life, until he finally makes it to Paradise.

42. “By His bounty” – because no one will enter Paradise on the strength of his deeds. It is Allah's own grace that will help him in. Says a *hadith* of the *Sahihayn*,

لَنْ يُدْخَلَ أَحَدًا عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ. قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ لَا، وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَعَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ بِفَضْلٍ وَرَحْمَةٍ

“None of you will enter Paradise by his deeds.” They were quick to ask, “Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “No, not even me, unless Allah Most High covers me with His bounty and grace” – Ibn Kathir.

[36] As for those who disbelieved, for them will be fire of Hell. (Death) will not be decreed for them so that they may die,⁴³ nor will its torment be lightened for them.⁴⁴ Thus do We recompense every ingrate.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يُقْضَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ فَيَمُوتُوا وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِهَا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَافِرٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] And they will be crying out therein, ‘Our Lord, bring us out, we will do righteousness: other than what we were doing’ – ‘Did We not grant a life long enough, so that he who would remember, could remember therein.⁴⁵ And there came to you the warner.⁴⁶ Taste then, the wrongdoers shall not have a helper.’

وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

43. The unbelievers will not die in Hell. It is the sinful among the believers who will. Says a *hadith*,

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ ، قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : أَمَا أَهْلُ النَّارِ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَهْلُهَا ، فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَمُوتُونَ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَوْنَ ، وَلَكِنْ نَاسٌ ، أَوْ كَمَا قَالَ - تُصَيَّبُهُمُ النَّارُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ، أَوْ قَالَ : بِحَطَايَاهُمْ - فَيُمَيِّتُهُمْ إِمَانَةً حَتَّى إِذَا صَارُوا فَحْمًا أَدْرَنَ فِي السَّقَاعَةِ ، فَجِيءَ بِهِمْ صَبَائِرَ صَبَائِرَ ، فَيَبْسُتُوا عَلَى أَتْهَارِ الْجَنَّةِ ، فَيَقَالُ : يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ، فَيَبْسُتُونَ تَبَاتَ الْحَيَّةِ تَحُونُ فِي حِمِيلِ السَّيْلِ قَالَ : فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ حِينَئِذٍ : كَأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ كَانَ بِالْبَادِيَةِ .

“As for those of the Fire who belong to it, they will neither die therein nor live. But some people,” or he said something like that, “whom the Fire will take its toll because of their sins,” or he said, “because of their errors,

they will die a death until when they would have become like coal, intercession will be allowed for them. They will be brought out and the dwellers of Paradise will sprinkle water on them. They will start growing like seedlings in the furrows through which water passes in the desert.” One of those present remarked, “As if the Prophet was brought up in the deserts” (Ibn Jarir).

44. But rather, as the Qur’an said (17: 97),

{ كَلَّمَا حَبَّتْ زِدَانُهُمْ سَعِيرًا } {الإسراء: ٩٧}

“Whenever it subsides, We shall increase for them the blaze” – Ibn Jarir.

45. To what age is the allusion? Qatadah’s implied opinion is that it is eighteen years. He warns that a long

life, unless spent in piety, could lead to regretful consequences. Wahab b. Munabbih thought it is twenty. Hasan however thought it is forty years. (That is, the age at which a person attains full mental maturity: Au.). Ibn `Abbas was also of the same opinion. Nonetheless, another opinion of Ibn `Abbas, and perhaps the right opinion, is that it is sixty years. This is supported by a *hadith* which directly addresses the issue. On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ:
أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ امْرِئٍ آخَرَ أَجَلَهُ حَتَّىٰ بَلَغَهُ سِتِينَ سَنَةً.
- صحيح البخاري

“Allah has left no excuse for a man whom He granted reprieve until he reached sixty years (of age).”

The above *hadith* (also quoted in Kashshaf) is in Bukhari. Ahmad has similar versions (Ibn Kathir).

Another narration, also through Abu Hurayrah says,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَالَ مَنْ عَمَّرَهُ اللَّهُ سِتِينَ سَنَةً فَقَدْ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ فِي
الْعُمْرِ - مسند أحمد

“Whomsoever Allah granted sixty years of age, left no excuse for him on the basis of his age” (Ibn Jarir).

And the reason for refusal to admit excuses after sixty is because by this age, all factors that prevent one from submitting himself to Allah, are absent. He who will still not surrender, is a true criminal (Au.).

Another opinion of Ibn `Abbas, however, adds Qurtubi is that the al-lusion is to the age of forty. Hasan al-Busri and Masruq said the same thing, and, (despite the *hadith* above), it carries its own weight in view of Allah’s words (46: 15),

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا
وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْرِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ
نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ
صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي
مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ [الأحقاف: ١٥]

“And We enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain, and the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months till, when he attains his full maturity and reaches the age of forty years, he says, ‘My Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Your favor which you have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and so that I may do such righteous deeds as may please You. And establish righteousness among my progeny for me. I do turn to You; and, truly, I am of those who have surrendered.’”

[38] Surely, Allah is the Knower of the unseen of the heavens and the earth. He knows what is in the breasts.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَالِمُ غَيْبِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] He it is who made you successors⁴⁷ in the earth; so whosoever disbelieved, upon him is his disbelief.⁴⁸ And, the disbelief of the unbelievers does not increase in the sight of your Lord except abhorrence. And, the disbelief of the unbelievers does not cause increase but in their loss.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ
كُفْرَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَعْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ
الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرَهُمْ إِلَّا حَسَارًا ﴿٣٩﴾

This is because by forty, a man's mind is fully matured. Malik said, "I have found people in my town who sought wealth and knowledge until they were forty. Until that age they interacted with the common folk. But once they reached forty, they abandoned the world and set themselves up to seeking the Hereafter, until death" (Qurtubi).

46. Most commentators have said that the allusion by "nadhir" is to the Prophets and warners raised among the nations of the world. Qurtubi notes that according to Ibn `Abbas, `Ikrimah, Sufyan, Waki`, Hussain b. al-Fadl, Farra' and Tabarri, the allusion is to old age. It is also said that the allusion is to illness (of old age) and death of relatives.

47. The textual word "khalaf" is the plural of "Khalifah" – one for whom

Allah subdued the earth, gave him a free hand in it, so that he could thank his Creator by believing in Him and obeying Him (Zamakhshari).

At this point it is in the sense of one who follows another. Hence when someone said to Abu Bakr, "O KhalifatuAllah," he retorted, "I am not KhalifatuAllah but rather Khalifa of the Messenger of Allah. And I am satisfied with it" (Qurtubi).

48. "Surely, in the string of human generations succeeding one another on the earth, departing of one, and following of another, this one inheriting that one, the fall of one empire and establishment of another, extinguishing of one flame and lightning of another, this extinction and that kindling, one after another over time ... surely, thoughts over this continuous movement, deserves the heart's

[40] Say, 'Have you considered your associates – those whom you invoke other than Allah, show Me what have they created of the earth. Or, is there for them a partnership in the heaven? Or, have We given them a Book, so that they are on a clear evidence thereby? But rather, the wrongdoers do not promise one another except delusion.⁴⁹

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ بَلْ إِنَّ يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿٤٠﴾

attention and drawing of lessons. Those present should realize that soon they will be of those who have departed, that those who come after them will ponder over their legacies, and exchange episode concerning them, as they ponder over the legacies of those who departed before them, and exchange episodes concerning them .. it is deserving that the heedless should wake up to the reality of the Hand that destroys the constructions, which interchanges the wands, which rotates the rule, grants kingdoms in inheritance, makes one generation succeed another, and that everything moves on, declines and passes off, and that Allah alone remains: the Everlasting, who will not pass off, who will not move away. These are the thoughts that come to mind as one gives the verse a cursory look” (Sayyid).

49. “The people who enthrone in their hearts for worship anything besides Allah may well be asked a few

questions. Some of such questions are indicated in the text with terse precision: (1) Have you seen these gods of yours? Do they exist? ‘Seeing’ of course does not necessarily mean physical sight. We do not see the air, but no one doubts that it exists. And the air is a physical substance. There are forces that we know exist, but we do not see them. To us, who have Faith, Allah is a truer Reality than anything else that we know, including ourselves. Can the false worshippers say that of any of their false gods? (2) Have your gods created or originated anything on earth? You may worship power or wealth, but that is a scramble for things as between selfish men. Power or wealth does not create new men or new worlds. (3) Have they a share in the ordering of the heavens? Obviously your false gods fail there. (4) Or have these false gods a book or revelation from the Supreme God, with clear evidence, to give them authority to

[41] Surely, Allah holds the heavens and the earth lest they should swerve.⁵⁰ And, if the two swerve, there is none at all to hold them after Him. He is indeed ever All-clement, All-forgiving.⁵¹

[42] And they swore by Allah their most earnest oath, 'surely, if there came to them a warner, they would surely be more rightly guided than any one of the nations.' But when there came to them a warner, it increased them in nothing but aversion.

[43] Waxing proud in the land and plotting evil. But evil plotting hems in none except its authors. Then, are they waiting except for the wont of the ancients? But you shall never find in Allah's ways any alteration; and you shall never find in Allah's ways any deviation.

[44] Have they not traveled through the land to see what was the end of those before them? They were stronger than themselves in might. But Allah was not such as that anything in the heavens or the earth should frustrate Him. He is indeed, ever Knowing, Able.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ إِحْدَى الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا تَفُورًا ﴿٤٢﴾

اسْتَكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتِ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا ﴿٤٤﴾

teach men? The Prophets or Messengers of Allah have such authority, and they bring evidence of the One True God. The fact is that falsehood is falsehood, however much one form of it may support another by delusions" (Yusuf Ali).

50. What is it that holds the heavens and the earth together? The scientific cliché is that it is the gravitational force. But in answer to the ques-

tion, what force is this, the scientist is dumb. All that can be said is that it exists, and that it can be expressed in such and such terms. But beyond that, nothing is known about it. It remains a mystery. So what's wrong in saying that He who created it knows its reality, and that He it is who ultimately controls it so that the sun and the moon, the earth and the stars, the galaxies and the nebu-

[45] And, should Allah to take men to task for what they earn, He would not leave on its back any creature,⁵² but He gives them respite for a stated term. Then, when their term comes, then surely Allah has ever been of His slaves, Seeing.

وَلَوْ يُوَاجِدُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

las do not fall apart? Yet, that is only one aspect of the Unknown. Other complication arise as scientists seek to know more. One of the findings is that the Universe is expanding at an accelerating rate, i.e., faster and faster. So, after all, gravitation works fine at micro level, but it does not seem to be working at the macro level. There is another force that is pushing matter into outer space (or expanding the space, as scientists prefer to state, though without any good reason). What force is causing this acceleration? What is force is expanding the space? No one has the slightest of clue (Au.).

51. That is, none can hold them and sustain them but He. A *hadith* of Muslim says,

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى قَالَ قَامَ فِينَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَقَالَ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَا يَنَامُ وَلَا يَبْغِي لَهُ أَنْ يَنَامَ يَخْفِضُ الْقِسْطَ وَيَرْفَعُهُ يُرْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ عَمَلُ اللَّيْلِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ النَّهَارِ وَعَمَلُ النَّهَارِ قَبْلَ عَمَلِ اللَّيْلِ حِجَابُهُ النَّوْرُ - وَفِي رِوَايَةِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ النَّارُ - لَوْ كَشَفَهُ لَأَحْرَقَتْ سُبْحَاتٍ وَجْهَهُ مَا ائْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ بَصَرُهُ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ ». - صحيح مسلم

Abu Musa said, “The Prophet stood amongst us with five words. He said, ‘Allah does not sleep, nor does it behoove Him that He should sleep. He lowers the scale and raises it. He raises to Himself the deeds of the night before the day, and those of the day before the night. His veil is Light.’”

According to another narrative coming from Abu Bakr, ‘If He were to remove it, the glitter of His Face will burn down His creation to the extent His sight reaches.’

Notwithstanding that, He is the All-clement, the All-forgiving. He sees His slaves disbelieving and disobeying, but He shows clemency and forgives, gives respite and does not act against them hastily. Yet others He covers and forgives. He is indeed All-clement, All-forgiving (Ibn Kathir).

52. For, in that situation Allah will hold back the rains and all beings on the face of the earth will perish. It is said that someone admonished

another over a wrong action. The other one said, "Look after your own affairs. A wrongdoer does not wrong but himself." Abu Hurayrah was present. He said, "By Him be-

sides whom there is no Lord, you have lied. By Him in whose hands is my life, birds die because of wrongs committed by the wrongdoer" (Qur-tubi) ﴿قَاتِ﴾



Surah 36
*Ya Sīn*¹

Makkan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1. Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir present several reports related to the importance of this chapter. One of them is in Abu Ya`la as well as in Hafiz Muslim's collection, with a good chain. It says:

أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ يَقُولُ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : مَنْ قَرَأَ يَسَ فِي لَيْلَةٍ أَصْبَحَ مَغْفُورًا لَهُ ، وَمَنْ قَرَأَ حَمَّ الَّتِي يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا الدُّخَانَ فِي لَيْلَةٍ الْجُمُعَةِ أَصْبَحَ مَغْفُورًا لَهُ — مسند أبي يعلى

“Whoever recited *Ya Sin* in a night will be forgiven (of his sins); and whoever recited Ha Mim in which the smoke (Dukh-khan) is mentioned, will be forgiven.”

Ibn Hibban has another report in his *Sahih* collection coming through Jundab b. `Abdullah. It says,

عَنْ جُنْدُبٍ ، قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : مَنْ قَرَأَ يَسَ فِي لَيْلَةٍ ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَ اللَّهِ غُفِرَ لَهُ. — صحيح ابن حبان

“Whoever recited *Ya Sin* in a night seeking Allah's countenance will be forgiven.”

Yet another report figures in Ahmad, Abu Da`ud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah. It comes through Ma`qal b. Yasar:

”اقْرَأُوهَا عَلَيَّ مَوْتًا كُمْ” (يَعْنِي يَسَ أَخْرَجَهُ أَحْمَدُ وَرَوَاهُ أَبُو دَاوُدَ وَالنَّسَائِيُّ وَابْنُ مَاجَةَ)

“Recite it (i.e., *Ya Sin*) over those of you dying.”

[Although the report of Ma`qal b. Yasar did not receive full approval from Haythami, we have reproduced it on the strength of what follows: Au.].

Some scholars have said that one of the specialties of this *Surah* is that it will not be recited at difficult times but will ease up the difficulty; and that its recitation at death-beds is a source of comfort and mercy for the dying. It will help release the soul painlessly. Imām Ahmad has recorded Safwan as saying, “People of our older generation used to say that reciting *Ya Sin* near a man in his last throes helps reduce suffering.” (Haythami pointed out that to him one

[1] Ya Sin²

or more narrators of this report are unknown: Au.).

Qurtubi has many other reports on the importance and benefits of recitation of this *Surah*, both for the dying, as well as for oneself, and, in addition, recitation in the burial grounds, but about which he does not mention the status, and hence we leave them out (Au.).

Mufti Shafi` has a personal note: "Today, as I begin to write the commentary on *Surah Ya Sin*, it is 9th of Safar (1355 A.H.), the day my father, Muhammad *Ya Sin*, died. The correspondence urges me to ask the readers of these lines to pray for his forgiveness."

2. Considering them as "*huruf al-muqatta`at*," Imām Razi presents a long discussion over these letters asserting that they cannot be without wisdom, even if difficult to unravel. It may be noted for instance, that Arabic is composed of twenty-eight letters. The Qur`ān used the "*huruf al-muqatta`at*" in half of them: fourteen. It is apparent that the letters seem to have been divided as 9+10+9 (=28), that is nine from "alif" to "dhal," ten

from "ra" to "ghayn," and nine from "fa" to "ya." Allah chose from the first nine only two letters ("alif" and "ha"), and left out from the last nine only two letters ("fa" and "waw") – using the rest of the seven. Then, out of the guttural letters Allah used all, except one, which happens to be "kha." On the other hand, out of all the words pronounced with the lips, He did not use any but one, which is "mim." As for the rest of them in the middle, that is ten of them, He used the letters alternatively, so that He used "ra" but dropped "za"; He used "sin" but dropped "shin"; used "sad", but dropped "dad"; used "ta," but dropped "za" used "ayn," but left off "ghayn." This arrangement could not have been accidental.

Again, these "*huruf al-muqatta`at*" have been – in their usage – composed of one letter (such as "nun, qaf, sad"); some others of two letters (such as "*ha-mim, ya-sin, ta-sin, ta-ha*"); yet some are composed of three letters (such as "*alif-lam-mim, ta-sin-mim, alif-lam-ra*"); some others of four letters (such as "*alif-lam-mim-ra*" and "*alif-lam-mim-sad*"); and some that are composed of five let-

[2] *And by the Wise*³ Qur'ān.

وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٢﴾

ters (such as “*ha-mim-`ayn-sin-qaf*” and “*kaf-ha-ya-`ayn-sad*”).

At all events, writes Ibn Jarir, Ibn `Abbas and `Ikrimah believed that this (i.e., *Ya Sin*) is in its origin an Abyssinian word meaning, “O man.” [Qurtubi, and following him, Shawkani, add: Others have thought, however, that the word is from the dialect of the Tayy tribe while Hasan thought its origin is in the dialect of Kalb].

(The same is reported of Dahhak, Sufyan b. `Uyaynah, Hasan and Sa`id b. Jubayr: Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). “If we admit that ‘Ya’ is the evocative particle, and that ‘sin’ is for ‘insan’ (Man) then, the allusion by ‘Man’ could be to the noblest of men, Muhammad” (Yusuf Ali in substance).

However, a second reported opinion of Ibn `Abbas is that it is one of the Names of Allah (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Mujahid on the other hand believed that it is simply a word which Allah chose to open the *Surah* (Ibn Jarir).

A third opinion of Ibn `Abbas as reported in Ibn Marduwayh – and of Ibn Mas`ud too – is that it means:

“O Muhammad.” Sa`id b. Jubayr also held this opinion, and has its strength in the third verse which says, “Indeed, you are one of the Messengers” (Qurtubi, Shawkani).

In fact, there are two reports that say that the Prophet was known by several names, one of them being *Ya Sin* (Qurtubi).

3. Qurtubi thinks that the word “*hakim*” here is in the sense of “*muhkam*” meaning, ‘that which accepts neither addition nor deletion,’ as Allah said elsewhere about it (11: 1),

{ أَحْكَمْتَ آيَاتِهِ } [هود: ١]

“(A book) whose verses have been set clear,” which in turn has been explained by Zamakhshari and Razi as meaning, “well-established,” or “well-founded,” that is, free of defect; like a well-built structure that does not require further modification.

Taking it in the literal sense, Sayyid Qutb discusses the implications. He writes: “Allah describes the Qur’ān as a wise scripture. Wisdom however is the quality of an intelligent being, and such a description bestows on it the qualities of life, will, and voli-

[3] You are indeed of the sent ones.⁴

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣﴾

[4] On a path straight.⁵

عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾

[5] A sending down by the All-powerful, All-wise.

تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٥﴾

tion. This however is in the figurative sense. Notwithstanding this, the illustration is very close to a fact. For, this Qur'an has a spirit of its own and carries in its aura the qualities of one endowed with life. It shows concern for you as you show concern for it, and pay attention to it. It gives access to its deep-lying secrets as you open your heart, mind, and the soul for it. You begin (to recognize) its features and, so to say its mien, if you covet it - just as you covet to know the features and characteristics of a friend. The Prophet loved to hear the Qur'an from others. He would stop at a door, listening to the recitation emerging from within, just as someone stops to listen to his beloved being described."

4. This is the case of the 'reverse placement' of argument. The claim follows the evidence. If reversed, the two verses would read like this: "*Ya Sin*. You, O Muhammad, are of the sent ones. The proof is in the Wise Qur'an; a perfect Script, beyond human composition" (Au.).

5. "This is to describe the nature of the Message after the nature of the Messenger has been described. And the nature of this Message is its straightforwardness, clarity and unambiguousness. It is as straight as an arrow, without any twist, bend, or bias. Truth is portrayed in clear terms, without any ambiguity or ambivalence. Whoever looked for it, with sincerity, found it, straightaway, without much research. It does not beat about the bush, does not make complicated statements, does not erect barriers, but rather speaks out its intent loudly, in the simplest of terms, shorn of every obscurity, bereft of every sidetracking, and in need of no further explanation. A villager and a townsman, a lettered and an unlettered, a man in the hut or one in a bungalow – all of them gain entry into its plainly laid down meanings and implications touching upon life and its surroundings.

"In its straightness it matches with the plainness of the physical world, its laws, and systems. Its straightness

[6] That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned;⁷ who, therefore, are heedless.

لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴿٦﴾

[7] (Although) The Word has (already) proved true concerning most of them.⁸ So they will not believe.

لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧﴾

is in conjugation with the things and life around man. It does not collide with realities, nor does it ask man to collide with them. Its straightness is in perfect harmony with the world and its governing laws patterned after similar straightness.

“It is also straight in the sense of leading one who takes its path, straight to Allah, leading up through an un-deviating direct route. Its follower need not ever fear not reaching his destination or goal: Allah, because of the twists and turns on the way. He treads a path that leads directly to attaining the approval of his Creator.

The Qur’ān is the guide to this straight path. Whenever a man decides to go along with the Qur’ān, he will discover that the truth that has been unfolded in it – in all its details, in all its commandments and in the portrayal of the values that it stands for, has been done candidly and explicitly“ (Sayyid).

6. “The Al-mighty, the All-compassionate”: The first attribute is meant

to convey the fact that the message sent is not the counsel of a powerless admonisher, whose persuasions could be accepted or ignored without any fear of retribution (Mawdudi). And the second is meant to convey the message that if, despite rejection, retribution does not immediately follow, it is because His mercy demands that sufficient respite be allowed (Au.).

7. That is, those whose immediate forefathers had not been warned, otherwise, several centuries back there had been among them Isma’il, Shu`ayb and others (Au.).

8. What “word” is it that came true? Alusi refers to Iblis saying (38: 82),

{ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ } [ص: ٨٢]

“I shall surely misguide them all,”
and Allah replying (7: 18),

{ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ } [الأعراف: ١٨]

“I shall surely fill Jahannum with you altogether.”

Shabbir has a thorough discussion to demonstrate – once and for all – that Allah’s decision (“word”) about

the people is preceded by the people choosing a path for themselves. That is, their present state of heedlessness is not because of Allah's word coming true, but rather, because of the choices they made in the past. Allah said (43: 36),

{ وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقِضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ } { [الزخرف: ٣٦]

"Whoever is blind to the remembrance of the Most Merciful – We appoint for him a Devil, who is to him a companion."

And (61: 5),

{ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ } { [الصف: ٥]

"But when they deviated, Allah deviated their hearts."

And (6: 110),

{ وَتَقَلَّبَ أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوْلَٰى مَرَّةً وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ } { [الأنعام: ١١٠]

"And We turn away their hearts and eyes because they did not believe in it in the first instance and leave them in their insolence stumbling blindly."

And (46: 17, 18),

{ وَالَّذِي قَالَ لِرَأْسِهِ أَفٍّ لَكُمْ مَا أَتَعَدَانِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا يَسْتَعْجِلَانِ اللَّهَ وَيُنَكِّتُ آمِينَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ، أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ } { [الأحقاف: ١٧-١٨]

"While he who said to his parents, 'Oof unto you. Do you promise me that I will be brought out, although generations have passed before me?' They (the parents) call to Allah for help (saying), 'Woe unto you. Come to believe. Surely, Allah's promise is true.' But he replies, 'This is nothing but tales of the ancients.' It is these against whom the word has come true."

And (7: 101),

{ تِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ نَقِصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِهَا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ } { [الأعراف: ١٠١]

"Those are (some of those) towns of which We narrate you their tidings. Messengers went to them with clear signs. But they were not such as to believe in what they had rejected earlier. That is how Allah seals the hearts of the unbelieving folks."

And (10: 74),

{ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ كَذَٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ } { [يونس: ٧٤]

"Then We sent after him Messengers. They brought them clear signs. But they were not such as to believe in what they had denied earlier. That is how Allah seals the hearts of a transgressing folk."

[8] We have indeed placed around their necks shackles, that reach up to their chins, so that their heads are forced up.⁹

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُقْمَحُونَ ﴿٨﴾

And (83: 14),

{ كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ }
[المطففين: ١٤]

"But rather, what they had been earning rusted their hearts."

And (45: 23),

{ أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاءً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ } [الجناتية: ٢٣]

"Have you seen him who has taken his base desires as his deity? Allah has misled him despite his knowledge. He has set a seal on his ear, and has placed a covering on his sight. So who can guide him after Allah?"

And (5: 41),

{ يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ يَنْوَلُونَ إِنْ أُوتِيتُمْ هَذَا فَخَدُّوهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَوْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوا وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُطَهِّرَ قُلُوبَهُمْ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ } [المائدة: ٤١]

"They pervert the words from their meaning saying, 'If you are given this (kind of judgment), accept it, but if you are not given it, then watch out.' And whomsoever Allah desires to try, you cannot avail anything for him against Allah. These are a people whom Allah did

not desire to cleanse their hearts (because of their continued transgressions). For them is disgrace in this life."

It should be apparent, continues Shabbir, that the deafening of the ears, blinding of the eyes, closing of the minds, and sealing of the hearts are choices made by those who are bent on denying the truth no matter what kind of proofs, evidences and signs come before them. It is in consequence of their firm decision against the truth that Allah's word of punishment comes true.

9. That is, the chains are wound round their necks so many times that their chins are forced up and so they are unable to bend their heads down before their Lord in submission; an allegorical reference to their extreme stubbornness. When a camel obstinately refuses to drink, throwing its head up, they say قَمَحَ الْجَمَل (Lexicon).

Yusuf Ali's comment is comprehensive at this point: "Man's misdeeds inevitably call forth the operation of Allah's Law. The result of man's willful disobedience is now described in a series of metaphors. (1) Refusal

[9] And We have placed before them a barrier, and from behind them a barrier, and have thus covered them, so they do not see (the truth).¹⁰

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَعْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

[10] So it is the same to them whether you warned them or did not warn them¹¹ - they will not believe.

وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

of Allah's Light means less and less freedom of action for man: the yoke of sin is fastened round man's neck, and it gets more and more tightened, right up to the chin. (2) The head is forced up and kept in a stiff position, so that the mind becomes befogged. Moral obliquity taints the intellect. According to the Sanskrit proverb, 'When destruction comes near, understanding is turned upside down.' According to the Latin proverb, 'Whom God wishes to destroy, He first makes him demented.' In other words, iniquity not only is folly, but leads deeper and deeper into folly, narrowness of vision, and blindness to the finer things of life. (3) This state of deprivation of Grace leads to such a decline in spiritual vitality that the victim can neither progress nor turn back, as explained in the next verse."

10. The allusion is to the natural consequence of their refusal to learn from past history, or to consider the

future consequences of their refusal to accept the truth, which, in their blindness they are unable to perceive. Their misconceptions have erected barriers all around them that prevent them from evaluating the realities (Mawdudi).

"The whole passage is a vivid description of utter blindness and unshakable obstinacy on the part of the perverse and willful opponents of truth and light" (Majid).

Yusuf Ali offers us the allegorical implications: "Their retreat is cut off and their progress is impossible. Further the Light that should come from above is cut off, so that they become totally devoid of any hope, and the last gleam of any spiritual understanding is extinguished in them."

11. It is the same for them whether you warn them, or do not warn them, but it is not the same for you, O Muhammad, whether you warned or did not warn, therefore, keep

[11] You can only warn him who followed the admonition¹² and feared the Merciful, Unseen.¹³ So give him glad tidings of forgiveness and a noble reward.

إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ
بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾

warning them, albeit, for your own good (Shabbir).

12. Thanwi writes in a short sentence in Arabic (in his “*Masa’il al-Suluk*”) the conclusion that modern educationists have arrived at after several centuries of experience but which their eastern apists are yet to perceive. He writes, “The words, ‘You can only warn him who followed the admonition,’ signify the fact that when a (*Sufi*) master trains another, then the result achieved is nothing but manifestation of the potentialities and possibilities of the seeker himself.”

13. “As far as those are concerned, who have obstinately delivered themselves to evil, the preaching of Allah’s Message has no appeal, because their own will shuts them out. But there are others who are anxious to hear Allah’s Message and receive Allah’s grace. They love Allah and fear to offend against His holy Law, and their fear is not merely superfi-

cial but deep-seated: for while they do not yet see Allah, nor do other people see them, they have the same sense of Allah’s presence as if they saw Him, and their religion is not a mere pose, ‘to be seen of men.’

“Unseen is here adverbial: their reverence for Allah is unaffected by the fact that they do not see Him, or that other people do not observe them, because their attitude arises out of a genuine love for Allah” (Yusuf Ali).

Thus basically, the Prophet had to deal with, as all those have to who take up the task of preaching Islam, two kinds of people: One, which had already made up its mind. ‘So it is the same to them whether you warned them or did not warn them - they will not believe.’ The second kind was the one that was ready to consider, and receive the warning, ‘You can only warn him who followed the admonition and feared the Merciful, Unseen’ (Au.).

[12] Indeed We give life to the dead¹⁴ and record what they have forwarded as also their traces,¹⁵ and We have taken account of all things in a clear Book.¹⁶

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا
وَأَنزَلْنَاهُمْ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ
مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

14. This is to hint that Allah could yet quicken the dead hearts - just as He quickens the dead land – and lead them to the truth (despite their unwillingness) - Ibn Kathir, Shabbir and others.

15. That is, the good deeds that one has forwarded, and the effects and influences of those deeds, such as, e.g., wrote a book, built a building, established a practice, or left a tradition: good or bad (Shabbir).

Qatadah has said, “If there was anything, O son of Adam, that Allah could ignore of you, it would have been your footsteps that the winds erase” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The fact that a person is responsible for his deeds, as well as for the effects and influences produced by those deeds is further elaborated in the *hadith* literature. A report in Muslim says,

”مَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً حَسَنَةً فَلَهُ أَجْرُهَا وَأَجْرُ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَنْقُصَ مِنْ أَجْرِهِمْ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً سَيِّئَةً كَانَ عَلَيْهِ وِزْرُهَا وَوِزْرُ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَنْقُصَ مِنْ أَوْزَارِهِمْ شَيْءٌ“ . - صحيح مسلم

“Whoever set a good example in Islam will have its reward and the reward of all those who put it to practice after him, without any reduction in their rewards; while he who set a bad example in Islam will have its sin on him and the sin of all those who practiced it after him, without any reduction in their own sins.”

Mujahid thought however that the allusion is to the footsteps that one takes on his way to good or bad deeds. This was also the opinion of Hasan and Qatadah. The following can be quoted from Muslim in support of this: Jabir b. `Abdullah said, “A plot near the Prophet’s Mosque became vacant. Banu Salimah thought they could shift there to be nearer the mosque. The Prophet came to know of it. He asked them, “I am told that you wish to move nearer the mosque.” They replied, “Yes, Messenger of Allah. We have been considering it.” He said,

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ خَلَّتِ الْبِقَاعُ حَوْلَ الْمَسْجِدِ فَأَرَادَ بَنُو سَلِيمَةَ أَنْ يَنْتَقِلُوا إِلَى قُرْبِ الْمَسْجِدِ فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَقَالَ لَهُمْ

« إِنَّهُ بَلَّغَنِي أَنَّكُمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَتَّخِلُوا قُرْبَ الْمَسْجِدِ
 «. قَالُوا نَعَمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَدْ أَرَدْنَا ذَلِكَ. فَقَالَ « يَا
 بَنِي سَلَمَةَ دِيَارَكُمْ تُكْتَبُ آثَارُكُمْ دِيَارَكُمْ تُكْتَبُ آثَارُكُمْ
 «. - صحيح مسلم

“O Banu Salimah, your dwellings (hold on to them). Your (foot) marks are being recorded; your (foot) marks are being recorded.”

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو قَالَ مَاتَ رَجُلٌ بِالْمَدِينَةِ
 مِمَّنْ وُلِدَ بِهَا فَصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه
 وسلم- ثُمَّ قَالَ « يَا لَيْتَهُ مَاتَ بِعَيْرِ مَوْلِدِهِ «. قَالُوا
 وَبِمِ ذَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ « إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ إِذَا مَاتَ بِعَيْرِ
 مَوْلِدِهِ قِيسَ لَهُ مِنْ مَوْلِدِهِ إِلَى مُنْقَطِعِ آثَرِهِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ
 «. - النسائي

It is also reported in Ahmad, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah by `Abdullah ibn `Amr that: A man born in Madinah died in Madinah. The Prophet prayed over him and then remarked,

“Only that he had died in a place other than his place of birth.” They asked, “Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “When a man dies in a place other than his birth-place, the (foot) marks from his birth place until where they end are measured (and so much space is allotted to him) in Paradise” (Ibn Kathir).

Scholars have explained that what the Prophet meant was that had the man been a *Muhajir* in the way of Allah, he would have earned rewards even for the footsteps that he trod in His Pleasure (Au.).

16. That is, in *Umm al-Kitab*, which is in *Lauh al-Mahfuz* (the Preserved Tablet). The word “Imām” has been used in the sense of “a book” elsewhere in the Qur’ān. E.g. (17: 71),

{يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أَنَسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوِّيَ كِتَابُهُ
 بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا }
 [الإسراء: ٧١]

“The day when We shall call all men with their record; then whoso is given his book in his right hand - those shall read their book (with pleasure); and they shall not be wronged by a thread” (Qurtubi, *Ibn Kathir*).

It has been qualified as clear (mu-bin) because of the thoroughness with which each detail is recorded. A very clear picture will appear when its contents are reconstructed in the light of its details (Thanwi, reworded).

[13] Set forth to them the example of the companions of the city, when Messengers came to it.¹⁷

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] When We (first) sent unto them two. But they rejected them, so We reinforced (them) with a third.¹⁸ They said, "We have been assuredly sent unto you."

إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُّرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

17. It could be said defining the connection between the previous verses and the following is that if it caused pain to the Prophet that some of his people he was sent to were not going to believe, then he might mention to them - as well as remind himself - of the story of an earlier people. In comparison you might note, the Prophet is told, that after all, you alone have been raised for your people, while three Messengers were raised in an earlier nation. Further, they were inhabitants of a single city, while you have been sent to entire mankind. Is there for you any comfort in this? (Razi).

18. 'Ikrimah has said that the allusion is to two envoys that 'Isa ibn Maryam sent to Antakiyyah (Antioch), but Wahb b. Munabbih (as reported by Ibn 'Abbas and Ka'b al-Ahbar) thought that it were Messengers proper who were sent to Antakiyyah (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Ibn Kathir however disputes this report, (which obviously has its origin in Jewish sources: Au.). He says that the city of Antakiyyah was in fact the first to believe in the call of Jesus: the reason why it is one of the four cities that the Christians venerate. The others are Bayt al-Maqdis, being the birth place of Jesus Christ, Alexandria where the first church was established, and Rome whose emperor embraced Christianity and supported the early Christians.

Another difficulty, continues Ibn Kathir, is that the assumption of the destruction of Antakiyyah after the appearance of Jesus Christ contradicts the belief of the *Salaf* that Allah did not destroy any nation after the advent of Musa (*asws*). Statements to this effect can be found at the point the following verse is explained (28: 43),

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَى﴾ [القصص: ٤٣]

[15] They said, 'You are no more than men like us;¹⁹ and the Compassionate has not revealed anything. You are not but lying.'²⁰

قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] They said, 'Our Lord knows well that we have been sent unto you.

قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] And, there is no more upon us but clear deliverance.'

﴿١٧﴾ وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٧﴾

“We did give Musa the Book after We had destroyed the earlier generations.”

Also see note 75 of *Surah Al-Qasas* in this work.

Thanwi notes that another Tafsir work (not accessible to this writer) demonstrates how the comments of the *Salaf* are reconcilable. But, his own point is, the identification is not important. It is the lesson which is the main point of narration.

19. “The objection,” (viz., ‘You are no more than men like us,’) and its repetition throughout the history of the Prophets, reveals naivety and lack of basic understanding on the part of the people, as it also reflects a failure to appreciate the functions of a Messenger. Those people always expected that there should be some kind of mystery surrounding the life and personality of a Messenger. They thought that he should bear behind

his outward mien, another person: closer to mythologies and fantasies of their own imagination. How could his personality be open, free of all complexities, one which carried no secrets and bore no mysteries? How could Messengers be ordinary persons – of the kind that filled the market places?

“They could not appreciate the simple fact that for a Messenger to receive revelation, and to be in touch with the other world, was itself a thing of wonder for them. Further, they failed to realize the point that one who had to function in the earth (and not in the heavens), who had to deal with real human situations, and offer guidance to real human problems, had to be, by the very nature of his call and function, one of them: a human being like any other.”

20. “[This passage alludes] to people who like to think of themselves as

[18] They replied, 'Surely, we augur evil omen from you.²¹ Surely, if you do not desist we shall stone you and surely, a painful chastisement shall befall you at our hands.

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

'believing' in God without, however, allowing their 'belief' to interfere with the practical concerns of their lives: and this they justify by conceding to religion no more than a vaguely emotional role, and by refusing to admit the fact of objective revelation – for the concept of revelation invariably implies a promulgation, by God, of absolute moral values and, thus, a demand of one's self surrender to Islam" (Asad).

How correct Asad's reading is can be judged from an unconnected and unintended event: a recent new Muslim has written a book which he entitles, "Struggling to Surrender" (Au.).

21. That is, we will consider you as the cause for any ill occurrence that strikes us (Tabari).

Ibn Kathir writes: Earlier nations also drew ill omen from the envoys sent to them. For example, Allah said about Fir'awn's folks (7: 131),

﴿فَإِذَا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَلَا إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ [الأعراف: ١٣١]

"When a good (thing) came to them, they said, 'This is our due.' But when an evil touched them they would augur ill by Musa and those with him. Nay! Rather their ill augury is with Allah. But most of them realize not."

Similarly, Allah said [about the hypocrites of this Ummah: Au.] (4: 98),

﴿وَإِنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلُّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا﴾ [النساء: ٧٨]

"And, if a good thing happens to them, they say, 'This is from Allah.' But when an evil befalls them they say, 'This is from you.' Tell them, 'Everything is from Allah.' What then is the matter with these people that they come nowhere near to understanding the discourse?"

[19] They said, 'Your ill omen is (already) with you;²² is it because you have been admonished? But rather, you are a people who cross all bounds.'

قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And there came a man from the furthest part of the city, hastening.²³ He said, 'O my people! Follow the Messengers.

وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَفْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] Follow those who ask you not (any) wage, and who are rightly guided.

اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] And, what's with me (that) I should not worship Him who originated me, and to whom you will be returned?²⁴

وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

[23] Should I take besides Him (other) deities? If the Compassionate should wish me an affliction, their intercession will profit me naught, nor can they deliver me (on their own).

أَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَّا تُعْنِي عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] Surely, in that case, I should be in a manifest error.

إِنِّي إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] I have surely believed in my Lord – so listen to me.'

إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّيكُمْ فَاسْمِعُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾

22. That is, your deeds will determine your augury.

23. Ibn `Abbas, Ka`b al-Ahbar, Wahab b. Munabbih and many others of the *Salaf* thought that the man was named Habeeb (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). But there are no confirmed reports about this, and, in fact, some of the *Salaf* have also thought that Habeeb was the name of the "believer" in Fir`awn's court who concealed his faith (Au.).

24. The brief narration of his talk with the people indicates that the man had been involved in previous discussions with the people, and that he must have been a person of some standing to say, 'As for me, what's with me that I should not believe?' Had he been an ordinary person, his coming to belief or not coming to belief would not have made any difference to those he was debating with (Au.).

[26] It was said, 'Enter into Paradise.'²⁵ He said, 'Ah, would that my people knew.

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] How (graciously) has my Lord forgiven me, and has placed me among the honored ones.²⁶

بِمَا عَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] And We sent not upon his people, after him, any host out of heaven, neither were We wont to sending down (any).

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

25. The same authorities as above were one in opinion that he was instantly killed.

Islam has similar examples. Ibn Is-haq reports that when Musaylimah the Liar captured two Muslims, he demanded to know from one of them whether he would vouch that Muhammad was a Prophet. The captured Muslim would reply, "Yes." Then he would ask him whether he would vouch that he (Musaylimah) was also a Prophet? He would reply, "I do not hear you." Musaylimah would say, "May Allah curse you. Do you hear that, but do not hear this?" He would say, "Yes." Finally Musaylimah ordered that his limbs be severed one after another. After each limb was severed, he was asked the same questions and he answered in the same manner until he was dead. When Ka`b the narrator was told that his name was Habeeb, he remarked, "By Allah, the man men-

tioned in Yaa Seen was also called Habeeb" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

26. This is a striking example of goodness inherent in true believers. They do not wish ill of their adversaries (Au.).

Ibn `Abbas is reported as having said, "The man wished his people well: dead and alive" (Qurtubi).

Mawdudi comments: "The man had no ill-will or feelings of vengeance against a people that had murdered him. He did not wish Hell for his murderers but that they should come to faith and win the Paradise that he had won."

"Allah has narrated this event," continues Mawdudi, "to impress upon the Makkans that this Prophet too was not invective towards them. He was not their enemy. His only wish was that they should achieve the everlasting bliss of the Hereafter."

[29] It was but a single Cry, and lo, there they were, quenched (and silent, like burnt out coals).²⁷

إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ
خَامِدُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] Alas for the slaves! Never went to them a Messenger, but they were mocking at him.

يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ
رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[31] Have they not seen how many generations We destroyed before them²⁸ – that to them, will not return?

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ
أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] And indeed each of them – of those,²⁹ altogether – are brought before Us.

وَإِنْ كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ
﴿٣٢﴾

[33] And a sign there is for them in the dead land (that) We gave life and brought therefrom grains, of which do they eat.³⁰

وَأَيُّةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا
مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

27. The textual word “*khamada*” is used for a dying fire. Literally it means, “To get low (of fire) [or] to faint and die” (Penrice), “the extended meaning being, to die out, fade away, cool off, to be extinguished, to become extinct (Au.).

28. Asad comments: “...the term *qarn* which literally signifies a ‘generation’ or ‘people living at the same period’, has in this context the wider meaning of ‘society’ or ‘civilization’ in the historical connotation of these terms. Thus, the downfall and utter disappearance of the past societies, and civilizations is here linked to their spiritual frivolity and consequent moral failure. A further lesson to be drawn from this parable is the

implied conclusion that the majority of people in every society, at all times (our own included), refuse to be guided by moral considerations, regarding them as opposed to their conventional mode of life and their pursuit of materialistic values – with the result that ‘never has an apostle come to them without their deriding him.’”

29. We have adopted this mode of expression following one of the several explanations offered by Ibn Jarir for the word “*lamma*” occurring at this point (Au.)

30. The allusion could be to ancient times billions of years ago when the earth lay waste, a mere ball of rocks and minerals, with no water, revol-

[34] We placed therein orchards of date palm and grape, and We caused (many) springs to gush forth therein.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ نَّجِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ
وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الْعُيُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] That they might eat of its fruits and of their hands' labors.³¹ Will they not, then, give thanks?³²

لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] Blessed is He³³ who created all of the pairs³⁴ – of what the earth produces, and of themselves, and of what they know not.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا
نُتِبَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَمِمَّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] And a sign for them is the night, We strip off the day from it, and behold, they are plunged in darkness.

وَأَيَّةٌ لَهُمُ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ
مُظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

ing around the sun, with no enveloping atmosphere, subject to its deadly bombardment of ultraviolet and other destructive rays that would not allow for existence of any kind of life – human or biological (Au.).

31. Another possible rendition can be, as posted by Ibn Jarir, although not very enthusiastically, “and that which was not wrought by their hands.” Zamakhshari also sees the possibility as does Qurtubi who traces the opinion to Ibn ‘Abbas, Dahhak and Muqatil.

32. “Date-palms and vines stand as symbols for fruit-trees of all kinds, these being the characteristic fruits of Arabia. Grain was mentioned in the last verse; fruit is mentioned now. All that is necessary for food and the satisfaction of the choicest

palate is produced from what looks like inert soil, fertilized by rain and springs. Here is wonderful evidence of the artistry and providence of Allah” (Yusuf Ali).

33. The usage of “*subhana*” at this point is to express wonder and amazement. It is as if to say, “How amazing of these unbelievers that they should see all these signs, yet do not come to believe!?” (Qurtubi).

34. The rendition is literal. Qatadah believed the allusion is to male and female. Ibn Jarir however understands “*azwaj*” as meaning “kinds.”

If it is assumed that this Qur’ān is the handiwork of the Prophet, then how to explain the phenomenon fully brought to light by scientific research just about a century ago that everything comes in pairs: positive and

[38] And the sun runs to its ultimate destination.³⁵ That is the ordaining of the All-mighty, the All-knowing.

وَالشَّمْسُ بَحْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ
الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾

negative electrical charges, protons with anti-protons, quarks with anti-quarks, bacteria as male and female that exchange DNA, that stars are binary (our sun's companion is said to be on the other side of the galaxy) and even galaxies seem to exist in pairs, the companion of our galaxy, Milky Way, is Andromeda?! Would the Orientalists who filled tens of thousands of pages of Encyclopedia of Islam say that the Prophet took it from the *Bible*? (Au.)

35. The text in all Qur'anic Scriptures appears as it is here:

{وَالشَّمْسُ بَحْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا}

But, Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn 'Abbas read it as,

وَالشَّمْسُ بَحْرِي لَا مُسْتَقَرَّ لَهَا

"The sun runs (its course) without a resting place." That is, ceaselessly (Tabari, Kashshaf, Qurtubi and others).

At all events, granted the varying opinion its place, there are about a dozen explanations attached to the word "*mustaqarr*" – as speculated by the earlier and later commentators - with none more convincing than an-

other, except perhaps the one which says that the sun's "*mustaqarr*" is the Day of Judgment, (when it will come to halt over the heads of the people in the Field of Resurrection). This opinion is attributed to Qatadah (Au).

Most commentators, however, despite mentioning various possible meanings, also quote a related *hadith* which is in Bukhari:

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ قَالَ دَخَلْتُ الْمَسْجِدَ وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ -
صلى الله عليه وسلم - جَالِسٌ، فَلَمَّا غَرَبَتِ الشَّمْسُ
قَالَ « يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ هَلْ تَدْرِي أَيْنَ تَذْهَبُ هَذِهِ » .
قَالَ قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . قَالَ « فَإِنِّي تَذْهَبُ
تَسْتَأْذِنُ فِي السُّجُودِ فَيُؤَدُّنَ لَهَا ، وَكَأَنَّهَا قَدْ قِيلَ لَهَا
ارْجِعِي مِنْ حَيْثُ جِئْتِ . فَتَطْلُعُ مِنْ مَعْرِبِنَا » . ثُمَّ
قَرَأَ { ذَلِكَ مُسْتَقَرُّ لَهَا } - صحيح البخاري

Abu Dharr said, "I entered the mosque while the Prophet was there. When the sun had gone down he said, 'O Abu Dharr. Do you know where does the sun go?' I said, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'It goes and seeks permission to prostrate itself. It is allowed. But as if it will be told, "Return from where you came from." It will appear from where it sets.' Then he recited, "That is its place of rest."

Qurtubi quotes another longer version of the *hadith* which happens to be in Muslim. It says,

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- قَالَ يَوْمًا « أَتَذَرُونَ أَيْنَ تَذْهَبُ هَذِهِ الشَّمْسُ ». قَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. قَالَ « إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَجْرِي حَتَّى تَتَّهِيَ إِلَى مُسْتَقَرِّهَا تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ فَتَجْرُ سَاجِدَةً وَلَا تَرَالُ كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى يُقَالَ لَهَا ارْتَفِعِي ارْجِعِي مِنْ حَيْثُ جِئْتِ فَتَرْجِعِ فُتُصْبِحُ طَالِعَةً مِنْ مَطْلِعِهَا ثُمَّ تَجْرِي حَتَّى تَتَّهِيَ إِلَى مُسْتَقَرِّهَا تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ فَتَجْرُ سَاجِدَةً وَلَا تَرَالُ كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى يُقَالَ لَهَا ارْتَفِعِي ارْجِعِي مِنْ حَيْثُ جِئْتِ فَتَرْجِعِ فُتُصْبِحُ طَالِعَةً مِنْ مَطْلِعِهَا ثُمَّ تَجْرِي لَا يَسْتَنْكِرُ النَّاسُ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا حَتَّى تَتَّهِيَ إِلَى مُسْتَقَرِّهَا ذَلِكَ تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ فَيُقَالُ لَهَا ارْتَفِعِي أَصْبِحِي طَالِعَةً مِنْ مَغْرِبِكَ فَتُصْبِحُ طَالِعَةً مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا ». فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- « أَتَذَرُونَ مِنِّي ذَاكُمْ ذَاكَ حِينَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا » [الأنعام: ١٥٨]. - صحيح مسلم

Abu Dharr said, “Once the Prophet asked, ‘Do you know where does the sun go?’ I answered, ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘It goes on until it reaches its resting place under the *‘Arsh*. It remains in prostration there until it is told, “Rise. Go back to where you came from.” It returns appearing from the east. Then it goes on until it reaches its resting place under the *‘Arsh*. It remains in prostration there until it is told, “Rise. Go back to where you came from.” It returns appearing from the east. Then it

goes on until it reaches its resting place under the *‘Arsh*. It remains in prostration there until it is told, “Rise. Go back to where you came from.” It returns appearing from the east. It will go on and the people will find nothing unusual about it. But it will (so happen that it will) go until it reaches its resting place under the *‘Arsh*. (It will prostrate itself) but will be told, “Rise from where you set.” It will appear from the west. Then the Prophet asked, ‘Do you know when will that happen? Well, that will be on, “The day some of His signs appear, of no profit will then be the belief of him who did not believe earlier, or did not earn good (deeds) in his belief.”

Discussing the above *hadith*, Imām Nawawi expresses the opinion that it might be best to leave it at its face value, (instead of trying to fix any meaning), since the sun’s prostration, its resting place, and other details are uncertain of meaning. This is the line taken by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others, who would rather leave the passage unexplained because of ambiguities surrounding it. As for the sun’s “*mustaqarr*” as explained in the *hadith*, he says that since the entire universe is under the *‘Arsh*, the sun’s position is under the *‘Arsh*

anyway – of course, not a very satisfactory explanation, although not without logic.

Shabbir's explanation (as in a treatise he wrote from which Mufti Shafi` quotes) of the *ahadith* quoted above is that, firstly, they are allegorical which help drive home the truth through imagery. They are not dealing with cosmological truths nor stating an astronomical fact. (These are things left to man to discover). Secondly, to fix the meaning of “*mustaqarr*” we might as well refer to another verse of the Qur`an (39: 5),

{يَكْوُرُ اللَّيْلُ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيَكْوُرُ النَّهَارُ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ
وَسَحَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى {
[الزمر: ٥]

“(He) coils the day upon the night and the night upon the day. And He has subjugated the sun and the moon, each running to a determined term.”

Therefore, Shabbir argues, “*mustaqarr*” here should be understood in a way that does not contradict with the meaning that the last quoted verse lends. It must also be understood that “*mustaqarr*” carries two meanings: one related to time, and the other related to space. When the Prophet explained sun's “*mustaqarr*” as under the sun,

” مُسْتَقَرُّهَا تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ ” – صحيح البخاري

he was referring to its spatial position, while the Qur`an could be referring to its position in time. Qatadah had this “time-dimension” in mind when he said that the sun's “*mustaqarr*” is the Day of Judgment.

Thus, the *hadith* is emphasizing the sun's complete submission to Allah's command. Its prostration is of the same nature as in the verse (22: 18),

{أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ
وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ { [الحج: ١٨]

“Do you not see that to Allah prostrate themselves all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the animals, and a great many of the people?”

On the other hand, at this point the Qur`an is drawing our attention to the governing of the celestial bodies and cosmological phenomena, leading a man of right mind to the Power that brought the organization into being. As for the sun rising from the West, this is predicted in many *ahadith*, and, all it would require is the earth's gradual halt because of the gravitational pull of a passing massive comet while the sun is on the same side as the comet. Then, as the

[39] And the moon, We have determined (its) phases,³⁶ until it returns (appearing) like an old palm-bough.

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَا مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٣٩﴾

comet passes on, it gradually reverses the present anti-clock wise rotation of the earth to clock wise. The humans might not be able to feel the halt and reversal because of the gradualness and because of darkness, the continents being on the other side of the sun. This is one of the possibilities. There can be several others (Au.).

36. Zamakhshari writes that the allusion is to twenty-eight phases of the moon, i.e., a new phase every new night (according to its position in the Zodiac). To highlight the pathetic state of ignorance of the contemporary Muslims and their backwardness in all fields of science, including astronomy, in which they were the pioneers: a pathetic state not only when compared with modern scientific knowledge, but also when compared with the knowledge of their predecessors and their interest in the world surrounding them, we present here the names allotted to the twenty-eight phases of the moon with reference to its position in the heaven among the stars and planets, as recorded by Zamakhshari. After

the completion of these twenty-eight phases, the moon disappears from sight, to reappear a day or two later as “an old palm-bough”:

الشرطان ، البطين ، الثريا ، الدبران ، الهقعة ، المنعة ، الذراع ، النثرة ، الطرف ، الجبهة ، الزبرة ، الصرفة ، العوا ، السماك ، الغفر ، الزباني ، الإكليل ، القلب ، الشولة ، النعائم ، البلدة ، سعد الذابح ، سعد بلع ، سعد السعود ، سعد الأخبية ، فرغ الدلو المقدم ، فرغ الدلو المؤخر ، الرشا . فإذا كان في آخر منازلها دقّ واستقوس ، و (عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ) وهو عود العذق ، ما بين شماليه إلى منبته من النخلة . وقال الزجاج : هو (فعلون) من الانعراج وهو الانعطاف . وقرئ : (العرجون) بوزن الفرجون ؛ وهما لغتان ، كالزبون

Qurtubi and the *Sufi* Commentator Alusi describe the position of stars indicating the numbers involved and the shapes they take, (during each of these twenty-eight phases) in relation to the position of the moon in the sky.

Far from matching their predecessors in piety, can the present day loquacious Muslims, drowned in this world, match them in astronomical observations? Perhaps in our times, many Muslims, men and women, have never seen the moon, except ac-

[40] It behooves not the sun that it should catch up with the moon, nor can the night overtake the day. Each is swimming in an orbit.³⁷

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ
وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ
يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

cidentally - so much time they spend on the television, open-mouthedly, empty headedly, following flashing absurd scenes. A true Muslim can only sHüdder at the heavenly response that these tens of millions can invoke (Au.).

37. “Falak” is any round or spherical body (Shawkani); the orbit of a celestial body (Penrice); “fallaka”: to have round breasts (Hans Wehr).

This is the clearest indication in the Qurʾān that the earth is spherical. Similarly, the going around the earth of the day and night, is only possible if the earth is round. Another Qurʾānic verse throws a stronger hint that the earth could be round. It says (39: 35),

يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ
[الزمر: ٥]

“(He) coils the day upon the night and the night upon the day.”

The word “yukawwiru” has its root in “kawwara” which means to coil, or wind. For example, كَوَّرَ عِمَامَتَهُ

“kawwara `Imāmatahu” means, “he wound his turban (around his head).” It was perhaps not this reasoning that was missing on the part of early Muslim scholars, but the explanation of how, if earth is spherical, the people on the other side do not fall off was difficult to reconcile. Newton’s gravitational discovery made it easier for people to accept the sphericity of the earth (Au.).

Strangely, however, when Imām Abu Haneefa was asked, as a report goes, about where the centre of the earth was, he gave a perfectly scientific answer when he said that it was right where he stood! (Au.).

Sphericity of the earth apart, the *ayah* in question raised difficulties for most Muslims of recent times. It says that the sun is swimming in an orbit of its own. This was alright so long as Pythagorean cosmological notions prevailed. In this system the earth was stationary. The sun went around it. But Muslim scholars were at their wit’s end trying to reconcile modern finding that the sun was

[41] And a sign for them (is there in) that We carried their seed in the laden ship.³⁸

وَأَيَّةٌ لَهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ
الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] And We created for them the like of it, on which they ride.³⁹

وَحَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] If We wished, We could drown them, then none there would be for them to cry to, nor would they be delivered.

وَإِن نَّشَاءُ نَعْرِفُهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيحَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنْقَدُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

stationary. It is the earth that went around it. Many scholars held to their guns and said they believed in the Qur'an. Let science and scientists say what they will. The Qur'an could not be wrong. The scholars carried the masses in their sway. But the Western educated Muslim class was in doldrums. For many, their faith in the Qur'an as a Revelation was at risk. Actually, for a while the Qur'an was opposing everyone's notion: those of the Muslim scholars who thought the earth was stationary, and those of the scientists who said the sun was stationary with the earth going round it. It was only in the early years of the 20th century that it was discovered that the sun indeed was on the move, not going round the earth, but going round the centre of the Milky Way galaxy along with billions of other stars similarly orbiting the center. The sun orbits the center of galaxy at a speed of about 200 km a second, and completes a round in

250 million years. As it swims in its orbit through empty space around it, it carries with it its family of planets and their satellites (moons) bound to it by the gravitational force. The Qur'an proved true. No human could have predicted this 1400 years ago (Au.).

38. The *Salaf* generally agreed that the allusion is to the boat of Nuh (*asws*). But how to explain use of the word progeny? Zamakhshari answers that the meaning is, "We carried your forefathers, who carried you in their backs, in fact, also your own progeny who are in your backs, in Nuh's boat."

Asad remarks: "The term 'offspring' denotes here the human race as a whole (cf. the recurring expression 'children of Adam')."

39. Since the camel is often referred to as the ship of the desert, some of the oldest authorities have thought that the allusion by "the like of it" is

[44] Save for a mercy from Us, and enjoyment for a while.

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] When they are told, 'Fear what is before you and what is after you,'⁴⁰ haply you are shown mercy (they heed not).⁴¹

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] And there never comes to them a sign from the signs of their Lord but they are ever turning away from it.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

to this beast. Further, the words imply that the first ship ever made was by Nuh under the direct guidance of Allah. Later human fabricators followed that prototype (Au.).

The human race would have perished at the time of the Flood, adds, Mawdudi, if not for Allah's instruction. All later modifications, improvements, and perfections owe their existence to the first model. Yet, it might be remembered, that despite great strides in navigational equipments and techniques, man is far from able to subdue the seas. Allah's Power has its sway and can drown the ships any moment He wishes.

40. Mujahid explained it as meaning, the sins that have already been

forwarded, and the sins that will be committed in time (Tabari).

41. "Man should consider and beware of the consequences of his past, and guard against the consequences in his future. The present is only a fleeting moment poised between the past and the future, and gone even while it is being mentioned or thought about. Man should review his whole life and prepare for the Hereafter. If he does so, Allah is Merciful: He will forgive, and give strength for a better and higher life in the future. But this kind of teaching does not suit those steeped in this ephemeral life, they are bored, and turn away from it, to their own loss" (Yusuf Ali).

[47] And when they are told, 'Expend out of what Allah has provided you,' those who have disbelieved say to those who have believed, 'Should we feed him whom Allah would have fed if He (so) willed?⁴² Surely, you are in a manifest error.'

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْطَعِمُ مَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] And they ask, 'When will the promise be, if you are true?'

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] They are not waiting but for a single Cry that will seize them while they are disputing.

مَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Then they will not have the power of testament, nor to their folks will they return.⁴³

فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] And the Trumpet will be blown into, and lo! from their graves will they rush to their Lord.

وَيُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

42. This demonstrates that disbelief had not only blinded the intellects of the adversaries of this Message, but also destroyed their moral sense. They followed a pervert philosophy to escape from moral bindings (Mawdudi).

Yusuf Ali has a deeper note: "They are too full of themselves to have a corner in their hearts for others. 'If' they say, 'Allah gave them nothing, why should we?' There is arrogance in this as well as blasphemy: arrogance in thinking that they are favoured because of their merits, and blasphemy in laying the blame of other people's misfortunes on Allah.

They further try to turn the tables on the Believers by pretending that the Believers are entirely on a wrong track. They forget that all men are on probation and trial: they hold their gifts on trust: those apparently less favoured, in that they have fewer of this world's goods, may be really more fortunate, because they are teaming patience, self-reliance, and the true value of things ephemeral which is apt to be very much exaggerated in men's eyes."

43. The allusion is to the day, write Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others, when the Trumpet will be blown. Tabari quotes a long *hadith* which

[52] They will say, 'Ah, our woe. Who roused us out of our sleeping-place?'⁴⁴ This is what the All-merciful had promised, and the Messengers spoke the truth.⁴⁵

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] It was not but a single blast, when lo! at once they are brought to their Lord - altogether.

إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] Then, today no soul shall be wronged in the least; nor will you be recompensed but for what you were doing.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا تُظَلَّمُ تَمْسٌ شَيْئًا وَلَا نُجْزُونَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

could not be traced by this author. But a shorter version is in Bukhari, as reported by Abu Hurayrah. It says,

وَلَتَقُومَنَّ السَّاعَةُ وَقَدْ نَشَرَ الرَّجُلَانِ ثَوْبَهُمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ، فَلَا يَتَّبَاعِيَعَانِهِ وَلَا يَطْوِيَانِهِ ، وَلَتَقُومَنَّ السَّاعَةُ وَقَدْ أَنْصَرَفَ الرَّجُلُ بِلَبَنِ لِفَحْتِهِ فَلَا يَطْعُمُهُ ، وَلَتَقُومَنَّ السَّاعَةُ وَهُوَ يُلِيطُ حَوْضَهُ فَلَا يَسْقِي فِيهِ ، وَلَتَقُومَنَّ السَّاعَةُ وَقَدْ رَفَعَ أَكْلَتَهُ إِلَى فِيهِ فَلَا يَطْعُمُهَا. - صحيح البخاري

“Surely, the Hour will strike while two men would have stretched open a piece of cloth but will not finalize the deal nor will be able to fold it back. Surely, the Hour will strike when a man would have milked his beast but will not be able to drink it. Surely, the Hour will strike when he would have just placed the stones together for his water trough but will not be able to water (his animals). And surely, the Hour will strike while one of you would

have raised a morsel of food to the mouth but will not be able to take it in.”

44. The word “sleeping-place” (marqad) has been used because according to authorities such as Ubayy b. Ka`b, Qatadah and Mujahid, mankind will go into a short nap, just before the final blow of the Trumpet wakes them up (Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and others).

Alusi however points out that if it is treated as “masdar mimi” then the meaning the word “marqad” will lend is, sleep. That is, who woke us up from our sleep?

It has also been said by some of the *Salaf* that in comparison to what the unbelievers will see of the horrors of the Day, the punishment in the grave they had been undergoing would be like, to use a modern cliché, picnic.

[55] Verily, today the companions of Paradise are busy (in pleasantries), rejoicing⁴⁶ إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغُلٍ فَاكِهُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

45. “The dead will rise as in a stupor, and they will be confused in the new conditions! They will gradually regain their memory and their personality. They will be reminded that Allah in His grace and mercy had already announced the Hereafter in their probationary lives, and the word of Allah’s messengers, which then seemed so strange and remote, was true and was now being fulfilled” (Yusuf Ali).

“This is what .. spoke the truth,” - whose words are these? Mujahid and Qatadah thought it is the believers who will thus say. But Ibn Zayd said it is the unbelievers who will say so. The former opinion sounds weightier (Tabari).

Ibn Kathir points out that Ibn Jarir’s inclination can be substantiated with another verse (22: 55, 56),

{ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا يُؤْفَكُونَ. وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْنَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ فَهَذَا يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ } [الروم: ٥٥ - ٥٦]

“The Day the Hour strikes, the criminals will swear (that) they

tarried not but an hour. That is how they were being deluded. But those that were given knowledge and faith shall say, ‘Indeed you tarried by Allah’s decree to the day of resurrection. This then is the day of resurrection, but you were not knowing.’”

46. The translation reflects the understanding offered by Ibn Jarir. That is, the inhabitants of Paradise will be in various kinds of pleasantries, or, to put it as Majid does, “(they) shall be happily employed.”

The above is supported by Hasan’s opinion (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

However, Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, and Alusi also report the opinion of Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id ibn al-Musayyib and others that the allusion is to breaking the seal of the virgins.

Reports to this effect are also in Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, and Ibn Marduwayh (Shawkani).

But, that need not necessarily be the case. After all, that would be only

[56] They and their spouses: in shades,⁴⁷ reclining on decorated couches.⁴⁸

هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ
مُتَّكِفُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] For them are therein fruit, and for them whatever they ask for.⁴⁹

لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُمْ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] 'Salam,' will be the word from a Lord Compassionate.

سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِنْ رَبِّ رَحِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

one of the enjoyments in Paradise. The verse is simply saying that the believers will be in such pleasantries as to make them unconcerned of the fate of the unbelievers (Alusi).

“*Fakihin*” however (translated here as “rejoicing”) has, Ibn Jarir points out, another connotation, viz., of relishing fruits.

Yusuf Ali adds: “Notice the subtle gradation in the description. First, in this verse, we have the nature of the mise en scene and the nature of the joy therein. It will be a Garden i.e., everything agreeable to see and hear and feel and taste and smell; delightful green lawns and meadows, trees and shrubs; the murmur of streams and the songs of birds: the delicate texture of flowers and leaves and the shapes of beauty in clouds and mist; the flavours of fruits; and the perfumes of flowers and scents. The joy in the Garden will be an active joy, without fatigue: whatever we do in it, every employment in which we

engage there, will be a source of joy without alloy.”

47. Asad notes: “In the Qur’ānic description of paradise, the term ‘*zill*’ (‘shade’) and its plural ‘*zilal*’ is often used as a metaphor for ‘happiness.’”

48. The textual word “*ara’ik*”, sing. *arikah*, has been explained as meaning “*hijal*”, sing. “*hajalah*” (Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid: Tabari). The latter is a word of Yemeni origin and stands for a curtained canopy, tent, pavilion or the like, decorated and adorned with colorful cloth prepared for a bride (Lexicon). Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Muhammad b. Ka`b, Hasan, Qatadah, Suddi and Khusayf however added as explanation, that the “*ara’ik*” will be under the “*hijal*” (Ibn Kathir).

49. Ibn Kathir cites a report found in Ibn Majah and Ibn Abi Hatim, in explanation of the enjoyments of Paradise. Usama b. Zayd reported that the Prophet addressed his Companions one of those days and said,

[59] 'Fall apart today, O criminals.

﴿٥٩﴾ وَامْتَارُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ

[60] Had I not enjoined upon you, O children of Adam, that you should not worship Shaytan,⁵⁰ (that) surely he is your open enemy?

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] And that you worship Me (alone)? This is the straight path.

وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] He did lead astray a great multitude of you (in the past). Were you not able to think?

وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا أَفَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] This is the Jahannum (then), that you were promised.

﴿٦٣﴾ هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

[64] Roast therein today, for that you were rejecting.'

﴿٦٤﴾ اصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ

عن أسامة بن زَيْد ، قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ لِأَصْحَابِهِ : أَلَا مُسَمَّرٌ لِلْجَنَّةِ ؟ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ لَا حَظَرَ لَهَا ، هِيَ وَرَبِّ الْكَعْبَةِ نُورٌ يَتَلَأَلُ ، وَرِيحَانَةٌ تَهْتَرُ ، وَقَصْرٌ مَشِيدٌ ، وَتَهْرٌ مُطَرَّدٌ ، وَفَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ تَضْبِجُ ، وَرَوْحَةٌ حَسَنَاءُ جَمِيلَةٌ ، وَحُلَلٌ كَثِيرَةٌ فِي مَقَامٍ أَبَدًا ، فِي حَبْرَةٍ وَنَضْرَةٍ ، فِي دَارٍ عَالِيَةٍ سَلِيمَةٍ بَهِيَّةٍ ، قَالُوا : نَحْنُ الْمُسَمَّرُونَ هَذَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، قَالَ : قُولُوا : إِنَّ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ، ثُمَّ ذَكَرَ الْجَهَادَ وَحَضَّ عَلَيْهِ .
— ابن ماجه وغيره

said, “We do aspire after it Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Say, ‘in sha Allah.’” Thereafter he spoke of *Jihad* and encouraged them to take part.

“Is there no aspirant for Paradise? Paradise has no hazard therein. It is, by the Lord of the Ka`bah, dazzling light, swaying fragrance, massive palaces, steady streams, plenty of ripe fruits, strikingly beautiful spouses, and lots of jewelry – in a place everlasting, in luxuries and pleasantries, in high rise splendid apartments.” They

Haythami noted that the trustworthiness of one of the narrators has been questioned, but otherwise, the rest of the chain is reliable. Dhahabi also expressed his doubts about that narrator. Ibn Hibban however trusted him and hence placed the report in his *Sahih* collection (Au.).

50. It should be obvious, writes Razi in effect, that *Shaytan* being invisible, nobody worships him in the direct manner. Obeying his commands then, is to worship him (as said here: “la ta`budu”). Whatever is done,

even if it is an act of Allah's worship, following either his command, or a whisper, or what will please him even when he is not with us, can be in his service. Further, if the sin is the "qalbi" type (of the heart), and not merely "jasadi" (of the body), then it is an act of worship directed to him. A sin in which one's faith is not involved, where his belief in Allah remains untouched is "jasadi." That is, following *Shaytan's* bidding from such a state of weakness can be of the "jasadi" type of service to him. In contrast, if there is lack of faith, such as where Allah's powers are questioned, or doubted by the heart, then the sin is "qalbi." Following *Shaytan's* bidding from such a state is to worship him. The sins of the "Prophets" (so called because of their high status, are, (if admitted as sins despite their extremely minor nature), of the "jasadi" type. They reach higher status with Allah because of their quick repentance, and because of the extended acts of expiation. They prove themselves better than the angels who said (2: 30), "We sing your glory in Praise and

magnify You." There is no question of the Prophets and Messengers ever being in any doubt about Allah and His powers.

The relationship between us and *Shaytan* is of course, quite complicated leading to a variety of consequences. For example, if someone worships Allah, but follows *Shaytan's* bidding, to please other than Him, then, in actual fact he worshipped *Shaytan*. On the other hand, a believer's vigilance can lead him closer to Allah, despite having temporarily fallen prey to *Shaytan's* scheming. To illustrate with an example, an act following *Shaytan's* bidding, can actually lead to Allah's approval, albeit indirectly. It can happen in this way. *Shaytan* bids a man an evil and departs quite satisfied having left him busy with it. But if the sin in question is of the bodily type (jasadi), and not where the heart and soul's approval is there (qalbi), then the man soon realizes the error. He is deeply rueful and turns to his Lord with greater vigor: remorseful, repenting, expiating, and so on. This takes him closer to Allah.

[65] Today, We shall seal over their mouths and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify to what they were earning.⁵¹

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

51. Other Qur’ānic passages tell us that after the mouths are sealed, not only organs but even the skin will speak out. The Qur’ān said (41: 20),

{ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ } [فصلت: ٢٠]

“When they arrive at it, their ears, their sights and their skins will bear witness against them – about what they were doing” (Shabbir, Mawdudi).

This is corroborated by the *hadīth*. One is in Muslim, as reported by Anas b. Malik. He says:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَصَحَّحَ فَقَالَ هَلْ تَذَرُونَ مِنِّي أَصْحَابُكَ قَالَ قُلْنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ قَالَ مِنْ مَخَاطِبَةِ الْعَبْدِ رَبُّهُ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَلَمْ تُجْزِنِي مِنَ الظُّلْمِ قَالَ يَقُولُ بَلَىٰ قَالَ فَيَقُولُ فَإِنِّي لَا أُجِيزُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِي إِلَّا شَاهِدًا مِنِّي قَالَ فَيَقُولُ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ شَهِيدًا وَبِالْكَرَامِ الْكَاتِبِينَ شُهودًا قَالَ فَيُحْتَمَمُ عَلَىٰ فِيهِ فَيَقَالُ لِأَرْكَانِهِ أَنْطِقِي قَالَ فَتَنْطِقُ بِأَعْمَالِهِ قَالَ ثُمَّ يُحَلَّىٰ بِنَتْنِهِ وَيَبِينُ الْكَلَامَ قَالَ فَيَقُولُ بَعْدًا لَكَرْنٍ وَسُخْفًا فَعَنْكَرَنَّ كُنْتُ أَنَاضِلُ. - صحيح مسلم

We were with the Prophet when he smiled. He asked, “Do you know why I smiled?” We said,

“Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “(I smiled) at the conversation of a slave with his Lord. He will say, ‘My Lord. Have you not freed me of oppression?’ He will say, ‘Yes, of course.’ He will say, ‘I will not allow any testifier against me, except myself.’ He will say, ‘Enough for you against you, yourself as a testifier, and the honored Scribes as witnesses.’ Then his mouth will be sealed and his organs told, ‘Speak.’ They will speak out his deeds. Then he will be allowed to talk. He will say, ‘Away from you, and destruction (for you). Was it not for your sake that I was disputing?’” (Kashshaf, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

There is another report in Muslim and other collections. The last part of this long report says,

ثُمَّ يَلْقَى الثَّلَاثَ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَمَنْتُ بِكَ وَبِكِتَابِكَ وَبِرُسُلِكَ وَصَلَّيْتُ وَصُمْتُ وَتَصَدَّقْتُ وَيُفَنِّي بِخَيْرٍ مَا اسْتَطَاعَ فَيَقُولُ هَاهُنَا إِذَا قَالَ ثُمَّ يَقَالُ لَهُ الْآنَ تَبَعْتُ شَاهِدَنَا عَلَيْكَ وَيَتَفَكَّرُ فِي نَفْسِهِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْهَدُ عَلَيَّ فَيُحْتَمَمُ عَلَىٰ فِيهِ

[66] And, if We willed, We could surely have blotted their eyes,⁵² then they would have raced to the path, but how could they have seen?⁵³

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا
الصِّرَاطَ فَأَنَّىٰ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَيُقَالُ لِفَخْذِهِ وَحَمِيهِ وَعِظَامِهِ انْطَقِي فَتَنْطِقُ فَخِذُهُ
وَحَمِيَّهُ وَعِظَامُهُ بِعَمَلِهِ. - صحيح مسلم

“Then a third one will be presented. He will speak out like the previous one saying, ‘My Lord. I believed in You, in Your Book, Your Messengers, prayed, fasted, and spent (in Your cause)’ He will thus praise himself to the degree possible. He (Allah) will remark, ‘Even here (the lies)?!’ Then he will be told, ‘Now We shall bring up Our testifiers against you.’ He will wonder who could bear witness against him. Then his mouth will be sealed and his thighs, flesh, and bones told, ‘Speak out.’ His thighs, flesh, and bones will speak about his deeds.”

A report in Ibn Jarir, coming through Abu Musa al-Ash`ari says that when the record of deeds is presented, one of the unbelievers will deny that he did any such thing as recorded. He will say, “My Lord. This angel has written down things that I did not do.” The angel will protest, “Did you not do such and such a thing, on such and such a day, in place such

and such?” He will say, “My Lord. By Your Honor. I never did any such thing.” Then Allah will seal his mouth and his organs will be allowed to speak (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

There is a similar report in Tirmidhi (Shawkani).

And, a report in Ahmad tells us that it is the left thigh that will speak out first when told to. ‘Uqbah b. `Aamir says he heard the Prophet say,

عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
يَقُولُ إِنَّ أَوَّلَ عَظْمٍ مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ يَتَكَلَّمُ يَوْمَ يُحْتَمَمُ
عَلَى الْأَقْوَامِ فَخِذُهُ مِنَ الرَّجُلِ الشِّمَالِ. - مسند
أحمد

“The first bone of a man that will speak out when mouths are sealed is his left thigh” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Haythami noted that the *hadith* is also in Tabarani and carries a trustworthy chain (Au.).

52. Asad comments, “Lit., ‘We could surely have effaced their eyes’: a metaphor for ‘We could have created them morally blind’ and, thus, devoid of all sense of moral responsibility – which in its turn, would

[67] *And, if We willed, We could have transformed them (fixe) in their places, then they would not have been able to move forward, nor could they have returned.*⁵⁴

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَمَسَخْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِهِمْ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مُضِيًّا وَلَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] *And, to whomsoever We grant long life, We reverse him in creation;⁵⁵ then, will they not think?*⁵⁶

وَمَنْ نُّعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

constitute a negation of all spiritual values in human life as such.”

53. Writes Asad: “In this instance – as, e.g., in 20: 96 – the verb ‘basura’ (‘he became seeing’ or ‘he saw’) is obviously used in its tropical sense of ‘perceiving [something] mentally.’ According to Ibn `Abbas, as quoted by Tabari, the phrase ‘anna yubsirun’ signifies ‘how could they perceive the truth.’”

That is, had Allah wished, He could have blinded them altogether so that, even if they rushed to the path, how could they have perceived it? This explanation comes from Ibn `Abbas (Ibn Kathir).

54. Asad again, “I.e., if it had been God’s will that men should have no freedom of will or moral choice, He would have endowed them from the very beginning with a spiritually and morally stationary nature, entirely rooted in their instincts (‘in their places’) devoid of all urge to advance,

and incapable either of positive development or of retreat from a wrong course.”

If the passage is taken in the allegorical sense, then the above holds water. The *Salaf*, however, offered a contextual explanation, as in Tabari and others, viz. the unbelievers wanted to attack the Prophet as he offered prayers in the Grand Mosque. Allah prevented them by blinding the eyes of some, so that they failed to spot the Prophet, and froze the movements of others to prevent them from advancing towards him.

55. So that, as the age advances, man begins to lose physical and mental powers in the same measures in which he gained them at first. First memory wanes, then physical strength and vigor decline, and finally, all mental powers are lost, so that he becomes, if he lived long enough, the infant that he was when he came into this world – helplessly lying in

[69] *And, We have not taught him poetry,⁵⁷ nor does it befit him.⁵⁸ It is only a reminder and a clear recitation.*

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

the bed, surviving on liquids, not knowing when he relieves himself, and unable to recognize anyone - until death comes as a relief, to him and to those who are tested through him. How many dutiful sons and daughters have not prayed for the death of their invalid parents?! (Au.).

No wonder, as Qurtubi notes, the Prophet himself prayed to be spared advanced old age.

His prayer-words – futile to look for in any other religious system - as recorded by Muslim and reported by Zayd b. al-Arqam are:

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمَ قَالَ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِلَّا كَمَا كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ كَانَ يَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَالْجُبْنِ وَالْبُحْلِ وَالْهَرَمِ وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ اللَّهُمَّ آتْ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا وَرَكِّهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرٌ مِنْ رَكَّاهَا أَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا. -
صحيح مسلم

Zayd said, “I will not say anything to you but what the Prophet used to say, ‘O Allah, I seek Your protection from incapacity, sloth, cowardice, senescence, and punishment in the grave. O Al-

lah, award my soul its piety and cleanse it, for You are the best of those who cleanse. You are its protector and its trustee. O Allah, I seek your protection from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not fear, from a base self that cannot be satiated, and a supplication that is not answered” (Au.).

56. This verse is related to the previous two verses where Allah spoke of transformation. Now, if someone wonders how humans can be transformed, then, ‘let them consider how we transform them during their different phases of life, particularly the last phase of complete helplessness’ (Shabbir).

57. Has poetry ever brought such transformation in the lives of the people as brought about by the Qur’ān? The Qur’ān created such monumental social institutions that last to this day. What poet ever achieved a fraction of this? It was to disallow any doubts on this score that although even slave-girls of the Quraysh were poets, the Prophet could not quote correctly a single poetical line, far

from making up his own, except that he had to be always corrected (Shab-bir).

Asad points to a major difference between the Qur'ān and poetical creations: “.. we have here an allusion to the allegation of Muhammad's opponents, in his own as well as later times, that what he described as divine revelation was in reality an outcome of his own poetical invention. This the Qur'ān refutes by alluding to the fundamental difference between poetry – especially Arabic poetry – and divine revelation as exemplified by the Qur'ān: whereas in the former the meaning is often subordinated to the rhythm and the melody of the language, in the Qur'ān the exact opposite is the case, inasmuch as here the choice of words, their sound and their position in the sentence – and, hence, its rhythm and melody – are always subordinated to the meaning intended.”

Qatadah said that `A'isha was asked whether the Prophet ever said poetry. She replied, “The most despised thing to him! Yet, occasionally he would quote a line, but all wrong. Abu Bakr would offer correction and he would say, ‘I think I am incapable of doing it right, and it does not benefit me that I should say poetry’ (Ibn

Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Although the Prophet admitted, as in Bukhari, reported by Ubayy b. Ka`b that,

إِنَّ مِنَ الشِّعْرِ حِكْمَةً. - صحيح البخاري

“Surely, some poetry contains wisdom” (Razi and others).

We also have Bayhaqi recording that when the Prophet met `Abbas b. Mirdas he told him, “Are you not the one who said,

أَبْتَجَلُ نَهْيٍ وَتَهَبُ الْعُبَيْدُ بَيْنَ الْأَفْرَعِ وَعُيَيْنَةَ

`Abbas corrected him, “But rather it is,

أَبْتَجَلُ نَهْيٍ وَتَهَبُ الْعُبَيْدُ بَيْنَ عُيَيْنَةَ وَالْأَفْرَعِ

The Prophet remarked (perhaps to Mirdas' discomfiture), “It's all the same” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

What he meant by saying “It's all the same” is that so far as the meaning was concerned, it made no difference whether you said, `Uyayna and Aqra`, or Aqra' and `Uyayna.” But it is the rhyme which matters, without which a line is not poetry (Au.).

Ibn Kathir reports Sha`bi as having said, “There was not anyone in the family of `Abd al-Muttalib (the Prophet's grandfather), neither male nor female, but who said poetry ex-

cept the Prophet.”

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir give some more examples of how the Prophet invariably got mixed up while quoting poetry. For example, he tried to quote the second-half line of Tarafah and said,

وَبِأَيْتِكَ مَنْ لَمْ تُرَوِّدْ بِالْأَخْبَارِ

But the correct version runs as follows:

سُبِّدِي لَكَ الْأَيَّامُ مَا كُنْتَ جَاهِلًا
وَبِأَيْتِكَ بِالْأَخْبَارِ مَنْ لَمْ تُرَوِّدْ

There are a few lines that have been attributed to the Prophet as the nearest he came to saying poetry. One of them he said at the time of the digging of the Trench. They are,

اللَّهُمَّ لَوْلَا أَنْتَ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا
وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا
فَأَنْزَلْنَا سَكِينَةً عَلَيْنَا
وَتَثَبَّتْ الْأَقْدَامُ إِنْ لَاقَيْنَا
إِنَّ الْأَعْدَاءَ قَدْ بَعَوْا عَلَيْنَا
إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أَيْنَا

But these are not the Prophet's own lines. It is 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha who had composed them. Further, the Prophet did not sing the lines. He only joined the chorus at the end of the lines (Ibn Kathir).

Nonetheless, writes Kashshaf, and, following him, Qurtubi and Ibn

Kathir, two instances of the Prophet saying what could be considered as poetry could be cited. One, when he injured his finger. The report is in the *Sahihayn*. He said:

هل أنت إلا أصبع دميت
وفي سبيل الله ما لقيت

Are you but a finger that has bled?

And received what you did in Allah's way?

And another when he said in Hunayn:

أنا النبي لا كذب
أنا ابن عبد المطلب

I am a Prophet, that is no lie

I am the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib.

These are, however, extempore utterances that are not poetical pieces, but at best, smack of poetry. Many non-poets, writing prose, delivering sermons, or composing proverbs, have uttered rhythmical lines although ordinarily they never said poetry nor anyone thought they had become poets. Occasional stitching, as Qurtubi remarks, does not convert a man into a tailor.

[It might also be noted that no one said poetry under imminent threat to his life, as was the situation in Hunayn, when the need was to quickly

move away from the dangerous situation rather than say poetry. Further, such composition is the share of every Arab with some mastery over the language, without being a poet; such is the characteristic of the language itself. Note for example the following lines that Imām Ghazali, a dry *Sufi*, wrote in the introduction to one of the chapters. We have split the prose lines to make the point,

الحمد لله المبدئ المعيد، الفعال لما يريد، ذي العرش
المجيد، والبطش الشديد، الهادي صفوة العبيد، إلى
المنهج الرشيد، والمسلك السديد، المنعم عليهم
بعد شهادة التوحيد، بحراسة عقائدهم عن ظلمات
التشكيك والترديد، ..

The lines go on filling quarter of a large page, flowing out effortlessly here, as at the beginning of every chapter of his book “The Revival of Islamic Sciences”: [Au].

In fact, Ibn Kathir continues, the Prophet did not approve of poetry for himself, although he accepted it from his Companions, especially those who inveighed against the pagans. As for himself, we have a report in Abu Da’ud,

عَبَدَ اللَّهُ بَنَ عَمْرُو يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: ”مَا أَتَيْتُ إِلَّا أَنَا
شَرِيْتُ تَرْيَاقًا أَوْ تَعَلَّقْتُ تَمِيمَةً أَوْ قَلْتُ الشَّعْرَ مِنْ
قَبْلِ نَفْسِي“ .

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr said that he heard the Prophet say, “I would not care for what I brought if I drank the potion, or hung an amulet or composed poetry on my own.” And, back to the *hadith* text, what the Prophet meant by saying, “I would not care for what I brought...” is, ‘it would not matter whether I brought revelation or not if I believed in potions, amulets or poetry.’ Since they stand in contrast to the Qur’ān and its message.

[Scholars have explained that by “the potion” he meant that medication which contains, in any quantity, the unlawful, although he allowed it to his followers. As regards amulet, it is such of them he disapproved of that contain pagan lines, or words that smack of idolatry. Otherwise, if it is Qur’ānic verses, it is allowable, although Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi has said that wearing amulet is not the *Sunnah*, but rather recitation is. On the other hand Khattabi did not see anything wrong if it contains Qur’ānic verses. Finally, the report itself (of Abu Da’ud above) is not too strong: ‘Awn al-Ma’bud - Au.].

58. Majid brings out a fine point of distinction between what the apparent words suggest as the objection

[70] That he may warn him who is alive,⁵⁹ and the word may be realized against the unbelievers.⁶⁰

لِيُنذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَجِئَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] Have they not seen how We have created for them among things that Our Hands fashioned:⁶¹ cattle, of which they are masters?⁶²

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا
أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

raised by the pagans, and what in actual fact they could have meant. He writes, "This is said in answer to the pagans who held the holy Prophet to be a poet. Now, a poet in their parlance, did not mean a versifier. Poetry according to them, as according to most primitive peoples, was not a fine art, but a sort of magical utterance, inspired by powers from the Unseen: and the poet in their estimation was more allied to soothsayer than to a literary composer. 'The Arabian poet (Shaa`ir), as the name indicates, was originally one endowed with knowledge hidden from the common man, which he acknowledge he received from a demon, his special *Shaytan* (Satan). As a poet he was in league with the unseen powers and could by his curses bring evil upon the enemy. Satire was therefore a very early form of Arabian poetry' (Hitti, op.cit. p.94f)."

59. Yusuf Ali almost paraphrases Tabari's words, "Alive', both in English and Arabic, means not only

'having physical life', but having all the active qualities which we associate with life. In religious language, those who are not responsive to the realities of the spiritual world are no better than those who are dead. The Message of Allah penetrates the hearts of those who are alive in the spiritual sense."

60. That is, the word of punishment, that whoever denied out of contumacy shall be punished (Au.).

61. Usage of the words "Our Hands" is only figurative (Zamakhshari), meaning "handiwork"; and the intent is, "Our Hands fashioned" without involvement of any other, implying, in other words, 'created them, all by Himself' (Thanwi).

62. So that, a herd of a hundred camels can be lined up and driven from place to place by a little boy (Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir in effect). In fact, they can be lined up for slaughter taking place right before their eyes, but, do not bolt away en-masse, except for

the individual's struggle when the knife is actually applied (Au.).

The Qur'ān characterizes unbelievers as "qawmun la ya`qilun." Domestication of animals is an example and draws some curious explanations from the scientists since domestication works against the Darwinian theory of evoLūtion. How does one explain the presence of cattle among the humankind? The answer given by the respected community of scientists is that they came into homes by accident and then decided to stay on. It was easier to get fed here rather than in the forests where they had to compete for food, kill or get killed. But why only the cattle, and, in addition, cats and dogs? Why not the beautiful antelopes? Or the cute-looking rabbits? Or the much loved parrots? Why do the birds fly off after ten years in the cage, where they do not have to compete for food nor get snatched by an eagle, but rather, as in zoos, live with the whole family, parents and children, twittering morning and evening? And the cat, that turns up home after a decade, dropped a thousand miles away by a

tired master? And how about goats? Did they escape from the tiger, who only feasted on one of the flock, and chose to live with man who feasts on not one, but the entire flock, generation after generation, slaughtered mercilessly? Someone could perhaps suggest to the scientists to cage up one of wild animals – tigers, jackals, sparrows - and then see whether it will return when released in a forest after twenty years of captivity. They could also try and domesticate jackals, and after a decade line up a hundred of them to lead them out to the parallel street, not for slaughter, but as proof of their stupid explanations. They will say, "Ah, the process requires millions of years." Yes, yes. Millions of years! How true. He forgets that he claims in his other books that the oldest Man has not been around here for more than 100,000 years. Or, is he honest? Alright, 100,000 years. But the parrot has been in the cage for 100,000 years. Open the cage and see whether it flies faster or the evoLūtionist's intellect flies off faster. How true the Qur'ān: "innahum qawmun la ya`qilun" (Au.).

[72] And We subdued them unto them, so that some of them are for their ride, while some of them they eat.⁶³

وَدَلَّلْنَاهَا هُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] And for them there are in them (other) benefits, and drinks. Will they not then give thanks?

وَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعَ وَمَشَارِبَ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] Yet they have taken deities other than Allah for worship,⁶⁴ hoping that they might be helped.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] (But) they are not capable of helping them, in fact, they are (merely) a host of theirs who will be brought up (for judgment).⁶⁵

لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُخَضَّرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

[76] So, let not their words grieve you. Verily, We know what they conceal and what they reveal.

فَلَا يَحْزِنَكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

63. Hence we have been instructed to say when we mount one of them (43: 13),

{ سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ }
[الزخرف: ١٣]

“Blessed is the One who subdued this to us, although we could not have subdued it (ourselves)” - Zamakhshari.

64. “... alluding .. to objects of worship consciously conceived as such – i.e., idols, imaginary deities, deified persons, saints, etc., - as well as to abstract concepts like power, wealth or ‘luck’, which may not be consciously ‘worshipped’ but are nevertheless often revered in an almost idolatrous fashion” (Asad).

65. There have been two opinions. Mujahid said that the deities (forces) as well as their worshippers will be presented for judgment. But Qatadah believed that the allusion is to the devotees who believe in false gods (forces), in whose defense they are ready to fight in this world, but which themselves will be brought forth before them for judgment (Ibn Jarir).

Qatadah’s opinion has been strengthened by that of Hasan al-Busri (Ibn Kathir).

In Shabbir’s words: Far from these false deities helping them out on the Judgment day, they will in fact, get their devotees arrested.

[77] Has not man seen that We created him of a sperm-drop? And lo! there he is, an open adversary.⁶⁶

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

Mujahid’s opinion is supported by the *ahadīth*. One in Tirmidhi is on the authority of Abu Hurayrah. The Prophet said,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: “يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي صَعِيدٍ وَاحِدٍ ثُمَّ يَطَّلِعُ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ فَيَقُولُ أَلَا يَتَّبِعُ كُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ مَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ. فَيُمَثِّلُ لِصَاحِبِ الصَّلِيبِ صَلْبِيَهُ وَلِصَاحِبِ التَّصَاوِيرِ تَصَاوِيرَهُ وَلِصَاحِبِ النَّارِ نَارَهُ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ وَيَتَّبِعَى الْمُسْلِمُونَ. - سنن الترمذي

“Allah will gather together the people in one plain. Then the Lord of the world will appear before them and say, ‘Will not every man follow what he was worshipping?’ Then, for him who had worshipped the Cross, He will present his Cross (as a living god). He who worshipped an image, He will present him his image. He who worshipped the fire, He will present him his fire. Then those who worshipped them will follow them (into Hellfire). Only Muslims will remain.”

Similar reports are in other works such as Muslim (Qurtubi).

Yusuf Ali comments: “There is some difference of opinion among Com-

mentators as to the exact meaning to be attached to this clause. As I understand it, the meaning seems to be this. Man is apt to forget or turn away from the true God, the source of all the good which he enjoys, and to go after imaginary powers in the shape of gods, heroes, men, or abstract things like Science or Nature or Philosophy, or superstitious things like Magic, or Good-Fortune or Ill-Fortune, or embodiments of his own selfish desires. He thinks that they might help him in this Life or in the Hereafter (if he believes in a Hereafter). But they cannot help him: on the contrary all things that are false will be brought up and condemned before Allah’s Judgment-seat, and the worshippers of the Falsehoods will also be treated as a troop favouring the Falsehoods and therefore worthy of condemnation. The Falsehoods, therefore, instead of helping them, will contribute to their condemnation.”

66. “Disputant” is another possible connotation of the textual word “khasim” (Zamakhshari). “... Razi equates here the term ‘khasim’ (lit. ‘contender in argument’) with the

[78] He strikes for Us an example, and forgets his own creation.⁶⁷ He says, 'Who will quicken the bones when they are decomposed?'⁶⁸

وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] Say, 'He will quicken them who created them the first time. He is, of all creation, knowing.'

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾

highest manifestation of what is described as 'natiq' (articulate [or 'rational'] being)" – Asad.

(The Prophet drove home the main point expressed in this verse quite effectively). It has been recorded by Ahmad and Ibn Majah on the authority of Busr b. Jahhaash the Qurashi that,

عَنْ بُسْرِ بْنِ جَحَّاشِ الْقُرَشِيِّ قَالَ: بَرَّقَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي كَفِّهِ، ثُمَّ وَضَعَ أُصْبُعَهُ السَّبَابَةَ وَقَالَ: "يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أَلَيْ تَعْجِزُنِي ابْنَ آدَمَ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ مِثْلِ هَذِهِ، فَإِذَا بَلَغْتَ نَفْسُكَ هَذِهِ - وَأَشَارَ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ - قُلْتَ: أَتَصَدَّقُ، وَأَلَيْ أَوَانُ الصَّدَقَةِ؟" - مسند أحمد وغيره

The Prophet spat in the palm of his hand and then placing his index finger in it said, "Allah Most High says, 'How can you, O son of Adam, frustrate Me when I created you from something like this? But when your spirit reaches here' – pointing to the throat (i.e., when death approaches – 'you say, "(Now) I expend in charity." But where is the time for charity?"

The above report is from Ibn Majah which Haythami treated as *Sahih*. Ahmad has a longer version (Au.).

Ibn Kathir presents another *hadith* on this topic which comes from the *Sahihayn*. It says,

"When death approached a man, and he lost all hopes of life he instructed his folks, 'When I am dead, collect together for me a lot of wood, set it ablaze until when it has eaten my flesh and has reached my bones burning it all, then wait for a windy day and scatter it all in a river.' They did (as told). Allah gathered him together and asked, 'Why did you do it?' He answered, 'Out of Your fear.' So Allah forgave him."

'Uqbah b. 'Aamir added, "I heard him say, 'He was a coffin-shroud thief.'

67. That is, one who disputes against the quickening of the dead forgets his own creation, how he was a mere drop of sperm to which Allah gave the powers of speech and intellect (Ibn Jarir).

[80] He who made for you of the green trees fire, and behold, from it you kindle.⁶⁹

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

Asad more or less expands on the same theme in modernistic terms: “Lit., ‘he coins for us a simile (mathal)’ – an elliptic allusion to the unwillingness of ‘those who deny the truth’ to conceive of a transcendental Being, fundamentally different from all that is graspable to by man’s sense of imagination, and having powers beyond all comparison with those which are available to any of the created beings.. Since they are enmeshed in a materialistic outlook on life, such people deny – as the sequence shows – all possibility of resurrection, which amounts to denial of God’s creative powers and, in the final analysis, of His existence.”

68. The following incident became the cause of revelation of this verse. Ubayy b. Khalaf went up to the Prophet with a piece of decayed bone. He crushed it to powder with his fingers and scattering them in the air asked, “Muhammad, who will gather these together and quicken it?” The Prophet answered, “Allah. He will give it new life. Moreover, He will deal you death, quicken you, and then cast you into the Fire.” Al-

lah revealed this verse, and, ironically, it was the Prophet who killed Ubayy at Badr.

But there is difference in the identity of the person. Some said it was `As b. Wa’il al-Sahmi. A third opinion, attributed to Ibn `Abbas is that it was `Abdullah b. Ubayy (Ibn Jarir).

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir attribute the identity of Ubayy b. Khalaf’s to Ibn `Abbas.

Ibn Kathir discounts the report which names `Abdullah b. Ubayy since the chapter is Makkan while `Abdullah was a Madinan. (The confusion, because of similarity in names - `Abdullah b. Ubayy and Ubayy b. Khalaf - is understandable: Au.). Reports in Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwayh, Bayhaqi and Hakim, who declared it *Sahih*, agree on Ibn `Abbas identifying `As b. Al-Wa’il as the one involved (Shawkani).

69. The allusion is to the practice of campers rubbing two twigs together to obtain a spark. It is said that there was a plant, whose twigs, despite dripping with water, yielded spark (Au.)

[81] Is He not then, who created the heavens and the earth, able to create the likes of them? Yes indeed. He is the All-knowing, the Great Creator.

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] His only command when He wishes a thing, is to say to it, 'Be,' and (lo) it is.⁷⁰

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٨٢﴾

Asad adds: "...evidently an allusion to the metamorphosis of green – i.e., water containing – plants into fuel, be it through desiccation or man-made carbonization (charcoal), or by millennial, subterranean process of decomposition into oil or coal."

Yusuf Ali expands: "Even older and more primitive than the method of striking fire against steel and flint is the method of using twigs of trees for the purpose.. The Arab method was to use a wooden instrument called the Zinad. It consisted of two pieces to be rubbed together. The upper one was called the `Afar or Zand, and the lower the Markh. The markh is a twig from a kind of spreading tree, the Cynanchuin viminale, of which the branches are bare, without leaves or thorns. When they are tangled together, and wind blows, they get ignited and strike fire (Lane's Arabic Lexicon). In modern Arabic Zand is by analogy applied to the flint pierce used for striking fire with steel."

But not always did the Arabs depend on Zand. They simply rubbed together two twigs – usually either from Markh or `Afar – to obtain fire. This is reported as the statement of Ibn `Abbas (Ibn Kathir).

70. Ibn Kathir quotes in brief a report in Ahmad that we reproduce in full here. It speaks of the extent of Allah's Power: The Prophet reports Allah as having said,

كُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ مِنْكُمْ مَا بَلَغَتْ أُمْنِيَّتُهُ ، فَأَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ سَائِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مَا سَأَلَ مَا تَقْصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مُلْكِي إِلَّا كَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ مَرَّ بِالْبَحْرِ فَعَمَسَ فِيهِ إِبْرَةً ، ثُمَّ رَفَعَهَا إِلَيْهِ ، ذَلِكَ بِأَنِّي جَوَادٌ مَا جِدْتُ ، أَفْعَلُ مَا أُرِيدُ ، عَطَائِي كَلَامٌ ، وَعَدَائِي كَلَامٌ ، إِنَّمَا أَمْرِي لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْتُهُ أَنْ أَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ. — مسند أحمد وغيره

"O My slaves, all of you are in error except he whom I guided. Therefore, ask guidance of Me, I shall guide you. All of you are poor except he on whom I bestowed. Therefore, ask me I shall bestow on you. All of you are sinners except he whom I saved. Therefore, whoever of you knew

[83] So glory to Him in whose hands is the realm of every thing, and unto whom you will be returned.⁷¹

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَالِيهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

that I have the power to forgive, and sought My forgiveness, I forgive him and do not care. If the first of you and the last of you, the living of you and the dead of you, those in sea and those in water, became altogether like the most pious of My slaves, it will not increase in My dominion by the weight of a gnat. And if the first of you and the last of you, the living of you and the dead of you, those in sea and those in water, became altogether like the most wicked of My slaves, it will not decrease in My dominion by the weight of a gnat. And, if the first of you and the last of you, the living of you and the dead of you, those in sea and those in water, were to gather together in a field and each of them asked Me for the most that he can imagine, and I gave to every petitioner of you, it will not decrease in My kingdom by aught except that if one of you were to pass by an ocean and dip a needle and then pull it out. That is because I am the Great Bestower, Creator, Ex-

alted, do what I want. My giving is merely My word, as My chastisement is merely My word. Indeed My affair, when I decree a thing to be is to say, ‘Be’, and it is.”

The above report is from Tirmidhi who declared it of Hasan status although it has its corroborators coming through other chains (Ibn Kathir).

Some people have difficulty in understanding this verse. How could Allah address a thing which is not yet in existence? There are two answers. One, Allah chose this manner of expression to impress on us His creative power: it does not take much for Him to create. He can do it in a moment. Second, the thing to be created is already in His knowledge to which He says “Be”, and it comes into existence. The conversion of an idea into a thing needs no more than a word of command (Au.).

71. What is the meaning of the word “malakut?” Zamakhshari answers that the meaning is the same as that of “mulk” meaning “dominion.”

Ibn Kathir adds: It is constructed on the same pattern as “jabarut” from “jabr”. He disagrees with the notion that “mulk” is for the physical world while “malakut” for the world of spirits.

[In contrast, “malakuti” is used in the sense of “divine,” or “heavenly”, as against the physical world (“malakut”), especially in *Sufi* terminology: Au.].

In any case, the word “malakut” has been used by the Prophet also. It is from Ahmad.

نُ حَذِيْقَةٌ قَالَ: قُمْتُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ فَقَرَأَ السَّبْعَ الطَوَالَ فِي سَبْعِ رَكَعَاتٍ، وَكَانَ إِذَا رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ مِنَ الرَّكُوعِ قَالَ: ” سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ ”، ثُمَّ قَالَ: ” الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ذِي الْمَلَكُوتِ وَالْجَبْرُوتِ، وَالْكَبْرِيَاءِ وَالْعَظَمَةِ ”، وَكَانَ رُكُوعُهُ مِثْلَ

قِيَامِهِ، وَسُجُودُهُ مِثْلَ رُكُوعِهِ، فَأَنْصَرَفَ وَقَدْ كَادَتْ تَنْكَبِرُ رِجَالِي. — مسند أحمد

Hudhayfah (ra) says, “One night I joined the Prophet as he stood in Prayer. He recited the seven long chapters of the Qur’ān (*Surah* 2-8) in seven cycles (raka`at). When he raised his head from the deep bow (*ruku`*) he would say, ‘Allah hears him who praises him,’ and then add, ‘Praise to the owner of dominion, power, Pride and Greatness.’ His *ruku`* was similar (in length) to that of his standing posture (qiyam), and his prostration was like his deep bow. (He left after the Prayer) but my legs were as if broken” (Ibn Kathir). مَقْتًا





Surah 37
*Al-Sāffāt*¹

Makkan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
 THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] By those who range (themselves) in (perfect) rows,²

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا ﴿١﴾

1. Nasa'i has a report coming through Ibn `Umar which says,

عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنهما: كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يأمر بالتخفيف ويؤمنا بالصافات. - سنن النسائي

“The Prophet used to recommend us shortening of the recitation (in Prayers, when we lead), while he himself used to recite *Al-Saffat*” (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Albani declared it *Sahih* (S.Ibrahīm).

That is, although the Prophet recommended that Prayers be made short and easy for ease of the people, his own practice was to recite long chapters such as this one, to encourage his followers adopt similar ways (Sindi in Sharh Nasa'i).

2. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Masruq, Suddi and Ibn Zayd said that the allusion is to angels (Ibn Jarir); who

stand in rows in their own Prayers in the heavens, or, perhaps, as Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Razi and Shawkani added, ‘hung in the air, (wings outspread), in rows, waiting for orders.’

It is also possible that the allusion is to the angels lining up in rows in accordance with their ranks, (whenever they have to, for whatever purpose) – Razi.

Another *ayah* of this *Surah* implies that it is angels who line up in rows (37: 165):

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ [الصافات: ١٦٥]

“Indeed, we do line up” (Thanwi).

In connection with rows, Ibn Kathir reminds us of the following *hadith*:

عَنْ حَدِيثَةٍ قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- « فُضِّلْنَا عَلَى النَّاسِ بِثَلَاثٍ جُعِلَتْ صُفُوفُنَا كَصُفُوفِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَجُعِلَتْ لَنَا الْأَرْضُ كُلُّهَا مَسْجِدًا وَجُعِلَتْ ثَرِيئَتُنَا لَنَا طَهْرًا إِذَا لَمْ نَجِدِ الْمَاءَ » - مسلم

[2] Then (by) those who drive strongly,³

﴿فَالرَّاجِعَاتِ رَجْرًا ﴿٢﴾﴾

[3] Then (by) those who recite the Reminder,⁴

﴿فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا ﴿٣﴾﴾

Hudhayfa reports the Prophet in a narrative preserved by Muslim as having said, “We have been given preference over other people in three things: Our rows have been made similar to the rows of the angels, the whole of the earth has been made a place of worship for us, and, its dust has been made a means of purification if we do not find water.”

Muslim, Abu Da’ud, Nasa’i and Ibn Majah also report on the authority of Jabir b. Samurah that the Prophet said,

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ : حَرَجَ عَلَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ : (أَلَا تَصُفُّونَ كَمَا تَصُفُّ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهَا ؟) فقلنا : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ تَصُفُّ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهَا ؟ قَالَ : (يُيْمُونُ الصُّفُوفَ الْأُولَى وَيَتَرَاصُونَ فِي الصَّفِّ) . - سنن أبي داود وغيرها

“Would you not like to line up in rows like the angels do before their Lord?” They asked, “How do the angels row up before their Lord?” He replied, “They fill in the front rows and stand close to each other in them.”

In fact, adds Mufti Shafi`, there are so many *ahadith* on straightening up

the rows and forming them properly that one could write a short book on it. One of the *hadith* is reported by Abu Mas`ud the Badri,

عَنْ أَبِي مَسْعُودٍ، قَالَ: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَمْسُحُ مَنَاكِبَنَا فِي الصَّلَاةِ، وَيَقُولُ: «اسْتَوُوا، وَلَا تَخْتَلِفُوا، فَتَخْتَلِفَ قُلُوبُكُمْ، لِيَلْبِي مِنْكُمْ أَوْلُو الْأَحْلَامِ وَالنُّهَى ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ» - مسلم

“The Prophet used to pat us on our shoulders before the Prayer and say, ‘Straighten up and do not differ, or your hearts will differ. Let the matured and the discerning of you be nearest to me, then the next and then the next.’”

3. Mujahid and Suddi thought that the allusion is, once again, to angels who drive the clouds. But Qatadah believed it was to the verses of the Qur`an that prohibit (which is another connotation of the word *zajara*). But Mujahid’s opinion sounds more correct (Ibn Jarir). The opinion (of Mujahid and) Suddi was also corroborated by Rabi` b. Anas and Zayd b. Aslam (Ibn Kathir).

4. That is, by those angels who bring revelation – Mujahid (Ibn Jarir).

[4] Surely, your Lord is indeed One.⁵

إِنَّ إِلَهُكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ﴿٤﴾

[5] Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them: Lord of the Easts.⁶

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ ﴿٥﴾

[6] Surely, We have adorned the earth's heaven⁷ with the beauty of the stars.

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَاكِبِ
﴿٦﴾

[7] And a guard against every rebellious⁸ Satan⁹

وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ ﴿٧﴾

5. The preceding three oaths in three verses, are not there as evidences of Allah's Oneness, but rather, have been placed, primarily, to attract attention (Thanwi).

6. The allusion is to the ever changing position of the sun as it rises with reference to the earth. And, Wests has not been mentioned because it is obvious. In fact, Suddi said that there are 360 Easts and 360 Wests: as many days of the year (Ibn Jarir).

Nonetheless, we have verses in the Qur'an that mention the West in plural, (70: 40),

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ
[المعارج: ٤٠]

"Verily, We swear by the Easts and the Wests, that We are Able."

The allusion could also be, adds Mawdudi, to different points of the sun's position as it rises, with reference to people in different parts of the globe.

7. That is, the firmament closest to the earth; and all that is visible either to the naked eye, or is detectable with instruments, is part of the first firmament.

8. Literally, "marada" is for one who is bereft (of something); hence "amrad" for a boy who is bereft of hair on the chins, or, "mareed" who is free (of all goodness). Here, "he who is free of any obedience;" hence, rebellion (Alusi).

9. The unanimous opinion is that the stars, while serving the purpose of adornment for the people of the earth, are also guards against the penetration of Shayatin too far into the first firmament (Ibn Jarir).

If we take the above *ayah* in the material sense, for which there is room without any fear of contradiction with the more obvious explanation, as adopted by the *Salaf*, we can add that although we do not have suffi-

[8] (So that) they do not hear (anything) from the Exalted Assembly; and are darted¹⁰ from every side,¹¹

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقَذَّفُونَ
مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ ﴿٨﴾

cient data on other planets, in fact not even about the moon as to how many meteorites it deflects through its gravitational pull from the earth to absorb into itself, but about Saturn the scientists are quite sure that one of the advantages of its exceptionally large size is that it attracts to itself large meteors, which would otherwise crash on to earth, making life impossible to exist thereon (Au.).

10. This passage has been explained by the *Salaf* in the same terms as *ayah* 23 of *Surah Saba'*. See note 52 there. Some more details might be added, Allah willing, if found necessary, at *ayah* 9 of *Surah al-Jinn* (no. 72).

At this point Ibn Jarir quotes the following: Shayatin had their sitting places in the heaven closest to earth from where they could pick up a few fragments of the Revelation. Those days the Shayatin were not struck. When they manage to hear any part of the Revelation, they descended to the earth, added nine of their own words to every word they heard, and

published it. But after the Prophet had been commissioned, when a *Shaytan* tried to take his position, a blazing fire was hurled at him that did not miss him. They complained of this to Iblis – may Allah curse him. He said, “Surely, something must have happened.” He sent his scouts around. They discovered the Prophet offering Prayer between two mountains of Nakhlah. (That is, said the reporter, at the bottom of a valley [between two mountains]). They reported back the matter to him. He said, “This is what has newly happened” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

The pelting of fire at the Shayaatin, however, does not kill them, it only burns and injures them (Shawkani from Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi al-Mundhir).

11. “From every side” does not imply that they are literally pelted with flaming fire from every side, but rather, they are pelted with fire, at whichever side of the firmament they take position (Thanwi).

[9] *Repulsed:*¹² and theirs is a perpetual torment.

﴿٩﴾ دُحُورًا وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَأَصِيبٌ ﴿٩﴾

[10] *Except for him who snatched away by stealth; but then he is pursued by a flaming Fire of piercing brightness.*¹³

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطَفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَاتَّبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ
ثَاقِبٌ ﴿١٠﴾

[11] *So, seek their opinion.*¹⁴ *Are they the more difficult to create*¹⁵ *or those (others) We have created?*¹⁶ *Surely, We created them*¹⁷ *of sticky clay.*¹⁸

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهْمُ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَنْ خَلَقْنَا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ ﴿١١﴾

12. This is how Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, `Ikrimah and Ibn Zayd understood the word (Ibn Jarir).

the allusion is to the heavens and the earth.

13. The flaming fire need not be meteorites – or, in common parlance, the falling star that are visible in the night once in a while. The word – shihab – as employed by the Arabs, and as used by the Qur`ān, is common, but meanings are different (Au.).

17. “Them”: i.e., the humans.

Dahhak was asked, “Do the Shayatin have wings?” He answered, “How else do you think they fly?” (Ibn Jarir).

18. That is, all that was involved, after all, in the creation of human beings was clay, while creation of the universe required energy and various other forces, some known (e.g., gravitational force, electrostatic force, the weak and the strong nuclear forces), others unknown, (such as, e.g., the predictable anti-gravity, the dark energy, and few others), yet all so finely balanced that according to scientists, if – for example – gravity, (one of the weakest of the forces involved), had varied by one in 1060, this universe would not have come into being. Yet this is about the part of world that we know. To know it in its entirety is out of human scope since its expansion at almost the speed of light, prohibits that we shall ever know it in full. Matter at the pe-

14. The verbal form chosen (istafti-him) suggests seeking their well-considered opinion (Au.).

15. Another possible rendering is, “Are they harder of constitution?”

16. Who are “those others?” Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir believe

[12] Lo! You wonder, while they scoff!¹⁹

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

[13] And when they are reminded, they do not remember.²⁰

وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

riphery ever gets out of the range of detecting instruments because light emanating from them will never reach us because of the doubling of distance for reasons of expansion, leaving us in dark. In fact, an interesting point is that our progeny will know less of the universe than we know, since, by their time, the enormous expansion will have put much matter beyond the reach of their instruments. Hence the conclusion of many scientists that we will never know how large our universe is.

Another interesting, and, perhaps, ironic factor is that of what we know of the universe, which is but a part, ninety percent is hidden as dark matter: dark because no instrument can detect it, not to mention minor irritations such as “Black Holes” from whose powerful gravitational field, nothing can escape, not even light, for humans to detect it by any means. Their existence is only implicitly evident.

Allah said at another place (*Ghafir*; 40: 57),

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ [غافر: ٥٧]

“Surely, creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most people know not.”

Finally, the universe came first, then came the humans. It should be obvious, although the DNA’s complexity creates immense complication, [to human knowledge, it is “the most” amazing thing in the universe], yet .. it should be obvious that what comes later should be easier to create, although all is equally easy for Allah (Au.).

19. Qatadah has said in effect that the text points to the contrast that the Prophet, although the recipient of the Revelation, was filled with wonder by this phenomenon, pagans made it a point of ridicule (Ibn Jarir).

The textual word “*yestaskhirun*” suggests seeking to ridicule, implying, as Razi and Qurtubi suggest, invoking each other to ridicule the Message.

20. Or, as Asad put it, “they refuse to take it to heart.”

[14] And when they see a sign, they seek to ridicule (it).

﴿١٤﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخِرُونَ

[15] And they say, 'This is nothing but clear magic.

﴿١٥﴾ وَقَالُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

[16] What! When we die and have become dust and bones, shall we indeed be raised up (again)?

﴿١٦﴾ أَئِنذًا مِّنَّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ

[17] What, and our fathers of old (also)?'

﴿١٧﴾ أَوْ آبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ

[18] Say, 'Yes, and you will be humiliated.'

﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ تَعَمَّ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ

[19] It will merely be a single shout,²¹ and behold, they will begin to see.

﴿١٩﴾ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ

[20] They will say, 'Woe unto us, this is the Day of Reckoning.'

﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ

[21] This is the Day of Decision²² that you were denying.²³

﴿٢١﴾ هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ

[22] 'Gather together,' (it will be said), 'those who wronged:²⁴ their likes,²⁵ and what they were worshipping

﴿٢٢﴾ أَحْشَرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ

21. The allusion is to the second blast of the Trumpet (Alusi).

22. "Fasl" is for separation. Yusuf Ali comments: "The Day of Judgment is the Day of sorting out.. Good and evil will finally be separated, unlike the apparently inexplicable conditions in the present probationary life, when they seem to be mixed together."

23. This will be said by angels and believers (Ibn Kathir).

24. Specifying those who will be ultimately led to Hellfire as "zalimun" gives strength to the opinion that the word "zalimun" of the Qur'an – when used in its absolute sense – is synonymous with "kafirun." Allah said at another place:

﴿٢٥٤﴾ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ [البقرة: ٢٥٤]

"The unbelievers: they are the wrong-doers."

Allah also said, adds Qurtubi,

﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ [لقمان: ١]

[23] other than Allah, and lead them on to the way to Hell.²⁶

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ
الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٢٣﴾

[24] But stop them. They are to be questioned.²⁷

وَقَفُّوهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْتُؤَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] What is the matter with you that you do not help one another?'

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

[26] Nay, but today they are resignedly submissive.

بَلْ هُمْ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Some of them will turn to others seeking to question each other.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ
﴿٢٧﴾

“Surely, Association (with Allah) is a great wrong.”

عندي من هذا أزواج

25. `Umar ibn al-Khattab, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Abu al-`Aliyyah, Qatadah, Suddi and others are reported to have said that by the word “*az-waj*” at this point, the allusion is to “kinds, likes, associates, compatriots, followers,” etc. (Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf [citing an untraced *hadith*], Razi, Ibn Kathir).

“a pair of socks”, then, each of them is the “like” of the other. Allah also said (56: 7),

{ وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً } [الواقعة: ١٠]

“You will be (divided into) three kinds” (and not pairs).

That is, as `Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “Sin-sharing groups will be presented together: adulterers with adulterers, wine-addicts with wine-addicts, usury-devourers with usury devourers etc.” (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

26. (Lit. flaming fire), Ibn `Abbas said about the textual “*Jahim*” that it is the name assigned to the fourth gate of Hell (Ibn Jarir).

So that, Razi adds, when you say in Arabic, you mean to say, “I have of this [thing, of the same], more kinds.” Or when you say,

27. `Abdullah ibn Mubarak said that he heard `Uthman b. Za'idah say, “The first thing a man will be required to answer for is his friends” (perhaps meaning, regarding those one interacts with: Au.) - Ibn Kathir.

[28] They will say, 'Verily, it was you who used to come to us from the right side.'²⁸

قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] They will reply, 'Nay, but you yourselves were not believers.'²⁹

قَالُوا بَلْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

[30] We had no power over you. Nay, but you were a rebellious people yourselves.

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطَانٍ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا طَٰغِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

28. The textual “*yamin*” has been explained as “power, force and influence” by Mujahid. Poetical pieces can be cited in support of this opinion (Ibn Jarir). That is, they presented their deviations in a powerful manner (Kashshaf, Razi). In other words, adds Razi, “you used to deceive us into accepting your misguidance by suggesting that those were very much in the cause of truth.”

In Asad’s words, “The idiomatic phrase ‘approaching one from the right’ is more or less synonymous with ‘pretending to give a morally good advice’, as well as ‘approaching another person from a position of power and influence (Zamakhshari).”

‘Ikrimah said that the allusion is to “points, places or locations they felt comfortable (that they would not be misguided by)” - Ibn Kathir.

29. That is, explain Razi and Qurtubi, you never possessed belief for

us to have deflected you. You were always unbelievers: from the beginning to the end.

Yusuf Ali removes some misconceptions in this regard: “But the fact that others mislead, or that their evil example is before us, does not justify us in falling from right conduct. Faith should save us from the fall. But if we have ourselves no Faith - in righteousness, or a future life, or the reality of Allah’s Law, how can we blame others? The misleaders can well say, ‘You will be judged according to your misdeeds!’ The responsibility is personal, and cannot be shifted on to others. The others may get a double punishment, - for their own evil, and for misleading their weaker brethren. But the weaker brethren cannot go free from responsibility for their own deeds; for evil means a personal rebellion against Allah, if we believe in a personal God. Evil has no authority over us, except in so far as we deliberately choose it.”

[31] Now the Lord's word has proved true against us.³⁰ We are indeed (bound) to taste (the consequence).

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

[32] We misguided you: indeed, we were ourselves misguided.³¹

فَأَعْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

[33] So, today they shall be sharers in chastisement.

فَأَيُّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] Surely, that is how we deal with the criminals

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] Indeed, when they were told, 'There is no deity (worthy of worship) but Allah,' they would wax proud.³²

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

30. To the effect that (11: 190),

{ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ }
[السجدة: ١٣]

"I shall surely fill Jahannum with men and Jinn, all together" (Qur-tubi and others).

31. Raghib Asfahani has said that (by saying, "We misguided you: indeed, we were ourselves misguided," what they meant is that) "we did the best that a friend could do to another in all sincerity: wishing the same for him as he wishes for himself, and so, we guided you to what we believed was right" (Alusi).

32. Yusuf Ali discusses dimensions other than apparent: "Selfish arrogance was the seed of sin and rebel-

lion: ii. 34 (of Satan): xxviii. 39 (of Pharaoh); etc. It is that kind of arrogance which prevents man from mending his life and conduct. When he speaks of ancestral ways, or public opinion, or national honour, he is usually thinking of himself or of a small clique which thrives on injustice. The recognition of Allah, the one true God, as the only standard of life and conduct, the Eternal Reality, cuts out Self, and is therefore disagreeable to Sin. If false gods are imagined, who themselves would have weaknesses that fit in with sin, they give countenance to evils, and it becomes difficult to give them up, unless Allah's grace comes to our assistance."

[36] And say, 'Are we going to abandon our deities for the sake of a possessed poet?'³³

وَيَقُولُونَ أَأَنَّا لِنَارِكُوا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] No indeed, he has brought the Truth and confirms the Sent ones.³⁴

بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] Surely, you are about to taste a painful chastisement.

إِنَّكُمْ لَدَائِقُو الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] You will not be recompensed but for what you were doing.

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[40] Except for Allah's slaves, the chosen ones,

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] They, for them is a provision known,³⁵

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٤١﴾

[42] Fruits,³⁶ and they shall be honored,³⁷

فَوَاكِهَ وَهُمْ مُكْرَمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] In Gardens of Bliss.

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٣﴾

33. "The message of Islam, so far from being 'mad' or in any way peculiar, is eminently conformable to reason and the true facts of nature as created by Allah. It is the Truth in the purest sense of the term, and confirms the Message of all true Messengers that ever lived" (Yusuf Ali).

34. So, what then was your problem, O religious people, when this fresh Messenger had confirmed the Messengers you believed in as true? By confirming the Messengers of yore, had he not taken your side against the skeptics and rejectionists you were struggling against from among your own people? Had he brought

anything that went against the basic principles of truth and morality laid down by previous Messengers? (Au.)

35. It will be known, e.g., that they are available in abundance; that they are of any quality, taste, color, or shape that one can desire (Alusi).

36. (Although "fawakih" is for fruits, the connotation hidden in the word is that of what yields pleasure, in short), fruits for pleasure and not as food for sustenance (Alusi).

37. Food that comes without honor is fit only for animals (Razi); and perhaps a reference to spiritual bliss after the physical bliss of the fruits.

[44] On couches facing one another.³⁸

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] A cup³⁹ from a free-flowing spring,⁴⁰ would be passed around them.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] (Sparkling) white,⁴¹ a delight to the drinkers,

بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] Neither any headiness therein, nor will they be intoxicated thereby.⁴²

لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

38. It has been said that the couches will have circulatory movement so that the occupants, sitting face to face, will never see each other's backs (Qurtubi). Perhaps, one circular couch within another circular couch; and which reminds us of a circular couch Bernard Shaw had got made in his backyard that automatically rotated in a manner to be always facing the sun (Au.).

39. "Cup" is the literal translation of "ka's" but, according to Dahhak, whenever the Qur'an said "ka's" the allusion is to wine. In fact, Suddi added, a "ka's" was a "ka's" for the pre-Islamic Arabs if it was filled with wine, otherwise it was a mere "inaa" (or "qid-h" – Qurtubi), i.e., a container or a pitcher (Ibn Jarir); like "ma'idah" (low-height food-table) which is not a "ma'idah" without food on it; or "zani`ah" for "hawdaj" (litter) is not so named if there is no woman in it (Qurtubi).

40. "Ma'in" is a spring which has water flowing on the surface of the earth (as against a spring which has water beneath the surface) – Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi.

41. Another explanation will tell us that "bayda" is that wine which has not been squeezed by the feet (Qurtubi). For those who do not know, we might mention that juice for the best grape wines in Europe are squeezed out by the feet of several men or women in a deep concrete or wooden trough (Au.).

42. Thus, free from all side-effects that earthly wine causes: headache, vomiting, stomach-ache, loss of self-control, liver damage, impotency, general deterioration of health over the long run, etc. (Au.). Further, it should never be forgotten that wines, fruits, springs, etc., are only names that have been used for human understanding. Otherwise (as Ibn `Abbas has said: Au.) there is nothing in

[48] *And, by their sides low-gazed⁴³ wide-eyed (damsels).*⁴⁴

﴿٤٨﴾ وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عَيْنٌ

[49] *As if they are hidden eggs.*⁴⁵

﴿٤٩﴾ كَأَنَّهِنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ

Paradise that shares anything with that on earth, but the name (Alusi).

43. For those in the West who, (are used to bold, forward, progressive, half naked women who never bat an eye, no matter what the extent of obscenity they face), and who have perhaps never had the occasion to observe the beauty of a low-gazed girl, one might explain that there were times when – out of pure modesty – women, and especially maidens, would not raise their eyes at any man but to a close kin without a deep blush that forced their gazes down again. Perhaps the nearest in English would be a combination of “coy, blushing and bashful” (Au.).

44. The textual word “`een” is the plural of “`aynaa” which, as many commentators have pointed out, is also used in the sense of “beautiful.”

45. An opinion attributed to Ibn `Abbas is that the allusion by “eggs” is to pearls, while that of Ibn Zayd was that it is to eggs under a birds’ wings in a nest that are well guarded and which are brown-white in color. But other authorities have said that the

allusion is to the white layer below the egg’s shell – unpolLuted by touch (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

In Iv.58, the phrase used is “like rubies and coral” (Yusuf Ali, Shabbir).

Writes Majid: “The likeness of a modest maiden with an egg is in respect of her color as well as in her being closely guarded and protected as beneath the wing. ‘This may seem an odd comparison to an European; but the Orientals think nothing comes as near the color of fine woman’s skin as that of an ostrich’s egg when kept perfectly clean’ (Sale).”

Alusi adds: Fair with a yellowish tint is an approved color for women, as fair with a pinkish tint is for men. Pure white is repulsive. The Prophet has been described as “fair, but not pure white.”

Alusi’s description of the preferable color comes very close to the color now prevalent in the Middle East, i.e., area covering Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine (excluding the Jews) and parts of North Africa. This color seems to have emerged by virtue of centuries of mixing of races of all

[50] Some of them will advance on others seeking to know.⁴⁶

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] One of them saying, 'I had an intimate companion.

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] Who would say, "Are you really of the confessors?"

يُعُولُ أُنثَىٰ لِّمَنِ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] Is it that when we are dead and become dust and bones, shall we indeed be called to account?'"

أَإِنذًا مِّنَّا وَكُنَّا ثَرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

color-range: from pure white to pure dark, and all hues in between, during centuries when Islam had prevailed, and people were free to move and settle down anywhere in the Islamic world. This belt was most preferable, being the seat of political and cultural power. One is inclined to believe that had Islam prevailed over the globe, a few things would have happened: the prevalence of ostrich-egg color with few extremely dark and extremely white individuals surviving at the fringes as insignificant minorities, opening up of all borders for migration and settlement leading to leveling of economic conditions covering the globe, and domination of a single language Arabic, resulting in closer homogeneity of the minds, and culture, while Islam exercised similar influence on the soul. With the white man still considering col-

ored people as "the scum" (as recently remarked by a French minister with reference to second and third generation French immigrants from North Africa and Arab world), even after the modern "civilization" has passed its peak, indicates that it is only Islam that could have been as successful over the globe, as it has been in the belt referred above. But, perhaps much influenced by the Jewish story of the Tower of Babel, Man chose otherwise (Au.).

46. Yusuf Ali places this note at an earlier point but within the same passage: "The Garden's Delights are figured forth from parallel experiences in our present life, and follow an ascending order: Food and Fruits; Gardens of Bliss, (with all their charm, design, greenery, birds' songs, fountains, etc.); the Home of Happiness and Dignity, with congenial

[54] He will say⁴⁷ 'Would you (care to) look (at him)?'

﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَّلِعُونَ

[55] He will look and see him in the midst of the Flaming Fire.⁴⁸

﴿٥٥﴾ فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ

[56] He will say, 'By Allah, you had almost ruined me.

﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدْتِ لَتُرْدِينِ

[57] But for my Lord's favor, surely, I would have been of those arraigned.

﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ

[58] Is it (the case that) we do not die?

﴿٥٨﴾ أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ

[59] Except for our first death, and, are we (humans) not chastised?

﴿٥٩﴾ إِلَّا مَوْتَنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ

[60] This indeed is the supreme triumph.⁴⁹

﴿٦٠﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

[61] For the like of this then, let the workers work.

﴿٦١﴾ لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ

company seated on Thrones; Delicious Drinks from crystal Springs, for social pleasure; and the society of Companions of the opposite sex, with beauty and charm but none of the grossness too often incidental to such companionship in this life.”

47. Perhaps an angel will say this (Au.).

48. It is said that there will be apertures (vision glasses) in Paradise through which believers will be able to see the inhabitants of the Fire (Zamakhshari). The statement is attributed to Ibn `Abbas as well as Ka`b al-Ahbar (Qurtubi).

One wonders at the source of the above statement because the telescope had not yet been invented until after a 1000 years (Au.).

49. These are the concluding remarks of the believers in Paradise, and to paraphrase verses 58-60: “Is it not a fact that – being in Paradise – we shall not experience death again, except for the one we experienced earlier? Further – also being in Paradise – we shall never experience any chastisement anytime in future.”

[62] Is that better as hospitality⁵⁰ or the Zaqqum tree?⁵¹

أَذَلِكْ خَيْرٌ تَرْتَلَا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الرَّقُومِ ﴿٦٢﴾

[63] Verily, We have made it a trial for the wrongdoers.⁵²

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] Verily, it is a tree that issues forth from the bottom of the Flaming Fire.⁵³

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٤﴾

50. “*Nuzul*” has been understood by the authorities as “*fadl*” meaning superabundance (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi).

51. Zaqqum is a tree of the cactus species that grows in Tihama. Its fruit is bitter, obnoxious in smell, and yields a milk-like juice when cut open (Majid, Mawdudi). Indian soil also grows a variety which in fact is locally known as the serpent-headed tree (Nag-phun) – Thanwi, Shabbir, Mufti Shafi`.

Some varieties in the USA grow as tall as palm trees, and, a desert area filled with them has an eerie, almost devilish, look (Au.).

It is reported by Mujahid and Suddi that when the *ayah* (44: 43),

{ إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الرَّقُومِ { [الدخان: ٤٣]

was revealed, Abu Jahl said, “Do you know what it means in the Arabic language? Let me serve you some.” The he ordered his slave-girl to bring dates and cream. He began to eat one

with the other and remarked, “Have some. This is the Zaqqum that Muhammad is threatening you with.” So Allah revealed these present three verses (Ibn Jarir).

52. One of the possible explanations is that when the Qur’an mentioned a tree in Hell-fire, it caused increase in the disbelief of the pagans, thus, the Zaqqum Tree became a trial for them (Razi).

Interestingly, the meaning of tribulation is also hidden in the word (Zamakhshari).

53. When the pagans objected by saying, how can there be a tree in fire?, Allah answered by pointing out that it grows from the bottom of the Fire, meaning, it is a tree constituted of fire (Ibn Jarir).

But it could also be a tree (in the biological sense) but which the fire cannot burn. After all, Allah has placed angels over the fire – the Zabaniyyah (96: 18) – but which does not burn them (Razi).

[65] Its fruits⁵⁴ as if they are heads of the Devils.⁵⁵

طَلَعَهَا كَأَنَّهٗ زُرُّوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] They will surely eat thereof, and fill their bellies therewith.

فَاتَّيَّبَهُمْ لَا كِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالُؤُونَ مِنْهَا
الْبُطُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] Then, on top of it, there is for them a brew⁵⁶ of boiling liquid.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾

54. Alternatively, “swathes.”

55. Ibn Jarir raises a doubt. The pagans had neither seen the Zaqqum tree nor the heads of the Devils. How were they to visualize what the allusion was to? The answer is, the use of the word *Shaytan* gives rise to an ugly and nasty connotation. For example, it is said, “So and so is a devil,” although the people have not seen a devil. But the loathsome feeling the comparison evokes justifies the usage.

At all events, the words “ru’usus Shayatin” have also been understood as referring to the heads of the serpents which look most fearful, especially when they have a crown (Ibn Jarir and others).

Tirmidhi has a *Sahih* report in this connection, as well as Nasa’i, Ibn Majah and Ibn Abi Hatim. It is as follows:

عن ابن عباس، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَرَأَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ: {اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا
وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ} [آل عمران: ١٠٢] قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «لَوْ أَنَّ فِطْرَةَ مِنَ الرَّقُومِ فُطِرَتْ
فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا لَأَفْسَدَتْ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا مَعَايِشَهُمْ،
فَكَيْفَ يَمَنْ يَكُونُ طَعَامَهُ؟» قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى: هَذَا
حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ.

Ibn `Abbas reports that the Prophet recited this verse and then said, “Fear Allah in the manner He should be feared. For, if a drop of Zaqqum were to be dropped into the oceans of the earth, it will pollute the life of its inhabitants. So, how about him whose food it will be?” (Ibn Kathir)

56. Brew: that is, a mixture of tears, blood, and puss that their bodies will discharge (Ibn Zayd: Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Abi Hatim has a report coming down from Sa`id ibn Jubayr that he said, “When the people of Hell are hungry they will be fed with Zaqqum which will cause the skins of their faces to peel off. So that, if somebody passed by them he will not be able to recognize them from their faces. As thirst overtakes them they will ask

[68] Then their return is unto the blazing fire.⁵⁷

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] Verily, they found their forefathers misguided.

إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

[70] So they are hurled on their footsteps.⁵⁸

فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] In fact, misguided before them were most of the ancients.

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] Although We had sent among them warners.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ مُنذِرِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] See then, how was the end of those who were warned.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

for a drink and will be given a boiling liquid similar to oil heated to its maximum degree. As it is taken to the mouth, it will bake the flesh from which the skin had fallen off. (A single gulp) will melt their guts which begin to fall off. Then they will be struck with hooked rods and every element of their body will burst out in lamentation” (Ibn Kathir).

May Allah save us from a touch of the Fire (Au.).

57. Apparently, eating and drinking will take place in another place in Hell. (Muqatil has said that Hamim is situated out of the boundaries of *Jahim*: Qurtubi). After they have been fed and given a drink they will be taken back to the area designated as “Al-*Jahim*.” This is supported by

another *ayah* of the Qur’an which says (55: 44),

{ يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ آتٍ } [الرحمن: ٤٤]

“They will make rounds between it (*Jahannum*) and scalding water, heated to the highest degree” (Razi, Qurtubi).

Qushayri has said that these are various regions of Hellfire (Qurtubi).

58. Asad quotes Zamakhshari, “i.e., blind imitation (*taqlid*) of the – obviously absurd – beliefs, valuations and customs of one’s erring predecessors, and disregard of all evidence of the truth supplied by both reason and divine revelations, is here shown to be the principal cause of the suffering referred to in the preceding passage.”

[74] Except for the chosen slaves of Allah.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] Verily, Nuh had called to Us – and We are best of the responders.

وَلَقَدْ نَادَانَا نُوحٌ فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

[76] So We delivered him and his folks from the great agony.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾

[77] And made his progeny, the only survivors.⁵⁹

وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

59. So that, the whole of the humanity today can be traced back to Nuh (Ibn Jarir).

It is believed that the progeny of others that were with Nuh in the ship did not survive (Zamakhshari). This has been reported as a statement of Ibn `Abbas. However, others have thought that those others that were with Nuh in the boat also left behind their progeny. They based their opinion on (17: 3)

{ ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ { [الإسراء: ٣]

“.. progeny of those whom We carried in the boat” (Qurtubi).

Tirmidhi has a report (of Hasan status: Au.), as also Ahmad, that the Prophet said about the progeny of Nuh that they were Sam, Ham and Yafeth. According to another report, also in Tirmidhi, and narrated by Samurah b. Jundub (but weak: Au.), the Prophet said,

عَنْ سَمُرَةَ بْنِ جُنْدُبٍ ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ : ” سَامُ أَبُو الْعَرَبِ ، وَيَافِثُ أَبُو الرُّومِ ، وَحَامُ أَبُو الْحَبَشِ ” . قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى : هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ وَيُقَالُ يَافِثٌ وَيَافِثٌ وَيَقْمُثُ

“Sam is the progenitor of the Arabs, Yafeth of the Romans, and Ham of the Africans.” Yafeth is also pronounced Yafet as well as Yafeth (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). Alusi points out that Hakim declared the above *hadith* as trustworthy.

It might be noted that the above report does not say anything about other sons of Nuh, nor about the progeny of others who were with him. Alusi accepts the notion that the Flood might not have been universal and hence, other races in other regions of the world could have remained unaffected (Au.).

[78] And left for him (a good word) among the later folk.⁶⁰

﴿٧٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ

[79] Peace upon Nuh in the worlds.⁶¹

﴿٧٩﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ

[80] Thus indeed We reward those who excel (in deeds).

﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

[81] He was surely (one) of Our believing slaves.

﴿٨١﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

[82] Then We drowned the rest.

﴿٨٢﴾ ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ

[83] And, of his persuasion⁶² was Ibrahīm.

﴿٨٣﴾ وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ

[84] When he came to his Lord with a sound⁶³ heart.

﴿٨٤﴾ إِذْ جَاء رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

[85] When he said to his father and his people, 'What is it you worship?

﴿٨٥﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ

60. The words in parenthesis reflect the understanding of Qatadah and Suddi as in Ibn Jarir; and of Ibn `Abbas as in Ibn Kathir.

61. Some commentators have understood the two verses in the following manner: And (We) left for him among the later folk: Peace upon Nuh in the worlds (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

62. The textual word "Shi`a" has been understood by `Ibn `Abbas as "religion," by Mujahid as "way," and by Qatadah as "religion and nation" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others).

The *ayah* expresses the same meaning as in the following (21: 92),

{ إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ }
[الأنبياء: ٩٢]

"Surely, this religion of yours is one religion and I am your Lord, therefore, worship Me (alone)" – Shabbir.

63. Qatadah and Suddi (as also Muqatil and Kalbi: Razi) said that by a "sound heart" the allusion is to one free of Association (*shirk*). Mujahid however believed it meant free of doubts (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi). Scholars have said that Ibrahīm (*asws*) lived and died with a clean heart, free of every contamination of sin which would include Association, doubts, dishonesty, deceit, hatred and envy (Razi, Alusi).

[86] *Is it a falsehood, a deity other than Allah that you desire?*

﴿٨٦﴾ أَفَمَكَّا آلهةٌ دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ

[87] *What then is your idea about the Lord of the worlds?'*

﴿٨٧﴾ فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[88] *Then he cast a glance at the stars,*⁶⁴

﴿٨٨﴾ فَتَطَّرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ

[89] *and said, 'I am indeed sick.'*⁶⁵

﴿٨٩﴾ فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ

64. While most scholars have understood Ibrahīm's glance at the stars as something to do with his utterance thereafter, Alusi has the intelligence to point out that there is no reason to connect them. People do different things while thinking. (Some scratch their heads, another holds his beard, another looks deeply at an object: Au.). So, it is possible that Ibrahīm was pondering over a proper answer, and in his deep thought looked at the stars. They assumed he was consulting them.

Alusi also devotes several pages to the question of effects brought by stars and planets on human beings, and the knowledge thereof. He concludes by quoting Sheikh al-Akbar, presenting his statements almost as the last word on the subject, and which, according to him, is in agreement with what star-gazers and astronomers have to say concerning the issue. Needless to say that what he quotes from "Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah,"

demands a good amount of naivety for acceptance. One is amazed at the credulity he accords to the quoted passages, despite the fact that not a line of it was ever uttered by any of the Companions, not even by the architect of the "Futuhat `Umariyyah" whose "Ya Sariyatu: al-jabal" was instrumental, at the spiritual plane, in bringing about the "futuhat" that led millions to Islam. Do we have a better example of the immense spiritual and moral influence wielded by a single individual, which deserve that he be remembered by the appellation Sheikh al-Akbar, if such appellations have to be taken seriously? (Au.).

65. An alternative translation could be, as pointed out by Razi and others, "I am about to get sick." The language supports this.

(Like pagans of all times, including quite a few with similar leanings in the modern West), Ibrahīm's people were firm believers in astrology.

When he looked at them, they assumed he was consulting the stars and constellations, and had read his destiny that he was about to fall sick (Zamkshari and others).

There have been differences in opinion among the ancient commentators over what Ibrahīm meant by saying he was unwell; but they all agreed that consultation of the stars was a common practice among his people; and, therefore, he cast a glance at the stars, as if consulting, and declared that either he was sick or going to be so. What sickness was it that he meant? Neither the Qur'ān nor prophetic traditions say anything about it. Ibn 'Abbas, Dahhak, and Ibn Is-haq, perhaps influenced by the verse which follows, said that he meant he had plague, a fearful disease and hence they hastily retreated. Others however took the word in its general sense of being unwell. In any case, this was one of the three lies that Ibrahīm had spoken, as confirmed by a *hadīth* (Ibn Jarir).

Writes Ibn Kathir: This is one of those three lies that have been attributed to Ibrahīm (*asws*), the reports about which are preserved in *Sahih* and *Sunan* compilations. However, they were not lies in the literal sense that draw people's rebuke, but only meta-

phorically or figuratively so, for, they were in Allah's cause, as in a *hadīth*.

« في المعارض لمدوحة عن الكذب »

“Surely, in indirect suggestions there is escape from lies.”

(Its authenticity could not be established. The author of *Kanz* traces it to Bayhaqi and ibn 'Adiyy in his *Kamil* but without passing his judgment. Haythami traces it in *Tabarani*, but taking it up to 'Imran b. Hussain only, and remarks that all the narrators up to him are those of the *Sahih* works: Au.).

Alusi points out that we have a comparable situation in the Qur'ān, although not exactly the same, when the belongings of Yusuf's brothers were searched earlier than Bin *Yamin's*, although they knew that it could not be with his brothers. See *Surah Yusuf*, *ayah* 76.

Shabbir adds that we have another example in the *hadīth*, of how in life-threatening situations, one could use what is known as “*tawriyyah*”, feigning to be speaking of one thing, but actually meaning another. E.g., during the *hijrah* journey (when the Prophet carried the prize of a hundred camels on his head), whenever someone asked Abu Bakr as to who his companion was, he would say,

[90] So they departed from him retreating.⁶⁶

فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

[91] Then he turned to their deities and said, 'Will you not eat?'

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ آلِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

[92] What is the matter with you that you do not talk?'

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

[93] Then he turned upon them smiting with his right hand.

فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٣﴾

[94] Thereafter they advanced towards him, in hurried steps.⁶⁸

فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَرْفُوفُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

[95] He asked, 'Do you worship that which you yourselves carve?'

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَحْتُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

رَجُلٌ يَهْدِيَنِ السَّبِيلَ

“A man who will show me the way.” He meant to say that his companion was a religious guide while the listener thought he was a professional guide (through the deserts and mountains).

66. Ibrahīm's folk had come to take him along to celebrations of a day of feast, having known from past experience that Ibrahīm stayed away from such festivals. Ibrahīm pretended that he was unwell, and, from the words he used they assumed that it as one of the contagious diseases, and so retreated hastily. But of course, there could have been other reasons for a hasty retreat, one, e.g., that they were already late for the functions (Au.).

67. The pagan practice of food offerings to deities lasts to this day (Au.).

68. Ibrahīm had a history of disparaging their deities. Therefore, when they saw them broken down, the first suspicion fell on him and so they went to him in haste to investigate the truth. Perhaps they would have met people on the way who would have told them (21: 60),

{ سَمِعْنَا فَنَّىٰ يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ } [الأنبياء: ٦٠]

“We have heard of a young man mentioning them (disparagingly). He is called Ibrahīm” (Zamakhshari).

For those who have not seen the emotional attachment of idol-worshippers to their idols, it will be hard to imagine their chagrin at seeing

[96] While (it is) Allah (who) created you and what you make.⁶⁹

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

[97] They said, 'Build for him a structure and cast him into a blazing fire.'

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُيُوتًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٩٧﴾

[98] Thus they devised a scheme against him, but We made them the lowest ones.

فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

[99] He said, 'Verily, I am leaving towards my Lord,⁷⁰ He will surely guide me.'

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٩٩﴾

[100] 'O my Lord, grant me one of the righteous.'⁷¹

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

[101] Wherefore, We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing son.⁷²

فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

them in a broken heap. They can be in tears - although they can buy another (sometimes a foreign made, better looking one). In contrast, when our neighborhood mosque was burnt down by a crowd of non-Muslim rioters (while Muslims were Praying inside), no Muslim, not even the regular worshippers, were in tears. Of course they were angry, but they said, "Well, we will build it again." Of course, mosques are not idols, but one can imagine the emotional response to the destruction of a temple, instead of an idol. It finds its place in historical works. (Au.).

69. That is, what you make of the idols.

70. That is, "I shall migrate in obedience of my Lord's command" (Razi, Qurtubi).

It is said that from Babylon he migrated to Palestine, perhaps halting for sometime at Harran (based on Qurtubi).

71. Ibrahim must have made this supplication several years later, perhaps when he was in Syria, for he was a mere youth when cast into the fire (Au.).

72. That is, Isma'il, who was Ibrahim's first son, but whom the Israelites do not acknowledge as the "first-born" because, according to them, it is only the first son from a free wife that wins the title, while, and although Isma'il was the first

[102] Then, when he was of age of exertion with him, he said, 'O my little son! I see indeed, in my sleep,⁷³ that I am slaughtering you.⁷⁴ So, consider, what is your view!⁷⁵ He said, 'O my father! Do as you are ordered. You shall find me, Allah willing, of the steadfast.'

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى
فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى
قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن
شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

[103] So, when the two had submitted, and he had laid him down on his forehead,

﴿١٠٣﴾ فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ

[104] We called out to him, 'O Ibrahīm,

﴿١٠٤﴾ وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ

[105] You have fulfilled the (purpose of the) vision. Thus indeed We reward those who excel.

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

[106] Surely, this indeed was a clear test.'

﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْبَاءُ الْمُبِينُ

son of Ibrahīm, he was of a slave-girl Hajirah. Hence, according to the Israelites, Isaac was offered for sacrifice since the *Bible* speaks of the “first-born”, which could only have been Isaac – Isma`il being the elder but not the “first-born” of their Scriptures (Au.).

In fact, writes Shabbir, Isma`il was so named because he was bestowed when Ibrahīm's prayer was heard. In Hebrew, “sam`” means to hear, and “ail” means God. Says the *Torah*:

“And as for Ish'-ma-el, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation (Gen. 17: 20).”

73. Dreams of the Prophets are true (Ibn Jarir), except that, Ibn Hajr adds in *Fat-h*, they need to be interpreted (Au.).

Ibn Kathir adds: Abu Hatim in fact has a *hadīth* to this effect:

عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «رؤيا الأنبياء في المنام وحي».

“Dreams that Prophets see in sleep are revelations.”

The above *hadīth* provides (Haythami said about a different version in Tabarani that it is weak), its own authenticity test. Had it been a fabricated one, the fabricator would have said: رؤيا الأنبياء وحي: “Dream that Prophets see are revelations”

But the Prophetic statement above adds: “in the sleep.” That is, not those that all humans see – and Prophets are humans – while awake, i.e., “day-dreams” (Au.).

74. Despite the fact that after narrating the episode of sacrifice, the Qur’ān says, in verse 112 below, “And We gave him the glad tiding of Is-haq,” Ibn Jarir held the opinion that the “offering” was Is-haq and reports about `Abdullah ibn Ma`ud, `Abbas ibn `Abdul Muttalib, his son `Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, `Ikrimah, Qatadah, Masruq, Ka`b al-Ahbar as of those who held the same opinion. But he also reports some of the above authorities as well as some others as of opinion that the one offered for slaughter was Isma`il. Ibn `Umar, Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan, Muhammad b. Ka`b al-Qurazi, Sha`bi, Ibn Mahran and others figure here. He presents no less than 11 reports which say that it was Isma`il whom Ibrahim had intended to sacrifice. Muhammad b. Is-haq said that he heard Ka`b al-Qurazi (a former Jew) assert this several times. And, this is supported by *ayah* 112 of this *Surah* itself which says, “And We gave him the glad tiding of Is-haq: a Prophet, one of the righteous.” Ibn Jarir also reports that `Umar ibn `Abdul `Aziz was of some doubt regarding this until he heard that a learned

Jew had converted to Islam in Syria. After conversion he had proven to be a true and punctilious Muslim. Ka`b al-Qurazi says he was present when `Umar ibn `Abdul `Aziz asked him about which of the two he thought was the one offered for sacrificed. He said, without any hesitation that it was Isma`il and that this was written in *Tawrah* but modified by the Jews out of jealousy. Ibn Jarir also reports the following *hadith* (as also in *Kashshaf*):

عَنْ الصُّنَابِيِّ ، قَالَ : كُنَّا عِنْدَ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ ، فَذَكَرُوا الذَّبِيحَ : إِسْمَاعِيلَ أَوْ إِسْحَاقَ ؟ فَقَالَ : عَلَيَّ الْخَبِيرُ سَقَطْتُمْ ، كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص ، فَجَاءَهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، عُذُّ عَلَى مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بَنَ الدَّبِيحِينَ ، فَضَحِكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص ، فَقِيلَ لَهُ : [وَمَا الدَّبِيحَانِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ؟] فَقَالَ : إِنَّ عَبْدَ الْمُطَلِّبِ لَمَّا أَمَرَ بِحُفْرٍ زَقَمَ نَذَرَ لِلَّهِ : لَقَدْ سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ أَمْرَهَا لِيَذْبَحَنَّ أَحَدَ وَوَلَدِهِ ، قَالَ : فَحَرَجَ السَّهْمُ عَلَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ، فَصَنَعَهُ أَخْوَالُهُ وَقَالُوا : أَفَدِ ابْنَكَ بِمِائَةِ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ ، فَصَدَّاهُ بِمِائَةِ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ الثَّانِي [

Sunaabihi says we were with Mu`awiyah b. Abu Sufyan when they mentioned the “offering,” whether it was Isma`il or Is-haq. Mu`awiyah said, “You have fallen on the right man. We were with the Prophet when a man came in and said, ‘Give me some out of what Allah has bestowed on you, O son of the two slaughtered ones.’ The Prophet smiled

broadly.” We asked (Mu`awiyah), “O Leader of the faithful, what’s this son of the two slaughtered ones?” He replied, “When `Abd al-Muttalib was asked to dig up the Zamzam well, he vowed to Allah that if He made the affair easy for him, he would slaughter one of his sons. The draw fell on `Abdullah (the Prophet’s father). His uncles said no to the slaughter, telling him, ‘Offer instead 100 camels.’ So, he sacrificed 100 camels. (That was one). The second was Isma`il.”

(The report was preserved by Hakim also. But Ibn Kathir, Qurtubi and Alusi [who quotes Iraqi] do not believe in its trustworthiness: Au.).

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the majority opinion, Ibn Jarir maintains the opinion that it was Is-haq who was offered for sacrifice, and the place of sacrifice was Palestine. With regard to the horns of the ram (bestowed on Ibrahim for sacrifice in lieu of his son), that had remained in the Ka`bah (“I saw the two hung near the Meezaab, gone pretty dry”: Ibn `Abbas – Tabari), he thinks it could have been brought here from Palestine. But this does not seem plausible. Jews would not have allowed the horns to be taken away

from them. As for verse 112 which speaks of Is-haq only after the sacrifice affair is over (“and We gave him the glad tiding of Is-haq”), meaning, he came later, Ibn Jarir has an explanation that does not sound too strong and hence we ignore it (Au.).

Razi is also unsure about the “offering” – especially in face of the authorities holding a different opinion – but seems inclined to believe that if we are to go by the apparent text, it could only have been Isma`il. Qurtubi prefers to keep himself uncommitted. He presents arguments of both the sides and sees that both the arguments are inconclusive. Alusi quotes Jalaluddin Suyuti as saying that he was once inclined to believing that it was Is-haq who was offered for sacrifice until he looked into the arguments after which the inclination was gone and he came to conclude that it was Isma`il who was offered for sacrifice. Some scholars (as mentioned by Khifaji) have thought that a good ground for Is-haq being the person is established by the opinion held by the peoples of the Book who seem to be unanimous that it was Is-haq. In fact, moved by the evidences in favor of Is-haq, some have conjectured that the sacrifice could have been offered twice: once in Syria and

a second time in Makkah. But this sounds like a far-fetched conjecture.

Ibn Kathir believes that those who identified the “offering” as Is-haq were influenced by Jewish reports that somehow spread among the *Salaf*. They did not have a *hadith* to this effect, but (unprejudiced as they were: Au.), they accepted the reports as plausible and circulated them among themselves without any reservation. Otherwise, the Qur’ān is very clear about the identity of the “offering” by first mentioning the good news about a “forbearing” son, and then of a second son naming him as Is-haq. We have a report in Ahmed which says,

حَدَّثَنِي مَنْصُورٌ، عَنِ خَالِهِ مُسَافِعٍ، عَنِ صَفِيَّةِ بِنْتِ شَيْبَةَ أُمِّ مَنْصُورٍ قَالَتْ: أَخْبَرْتَنِي أَمْرًا مِنْ بَنِي سُلَيْمٍ وَوَلَدَتْ عَامَّةً أَهْلَ دَارِنَا: أَرْسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَى عُثْمَانَ بْنِ طَلْحَةَ . وَقَالَ مَرَّةً: إِنَّهَا سَأَلَتْ عُثْمَانَ: لِمَ دَعَاكَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ؟ . قَالَ: ” إِيَّيْ كُنْتُ رَأَيْتُ قَرْبِي الْكَبِشِ جَيْزٍ دَخَلْتُ الْبَيْتَ فَتَسَبَّيْتُ أَنْ أَمَرَكَ أَنْ تُخَيَّرَهُمَا فَخَيَّرَهُمَا، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ فِي الْبَيْتِ شَيْءٌ يَشْغَلُ الْمُصَلِّيَ ” ، قَالَ سُفْيَانُ: لَمْ يَزَلْ قَرْنَا الْكَبِشِ فِي الْبَيْتِ حَتَّى اخْتَرَقَ الْبَيْتُ، فَأَخْتَرَقَا

The above can be summarized as: “The Prophet once told `Uthman b. Talha (who was handed over the keys of the Ka`ba at the fall of Makkah: Au.), ‘I saw two horns when I went inside the

House (Ka`ba), but forgot to tell you to cover them up for it is not right that there should be anything in the House that distracts attention of the devotees.” Su-fyan (the narrator) added, “The two horns had remained hung in the House until the House once caught fire and burnt, along with the two horns which were also reduced to ashes.”

At all events, continues Ibn Kathir, although Abu Maysarah, Thawri, Abu Hūdhayl, Ibn `Abbas, his father `Abbas, `Ali and `Umar b. al-Khattab have thought that it was Is-haq who was offered for sacrifice; and that a trustworthy report tells us that Ibn Mas`ud held the same opinion; which is also the reported opinion of `Ikrimah, Sa`id ibn Jubayr, Mujahid, Sha`bi, Ibn `Umayr, Zayd b. Aslam, *Zuhri*, Ibn Abi Barzah, Mak-hul, Suddi, Hasan, Qatadah, Masruq, `Ata`, Muqatil and others; yet, it is very likely that these reports originated from Ka`b al-Ahbar and his kind of people, who picked them from Jewish scriptures, and which gained currency. There is in fact a *hadith* too to the effect that the “offering” was Is-haq. But it is untrustworthy. On the other hand, many of the authorities named above, as also several others, are reported to have

said that the one offered for sacrifice was Isma'il. Ibn 'Abbas for example has been severally reported that the Jews lied when they said Is-haq was the "offering;" it was rather Isma'il. Of the two conflicting reports from him, this one happens to be stronger in terms of chain of narrators. This was also the reported opinion of Mujahid, Sha'bi, Abu Saleh, Kalbi, Yusuf b. Mahran, Hasan al-Busri, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz (who inquired a newly converted Jew who said the Jews lied when they claimed that it was Is-haq), Ka'b al-Qurazi, Abu Hurayrah, Ibn 'Umar and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Of the *hadith* doctors Ibn Hanbal and Abu Hatim were of the opinion that the "offering" was Isma'il (Au.).

Shawkani, as also many other commentators see three Qur'anic verses as confirming that Isma'il was the offering. Allah said (21: 85):

{ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ }
[الأنبياء: ٨٥]

"And (remember) Isma'il, Idris and Dhu al-Kifl; they were all of the persevering ones."

In this *ayah* he has been described as "persevering" which quality he manifested when taken for slaughter.

(In fact, "halim" was an outstanding quality of Ibrahim and Isma'il and have been employed in the Qur'an for none but the two: Shabbir).

He also said about him (19: 54)

{ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ { مريم: ٥٤ }

"He was true of promise," which refers to his keeping of the promise which he made to his father when told that he wished to slaughter him. (This quality has also been reserved in the Qur'an for Isma'il: Au.).

A third Qur'anic verse supporting the view about Isma'il is in this chapter itself. The Qur'an says, after the affair of the slaughter (37: 112),

{ وَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ }
[الصافات: ١١٢]

"And We gave him the glad tidings of Is-haq: a Prophet, one of the righteous." How could the good news about Is-haq come if he was already there at the time of sacrifice? Secondly, this verse says that he will be a Prophet. Now, if Ibrahim was already told that Isma'il would be a Prophet, how could he be asked to slaughter him? Surely, he would have asked, "Here I am my Lord! But, have you not promised that the lad will be a Prophet?"

Mufti Shafi' points to weakness in Jewish claims, in the light of nothing

else but the *Torah* itself. It is said in Genesis (22: 1-2),

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, ‘Abraham’: and he said, ‘Behold, here I am.’ And he said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Mori’ah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of.”

(The Jews have used considerable ingenuity to locate Mori’ah in Palestine but with little success. Marwah (the Mount) sounds closest to Mori’ah. It is at Marwah that Hajj sacrifices were offered, as stated by the Prophet in a tradition documented in Muwatta’. This is the hill at which the Sa`ee ends and the likely original place for offering the sacrifice. But, perhaps, because of crowds the place of sacrifice was shifted to nearby Mina (in whose valleys there is enough space for shepherds and goatherds to bring their flock for sale: Au.). Who knows there might be a hint to this in the preceding verse which says,

{ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ } [الصافات: ١٠٢]

“When he reached Sa`ee (spot with him”).

In any case, it can be clearly seen in the above that Isaac is a later insertion since the first verse asserts, “thy only son;” since the *Torah* also tells us that Isma`il was born (14 years: ref. Gen., 16: 15 below) before Isaac, and hence Isaac was “not the only son.” In an earlier chapter Genesis it said (16: 1-2),

“Now Sar’ai Abrams wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sar’ai said unto Abram, ‘Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee go in unto my maid; It may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sar’ai.’

Abram accepted the offer and so, the *Torah* continues,

“And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.” (Gen., 16:4),

The *Torah* adds,

“And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bare, Ish’mael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ish’mael to Abram.” (Gen., 16: 15)

However, Sarah was not deprived of blessing. Abraham received the following message after Isma`il’s birth:

“And God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sar’ai your wife, you shall not call her name Sar’ai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover give you a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.’ Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?’”

The *Torah* adds,

“And God said, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.” (Gen., 16: 19)

Mufti Shafi` has not been quicker than the Jews to discover the discrepancy. They say therefore (in the interest of a tribal religion: Yusuf Ali), that since Ishmael was not of a free woman, but a slave, he could not become the first-born. Isaac was the first son (although second by birth) because he was born of a free woman. The ingenuity does not solve the problem wholly in view of the words “the only son.” This problem can be solved by declaring Isaac not only the “first-born” but also “the only” son.

But in that event, the *Torah* cannot be put to service because in several places it refers to Ishmael as a son of Abram. (After initially referring to Ibrahīm as Abram, God commanded him to change his name to Abraham: ref. Gen., 17: 5). In fact, Isma`il was “the only son” at the time Ibrahīm was ordered the slaughter. Thus, on close scrutiny, the theory that Is-haq was the offering – although supported by no less than seven of the Companions, albeit some of them reported as having a second opinion – fails to win approval.

The Brill Encyclopaedia of Islam, which blackens pages on articles of little or no interest and profit, completely ignores both the discrepancy in the *Bible*, as well as the arguments offered by the Muslim scholars. It quotes Ibn Jarir, but ignores Ibn Kathir. It accuses the Prophet of being initially ignorant of the father-son relationship between Ibrahīm and Isma`il:

“These (Qur’ānic: Au.) references to Isma`el and others are, in each case, part of a larger context in which more men of antiquity are mentioned. Each time, at either a lesser or greater distance before Isma`il, Abraham (Ibrahīm) is also praised as one of the earlier men. Nowhere,

[107] And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.⁷⁶

﴿١٠٧﴾ وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ

[108] And left for him (a good word) among the later folk.

﴿١٠٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ

[109] Peace upon Ibrahim.

﴿١٠٩﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

[110] Thus indeed We reward those who do excel.

﴿١١٠﴾ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

however, is a direct link established between Abraham and Isma`il, so that it must be assumed that originally Muhammad was not well informed about the relationship between Abraham and Ishmael, as at that time he seems to have counted Jacob, not Isma`il as another son of Abraham together with Isaac (XIX, 49; XXI, 72; XXIX, 27; VI, 84; XI, 71).” (Art.: Isma`il)

As if the above temerity is not enough, it gives a new twist to the issue. Discussing Ishak, it states:

“Actually the controversy came to be more concerned with Persian than with [IV:110a] Jewish rivalry for the Arabs (Goldziher, Muh. St., i, 144 f., Eng. tr., i, 135), since the Persians claimed descent from Ishak. Al-Mas`udi (Murudj, ii, 146 f.) quotes a Persian poet in 290/902 who boasted that his descent from Isaac the dhabih was superior to that of the Arabs.”

So, an unknown Persian poet’s boast (drunk on his words), 300 years after the Prophet was enough to prove, firstly, that the narrative is fully trustworthy, (as against the *hadith*, which is always untrustworthy), and secondly, that the Persians now become cousins of the Jews. One wonders whether this was ever suggested, in any scholarly work, to the Jews, or, it has been manufactured for the consumption of Iranians alone (Au.).

75. He was perhaps not seeking his opinion, but rather informing him, in the Middle-eastern style, of his intention to slaughter him (Au., with a point from Zamakhshari).

76. The substitute was a ram (male sheep, which, as some thought, came from Paradise, which explains the qualification “great”) or perhaps a mountain goat. The earliest commentators said that when Ibrahim took Isma`il for sacrifice and headed towards Mina, *Shaytan* appeared be-

[111] He was surely (one) of Our believing slaves.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١١﴾

[112] And We gave him the glad tiding of Is-haq: a Prophet, one of the righteous.

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

[113] And We blessed him and Is-haq; but of the progeny of the two (is one who is a) well-doer, and (another who is) a clear wrong-doer unto himself.⁷⁷

وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَقَ وَمِنَ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٣﴾

fore him at Jamarah al-`Aqabah (to dissuade him) but he waved him off. He reappeared at Jamarah al-Wusta and he waved him off again. Then, as he intended to proceed with the slaughter, Isma`il told him, "Father. I have no shirt other than this. I should rather remove it so that you can use it as my coffin." As he was removing his shirt, (or, as Suddi said, Ibrahīm was trying to run his knife over his neck) they heard (37: 104-05),

{ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ } [الصفافات: ١٠٤-١٠٥]

"O Ibrahīm, You have fulfilled the vision." They turned to find a ram which was duly slaughtered.

The report about the knife not cutting, is in Ibn al-Mundhir and Ha-

kim who declared it trustworthy (Alusi).

The above, it might be noted, is the *Salafs* own statements, which, although they are likely to have been heard from the Prophet, are not *ahadith* per se (Au.).

77. Thus writes Muhammad Asad, a former Jew, "With this prediction the Qur`ān refutes, as in so many other places, the spurious contention of the Jews that they are 'the chosen people', by virtue of their descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and therefore, a priori 'assured', as it were, of God's acceptance. In other words, God's blessing a prophet or saint does not, by itself, imply the conferment of any special status on his descendants."

[114] And surely, We conferred Our favor on Musa and Harun.⁷⁸

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

[115] And We delivered them and their folks from a great agony.⁷⁹

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٥﴾

[116] We succored them, so that they were the overcomers.

وَنَصَّرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْعَالِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

[117] And We gave them the manifesting Book.

وَأَتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

[118] And We guided them to the Straight Path.

وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١١٨﴾

[119] And left for them (a good word) among the later folk.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

[120] Peace upon Musa and Harun.

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

[121] Thus indeed do We reward those who excel.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾

[122] Surely, the two were of Our believing slaves.

إِنَّهُمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

[123] And surely, Ilyas⁸⁰ was also of the sent ones.

وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

78. "I.e., in consideration of their own merit, and not because of their descent from Abraham and Isaac" (Asad).

79. "The Israelites were delivered by three steps mentioned in verses 114, 115, and 116 respectively; but the consummation of Allah's favour on them was (verses 117-118) the Revelation given to them, which guided them on the Straight Way, so long as they preserved the Revelation intact

and followed its precepts. The three steps were: (1) the divine commission to Moses and Aaron: (2) the deliverance from bondage; and (3) the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army" (Yusuf Ali).

80. As discussed earlier, there have been differences in opinion over Ilyas and Idris: whether they were the same persons or different (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). But majority of com-

mentators believe that Ilyas, a descendant of Harun, was a Prophet in his own right (Razi) who was succeeded by Al-Yasa`, another Prophet (Qurtubi). Al-Yasa` on the other hand has been identified as Elisha of the *Bible*, who, as the *Bible* states was given the mantle after Elijah. See 2Kings, 2: 9-11 (Au.).

Majid writes: “Later commentators too have identified him as the Elisa of the *Bible*: ‘(He) was a prophet in Israel in the first half of the ninth pre-Christian century, under King Ahab.’ JE. V. p. 121). He ‘came from the land east of the Jordan, to wage war, in the name of the God of his fathers, against the worship of Baal.’ (ib) He ‘was among the greatest and most original of the Hebrew prophets; not unworthy of a place by the side of Moses.’ (EBi. C. 1270) ‘The loftiest prophet of the OT, raised up by “J” at a crisis in the history of Israel to save the nation from lapsing into heathenism.’ (DB.I. p. 687) ‘Foremost prophet of the Northern Kingdom, whose activity .. falls chiefly in the reign of Ahab (876-853). He was known as the Fishlite, probably because he was a native of Fishlite in Gibal ... He performed some miracles, among them the restoration to life of a poor widow’s son ... Elijah like Enoch, is said to have

been transported to heaven .. apotheosis due no doubt to his great zeal for God and his insistence upon the spiritual and ethical value of Hebrew monotheism.’ (VJE. P. 201).”

We do not know whether the following has always been there, which Majid failed to notice, or is it a later introduction:

“Elijah (of the 9th century before Christ): also spelled Elias, or Elia, Hebrew Eliyahu. Hebrew prophet who ranks with Moses in saving the religion of Yahweh from being corrupted by the nature worship of Baal. Elijah’s name means ‘Yahweh is my God’ and is spelled Elias in some versions of the *Bible*. The story of his prophetic career in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Kings Ahab and Ahaziah is told in 1 Kings 17–19 and 2 Kings 1–2 in the Old Testament.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005 edition) – Au.

Mawdudi offers some more details. Herewith a summary: “Elijah appeared sometime after Solomon (10th century before Christ), when the Israeli Kingdom had already broken into two: a northern piece called Israel with its capital in Samaria (present day Nabulus: Shafi`), and a southern (both within Palestine) called Judea with its capital in

Jerusalem. Religious and moral corruption that had taken roots earlier, but which had subsided during the reigns of David and Solomon, began to reappear in full force now. Idol-worship spread along with tyranny. Ahab the King of the Israel married Jezebel the daughter of the polytheist King of Sidon, he adopted the religion of his wife and built a Temple for Ba`l in Samaria. Offerings were made publicly for Ba`l. That was the time that prophet Elias appeared. He was of course very unpopular with the religious class, and because of his denunciation of polytheism, was persecuted by Jezebel. Ultimately, he had to flee and took refuge in a cave at the foot of Mount Sinai where he lived for several years before coming back to Israel to once again try his hand at reformation, but to no avail. He died without having won many Israelis to his cause.”

To the above lines of Mawdudi, we may add: The present-day *Bible* tells us that Elijah (meaning “My God is Jehova”), who was fed by ravens when in hiding (1King, 17: 6), who parted river Jordan (2Kings, 2:8), and even raised a widow’s dead son (1King, 17: 21-22), was raised to the heaven alive on a fiery chariot:

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I be taken away from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’ And he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you; but if not, it shall not be.’ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind unto heaven.” (2Kings, 2: 9-11). It is this mysterious disappearance that led the Jews to the belief in the second coming of Elijah. (It was a Jewish belief that the prophet Elijah would return to earth to take part in the establishment of God’s kingdom: The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p.424, Originally pub. by Prentice Hall Inc., USA, 1968). When John the Baptist began to baptize, the Jews began to wonder what right he had to do it without being a Prophet: “And this is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’ And

they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, 'I am not.' 'Are you that Prophet?' And he answered, 'No.'" (John, 1: 19-21). [Incidentally, the above quote tells us that the Jews were waiting for three prophets: Jesus Christ, Elijah, and 'that Prophet'. Neither the Jews nor Christians are clear to this day about the identity of "that Prophet"] - Au.

At all events, writes Mufti Shafi`, the above were the stories in circulation during the time of the second and third generation Muslims and which influenced them to believe that Ilyas is still alive. Ka`b al-Ahbar for instance, thought that four Prophets are still alive, two in the heavens, and two on the earth: `Isa ibn Maryam and Idris in the heavens and Khadir and Ilyas on the earth. Some narratives say that the last two get together during Hajj; a few others in Ibn `Asakir tell us about people having met Ilyas. Ibn Kathir has declared all of them unworthy of any attention. Hakim has a report which claims that our Prophet had met Ilyas while on his way to Tabuk. Dhahabi emphatically declared it fake and was vexed that a scholar like Hakim placed it in his collection.

The above said, we (Au.) might now look into the Brill Encyclopedia of

Islam for some amusement. The article on Ilyas is contributed by two Orientalists. It says:

"Ilyas is the name given in the Qur`an .. to the Biblical prophet Elijah; the form Ilyas derives from .. a Hellenized adjustment, but attested also in Syrian and Ethiopic, of the Hebrew name Eliyah."

The implication is clear. How could the Prophet know about Elijah, and its equivalent Ilyas to be able to mention him in a non-revelational work, which the Qur`an is? Surely, it needs an explanation. It is found. The word is there in Greek and Ethiopic languages. So, the implication is, the Prophet picked his name from there.

The two authors continue down the lines:

"In Muslim legend related by later authors there may be noted on the one hand the more or less faithful use of the Biblical facts (I Kings XVII to II Kings II), with a genealogical linking, inspired by the Jewish Aggada, of Ilyas to the priestly line of Harun through Pinhas; and on the other hand to the confusion of the character of Elijah/Ilyas with al-Khadir (Khidr) and Idris."

We may ask, who else will fall upon fake reports with cupidity but the

[124] When he said to his people, 'Do you not fear?

إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

[125] Do you invoke Ba`l⁸¹ and forsake the best of creators:⁸²

أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

[126] Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old?!

وَاللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

[127] But they laid the lie on him; so they will surely be brought forth.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

[128] Except for the chosen slaves of Allah.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

[129] And We left for him (a good word) among the later folk.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

rejecters of trustworthy *ahadith*? Referring to Ibn Kathir at this point – who rejects the legends they speak of – perhaps did not suit the purposes of the two authors. So they promptly ignored him. A fact of greater interest is that the atheist authors suddenly reveal their true identity by assuming the role of Evangelists. Christian Scriptural stories that are treated skeptically – if not scorn – by learned Biblical scholars from among themselves become, to them, “Biblical facts.” It may also be noted that the “later (Muslim) authors” are declared here as being faithful to Biblical facts. But are these not the very “later (Muslim) authors”, who, according to the Orientalists, were not faithful to their own Prophet? According to them they manufactured

the mass of the *ahadith* fastened on their own Prophet? However, since even those who were careless enough to reproduce Biblical stories, were never confused about Ilyas or Khadir, this remark might have its own political connotations.

81. “Ba`l” of the text is literally for master, possessor, chief, etc., so that a husband is his wife’s “ba`l” (as in the Qur`an 11: 72 – Razi), a family has a “ba`l” at the top, a nourisher or sustainer is a “ba`l” et al. At this point the occurrence has been explained as meaning “Lord”, or “deity.” Some others have said that “Ba`l” was actually the name of an idol they worshipped in a town called Ba`albak west of Dimashq and inhabited by a branch of the Israelites. Another report identifies it as a woman who

[130] Peace upon Ilyasin.⁸³

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

[131] Thus indeed do We reward those who excel.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

[132] Surely, he was of Our believing slaves.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

[133] And surely, Lūt was also of the sent ones.

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

[134] (Recall) when We delivered him and his family, all together.

إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

[135] Except for an old woman: of those who tarried behind.

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

[136] Then we destroyed the rest.

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

[137] Indeed, you pass by them by the morning,

وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

was worshipped (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Majid quotes: “Ba`l is a primitive title of divinities which is found in all branches of the Semitic race.’ (ERE. II. P. 283)... The Particular Baal mentioned in connection with Elijah is the Ball of Tyre. ‘And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him... and went and served Ball and worshipped him. And he reared up an alter for Ba-al in the house of Ba-al which he had built in Samaria.’ (1Kings 16: 30-32).”

82. We could repeat a note offered by Asad at *ayah* 14 of *Surah Al-Mu`minun* (23) on the words “best of

creators”: “As Tabari points out, the Arabs apply the designation ‘creator’ to every artisan (*sani`*) – a usage also current in European languages with reference to the ‘creation’ of works of art and imagination. Since God is the only Creator in the real, primary sense of this word, the phrase ‘*ahsan al-khaliqin*’ must be understood in this secondary sense of the term *khaliq* (cf., *Taj al-`Arus*, art. *khalaqa*).”

83. That is, Ilyas. Just as Ibrahim from Abraham or Seeneen from Sinaa’ (Tabari), or Mika`eel from Meekaal (Ibn Kathir) Ilyasin is derived from Ilyas.

[138] *and by night.*⁸⁴ Will you not then, use your mind?

وَبِاللَّيْلِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

[139] *And surely, Yunus was also of the sent ones.*⁸⁵

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

[140] *When he fled to the laden ship.*⁸⁶

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾

84. Every sojourner to Syria had to pass by their ruins (Tabari).

85. Ibn Kathir reminds us of the *hadith* in the *Sahihayn*: Abu Hurayrah reports the Prophet as saying, “It is not becoming of a slave that he should say ‘I am better than Yunus b. Matti.’”

By “I” the Prophet’s allusion was either to himself or to a third person. The contexts of several versions support both. For example, The Prophet said, “Do not declare one Prophet superior to another. For, when the Trumpet is blown everyone will swoon in the heavens and the earth except for whom Allah wills otherwise. Then it will be blown a second time. I will be the first to be raised, and lo! (I will find) Musa holding on to the *‘Arsh*. Now, I do not know whether he would be spared because of his swooning on (Mount) Tur, or would have recovered before me. And I do not say, ‘Anyone is better than Yunus b. Matti’” (Au.).

86. That is, writes Razi, a ship that was heavily laden.

After having dealt with the issues that arise with reference to the journey taken up by Yunus (*asws*) at *ayah* 87 of *Surah* al-Anbiya’ (21: 87), Imām Razi presents a short discourse on the meaning that can be attributed to the word “abaqa” as, “he fled from his master.” After rejecting the meaning that is apparent, especially to a novice in religion who does not understand the character of a Prophet, nor his status, and considering Yunus and his relationship with his Lord he points out, that two meanings are possible. One, the error committed by Yunus against his Lord was that Allah had promised him destruction of the people who had rejected him. He took it for granted that it was binding (on Allah) that He should send down the punishment. Following this belief, he gave up the supplication of forgiveness he used to make for his people. It was incumbent upon him that he should have continued seeking their forgiveness, especially, when it was possible that the punishment to come down but not destroy his

[141] And he drew lots,⁸⁷ and was among the losers.⁸⁸

﴿١٤١﴾ فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ

people root and branch. Second, Yunus (*asws*) had promised his people the punishment. But when it did not come down, he concealed himself (out of shame) and escaped to the sea, hence the words, “fled to the sea.” The first meaning, adds Razi, is more appropriate.

We do not know the origin of the stories that we have received from the earliest commentators since there are no *ahadith* that offer details; it is quite likely that Jewish literature has been used to weave around the sketchy details given by the Qur’ān. Even Asad – who departs from his habit at this point to quote the *Bible* for explanation of the Qur’ānic passage - seems to have been influenced by them. But Muslim scholars have been careful about alluding to an envoy what does not match with the functions and character of Prophets (Au.).

87. It is reported that when the boat in which Yunus (*asws*) had mounted was set to sail, it began to founder. The passengers – following their superstitious beliefs – thought that they were sure there was a sinner (unpopular with their deities) in the

boat whose presence was causing the turmoil. They drew lots to find out who it could be. The lot fell on Yunus (*asws*). The casting was repeated but it was again his name. So he jumped into the sea and a whale gulped him in (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi and others).

Although casting of lots is allowed, such casting in which a man is to be punished with death for a sin he committed (unless murder) is disallowed in Islam. Some people still offer one of their men as sacrifice to the waters when they swell in the river. Islam does not allow this (Qurtubi).

88. The textual word “mud-hazin” has “dahaza” in its root which means, “to refute, dispute, confute,” etc. Hence the Qur’ānic usage (42: 15),

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ
حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ﴾ [الشورى: ١٦]

“Those who argue in (matters concerning) Allah, after He has been responded to (by others), their argument stands refuted.” Thus, although “mud-hazin” has been explained by the commentators as meaning “losers” (in the lot: Razi), the possibility

[142] Then a fish swallowed him⁸⁹ while he felt blameworthy.⁹⁰

فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْخَوْثُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

[143] Now, had it not been that he was of those who chant Praises,⁹¹

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

remains that the decision that Yunus (*asws*) should jump or (be cast into the sea) would have been preceded by some argument whether he should thus be treated or not: an argument that went against him (Au.).

89. There is every possibility that when asked to leave the boat, Yunus (*asws*) would have jumped in hoping to swim through to the shore, for a Prophet never thinks of committing suicide (Thanwi).

Majid writes that large sharks and whales are known for swallowing humans whole.

90. He was (perhaps) reproachful of himself for having left his people before he was ordered (Thanwi).

But other commentators have understood it as meaning that he was blameworthy in the sight of Allah.

One wonders whether there is any possibility that he felt blameworthy for participating in the draw of lots in the first place?! (Au.).

91. Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id b. Jubayr, Abu al-`Aliyyah, Suddi and Qatadah have

interpreted the word “musabbihin” as meaning “musallin,” i.e., ‘who Prayed much’ (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Surah al-Anbiya` tells in *ayah* 87 that the words he used for seeking relief are:

{ وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ
حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ } [الشورى: ١٦]

“There is no Lord save Thee, glory to You, indeed, I was of the wrong-doers.”

A reliable source says that Imām al-Haramayn Juwayni used the *ayah* quoted above as proof that Allah is not in any particular direction. He was not closer to Muhammad who went up to the Ultimate end of the Sidrah Tree (53: 11-15) than He was to Yunus when he was in the fish’s stomach at the bottom of the sea, supplicating Allah (Qurtubi).

In reference to the passage under discussion, Dahhak b. Qays was heard saying on the mimber, “Remember Allah when you are in ease, He will remember you when you are in hardship. Yunus was devoted to Allah’s remembrance. When he was struck by

hardship he called upon Allah. He was helped out because he had been an obedient slave before the tribulation. Allah said about the situation, ‘had it not been that he was of those who chant Praises, he would have surely stayed in its belly until the Day they will be resurrected.’ In contrast, Fir`awn was a rebel. He cried out when about to get drowned (10: 90), ‘I believe that there is no deity worthy of worship but He in whom the Israelites have believed; and I am of those who have surrendered.’ But his supplication was rejected because he had not been an obedient slave in the past. But rather, Allah said about him (10: 91), ‘(Is it) Now (that you believe)!? While you had disobeyed earlier and you were of the mischief-makers!’ (Thus Fir`awn’s past became an obstacle to he being heard when in hardship)” - Ibn Jarir.

In fact, Ibn Kathir adds, there is a *hadith* which says,

تعرف إلى الله في الرخاء يعرفك في الشدة. (الطبراني)

“Know Allah in ease, He will know you in hardship.”

This is well illustrated by the *hadith* about three people facing a storm taking refuge in a cave; each of them seeking Allah’s help by the virtue of one of their past good deeds, and each granted succor (Qurtubi).

hadith collections have a report which says that:

إِنَّ يُونُسَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ حِينَ بَدَأَ لَهُ أَنْ يَدْعُو اللَّهَ بِالْكَلِمَاتِ حِينَ نَادَاهُ [ص: ٤٧] وَهُوَ فِي بَطْنِ الْحُوتِ، فَقَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ {لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ} [الأنبياء: ٨٧] ، فَأَقْبَلَتْ الدَّعْوَةُ تَحْتَ الْعَرْشِ، فَقَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ: يَا رَبُّ، هَذَا صَوْتُ ضَعِيفٍ مَعْرُوفٍ مِنْ بِلَادِ عَرَبِيَّةٍ، فَقَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: أَمَا تَعْرِفُونَ ذَلِكَ؟ قَالُوا: يَا رَبُّ، وَمَنْ هُوَ؟ قَالَ: ذَلِكَ عَبْدِي يُونُسُ، قَالُوا: عَبْدُكَ يُونُسُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَزَلْ يَرْفَعُ لَهُ عَمَلٌ مُتَقَبَّلٌ وَدَعْوَةٌ مُجَابَّةٌ؟ قَالُوا: يَا رَبُّ، أَفَلَا تَرْتَحِمُ مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِي الرِّخَاءِ فَنَنْجِيهِ مِنَ الْبَلَاءِ؟ قَالَ: بَلَى، فَأَمَرَ الْحُوتَ فَطَرَحَهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ

When Yunus (*asws*) realized that he needed to supplicate Allah in some (particular) words, he began to call Allah while he was in the fish’s stomach. He said, “O Allah, there is no deity save You, hallowed are You, I have been of the wrong-doers.” The call began to ring under the *‘Arsh*. Angels said, “This is a weak but familiar voice coming from a distant place.” Allah asked, “Do you not recognize it?” They asked, “O our Lord! Who is it?” He answered, “My slave Yunus.” They said, “Is it Yunus, that slave of Yours whose accepted deeds always ascended up, and whose Prayers were always answered?” Then they said, “Our Lord! Will You not show mercy to him who

[144] He would have surely stayed in its belly until the Day they will be resurrected.⁹²

لَكَيْتَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُعْتَوْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

[145] Then We cast him on to the open,⁹³ and he was sick.⁹⁴

فَبَدَدْنَا بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

[146] And We caused to grow over him a plant of the gourd (kind).⁹⁵

وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾

did in his times of ease what benefits in times of hardship?” He said, “Sure.” So He ordered the fish to throw him out on to the sands (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi).

The report is in Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir).

But the authenticity of the report could not be established (Au.).

92. Although most commentators say that the *ayah* means that he would have died in the fish’s belly, Alusi does not see anything odd in the fish surviving with Yunus (*asws*) in its belly until the Day of Judgment.

93. Is there any contradiction between this *ayah* which says, “Then We cast him on to the open” and another in *Surah* al-Qalam (68: 49) which says,

{ لَوْلَا أَن تَدَارَكُهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِدَّ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ
مَذْمُومٌ } {القلم: ٤٩}

“If not for a blessing from his Lord that had reached him, he would

have been thrown into the open, and he would have been blameworthy”?

The answer is no. What this latter verse is saying is that Yunus (*asws*) was thrown into the open without any blame on him (Qurtubi).

94. In other words, very weak (Ibn `Abbas and others – Ibn Kathir).

95. Sa`id b. Jubayr said that generally speaking “yaqtin” is every stem-less creeper that dies out within a year. Abu Hurayrah, Ibn `Abbas, `Amr b. Maymun, Qatadah, and Dahhak said that it was a pumpkin tree (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi and others quoting various authorities). Flies stay off this plant. It is reported that the Prophet liked this vegetable and would look for it in a bowl (Ibn Kathir). The report is in Bukhari (H.Ibrahīm).

It could as well have been water-melon (Au.).

Imām Razi adds: Wahidi has pointed out a meaning that many others have

[147] Then We sent him unto a hundred thousand or more.⁹⁶ وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

missed but which is implied by the text: 1) Allah grew the plant instantly for Yunus, and 2) It crept over something to cast a shadow on him. If it spread itself on the ground, it would not have offered him protection from the sun. (One may not be misled, adds Thanwi, by the words, “into the open” for, open [deserts] have an occasional tree).

It is significant to note that today scientists regard pumpkin and its family as superfood. (Biologically, water melon is included). The following is from an article on it: “It is high in fiber and low in calories. Both flesh and seeds offer different health benefits and are loaded with nutrients like vitamin B, C, and E., potassium, magnesium, and the antioxidant precursors of vitamin A1, beta-carotene, lycopene, lLutein, zeaxantin, alpha-carotene, and beta-cryptozanthin.

“Pumpkin’s abundance in carotenoids benefits body tissues; regulates the defense mechanism; improves cell communication; activates the enzymatic detoxification system; lowers the rate of certain cancers (lung, colon, bladder, cervical,

breast, and skin); protects skin and eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays and reduces risk of cardiovascular disease.”

96. This is another way of saying they were more than a hundred thousand (Tabari from the *Salaf*).

But it is likelier that the doubt about the true figure is from the observer’s point of view. If someone saw them he would have said, “Oh. They were a hundred thousand, or perhaps, a little more” (Razi, Qurtubi).

As for the words “We sent him ... they believed; so We allowed them enjoyment for a while,” it has been suggested – as in Ibn Jarir - that he was perhaps sent to a fresh set of people who believed and were spared punishment until death. Baghawi has also mentioned this possibility (Ibn Kathir).

Most other commentators believe however, that he went back to his people in Nineveh, ancient capital of Assyria, who welcomed him and were rewarded for their belief.

At all events, the figure “a hundred thousand,” (or, “fifty-thousand

[148] They believed; so We allowed them enjoyment for a while.⁹⁷

﴿١٤٨﴾ فَأَمْنُوا فَمَنْعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

[149] So seek their opinion, 'Are daughters for your Lord, and sons for them?'⁹⁸

﴿١٤٩﴾ فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلرَّبُّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَهُمْ الْبَنُونَ

years": 70: 4) were perhaps employed for the first time in the history of the Arabic language. Pre-Prophet Arabs were unaware of such figures (Au.).

97. As for the punishment being withheld, Thanwi points out that perhaps it was originally conditional to their belief. When they committed themselves, it was withdrawn.

This writer's belief is that Allah is not bound by any rule. He can punish or show mercy as He will to whom He will (Au.).

As for their belief in Yunus (*asws*) after the fish episode, Mawdudi points out that a possible meaning is that they repented when they witnessed the scourge descending upon them, but formally declared their faith in him only upon his return.

Mufti Shafi` recalls in this connection that Mirza Ahmed Qadiyani – the false Prophet - had also predicted a certain date when Allah's chastisement would descend and destroy his opponents. The date passed and nothing happened. The liar then said

that the chastisement had been postponed just as the chastisement of Yunus' people was postponed. But what he forgot is that the people opposed to Yunus had repented, declared belief in him and had sought to be forgiven for their previous disbelief. As against that, those who had opposed Mirza Ahmed Qadiyani, never repented, but rather, had increased their opposition to him after his announcement of the date of their destruction, without any harm coming to them.

98. You might note that after presenting an account of the past Prophets, Allah now turns to describe the religious beliefs of the pagans (Razi).

In Qatadah's opinion the allusion is to angel-worship of the Arab pagans (Ibn Jarir).

The pagans preferred sons for themselves (but attributed angels to Allah as His daughters). Allah said about this:

﴿ وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴾ [النحل: ٥٩]

[150] Or We created the angels females, while they are witnesses?⁹⁹

أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

[151] Unquestionably, it is in their own slander (that) they say,

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

[152] 'Allah has begotten.' Indeed, they are liars.

وَلَدَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

[153] Has he chosen daughters over sons?

أَضْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

[154] What ails you then, how do you judge?

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

[155] Will you not then be admonished?

أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

[156] Or have you a clear authority?

أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾

[157] Produce your Scripture then, if you are truthful.

فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

[158] They have declared kinship between Him and the Jinn,¹⁰⁰ but the Jinn know that they will be mustered.¹⁰¹

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

"When one of them is given the glad tiding of a female (child) his face remains dark as he suppresses his anger" (Ibn Kathir).

99. Among the Arabs, Juhaynah, Khuza`ah, Banu Mulayh, Banu Salamah and `Abd al-Dar held the belief that angels were females (Razi, Qurtubi).

100. While Mujahid and Suddi believed that by Jinn it is angels that are meant (jinn = angels: both being imperceptible creations: Razi, Qurtubi), whom the pagan Arabs thought were Allah's daughters, Ibn

`Abbas and Qatadah thought that the allusion is to the pagan belief that the Jinn and Allah are brothers (Ibn Jarir); they were close to the belief of the Zoroastrians (who, unable to sort out the question of good and evil, (fell on the false concept: Au.) that the world has two lords: a lord of good: God (Yezdan), and a lord of evil: *Shaytan* (Ahraman) – Razi, Shabbir.

101. That is, angels know that whoever said such a thing will be brought forth for punishment (Qurtubi).

[159] Glorified is Allah, above what they attribute (to Him).

﴿ ١٥٩ ﴾ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ

[160] Except for the chosen slaves of Allah.¹⁰²

﴿ ١٦٠ ﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

[161] As for you, and what you worship,

﴿ ١٦١ ﴾ فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ

[162] You will not mislead any away from Him,

﴿ ١٦٢ ﴾ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ

[163] Except he who shall roast in the Blazing Fire.¹⁰³

﴿ ١٦٣ ﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَحِيمِ

[164] And, there is not one of us, but he has a known position.¹⁰⁴

﴿ ١٦٤ ﴾ وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَعْلُومٌ

[165] Indeed, we line up in rows.

﴿ ١٦٥ ﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُونَ

[166] And indeed, we chant glory.¹⁰⁵

﴿ ١٦٦ ﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ

[167] Although they used to say,

﴿ ١٦٧ ﴾ وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَشْفُونَ

[168] 'If only we had a Reminder from the ancients.

﴿ ١٦٨ ﴾ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ

102. There are two possibilities: either the exception is for those who will be “brought forth,” or for those who attribute daughters to Allah (Razi).

103. The translation of verses 160-163 follows the understanding of the *Salaf* as in Ibn Jarir.

104. That is, each of the pagans and believers occupies a known position with his Lord. The allusion could also be to the status each angel occupies in the sight of his Lord; to wit, status of fear, of gratefulness, hope, sincerity, and so on (Qurtubi).

(Qatadah and Muqatil have said that) men and women Companions used to row up together in congregations until this *ayah* was revealed, ‘and, there is not one of us, but he has a known position’, after which they segregated themselves: men in front and women at the back (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

105. The *Salaf* have said that verses 164-166 are words of the angels, and the allusion is to their own Prayers in congregation in the heavens (Ibn Jarir). `A'isha has reported the Prophet as having said in reference to 164-166,

“There is not a foot-space in the earthly heaven but occupied by an angel either in prostration or standing (in Prayers)” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir adds: Ibn `Asakir has a report which says that the Prophet said,

أطت السماء وحق لها أن تئط ليس فيها موضع قدم
إلا عليه ملك راعع أو ساجد

“The heaven is creaking, and it deserves to creak. There is not a foot’s space in it but there is an angel in deep bow or in prostration.”

Hakim has a longer and slightly different version of this report about which he said that it has a trustworthy chain although the *Sahibayn* did not record it. The version in Hakim is also in Tirmidhi who declared it Hasan, while Suyuti, citing Ibn Majah apart from others, declared it weak in his *Jami` al-Saghir*, but Munawi writes that it is either Hasan or *Sahih*. Albani also declared – as pointed out by S.Ibrahīm - one of its versions as trustworthy (Au.).

Sahih of Muslim has a report which says that the Prophet came out to the Companions and said,

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ : خَرَجَ عَلَيْنَا
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ : (أَلَا تَصُفُّونَ

كَمَا تَصُفُّ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهَا ؟) فَقُلْنَا : يَا رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ تَصُفُّ الْمَلَائِكَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهَا ؟ قَالَ : (يُتِمُّونَ
الصُّفُوفَ الْأُولَى وَيَتَرَاصِبُونَ فِي الصَّفِّ) . - مسلم

“Will you not make your rows as the angels do before their Lord?” We asked, “Messenger of Allah, how do the angels make their rows before their Lord?” He answered, “They complete the front rows (first) and stand close to each other within them” (Qurtubi).

And, it is reported of `Umar that when he stood before the congregation he would say, “People, straighten up, Allah wishes that you follow the angels – about whom He said, ‘Indeed, we line up in rows. And indeed, we chant glory’ – straighten up, you there, come forward, you there, go back a little, you there..” It is after they had properly lined up that he would go forward and lead in the Prayers (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

And Muslim has a *hadīth* brought to us by Hudhayfah:

عَنْ حَدِيثِهِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه
وسلم- « فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى النَّاسِ بِثَلَاثٍ جَعَلْتُمْ صُفُوفَنَا
كَصُفُوفِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَجَعَلْتُمْ لَنَا الْأَرْضَ كُلَّهَا
مَسْجِدًا وَجَعَلْتُمْ ثَرِيئَةً لَنَا طَهُورًا » - مسلم

The Prophet said, “We have been given preference over others in

[169] We would have surely been Allah's chosen slaves.¹⁰⁶

﴿١٦٩﴾ لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

[170] Yet (when it came) they denied it; so they shall soon know.

﴿١٧٠﴾ فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ

[171] Already, Our word has preceded in favor of the slaves that were sent,¹⁰⁷

وَأَلْقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ
﴿١٧١﴾

[172] That they indeed are the ones that shall be helped.

﴿١٧٢﴾ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمَنْصُورُونَ

[173] And that, Our forces, surely, they shall be the victors.

﴿١٧٣﴾ وَإِنَّ جُنَدَنَا لَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ

[174] So turn away from them for a while.

﴿١٧٤﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

[175] And watch them, they shall soon see.¹⁰⁸

﴿١٧٥﴾ وَأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ

[176] What, do they seek to hasten Our torment?

﴿١٧٦﴾ أَفِعِدَا إِنَّا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ

three things: our rows have been made on the pattern of the rows of the angels; the whole of the earth has been declared lawful for prostration; and, its dust has been made a means for cleansing (ourselves)" - Ibn Kathir, Alusi.

106. Suddi, Dahhak, Ibn Zayd and others have said that the allusion is to the pagans of Makkah who used to say before the appearance of our Prophet that 'had we received a Book from Allah, like the Jews and Christians did, we would have been better followers than they' (Ibn Jarir).

107. That is, the word of victory for the Messengers has been written down. As Allah said (58: 21),

{ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي } [المجادلة: ٢١]

"Allah has written that surely I and My Messengers shall overpower."

Accordingly, Hasan said, "No Messenger was ever killed" (Qurtubi); that is, although Prophets were killed, Messengers were not.

108. By the word "soon" the allusion could either be to the day of Badr, or the Prophet's death, or the Day of Judgment (Ibn Jarir from the *Salaf*, Razi, Qurtubi).

[177] But when it descends in their courtyard, then, evil is the morning of those that were warned.¹⁰⁹

فَإِذَا تَرَلَّ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ
الْمُنذَرِينَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

[178] So turn away from them for a while.

وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾

[179] And watch; they shall soon see.

وَأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

[180] Glorified is your Lord, Lord of the might, above that they attribute (to Him)

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

[181] And peace upon those that were sent.¹¹⁰

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾

109. Morning is the time when people start the day with new hopes and fresh resolves (Au.).

(In this accord are the Prophetic words said at Khayber). Anas reported, as in the *Sahihayn*, that when the Prophet did his morning at Khayber, and the Jews came out of their forts with their axes and other agricultural tools, to discover the Prophet and his men, they hastened back to their forts saying, “Muhammad! By God, Muhammad and the army.” The Prophet responded by saying,

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ حَرَبَتْ خَيْبَرُ إِنَّا إِذَا تَرَلْنَا بِسَاحَةِ قَوْمِ فَسَاءَ
صَبَاحُ الْمُنذَرِينَ

“Allah is Great, Khayber is destroyed. Indeed, when we descend down into the courtyard of

a people then, evil is the morning of those who were warned” (Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi).

110. This is to promise that those that were sent will remain in peace on the Day of Judgment while the rest of the mankind will be in terror. And, (to touch upon another aspect of the meaning) Qatadah reports the Prophet’s words,

إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ عَلَيَّ فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَيَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“When you send peace to the me, also send peace to the Prophets, for I am one of the Messengers that were sent” (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

The report is also in Ibn Abi Hatim (Ibn Kathir).

[182] And praise to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.¹¹¹

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٢﴾

111. There are several reports that say that the last three verses may be recited at the end of every assembly.

But none of them is appended with a good chain of transmitters (Au.).

بَقِيَّةٌ



Surah 38

Sād

Makkan



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] *Sad*,¹ by the Qur'ān of the Reminder.²

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ ﴿١﴾

[2] *But those who have disbelieved are in pride and dissension.*³

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ ﴿٢﴾

1. While Ibn `Abbas said that the letter “*sad*” here is a word of oath, Suddi thought it is one of the “*huruf al-muqatta`at*”.

On the other hand Hasan al-Busri said that “*sad*” is an imperative form of the word “*sad*” (s-a-d) meaning, “compare your deeds with the Qur'ān, do they agree with each other?” There are other explanations (Tabari, Zamakhshari [without naming authorities], Qurtubi).

Yusuf Ali adds: “Sale’s note: ‘it may stand for Solomon’: is a real howler; for in Arabic the letter *sad* does not occur at all in the name of Solomon.”

Sulayman starts with a “Sin” and not “*Sad*.” And these howlers form the dominating clan among the Orientalist tribe (Au.).

2. Or, “full of admonition.” Nonetheless, “*dhi-adh-dhikr*” was explained by Ibn `Abbas, Sa`id ibn Jubayr, Abu Saleh, Suddi and others as meaning, “full of honor and of high-standing” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir), or, as Asad put it, “endowed with eminence.”

Yusuf Ali points out, “.. the word ‘*dhikr*’ is far more comprehensive than any single word or phrase that I can think of in English: it implies (1) remembrance in a spirit of reverence; (2) recital, celebrating the praises of Allah; (3) teaching, admonition, warning; (4) Message, Revelations, as in “*Ahlu al Dhikr*” ‘those who possess the Message (xv: 43). Devotional exercises are also called ‘*dhikr*’, with reference to meaning (2) above.”

[3] How many a generation⁴ We destroyed before them? At length they cried out, but that was no time for escape.⁵

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِمَّن قَرَّبْنَا قَدَاوًا
وَلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿٣﴾

[4] They wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves. And said the unbelievers, 'This is a sorcerer,⁶ a great liar.'⁷

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ
الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴿٤﴾

3. "... they refuse to acknowledge the fact of divine revelation because such an acknowledgement would imply an admission of man's responsibility to God – and this their false pride, manifested in their arrogant belief in man's 'self-sufficiency', does not allow them to do" (Asad).

Alusi devoting several pages to the beautiful term "*lata hina manas.*" We have given the sum and substance – if it was possible - in the translation (Au.).

As Allah (*swt*) said elsewhere about one of this class (2: 206),

The same thing has been expressed elsewhere in pointed words (21: 12-13):

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ
[البقرة: ٢٠٦]

فَلَمَّا أَحْسَبُوا أَنَّنَا إِذَا هُمْ مِنْهَا يَرْمِضُونَ، لَا
تُرْكَضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَا أَتَرْتُمْ فِيهِ
وَمَسَاكِينِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَسْأَلُونَ [الأنبياء: ١٢، ١٣]

"When he told: 'Fear Allah,' he is led by arrogance to more sins" (Qurtubi and others).

"When they felt Our chastisement (coming) they began to run away from it. 'Do not run, return to the luxuries you were in, and to your homes, perhaps you will be questioned'" (Ibn Kathir).

4. Asad writes: "It is to be noted that the term "*qarn*" signifies not merely a 'generation' but also - and quite frequently in the Qur'an - 'people belonging to a particular period and environment', i.e., a 'civilization' in the historic connotation of this word."

6. In what sense did the Makkans refer to the Prophet (*saws*) as a sorcerer? Mawdudi explains: They used the epithet "*sahir*" (sorcerer, magician) for him because whoever came in contact with him, was overly influenced by him to such extent that he who declared faith in him, would not mind endangering huge material

5. There has been a good deal of discussion over the verse, Qurtubi and

[5] *What? Has he made of the (several) deities, a single Deity?*⁸ *Surely, this is an amazing thing.*⁹

أَجْعَلِ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ
عُجَابٌ ﴿٥﴾

losses, was ready to face persecution, and was in fact, ready to break relations with his wife, children, parents and other dear ones. Who else, according to them, but a sorcerer could exercise such influence?

7. That is, when he claims that he receives revelation (Qurtubi), and not in personal life, in which they never experienced a lie (Au.).

In Asad's words, "... i.e., it is not the personality of the Prophet that fills them with distrust, but, rather, the substance of the message proclaimed by him – and, in particular, his insistence on God's absolute oneness and uniqueness, which runs counter to their habits of thought and social tradition."

8. Thanwi writes with reference to Ruh (but which statement could not be located there: Au.), that some *Sufis* have used this verse as evidence to prove validity of the concept of "*Wahdatu al-Wujud*" (Transcendent Unity of Being). But, he writes, as did Alusi, such reasoning is unreasonable because the purpose of this Qur'anic verse is to deny the exist-

tence in reality of any deities besides Allah.

9. "This wonder is only simulated. They are full of envy and spite against one of themselves who has been chosen by Allah to be his Messenger, and they vent their spite by making all sorts of false accusations. The man who was pre-eminent for truth and conscientious considerations, they call 'a sorcerer and a liar!'" (Yusuf Ali).

Majid comments and quotes on the multiplicity of gods: "In the realm of polytheism the number of gods, higher and lower, and sub-deities is such that one is, in fact overwhelmed by their vast medley. 'Starting from the theology of savage tribes the student arrives at the polytheistic hierarchies of the Aryan nations. In ancient Greece, the cloud-compelling Heaven-god reigns over deities as the god of War and the goddess of Love, the Sun-god and the Moon-goddess ... In modern India, Brahma, Vishnu-Siva reign pre-eminent over a series of divinities ... such figures as Indra of Heaven and Surya of the Sun, Agni of the Fire ... the

divine Rivers, and below the ranks of nymphs, elves, demons, ministering spirits, of heavens and earth.’ (PC., II, p.251).”

Asad delves below the surface to explain: “Divorced from its purely historical background, this criticism acquires a timeless significance, and may thus be paraphrased: ‘Does he claim that all creative powers and qualities are inherent exclusively in what he conceived as “one God?” – a paraphrase which illustrates the tendency of many people to attribute a decisive influence on human life – and, hence, a quasi-divine status – to a variety of fortuitous phenomena or circumstances (like wealth, ‘luck’, social position, etc.) rather than to acknowledge the overwhelming evidence, in all observable nature, of God’s unique existence.”

It is reported in this context by Ibn `Abbas that when Abu Talib fell sick a group of the chiefs of Quraysh went to him (afraid that he might die and leave the affair of the Prophet (*saws*) unsettled: Au.; and alarmed at `Umar’s Islam: Razi and Qurtubi) and told him to restrain his nephew who insulted their deities. Abu Talib sent for the Prophet. When he arrived, Abu Jahl hurried to occupy a vacant seat next to Abu Talib fear-

ing that the Prophet might soften his heart. So the Prophet had to sit near the door. Abu Talib told him that the Quraysh chiefs were complaining about him saying that he insulted their deities. The Prophet replied, “

يَا عَمَّ إِنِّي أُرِيدُهُمْ عَلَى كَلِمَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ
يَقُولُونَهَا تَدِينُ لَهُمْ بِهَا الْعَرَبُ وَتُؤَدِّي إِلَيْهِمْ
بِهَا الْعَجَمُ الْجَزِيَّةَ

O my uncle, all I want from them is a single word; if they said it, the Arabs will follow them and the non-Arabs will pay them tribute.”

They jumped and said, “One word, why, take ten from us.” The Prophet said, the word is,

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“There is no deity save Allah.” They tore their clothes and said (38: 5),

أَجْعَلُ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ
عَجَابٌ [ص: ٥]

“What? Has he made out of (several) deities, a single Deity?” (Ibn Jarir, Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

The narrative is in Tirmidhi (who declared it *Sahih*); Nasa’i, Hakim, who also thought it was trustworthy, and many other collections (Shawkani).

[6] And went forth the prominent ones among them (saying), 'Move on, remain steadfast to your deities. Indeed, this is an affair well-directed¹⁰ (to gain advantages).

وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ امشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا
عَلَىٰ آهْتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ ﴿٦﴾

[7] We never heard (the like) of this in the last religion,¹¹ surely this is nothing but an invention.

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا
اِخْتِلَافٌ ﴿٧﴾

[8] What? Has the Reminder been revealed to him out of us all?¹² But they are in doubt concerning My Reminder. But rather, they have not yet tasted My chastisement.

أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي
شَكٍّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِي بَلْ لَمَّا يَدُوقُوا عَذَابِ
﴿٨﴾

10. As we would say today in journalistic language, "points to a hidden agenda" (Au.).

11. Ibn `Abbas, Suddi and other said that the allusion by the "last religion" is to the last revealed religion, Christianity. Mujahid and Qatadah however thought the reference was to the religion of the Quraysh: paganism (Ibn Jarir, Razi without naming authorities).

12. This sentiment echoes in other verses. E.g. (43: 31),

لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ
عَظِيمِ [الزحرف: ٣١]

"Only if this Qur'an had been revealed to a man of these two major towns," where the allusion was to Makkah and Ta'if (Zamakhshari).

Nevertheless, the point was not that it should have been revealed to the noblest of them, (which the Prophet was, both genealogically as well as morally), but rather, the richest of them (Razi).

The Orientalists use verses of this kind to prove that the Prophet (*saws*) was not genealogically the best of them. That is, if the Quraysh thought Muhammad was not the noblest of them, which is what their objection implies, then, they were right. See EI art., Muhammad. Ironically, their argument reveals that at heart the Orientalists believe that the Qur'an is not the Prophet's product, since, if it was, it would not have contained verses that deny him noble lineage (Au.).

[9] Or, have they the treasures of your Lord's mercy, the Mighty, the Bestower?¹³

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ
الْوَهَّابِ ﴿٩﴾

[10] Or, is theirs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is between them? If so, let them then ascend up to the means.¹⁴

أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا
بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ ﴿١٠﴾

13. "I.e., 'Do they think that it is for them to decide as to who should and who should not be graced with divine revelation?' (Asad).

14. The textual "*al-asbab*" has been explained by some of the *Salaf* as meaning "the heavens." That is, let them climb up to the heavens (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Sa` id b. Jubayr and others said the allusion is to the "ways or means (such as ladders: Zamakhshari), to the heavens (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). In other words, they understood "*al-asbab*" as meaning, "the means by which they could ascend" (Au.).

But Tabari also has a strange statement coming from Anas: "Asbab: It is thinner than hair, stronger than iron and exist in every place except that it is invisible."

It is strange because the allusion could either be to gravitons (particles yet to be discovered but which are strongly believed to fill the universe, through

which the gravitational force works), or, to the new concept of the true nature of space. It is being said by the physicists that at ultramicroscopic distances - distances shorter than the Planck length - violent fluctuations are noted in the special fabric. A new field of study therefore, is now developing to unravel the mystery of the nature of space. This theory, known as the string theory, tries to reconcile the two irreconcilable theories: Einstein's theory of relativity, and the laws of quantum physics. Writes a contemporary scientist:

"According to string theory, the elementary ingredients of the universe are not point particles. Rather, they are one-dimensional filaments somewhat like infinitely thin rubber bands, vibrating to and fro ... (But) unlike an ordinary piece of string, which is itself composed of molecules and atoms, the strings of string theory are purported to lie deep within the heart of matter. The theory proposes that they are ultramicroscopic ingre-

dients making up the particles out of which atom themselves are made. The strings of string theory are so small – on average they are about as long as the Planck length – that they appear pointlike even when examined with our most powerful equipment.” (Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, p. 136, Vintage Books, New York, 2003) – Au.

Asad takes up yet another issue hidden in the verse, “Do they think that human beings are so highly endowed that they are bound to attain, some day, to mastery over the universe and all nature, and thus to God-like power?”

In contemporary context we might point out that the Qur’ānic prediction that humans will never be able to go beyond a certain distance in space, has come to be acknowledged by the scientists. It was not but a few decades ago when the scientists were talking about going deep into space, traveling from star to star, galaxy to galaxy, and coming back enriched with resources essential for human survival on earth. Some of them boasted of taking the earth itself – through human power – out of the decaying Solar system, and placing

it into another area in space orbiting around another sun, where, enriched by the new environment, the human race could continue living forever instead of the presently predicted mere four billion years. Four billion years is the estimated time that the sun will take to burn all its hydrogen after which it will flare up into a huge fire-ball burning its helium when its size will grow to such a magnitude as to engulf the earth, burning down all that there is on it now – a prospect that had dismayed Bertrand Russell.

But now it is being realized that anything that moves anywhere near the speed of light assumes such mass that it becomes impossible to be moved: ever increase in speed implies ever increasing mass of the moving body, in turn implying ever increasing demand on the supply of energy for the journey; in other words, a self-defeating enterprise. Secondly, movement in space implies movement through time, meaning, a much faster movement of time for the travelers in space than those on the earth, so that a couple of years through a distant space would mean perhaps thousands of years on earth. Any venture deep into the universe then is doomed to failure from the start (Au.).

[11] Forces these are, of the confederates (that will be) routed.¹⁵ جُنْدٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ ﴿١١﴾

[12] Laid the lie before them the people of Nuh, `Ad, and Fir`awn – he of the stakes.¹⁶ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ ﴿١٢﴾

15. Mujahid has said that by “jund” (forces) it is the Quraysh that are meant, while by “ahzab” (confederates), the allusion is to forces of the past. And, to put the verse differently, adds Tabari: “These are forces like the forces of the past nations, (lying) defeated there.”

Allah (swt) said elsewhere (54: 44-45),

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ جَمِيعٌ مُّنتَصِرُونَ سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ [القمر: ٤٤ - ٤٥]

“Or, do they say, ‘We are a band (that will emerge) victorious.’ Soon the band will be defeated and will show their backs” (Ibn Kathir).

The verse held a prediction which came true when the Quraysh too, along with the confederates, returned defeated in their purposes from the battle of the Trench (Qurtubi in brief).

Most commentators have pointed out that the forces of this occurrence were routed at Badr. But, if we consider the situation at the Battle of the

Ditch, when a confederate of forces came down intending to annihilate the Muslims root and branch – some 20,000 against perhaps 3-4000 Muslims – but were virtually routed by Allah’s forces, then we can legitimately say that the *ayah* made a perfect prediction of that event (Au.).

16. With reference to “awtad,” Suddi and Ibn Anas said that Fir`awn used to torture people by pegging them to the ground (and setting loose on them snakes and scorpions: as noted by most commentators), and hence “the man of pegs or stakes” (Tabari). Another possibility, among others, is that Fir`awn commanded a huge army that, when it pitched its tents, made a terrifying site with numberless pegs (and poles: Asad), and hence “he of the pegs” (Razi, Qurtubi).

Asad adds: “In classical Arabic, this ancient Bedouin term is used idiomatically as a metonym for ‘mighty dominion’ or ‘firmness of power’ ([as in] Zamakhshari). The number of poles supporting a bedouin tent is determined by its size, and the lat-

[13] *And Thamūd, Lūt's people, and the men of the thicket:*¹⁷ *those were the confederates.*¹⁸

وَتَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ
أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] *Not one (of them) but cried lies to the Messengers, and deserved My penalty.*¹⁹

إِنْ كُنتُمْ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِي
﴿١٤﴾

[15] *And, these (too) wait not but for a single shriek, which will brook no delay.*²⁰

وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مِمَّا هُنَّ
مِنْ فَوَاقٍ ﴿١٥﴾

[16] *And they said, 'O Our Lord, hasten to us our share before the Day of Reckoning.'*²¹

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ
الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٦﴾

ter has always depended on the status and power of its owner; thus, a mighty chieftain is often alluded to as, 'he of many poles.'

17. That is, the people of Shu`ayb (Razi).

18. That is, those were confederates, and forces like you are, O Quraysh. But what was their end?

19. Yusuf Ali places this note slightly above: "In their day, Noah's contemporaries, or the 'Ad and the Thamūd, so frequently mentioned, or Pharaoh the mighty king of Egypt, or the people to whom Lot was sent (cf. xxxvii. 75-82; vii. 65-73; vii. 103-137; vii. 80-84) were examples of arrogance and rebellion against Allah: they rejected the divine Message brought by their messengers, and they all came to an evil end. Will not their posterity learn their lesson?"

20. Also pronounced "fuwaq" by some, lit., it is the interval between one milking of an animal, and another, perhaps for relaxing the fingers, or to allow the young to suck.

Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and Suddi interpreted "fawaq" as meaning "return" (Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir). That is, once the Trumpet is blown into, there will be no return (to the situation and conditions of the world as known today: Au.). Some others have understood as meaning: the Trumpet-blowing will have no pause or ending thereto (Ibn Kathir and others).

21. The allusion is to the Quraysh's demand that the punishment be hastened upon them. This is how Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Suddi and Sa`id b. Jubayr understood it. But it could as well be that they demanded sarcastically that their good share of the

[17] Bear patiently what they say and remember Our slave Da'ud, a man of strength,²² an unflinching penitent.²³

اصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ
ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿١٧﴾

Hereafter may be granted here and now since they did not believe in the Hereafter anyway (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

22. While Ibn 'Abbas said "dhu al-ayd" meant the man of strength, Mujahid, Qatadah, Suddi and other added, 'in devotion.' That is, he was a man of strength in devotional matters (Tabari). This is supported by a Prophetic statement which says, as in the *Sahihayn*:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ جَمِيعٌ مُنْتَصِرُونَ، سَيُهْزَمُ
الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ [القمر: ٤٤ - ٤٥]

The best of Prayers in the sight of Allah was that of Da'ud and the best of fasts in the sight of Allah was that of Da'ud: he slept half of the night, stood up in Prayers one third and (then again) slept off one sixth. And he would fast a day, and break a day" (Ibn Kathir).

On the other hand, Ibn 'Abbas' opinion is strengthened by another verse which says (51: 47):

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

"And the heaven, We built it with strength and We are expanding it" (Ibn Kathir).

Another example is (19: 12),

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ [مریم: ١٢]

"O Yahya, hold the Book with strength." There are other examples of this usage (Razi).

23. Although, and as usual, the *Bible* does not treat David kindly, Western writers have treated him differently. It is falsely alleged by Jewish and Christian writers that Prophet Muhammad drew much material from Biblical sources. In this case, however, latter day Jewish and Christians seem to have drawn much from the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. Majid comments and quotes from them: "That David was a deeply religious personality is admitted even by the unfriendly critics: 'David himself was sincerely loyal to Jehovah, Israel's God. His battles were fought and his victories won in the name of Jehovah. None of his public acts was marked by any disloyalty or unfaithfulness to Jehovah. Through

[18] We subjected the mountains singing praises along with him at nightfall²⁴ and sunrise.²⁵

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ
وَالْإِشْرَاقِ ﴿١٨﴾

David the popular conception of the power of Jehovah must have been greatly strengthened.’ (NSBD, p. 172) ‘He was a sincerely religious man, a devout worshipper of Yahweh’ (EBr. VII. P. 78).. ‘David’s piety was so great that his prayers were able to bring things heavenly down to earth.’ (JE, IV, p. 455).”

24. “‘Ashiyy”: in common parlance “evening time” but in classical times the term referred to either (1) the time between sun’s decline until sunset or (2) the time between sun’s decline until next day’s morning (Lisan), while “Ishraq” is either (1) first hour of the day, or (2) the time between sunrise until it begins to decline. This is the reason why “Salatu al-Duha” (normally offered an hour before noon) is also referred to as “Salatu al-Ishraq,” which is normally offered some 20 mts. after sunrise (Au.).

25. Some scholars have suggested that the “tasbih” of the mountains could be of the same nature as that of the handful of pebbles that the Prophet (*saws*) once held against the

ears of some of his Companions and they heard their “tasbih” (Alusi).

It is reported that Ibn `Abbas did not Pray “Salatu ad-Duha” because he did not feel comfortable about it until he entered upon Umm Hani (Abu Talib’s daughter) and asked her about the Prophet (as to what he did when he entered Makkah triumphant). She said, “He entered my house, ordered a tub to be filled, asked for a cloth to be stretched between me and him and bathed himself. Thereafter he sprinkled some water at one corner of the house and offered eight cycles of Prayer: in which all actions were of more or less equal duration. Ibn `Abbas came out saying, “I had read the Qur`ān from cover to cover but did not know what *Salah* al-Duha is. I used to ask, ‘Where is *Salah* al-Ishraq?’ until I found it in this verse” (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir).

Umm Hani’s report is, according to Haythami, not very strong (S. Ibrahim), but various versions of reports concerning *Salah* al-Duha are to be found in the *Sahihayn* and other collections (Shawkani, Alusi).

[19] And the birds, assembled together; all (of them) obedient to him.²⁶

وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿١٩﴾

[20] And We strengthened his kingdom, gave him wisdom²⁷ and decisive speech.²⁸

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَلَ الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٠﴾

[21] And, has the tiding of the disputants come to you? When they scaled the sanctuary!²⁹

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَضْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ ﴿٢١﴾

26. That is, all of them responded to him with their own voices of glory when Da'ud recited the Zabur (Razi and others).

Imām Razi disagrees with the above interpretations and says that there is no reason why the apparent meaning should be abandoned viz., Da'ud (*asus*) was given the power of speech and the ability to express every shade of meaning he had in mind.

27. It is said that every statement that agrees with the truth is “*hikmah*” (Zamakhshari).

One may note that Allah (*swt*) mentioned no less than ten reasons as to why Da'ud (*asus*) should be an example (Razi).

28. Fasl al-khitab: That is, skill at judgment: Ibn `Abbas and others. It was further explained by Qadi Shurayh as one which consists in demanding witnesses and (if not found) resorting to oaths. But it is better, writes Tabari, to leave it open and say that the words refer to skill in judgment.

29. That is, they did not come by the door, but rather climbed the wall of his private chamber of worship.

“Sagacity of judgment” is another possibility (Asad).

The textual word “*mihrab*” is for an upper room, the best part of a house, where the head of the house sat, and latterly, a room reserved for devotional acts. Raghīb has said that the mosque’s “*mihrab*” is so called because that is the place where a person fights (from “*harb*”: war) or struggles against *Shaytan* and his influences (although, “*mihrab*” of today’s mosques, in its specific shape, did not, as Suyuti has pointed out in an

Sha`bi said that the allusion is to saying “*amma ba`d*” before starting a speech (Ibn Jarir). This is what Abu Musa (al-Ash`ari) also said (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani), but Da'ud could not have been the first to say those words (Alusi).

[22] When they entered upon Da'ud;³⁰ and so he was alarmed by them.³¹ They said, 'Do not be alarmed. (We) two are disputants: one of whom has wronged the other. Therefore, judge between us with Truth. Stray not (away from truth), but lead us to the straight path.'³²

[23] This is my brother.³³ He has ninety-nine ewes while I have just one ewe. Now, he says, "Entrust it to me," and has prevailed over me in speech.³⁴

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصِمَانِ بَعَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ ﴿٢٢﴾

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٣﴾

article on this topic, exist during the Prophet's time). Some others have said that originally "mihrab" was used for a place of worship alone, from where it was taken to be used for the best part of a house (Alusi).

30. The addition of the words, "they entered upon Da'ud" inform us that after scaling the wall, the two did not stop there, but advanced further to enter upon Da'ud (right in his private room) - Razi.

31. For, (perhaps) they had come by night and had not used the door. Further, it is possible that the two had come that way with ill intentions, under the impression that Da'ud would not be guarded. But when they found him guarded, they dug up the story of ninety-nine and one ewes (Razi).

32. Thus they spoke offensively with Da'ud, almost accusing him. But he

kept his cool, and thus passed the test except that when he pronounced his judgment, he addressed the plaintiff, instead of first inquiring the defendant about the truth of the matter, which was perhaps the error he made (that led him to seek Allah's forgiveness) - Thanwi.

The second half of the above has been voiced by many commentators (Au.).

33. That is, a brother in faith.

34. This tells us by implication that personal or social pressure to force a Muslim into doing something or giving away something, is not allowed. For example, if someone uses his authoritative position to make a Muslim yield a gift, which he is not happy to yield, then it would amount to "ghasab" (impounding). Similarly, a group of men going up to a Muslim to pressurize him into

[24] He said, 'He has undoubtedly wronged in asking your ewe to (be added) to his ewes. And truly, most partners (are such that) some of them oppress others; except those who believe and do deeds of righteousness,³⁵ but how few are they?!' And Da'ud understood that We had tested him and so he sought forgiveness of his Lord,³⁶ fell down deeply bowing, and turned repentant.³⁷

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نِعَاجِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لِيَبْغِيَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ ﴿٢٤﴾

making a charitable donation, say for a mosque or some other good cause, is not recommended. Those who collect funds for Madrasas, mosques, or other social causes may pay special attention to this. The Prophet (*saws*) has said,

"لَا يَحِلُّ مَالُ امْرِئٍ مُّسْلِمٍ إِلَّا بِطَيْبِ نَفْسٍ بَيْنَهُ".
رواه أبو يعلى وأبو حرة وثقه أبو داود، وضعفه ابن معين. (الهيثمي)

"A Muslim's wealth is not lawful except by his cheerful assent" (Mufti Shafi').

35. This is not only to say that practicing Muslims do not deceive each other, but also that their entry into partnership with anyone, for any apparent material reason, is – at bottom – of the kind where each seeks moral, spiritual and religious advantages of the other (Razi in different words).

36. In connection with the test and forgiveness, the following is in Ha-

kim's collection who treated it as trustworthy and which assessment Dhahabi seconded. It is also in Bayhaqi's "Shu'ab": Da'ud was struck by delight bordering to self-congratulation, to say, "O my Lord! There is not an hour during the day or the night when one of Da'ud's family is not in prayer, recitation, remembrance, chanting glory, or engaged in similar devotional acts." He was told by Allah (*swt*) that this was only because of His own attention and paving of the way making it easy for them all. He was also told that he would be tested. And the test consisted in he being freed (of Allah's help). That is, he would be given charge of his self altogether. Da'ud asked that he be told of the day it would happen, which was done, and so Da'ud shut himself up in the Sanctuary (Shawkani), [yet he fell into the error that he did: Au.].

The above story however does not say how exactly Da'ud was tried and what was the error he fell into (Au.).

Imām Razi has another explanation. It is possible, he states, that although the two had entered with an ill purpose, Da'ud's kindly treatment provoked them to repentance and to invoking him to seek their forgiveness which explains the words, "he sought forgiveness of his Lord."

Following their habit of passing on whatever they heard, many early commentators, including Ibn Jarir, have narrated stories that seem to have come from Jewish sources. They state in sum and substance that the piety, wisdom and material power that Da'ud commanded, provoked him into a sort of temporary vain-glory. He even sought to be granted the same status as major Messengers such as Ibrahīm (*asws*) and others were granted. Allah wished to teach him a lesson. One day, as he happened to be on his roof-top he saw a woman bathing. She pleased him, he sent her soldier husband to battle-front until he got killed. Thereafter he married the woman. According to some versions Da'ud, although he had ninety-nine wives, had asked her husband to divorce her so that he could marry her.

Qurtubi dismisses the story as what it is, viz., baseless, and Ibn Kathir points out that none of the versions has a good chain of narrators. (Both Abu Hayyan and Baydawi rejected the stories: f.n. Qurtubi). Imām Razi takes it up for a detailed refutation running over several pages. He points that the story is too fanciful, and unbefitting a Prophet to be accepted for narration. Far from a Prophet, whom Allah (*swt*) praised as possessing ten outstanding qualities, whose example He commanded Muhammad to follow, not even a man of low morals would plan and execute such an absurd thing without winning universal disapproval. The story alleges that Da'ud planned the murder of one of his followers. Could that be true when our Prophet said, "Whoever helped in shedding blood of a Muslim, even by a word, will appear on the Day of Judgment with the words written on his forehead, 'Despaired of Allah's mercy.'" Another *hadīth* says, "A Muslim is one, from whose tongue and hands others are in peace." When such are the qualities of an ordinary believer, could such things be attributed to a Prophet of the past?

Imām Razi would not even accept that the story is allegorical, that it were two angels that had come to

test him because such assumption will imply a lie on the angels, one of whom said, “We two are disputants” while they were not. Qurtubi and Alusi however maintain that if we assume that the two had agreed between themselves that this is how they shall talk, then the implication of a lie is removed. Alusi adds that the opinion that the two were angels is almost unanimous, although the story concerning the woman is obviously not.

Zamakhshari also discounts the stories that have circulated both among the laities as well as the non-laities about Da’ud (*asws*) and reports Sa’id ibn Jubayr and Harith al-A`war as saying that `Ali had promised to flog with 160 lashes anyone he heard was narrating such stories; (but Zaynuddin Iraqi thought the report is weak: Alusi). When `Umar b. `Abdul `Aziz mentioned the story, a scholar sitting there protested saying, “If the story is not in the Qur`ān, then its narration is a slander against a Prophet and if true – by any chance – then it is best not to publicize what Allah left concealed.” It seems Ibn `Abdul `Aziz was quite pleased with the remark.

Caution demands, conclude Zamakhshari, Razi, Ibn Kathir and some others, that we say no more

than what the Qur`ān has said, whether we understand the text or we do not.

Sayyid Qutb remarks that even modified and diLūted versions of the story are not acceptable in view of the praises the Qur`ān lavished on Da’ud.

Qadi Baydawi, Abu Hayyan, Ibn Jawzi, Abu Sa`ud, Qadi `Ayad, Khazin, Ibn Hazm, Khifaji, Abu Tammam, and others have all discounted the story refusing to accept any part of it as true (Shafi`).

All said, how catchy and alluring stories are, can be judged from the fact that a famous contemporary commentator, who, while criticizing the *Bible*, spins out a completely new version of the story that seems to be entirely from his own imagination (Au.).

Yusuf Ali points to inner contradictions in the *Bible*, which must be compared with the sublime notes on Ayyub in the Qur`ān. He writes, “Those who think they see a resemblance to the Parable of the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel, xii. 1-12) have nothing to go upon but the mention of the “one ewe” here and the “one little ewe-lamb” in Nathan’s Parable. The whole story is here different, and the whole atmosphere is different.

The Biblical title given to David, “a man after God’s own heart” is refuted by the *Bible* itself in the scandalous tale of heinous crimes attributed to David in chapters xi and xii. of 2 Samuel, viz., adultery, fraudulent dealing with one of his own servants, and the contriving of his murder. Further, in chapter xiii, we have the story of rapes, incest, and fratricide in David’s own household! The fact is that passages like those are mere chroniques scandaleuses, i.e., narratives of scandalous crimes of the grossest character.”

37. Some people are led to believe that Da’ud must truly have committed some kind of sin for Allah to have said, “he sought forgiveness of his Lord, fell down deeply bowing, and turned repentant.” Yusuf Ali paraphrases the sentiments of many commentators when he writes: “Some commentators say that David’s fault here was his hastiness in judging before hearing the case of the other party. When he realised his lapse, he fell down in repentance.” But, Imām Razi points out, had not Allah (*swt*) said to our Prophet (47: 19),

وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِدُنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
[محمد: ١٩]

“And seek forgiveness for your sins and for believing men and women.”

***Sajdah al-Tilawah* :**

What Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir write can be summed up in the following manner: Scholars have differed over “*sujud*” at this point, whether it is a prostration of thanks or the obligatory type. Ibn ‘Abbas thought – as in a report of Bukhari, Abu Da’ud and others - that a “*Sajdah*” at this point is not obligatory although “I have seen the Prophet prostrating himself.” In a *Sahih* report preserved by Nasa’i, Ibn ‘Abbas said,

ما رواه ابن عباس -رضي الله عنهما- أن
النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم سجد في ص ثم
قال: سجدها داود توبة، ونسجدها شكرا

“The Prophet prostrated himself during (the recitation of *Surah*) Sad” and remarked, ‘Da’ud prostrated himself by way of repentance while we prostrate ourselves by way of thanks.’”

With regard to what may be preferably said during the “*Sajdah al-tilawah*” at this point, (I have personally heard my *Sheikh* Mizzi narrate through his own chain reaching up to Ibn ‘Abbas: Ibn Kathir) that,

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، رَأَيْتَنِي اللَّيْلَةَ وَأَنَا نَائِمٌ كَأَنِّي كُنْتُ أَصْلِي خَلْفَ شَجَرَةٍ، فَسَجَدْتُ فَسَجَدَتِ الشَّجَرَةُ لِسُجُودِي، فَسَمِعْتُهَا وَهِيَ تَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ اكْتُبْ لِي بِهَا عِنْدَكَ أَجْرًا، وَضَعْ عَنِّي بِهَا وَزْرًا، وَاجْعَلْهَا لِي عِنْدَكَ ذَخْرًا، وَتَقَبَّلْهَا مِنِّي كَمَا تَقَبَّلْتَهَا مِنْ عَبْدِكَ دَاوُدَ - قَالَ ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ: قَالَ لِي حَدَّثَكَ: قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ - «فَقَرَأَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَجْدَةَ ثُمَّ سَجَدَ»، قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ: فَسَمِعْتُهُ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ مِثْلَ مَا أَخْبَرَهُ الرَّجُلُ عَنْ قَوْلِ الشَّجَرَةِ

A man came up (identified as Abu Sa`id al-Khudri in *Tuhfah*: Au.) to the Prophet (*saws*) and said, "I saw in my dream that I am Praying behind a tree. I recited a (verse carrying the) prostration-verse. So I prostrated myself and the tree also prostrated itself and I heard the tree say in its prostration,

اللَّهُمَّ اكْتُبْ لِي بِهَا عِنْدَكَ أَجْرًا، وَضَعْ عَنِّي بِهَا وَزْرًا، وَاجْعَلْهَا لِي عِنْدَكَ ذَخْرًا، وَتَقَبَّلْهَا مِنِّي كَمَا تَقَبَّلْتَهَا مِنْ عَبْدِكَ دَاوُدَ

'O Allah, write for me thereby a reward with You, remove from me thereby a sin, and preserve it with You as a reward for me and accept it from me as You accepted it from Your slave Da`ud.'

"When the Prophet recited an *ayah* containing a "*Sajdah*," continued Ibn `Abbas, he prostrated himself and I heard him say the same words."

While on the topic of *Sajdah* al-tilawah, we might add the following: A *hadith* in Tirmidhi, which he declared *Hasan Sahih*, has `A'isha saying that when the Prophet did his *Sajdah* al-tilawah, he would say the following words during the prostration:

سَجَدَ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي خَلَقَهُ ؛ وَشَقَّ سَمْعَهُ
وَ بَصَرَهُ بِحَوْلِهِ وَقُوَّتِهِ

"My face prostrates itself for Him who created it, and who fissured its hearing and sight by His strength and power." Muslim and others have reported however, that the Prophet used to say the above words during all his prostrations, including the prostration of *Salah*. Perhaps it is in view of this that Mullah `Ali Qari has said, as in *Tuhfah*, that one might say during *Sajdah* of tilawah falling within the Prayers what he normally says in his *sujud* viz.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

However, if it is out of Prayers one could say the words of his choice, such as the two Prayer-words noted above.

It may be noted that the following is in Tuhfatu al-Ahwadhi: “Tirmidhi declared the above *hadith* weak. Nevertheless, Ibn Hibban preserved it in his *Sahih*, as also Hakim in his *Mustadrak* declaring it *Sahih*, with the backing of Dhahabi [as noted in *Al-Mirqah*]. It is also in Ibn Majah. However, ‘Uqayli declared the report weak. [Haythami did not discuss it]. And, except for a minority, most scholars believe one should not offer the prostration if he recited or heard the *ayah* of *Sajdah*, unless he is in a state of ablution” (Au.).

Ibn Kathir continues:

عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه أنه رأى رؤيا أنه يكتب ص فلما بلغ إلى سجدها قال رأى الدواة والقلم وكل شيء بحضرة انقلب ساجدا قال فقصصتها على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فلم يزل يسجد بها. -رواه أحمد ورواه رواة الصحيح

“A report in Ahmad has it that Abu Sa`id al-*Khudri* dreamt that he was writing down *Surah* Sad. When he reached this verse, he found that the pen, the ink-pot and everything around him prostrated itself. He spoke of it to the Prophet. Thereafter, he (i.e. the Prophet) always prostrated himself at this point.” Abu Da`ud has another narrative on this topic:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ: قَرَأَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ ص، فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ السَّجْدَةَ نَزَلَ فَسَجَدَ وَسَجَدَ النَّاسُ مَعَهُ، فَلَمَّا كَانَ يَوْمَ آخِرِ قَرَأَهَا، فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ السَّجْدَةَ تَشَرَّنَ النَّاسُ لِلْسُّجُودِ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِنَّمَا هِيَ تَوْبَةٌ نَبِيٍّ، وَلَكِنِّي رَأَيْتُكُمْ تَشَرَّنْتُمْ لِلْسُّجُودِ»، فَزَلَّ فَسَجَدَ وَسَجَدُوا.

“On the authority of Abu Sa`id al-*Khudri*, once the Prophet recited this *Surah* on the mimber. When he reached this verse, he prostrated himself and so did his Companions. When he recited it another time and reached this verse, the people prepared themselves for the prostration (but the Prophet did not). He said, “That was a repentance of a Prophet. But as I see, you are quite predisposed to prostrating yourselves.” Then he came down (the mimber) and prostrated himself, and so did others.” (Quote from Ibn Kathir ends here).

Haythami declared it *Sahih* (Au.).

Mufti Shafi` adds: The following maybe remembered in connection with “*Sajdah* al-tilawah”:

- (1) In view of the *ayah* above, where Allah (*swt*) mentioned “raka`a” (instead of “sajada”), the Hanafiyyah allow one to go into “*ruku*” at “*ayah Sajdah*” (instead of making a “*Sajdah*”).

[25] So We forgave him that.³⁸ And indeed, he has closeness to Us, and a fair resort.³⁹

فَعَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَازْفَىٰ
وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

(2) But the above is allowable in obligatory Prayers alone (since there can be a large crowd behind an Imām who will be thrown into confusion if he went into prostration, instead of “*ruku*”, especially if his followers do not hear the recitation, or do not know Arabic: Au.).

(3) The above is not allowable if one is reciting the Qur’ān and reaches this point. He cannot offer a deep bow instead of “*Sajdah*”.

(4) Going into “*ruku*” in an obligatory Prayer, instead of “*Sajdah*” is only allowable, if one either goes into “*ruku*” directly after the recitation of the “*ayah Sajdah*” or, perhaps two or three verses after it, but not more. But of course, it is better to go into a “*Sajdah*” rather than a “*ruku*” even during an obligatory Prayer.

38. This forgiveness is in the same vein as was said to our Prophet (48: 2),

لِيَعْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ
[الفتح: ٢]

“In order that Allah may forgive the sins of your past and future” (Razi).

39. This refers to Da’ud’s spiritual closeness to Allah. A trustworthy Prophetic tradition (in Muslim: H. Ibrahim) says,

إِنَّ الْمُقْسَطِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَنَابِرَ مِنْ نُورٍ،
عَنْ يَمِينِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَكِلْتَا يَدَيْهِ
يَمِينٌ، الَّذِينَ يَعْدِلُونَ فِي حُكْمِهِمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ
وَمَا وُلُّوا. - مسلم

“Those who observe justice will be on members of nur by the right hand side of the Rahman - and both His hands are right - those who administer justice in their judgments, treat justly their home-folk and those they have been given the charge of” (Ibn Kathir).

[26] (We said), 'O Da'ud, We have indeed made you a vicegerent in the earth,⁴⁰ therefore, judge between the people with Truth,⁴¹ and follow not base desires lest they mislead you away from Allah's path. Surely those who wander away from Allah's path: for them is a severe chastisement, for having forgotten the Day of Reckoning.

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] And We have not created the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain.⁴² That is the assumption of those who have disbelieved. Woe then, unto those who have disbelieved for the Fire.⁴³

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] Or, shall We make those who believed and acted righteously, like those who cause corruption in the land? Or, shall We treat the righteous like the wicked?⁴⁴

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ ﴿٢٨﴾

40. That is, one who implements Allah's laws (Razi).

41. Men are social by nature, writes Razi. This being so, while living together and interacting with each other, they must enter into disputes. Therefore, there has to be someone to decide among the disputants. Da'ud is being told that you have to act as the judge, since you, after all, are also required to impose and implement Allah's laws.

42. It is common observance that the pious suffer at the hands of corrupt individuals and societies. If there is no Day of Reckoning, then the obvious conclusion is that life on earth is

entirely futile. The Day of Reckoning therefore, is a demand of reason. This connects this *ayah* with the previous one (Razi, Ibn Kathir reworded). See Asad's comment below.

43. Asad discusses the issue of disbelief: "i.e., a deliberate rejection of the belief that the universe – and, in particular, human life – is imbued with meaning and purpose leads unavoidably – though sometimes imperceptibly – to a rejection of all moral imperatives, to spiritual blindness and, hence, to suffer in the life to come."

44. Asad again: "By implication, belief in resurrection, judgment and life after death is postulated in this

[29] *A Book We have sent down to you, blessed, that they may ponder over its verses,⁴⁵ and so that those who are bestowed with reason may be reminded.⁴⁶*

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ
وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٩﴾

passage (verses 27-28) as a logical corollary – almost a premise – of all belief in God: for, since we see that many righteous people suffer all manner of misery and deprivations in this world, while, on the other hand, many of the wicked and depraved enjoy their lives in peace and affluence, we must either assume that God does not exist (because the concept of injustice is incompatible with that of Godhead), or – alternatively – that there is a hereafter in which both the righteous and the unrighteous will harvest in full what they had morally sown during their lives on earth.”

45. Hasan said, “By Allah, a man did not ponder over the Qur’ān if he memorized its words, but wasted away its commands and prohibitions. One of them says, ‘I have read whole of the Qur’ān,’ but, in actual fact, the Qur’ān is not visible in his behavior and dealings” (Ibn Kathir).

46. “The creation of the heaven and earth, and what is between them is not a falsehood, and is not built on a false premise. It is ‘the truth,’ and

has been established on the truth. It is from this truth that spring forth all the rights: the right of *Khilafah* in the earth, the right to judge between the people, the right to reshape people’s emotions and activities so that, not rendered equal are those who believe and live righteously and those who spread corruption in the earth, nor should the weight of the pious be equal to that of the wicked. The truth that this blessed Book has brought and which Allah has revealed in order that men of reason ponder over its content and so that men of reason may be reminded of the true basis upon which this universe is built: such truths as are imperceptible to the unbelievers, for, their nature does not match with the basic truths behind the construction of this world; moreover, they have evil ideas about their Lord, and, therefore, cannot attain to any of the noble characteristics of the truth – “That is the assumption of those who have disbelieved. Woe then, unto those who have disbelieved, because of the Fire.’

[30] And We bestowed Sulayman on Da'ud - an excellent slave⁴⁷ who was an unfailing penitent.⁴⁸

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

“Allah’s laws for the people are just one part of a set of laws that govern the universe. The Book that He has sent down expounds the truth upon which the universe is established. The justice that is demanded of the vicegerents in the earth, and of the rulers, is only a part of the whole truth. People’s affairs will never be righted but when this part matches with the whole of the set of laws operating this universe. Any deviation from Allah’s laws and the truth, in vicegerency and in delivering justice, is a deviation from the Truth upon which the universe is built and run. This is a matter of great consequence. It should be obvious that any clash with the great overwhelming Truth will only result in the destruction of those that clash against it. The transgressing deviators, deviating from Allah’s ways and laws operating the universe, cannot thrive for long. It is not possible for such of them, with weak forces in their command, to stand up for long against the irresistible grinding force of the truth.

“This is what should the ponderers think over, and the men of reason should be reminded of” (Sayyid).

It is the irony of times that, as these words are being written at the end of 2011, the world, with the West in the forefront, faces a a melt-down - material, economic, social, political, and civilizational - and a predicted complete collapse within a decade or two, Sayyid’s commentary is banned in the leading nations of the world! (Au.).

47. Although Jews and Christians also consider him as of the patriarchs, we could contrast this Qur’anic description with Biblical tributes:

He married Fir`awn’s daughter:

“Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh’s daughter and brought her into the city of David...” (1Kings, 3: 1).

This and other pagan wives that Solomon had taken, corrupted his faith:

“Now, King Solomon loved many foreign women: the daughter of Pharaoh, and Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, ‘You shall not enter into marriage with them.’ Solomon

[31] When there were presented to him in the afternoon nobly-bred⁴⁹ swift footed steeds.⁵⁰ إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ ﴿٣١﴾

clung to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon.” (1 Kings, 11: 1-9).

Here is another tribute to Solomon from the Jews and Christians:

Solomon was cruel and oppressive, “And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all Israel came and said to Rehoboam (Solomon’s son who took control after his death: Au.), ‘Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore, lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke upon us, and we will serve you.’” (2 Chr. 10: 3-5).

Yet, when the Jews and Christians are told, “Your Scriptures have been corrupted, and, therefore, the world needs another incorruptible Scripture,” they stare at the Muslims anger and disbelief (Au.).

48. Ibn Abi Hatim preserved Mak-hul who reported that Sulayman was much devoted to Allah. When Allah (*swt*) had bestowed him to Da’ud

(and he had grown) he asked him, “My little son, what is the best thing (in life)?” He replied, “Tranquility from Allah, and belief in Him.” He asked, “And what is the worst?” He replied, “Disbelief after belief.” He asked, “And which is the sweetest?” He answered, “Allah’s mercy among His slaves.” He asked, “And what is the coolest?” He answered, “Allah’s forgiveness of the people and people’s forgiveness of each other.” Da’ud remarked, “Then you are a Prophet” (Ibn Kathir); meaning perhaps, that “you are a Prophet in the making” (Au.).

49. “Safinat” (sing. “Safin”) has its root in “safinatun” meaning, to stand. It is used for a horse when it stands on its three legs, raising the front fourth, just touching its hoof to the ground. Obviously, a beautiful image. The same is stated in Jalalayn:

(الصافنات) الخيل جمع صافنة وهي القائمة على ثلاث وإقامة الأخرى على طرف الحافر (جلالين)

50. Note the description, write Zamakhshari and Razi: the steeds were a beautiful sight when standing, and the speediest when galloping.

[32] He said, 'Truly, I preferred lovable good things⁵¹ (over) My Lord's remembrance⁵² - until they hid behind the veil (of darkness)⁵³ -

فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾

Ibrahīm al-Taymi has stated, writes Ibn Jarir, that these horses had wings. Ibn Kathir reminds us of a *hadīth* in Abu Da'ud (but whose trustworthiness could not be established: Au.). It says:

عن عائشة رضی الله عنها قالت: قدم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من غزوة تبوك، أو خيبر وفي سهوتها ستر، فهبت ريح فكشفت ناحية الستر عن بنات لعائشة لعب، فقال: "ما هذا يا عائشة؟" قالت: بناتي، ورأى بينهما فرساً له جناحان من رفاع، فقال: "ما هذا الذي أرى وسطهن؟" قالت: فرس، قال: "وما هذا الذي عليه؟" قالت: جناحان، قال: "فرس له جناحان؟" قالت: أما سمعت أن لسليمان خيلاً لها أجنحة؟ قالت: فضحك حتى رأيت نواجذه. - أبو داود، سنن النسائي

`A'isha reports that as the Prophet (*saws*) returned from Tabuk, or perhaps Khayber, the wind blew the curtain over a niche to disclose her dolls. He asked, "What are these `A'isha?" She told him they were her dolls. He saw among them a horse with wings made from cloth. He asked, "Whatever is this one in the middle?" She said, "A horse." He asked, "And what

is it over (its back)?" I said, "Wings". He remarked, "A horse with wings?!" She replied, "Have you not heard that Sulayman had horses with wings?" She said, "The Prophet smiled until I could see his teeth" (Ibn Kathir).

(What dampens the report, Ibn Hajr writes in *Fat-h* that if we take earlier of the two campaigns, viz., Khayber, then `A'isha's age at that time must have been at least fourteen: not an age in which girls play with dolls).

It was not an age, especially for `A'isha who had undergone precocious development to be playing with dolls, an occupation of Arab girls of age up to five or six. Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi has treated the report (cf. *Sirat-e-`A'isha*) as belonging to the Makkan phase (Au.).

51. The words:

أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ

should be understood as,

أَحْبَبْتُ حُبًّا لِلْخَيْرِ

and the allusion by "khayr" is either to horses or material wealth (Ibn Jarir).

Imām Razi prefers the literal meaning viz., “I love the love of the good things,” or, in different words, “I approve of my love of good things (such as horses readied for *Jihad*).”

Horses are, remind Zamakhshari and Qurtubi, of the good things of this life. Our Prophet (*saws*) has said, (as in a *hadith* of Bukhari and several other collections: Au.),

الْخَيْلُ مَعْفُودٌ فِي نَوَاصِيهَا الْخَيْرُ إِلَى يَوْمِ
الْقِيَامَةِ

“Good is fastened to the forehead of horses until the Day of Judgment.”

In fact, many commentators have pointed out that in Arabic the word “khayr” is used both for material goods as well as – metaphorically - for horses.

52. Although it has been said by some of the *Salaf* that the allusion by Sulayman’s neglect of Allah’s remembrance was to the missing of *Salah* al-`Asr, the question remains open (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

While on this topic we might add the following. Ahmad has a narrative which says that Abu Qatadah and Abu Dahman used to travel to the Sacred House quite frequently.

Once they met a Bedouin. He said, “The Prophet had taken my hand in his and had taught me of what Allah the Great had taught him. He ended by saying,

إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَدَعَ شَيْئًا اتَّقَاءَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَّا
أَعْطَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا مِنْهُ (مسند أحمد)

‘You will not give up a thing in fear of Allah, but Allah will give you better than that’” (Ibn Kathir).

53. That is, writes Razi, Sulayman kept repeating the words until sunset. Qurtubi expresses the possibility that Sulayman set the horses loose in a race and kept following them until they disappeared in the darkness of the evening.

Some commentators have assumed that the pronoun in the word “rud-duha” is for the sun. That is, the sun was brought back so that he could offer his `Asr Prayer. But expert exegeses have rejected it. In fact, another report of this pattern is taken around to the effect that the Prophet (*saws*) had ordered the sun back after it had set for the sake of `Ali who had not done his `Asr. But the narrative is fake and a *Shi`ah* invention (Qurtubi).

[33] Bring them back to me.' Then he began to stroke (their) shanks and necks.⁵⁴

رُدُّوْهَا عَلَيَّ فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ
وَالْأَعْنَاقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] Surely We tried Sulayman and cast on his chair a (mere) body;⁵⁵ then he returned penitent.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ
جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ ﴿٣٤﴾

54. Although some earlier scholars have thought that the words: "he began to stroke (their) shanks and necks" allude to ordering them slaughtered, Ibn Jarir does not see any need for abandoning the apparent meaning. Qurtubi reports that when `Ali was told of this opinion of Ka`b, he said Ka`b had lied. (Ka`b is well-known for his narratives of Jewish origin: Alusi). Referring to the *hadith* of this connection as found in Tabarani's Al-Kabir, Haythami remarked that it is weak (Au.).

A straightforward meaning of the passage is as follows: Allah instructed our Prophet to bear the rejection of his message with patience. He gave him the example first of Da`ud, and then, in this passage, of Sulayman. (Although given a matchless kingdom: Au.), the latter was interested in *Jihad* more than other modes of devotion. Accordingly, he had got prepared finest quality horses and was examining them until sunset. After the sunset he asked the stablekeepers to bring them back and be-

gan to stroke their shanks and necks to judge their strength and readiness. All the rest that has been said, he adds, (which we have cut out for brevity: Au.), does not fit into the context and cannot be attributed to a Prophet of such caliber as whose example our own Prophet was asked to follow.

A report coming from Ibn `Abbas, as presented by Mufti Shafi`, is close to the above in its essence (Au.).

55. Several narratives have come down explaining this particular *ayah*, but none reliable. They state in sum and substance that Sulayman carried a ring on his finger that he had inherited from Da`ud and which held the secret of his control over the kingdom, and, therefore, which he would never remove. However, a Jinn was somehow able to lay his hand on the ring. He changed his own form and assumed Sulayman's resemblance. Then he disbanded him, expelled him, occupied his throne, and ruled over his kingdom

for forty days, until Sulayman managed to regain his ring. None of the chains of these tales is trustworthy, and the stories, (of which there are many versions, with additions and deletions), are straight out of mythical collections, perhaps with origins in Jewish Scriptures (Au.).

Ibn Kathir thinks that (even Jews would not like to make up such stories about Sulayman, therefore) these must have been fabricated by the perverts of thought (*zanadiqa*) among them. But Asad thinks they are of Talmudic origin.

(We can assume that Ibn Kathir was not well informed of the contents of Jewish literature, else he would not have expressed such positive opinion about them: Au.).

Imām Razi points out that if we are to imagine for a moment that the Jinn have the power to assume the form and figure of Prophets, then, surely, that will pull down the entire religious structure. Nothing would remain believable thereafter. A variety of explanations therefore, could be offered to this passage, such as, (as proposed by Zamakhshari), it was Sulayman himself who was cast on the throne as if a mere body, perhaps because of a temporary sickness. Another possibility is that the *hadith*

that speaks of Sulayman going into seventy of his wives in a night could be alluding to this *ayah*. The *hadith* (one of whose versions is in Bukhari: Au.) says,

عن أبي هريرة -رضى الله عنه-، عن النبي -صلى الله عليه وسلم-، قال : قال سليمان بن داود عليهما السلام : لأطوفن الليلة على مئة امرأة - أو تسع وتسعين امرأة - كلهن يأتي بفارس يجاهد في سبيل الله. فقال له صاحبه : قل إن شاء الله ، فلم يقل : إن شاء الله. فلم تحمل منهن إلا امرأة واحدة ، جاءت بشق رجل. والذي نفس محمد بيده لو قال : إن شاء الله، لجاهدوا في سبيل الله عز وجل فرساناً أجمعين. - البخاري

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet (*saws*) said, "Sulayman b. Da'ud, on whom be peace, said, "This night I shall go around visiting my hundred or ninety-nine wives. Every one of them shall beget a fighter in the way of Allah.' One of his companion said, 'Allah willing.' But Sulayman did not say, 'Allah willing.' So, none of his wives bore child except one which ended in a stillbirth. By Allah in whose hand is my life, if he had said, 'Allah willing,' they would have all fought in the way of Allah." Qurtubi also mentions this *hadith* as a possible explanation.

A contemporary commentator divided the hours of the night with the number of wives to demonstrate the impossibility of the event. We could as well divide the distance between the earth and the heaven by the hours of a night to prove the impossibility of a Prophet covering the distance at the speed obtained. Or, work out the total amount of water required for a hundred people to make ablution, and the impossibility of so much water flowing out of a body. What we cannot ignore is that at the primary and earthly level of investigation and interaction, we humans are required to use reason and logic. But that does not give us license to try and understand miracles with the help of mathematical calculations (Au.).

Sayyid accepts the authenticity of the above report but does not see it connected with the explanation of this verse. Mufti Shafi` also states that although the narrative is trustworthy, none of its version says that this explains the *ayah* under question. Imām Bukhari, for instance, quotes this *hadith* under several chapters, but not in Kitāb al-Tafsir. In short, it is best to leave unexplained what the Qur'an and *hadith* left unexplained.

What Bukhari wrote in connection with the Shayatin is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنْ عَفْرِيَّتَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ تَفَلَّتَا عَلَيَّ الْبَارِحَةَ أَوْ كَلِمَةً نَحْوَهَا لَيَقْطَعَنَّ عَلَيَّ الصَّلَاةَ فَأَمَكَّنَنِي اللَّهُ مِنْهُ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُرْبِطَهُ إِلَى سَارِيَةٍ مِنْ سَوَارِي الْمَسْجِدِ حَتَّى تُصْبِحُوا وَتَنْظُرُوا إِلَيْهِ كُلُّكُمْ فَذَكَرْتُ قَوْلَ أُخِي سُلَيْمَانَ رَبِّ أَهْبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالَ رَوْحٌ فَرَدَّهُ خَاسِئًا -
البحاري

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet (*saws*) said, “Yesterday one of the giants of the Jinn suddenly appeared before me so as to distract me from the Prayer. But Allah empowered me over him, and I considered tying him up to one of the pillars of the mosque so that you could see him in the morning. But I remembered the supplication of Sulayman who said, ‘My Lord bestow on me a kingdom that should not be the share of anyone after me,’...” Rawh, the narrator after Abu Hurayrah added, “So, he returned him (the Jinn) frustrated.” The narrative is also in Muslim and Nasa’i.

Another report of Muslim (recounts another incident),

عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ قَالَ قَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَسَمِعْنَاهُ يَقُولُ « أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْكَ ». ثُمَّ قَالَ « أَلْعُنْتَ بِلَعْنَةِ اللَّهِ ». ثَلَاثًا. وَبَسَطَ يَدَهُ كَأَنَّهُ يَتَنَاوَلُ شَيْئًا فَلَمَّا

فَرَعٌ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ قُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَدْ
 سَمِعْنَاكَ تَقُولُ فِي الصَّلَاةِ شَيْئًا لَمْ نَسْمَعْكَ
 تَقُولُهُ قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ وَرَأَيْنَاكَ بَسَطْتَ يَدَكَ. قَالَ
 « إِنَّ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ إِبْلِيسَ جَاءَ بِشَيْهَابٍ مِنْ نَارٍ
 لِيَجْعَلَهُ فِي وَجْهِ فَقُلْتُ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْكَ.
 ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ قُلْتُ أَلْعَنُكَ بِلَعْنَةِ اللَّهِ الثَّامَةِ
 فَلَمْ يَسْتَأْخِرْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ أَرَدْتُ أَخْذَهُ
 وَاللَّهِ لَوْ لَا دَعْوَةُ أَحْيَى سُلَيْمَانَ لَأَصْبَحَ مُوتَقًا
 يَلْعَبُ بِهِ وَلِذَانِ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ ». - مسلم

Abu Darda' has been recorded as saying that once the Prophet stood up for Prayers. We heard him say, "I seek Allah's refuge from you." Then he said, "I curse you with Allah's curse" – three times. And he stretched his hand as if he was trying to seize something.

When he was out of the Prayer we asked, "Messenger of Allah, you said in the Prayer something we have not heard from you earlier. And we saw you stretching your hand?!" He replied, "Allah's enemy Iblis came with a ball of fire to hurl it at my face. I said, 'I seek Allah's refuge from you' three times. Then I said, 'I curse you by the complete curse of Allah,' but he did not retreat - three times. Then I thought I should seize him. By Allah, if not for our brother Sulayman's supplication, he would have found himself tied up, an object of sport for children of Madinah" (Ibn Kathir).

A report in Ahmad adds that it was the *Fajr* Prayers, and that he got confused in his recitation. The report is as follows:

عن أبي سعيد الخدري أن رسول الله صلى
 الله عليه وسلم قام فصلى صلاة الصبح وهو
 خلفه فقرأ فالتبست عليه القراءة فلما فرغ
 من صلاته قال لو رأيتموني وإبليس فأهويت
 بيدي فما زلت أحنقه حتى وجدت برد
 لعابي بين إصبعي هاتين الأنهام والتي تليها
 ولو لا دعوة أحيى سليمان لأصبح مربوطاً
 بسارية من سواري المسجد يتلاعب به
 صبيان المدينة فمن استطاع منكم أن لا
 يحول بينه وبين القبلة أحد فليفعل. -
 مسند أحمد

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri says the Prophet (*saws*) stood up for *Fajr* Prayer while he was behind him. He started reciting but seemed to founder. When he was finished he said, "Had you seen me and Iblis, I seized him and kept squeezing his neck until I felt the wetness of his saliva between my thumb and index finger. If not for my brother Sulayman's supplication, he would have found himself tied to one of the pillars of the mosque, an object of sport for children of Madinah. So, whosoever can see to it that no one comes between him and the *Qiblah*, let him do it" (Ibn Kathir).

Alusi, Thanwi and Shafi' add: A question might arise here about

men's power over Jinns. Can any human subjugate a Jinn unto himself. Apparently, the Qur'anic verse in question denies this. But, we must make a difference between a Prophet subjugating the Jinn and Shayatin, as species, and an individual subjugating one or two of them (the latter being possible: Au.). Alusi writes his personal experience of one of his assembly. When a certain man was provoked, he demonstrated that he had subjugated a Jinn.

We might point out another difference: Sulayman's subjugation was complete. He could even chain them - by Allah's leave. But ordinary humans do not enjoy such powers: Au.].

Another narrative, continues Ibn Kathir, in Ahmad has `Abdullah al-Daylami saying,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الدَّيْلَمِيِّ قَالَ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو وَهُوَ فِي حَاطِطٍ لَهُ بِالطَّائِفِ يُقَالُ لَهُ الْوَهْطُ وَهُوَ مُخَاصِرٌ فَتَى مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ يُزَنُ بِشَرْبِ الْخَمْرِ فَقُلْتُ بَلِّغْنِي عَنْكَ حَدِيثٌ أَنْ مَنْ شَرِبَ شَرْبَةَ خَمْرٍ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ تَوْبَةً أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا وَأَنْ الشَّقِيَّ مَنْ شَقِيَ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ وَأَنَّهُ مَنْ أَتَى بَيْتَ الْمَقْدِسِ لَا يَنْهَرُهُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةُ فِيهِ خَرَجَ مِنْ حَاطِطِهِ مِثْلَ يَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ الْفَتَى ذَكَرَ الْخَمْرَ اجْتَذَبَ يَدَهُ مِنْ يَدِهِ ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ

ثُمَّ قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو إِنِّي لَا أَجِلُّ لِأَحَدٍ أَنْ يَقُولَ عَلَيَّ مَا لَمْ أَقُلْ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- يَقُولُ « مَنْ شَرِبَ مِنَ الْخَمْرِ شَرْبَةً لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلَاةٌ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ عَادَ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلَاةٌ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ - فَإِنْ عَادَ قَالَ فَلَا أَدْرِي فِي الثَّلَاثَةِ أَوْ فِي الرَّابِعَةِ - فَإِنْ عَادَ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَسْقِيَهُ مِنْ رَدْعَةِ الْحَيَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ». قَالَ وَسَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- يَقُولُ « إِنْ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ خَلْقَهُ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ ثُمَّ أَلْقَى عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نُورِهِ يَوْمِيذٍ فَمَنْ أَصَابَهُ مِنْ نُورِهِ يَوْمِيذٍ اهْتَدَى وَمَنْ أَخْطَأَهُ ضَلَّ ». فَلِذَلِكَ أَقُولُ حَفَّ الْقَلَمُ عَلَى عِلْمِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ. وَسَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- يَقُولُ « إِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ سَأَلَ اللَّهُ ثَلَاثًا فَأَعْطَاهُ اثْنَتَيْنِ وَنَحْنُ نَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ الثَّلَاثَةُ فَسَأَلَهُ حُكْمًا يُصَادِفُ حُكْمَهُ فَأَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ إِيَّاهُ وَسَأَلَهُ مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ فَأَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ وَسَأَلَهُ أَيَّمَا رَجُلٍ خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ لَا يُرِيدُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةَ فِي هَذَا الْمَسْجِدِ خَرَجَ مِنْ حَاطِطِهِ مِثْلَ يَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ فَنَحْنُ نَرْجُو أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدْ أَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ ». -

مسند أحمد

“I entered upon `Abdullah ibn `Amr while he was in an orchard of his called Al-Waht in Ta'if. He had his hand in the hand of a Qurayshi youth who was alleged to be drinking wine. I said to him, ‘I have re-

ceived a report from you which says, “Whoever took in a gulp of wine, will have Allah not accepting his repentance for forty days; and that the wretched is one who was wretched in his mother’s womb; and that whoever went to Bayt al-Maqdis with no other motive but to Pray in it, came out of his sins like the day his mother gave him birth.”

When the youth heard about wine-drinking, he withdrew his hand and left.

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr said, “I do not allow anyone to fasten upon me what I have not said. I (have actually) heard the Prophet (*saws*) say, ‘Whoever of my *Ummah* took a drink of wine, will have Allah not accepting his Prayers for forty days. If he repented, Allah will forgive. But if he returned, his forty days of Prayers will not be accepted. If he repented, Allah will forgive. But if he returned, his forty days of Prayers will not be accepted. If he repented, Allah will forgive. ‘If he repeated,’ (the narrator added) I do not know the third or fourth time, ‘it is becoming of Allah that

He should make him drink a mixture of puss and blood of the inhabitants of the Fire.’” Then he (‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr said), “I (also) heard the Prophet say, ‘Allah created His creation in darkness. Then He cast His Light upon them. So whoever received of His Nur that day is well-guided, but he who missed it, missed the way. I say that the Pen has dried upon the knowledge of Allah.’ And I also heard him say, ‘Sulayman asked Allah for three things. He granted him two and we hope the third will be granted to us also: He asked Him for a judgment that would agree with His own judgment. He granted it to him. He asked Him for a kingdom that will not be the share of any after him. He granted him. And he asked that if anyone came out of his house intending nothing but Prayers in this mosque, will come out of his sins like the day his mother gave him birth. And we hope that Allah would have granted him this (also).”

The above is supported in parts by a *hadith* in Nas a’i and Ibn Majah (Ibn Kathir).

[35] He said, 'My Lord, forgive me,⁵⁶ and bestow on me a kingdom that should not be the share of anyone after me.⁵⁷ Surely, You are the Great Bestower.'

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٣٥﴾

[36] So We subjected the wind to him flowing gently by his command whithersoever he directed.⁵⁸

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] (We also subjugated) the Shayatin to him (including) every builder and diver.

وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاءٍ وَعَوَّاصٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

[38] And others bound together in fetters.⁵⁹

وَأَخرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٣٨﴾

[39] This is Our bestowal, therefore, bestow or withhold, without account.⁶⁰

هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

56. Our own Prophet (*saws*) had said that he sought Allah's forgiveness seventy times a day (Razi).

57. This tells us by implication, says Razi, that seeking Allah's forgiveness can be the key to obtaining His blessings. Nuh (*asws*) had advised the same thing to his people when he said (11: 52):

وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا [هود: ٥٢]

"O my people! Seek forgiveness of your Lord and then turn to him (in repentance). He will open up the sky in torrents upon you."

A few others have thought however, that Sulayman wished it as a miracle of his own that he could use to strengthen his Message. Accordingly,

he was given power over the Jinn, one of his specialties, which our own Prophet respected, when he refrained from tying up one of them to the mosque post.

58. This is how most of the *Salaf* explained the word "asab." Zamakhshari, Imām Razi and Qurtubi quote a piece from Asma'i, the grammarian to prove the point. Zamakhshari offers another example.

59. Just as the Jinn are invisible, their chains would also have been invisible (Shafi').

60. That is, Allah (*swt*) had allowed Sulayman to manage his kingdom the way he wished, giving whom he wished, and withholding from whom he wished without the fear of accounting in the Hereafter. This

[40] And indeed, he has closeness to Us, and a fair resort.

وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

[41] And recall Our slave Ayyub when he called to his Lord, 'Indeed, Shaytan has touched me with hardships and torment.'⁶¹

وَأذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ ﴿٤١﴾

is because Allah had combined in him both a plentifully rich kingdom as well as Prophethood. Now, a rich kingship requires expansion. But the fear of accounting comes as a restraining factor, especially for a Prophet. In consequence, the benefits of kingship are severely curtailed. Therefore, Sulayman was assured that there would be no accounting for what he gave or what he withheld (Alusi and Thanwi in different words).

It was in any case known that a Prophet would never intentionally spend in a wrong cause (Ruh, Shafi').

Our Prophet was given the choice. He was asked to choose between being "a slave and Messenger" or, "a king and Prophet." He looked at Jibril as if consulting him who advised him to be "a slave and Messenger" (Ibn Kathir).

61. Details of the nature of trial, (although from Allah, but attributed to *Shaytan* by a noble soul: Au.), is not given anywhere in the Qur'an or

hadith. Most stories have to be treated with caution. We have offered some notes while discussing *ayah* 84 of *Surah al-Anbiya'* (21), which might be consulted once again. One of the trustworthy reports presented there, finds entry at this point in Ibn Jarir. Qurtubi recounts several stories spun around the *ayah*, and rejects them all as tales that should not be treated seriously.

Zamakhshari voices the opinion of most commentators when he writes about Ayyub's attribution of his physical and mental distresses to *Shaytan*, that it was out of respect: you attribute good to Allah and evil to other than Him although good and bad, both are from Him. The following are quoted as other examples (26 80),

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَبِهِوَ يَشْفِينِ [الشعراء: ٨٠]

"When I fall sick, He cures me."

Or (18: 63),

رَمَا أَنْسَانِيَهُ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أذْكُرَهُ
[الكهف: ٦٣]

“And did not lead me to forgetfulness but *Shaytan*.”

Or, as the Prophet (*saws*) said,

رَالْخَيْرُ فِي يَدَيْكَ وَالشَّرُّ لَيْسَ إِلَيْكَ. -
لنسائي

“Good is in Your Hand, and evil is not (attributed) to you.”

If the above is understood, writes Qurtubi (in sum and substance), then it will not be difficult to appreciate the statement, “*Shaytan* has touched me with hardships and torment.” That is, *Shaytan* had no role in his tribulations, and, therefore, there is no need to look into weird stories for explanation. And, the stories narrated in this regard are not only weird when attributed to a Prophet, but also, notably, not a word of them comes from our own Prophet. Regrettably, they are narrated despite the fact that we have been warned by our scholars not to treat Jewish or Christian stories seriously. Bukhari has recorded `Abdullah ibn `Abbas as having said,

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - قَالَ يَا
مَعْشَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ، كَيْفَ تَسْأَلُونَ أَهْلَ
الْكِتَابِ ، وَكِتَابِكُمْ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ عَلَيَّ نَبِيِّ -

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - أَحَدْتُ الْأَخْبَارَ بِاللَّهِ ،
تَفَرَّوْنَهُ لَمْ يُشَبَّ ، وَقَدْ حَدَّثَكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنْ
أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ بَدَّلُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ وَعَبَّرُوا
بِأَيْدِيهِمُ الْكِتَابَ ، فَقَالُوا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ،
لِيَسْتَرْوَا بِهِ تَمَنَّا قَلِيلًا أَفَلَا يَنْهَأكُمْ مَا جَاءَكُمْ
مِنَ الْعِلْمِ عَنْ مُسَاعَلَتِهِمْ ، وَلَا وَاللَّهِ مَا رَأَيْنَا
مِنْهُمْ رَجُلًا قَطُّ يَسْأَلُكُمْ عَنِ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْكُمْ. - البخاري

“O Muslims! How can you inquire with the People of the Scripture about anything while your Book which has been revealed to Allah’s Apostle is the latest of news concerning Allah? You read it undistorted, while Allah has informed you that the people of the Scripture altered what Allah wrote and altered the Scripture with their hands and said, ‘It is from Allah,’ to purchase thereby a little gain. Does not the knowledge which has come to you prevent you from asking them about anything? No, by Allah, we have never seen one of them asking you regarding what has been revealed to you!”

It should also be obvious, adds Razi, that if we are to suppose for a moment that *Shaytan* has any power on human beings, then, trust in Allah will be lost. Given any situation (evil or good), we would not know who its author is: Allah or *Shaytan*. Has not *Shaytan* himself admitted (14: 22):

[42] (It was said), 'Strike (the ground) with your foot: this (spring) is for a cool wash, and a drink.'⁶²

ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

[43] And We bestowed on him his family and the like of them along with them, as mercy from Us and a reminder for men of understanding.⁶³

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَى لَأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

[44] And (We said), 'Take in your hand a bundle (of twigs) and strike therewith.'⁶⁴ Do not break your oath.'⁶⁵ Indeed We found him a steadfast man - an excellent servant and an unflinching penitent.

وَاخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْتًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَخْنُثْ إِنَّآ وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي [إبراهيم: ٢٢]

"I had no power over you except that I invited you and you responded to me."

At best what the Qur'an leads us to believe, writes Sayyid, is that Ayyub was tried as a result of which he lost his health, wealth, and family-folks.

The above discussion was largely with Prophets in view. Thanwi points out that there is every possibility of *Shaytan* causing harm to the most perfect of men. But what he cannot do to anyone is to actually make him commit a sin (i.e., make him physically perform it, against his own will: Au.). The choice to do or not to do remains with man.

62. He was asked to strike the ground with his foot. With one strike a spring sprouted with water wherewith he bathed and became whole again. Another strike yielded water that he could drink (Ibn Jarir).

63. The allusion perhaps is to the restoration of his family members and friends from whom he was cut off during his long illness (Au.).

64. It could as well have been a bunch of grass; the word "dhighth" supports it (Zamakhshari).

65. Qatadah and Mujahid have explained that at one time during his illness Ayyub had become extremely upset with his wife (for repeating before him what *Shaytan* had suggested as a cure for his distresses: `Abul Rahman Ibn Jubayr), and had sworn

[45] And recall Our slaves Ibrahīm, Is-haq, and Ya`qub: men of strength and vision.⁶⁶

وَأَذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ
أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٥﴾

[46] Verily, We chose them for a quality most pure: remembrance of the final Abode.⁶⁷

إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ
﴿٤٦﴾

that he would lash her a hundred times for uttering such blasphemy. (But that was a woman devoted to her husband, a Prophet, serving him through two difficult decades, so) when Ayyub had recovered, Allah commanded him to fulfill his oath, but do it by taking hundred twigs and strike her once (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

Differences in opinion have prevailed among the jurisconsults over avoidance of a religious duty by resorting to what is termed as "hilah" whether it is allowed in Islam or not. Alusi and Thanwi state that it is not allowable where Allah's rights or those of the humans are involved, or where a *Shari`ah* rule is either compromised or nullified, such as, e.g., payment of *Zakah*.

The *hadith* however, which is often quoted about an extremely sick person committing fornication with (another's) slave-girl during the Prophet's time, (who ordered that he be struck just once with a broom), has been questioned for its trust-

worthiness (Qurtubi). Alusi has two more incidents of the above nature (i.e., striking with a bunch of sticks, or a broom) but without any note on their authenticity (Au.).

To the Hanafiyyah, who cite other evidences, Hila is allowed on certain condition. Details might be seen in Fiqh works (Au.).

66. That is, they were men of strong character, had a clear vision, and a proper understanding of religious truths (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir from the *Salaf*).

67. If it is asked, what is it they were chosen for, the answer is: for never losing sight of the Hereafter and reminding others of the need to prepare themselves for the great reality they are soon to encounter (Au.: based on the understanding of the *Salaf* as reported by Ibn Jarir).

68. Most commentators have identified him as the Prophet who succeeded Ilyas. The clue comes from Biblical sources, where he is named as Elisha, the successor of Elijah.

[47] And surely, in Our sight they are of the elect and the best.

وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] And recall Isma'il, Al-Yasa⁶⁸ and Dhu al-Kifl:⁶⁹ each among the best.

وَادْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] This is a reminder; and surely, for the godfearing there is a beautiful resort:

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لِحُسْنِ مَّآبٍ ﴿٤٩﴾

[50] Gardens of 'Adn,⁷⁰ (their) gates thrown open to them.⁷¹

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مُّفْتَحَةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ ﴿٥٠﴾

[51] Reclining therein, calling therein for abundant fruit, and drink.

مُتَّكِنِينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ ﴿٥١﴾

(See 1Kings, ch. 19). But there are no *hadith* statements to this effect.

69. See 21: 85 for explanation.

70. Asad explains “‘adn”: “In all the eleven instances in which the noun ‘adn occurs in the Qur’an – and of which the present is the oldest – it is used as a qualifying term for the ‘gardens’ (*jannat*) of paradise. This noun is derived from the verb ‘adana,’ which primarily denotes ‘he remained [somewhere]’ or ‘he kept [to something],’ i.e., permanently: cf. the phrase ‘adantu ‘l balad’ (‘I remained for good [or ‘settled’] in the country’). In Biblical Hebrew – which, after all, is but a very ancient Arabian dialect – the closely related noun ‘eden’ has also the additional

connotation of ‘delight’, ‘pleasure’ or ‘bliss.’ Hence the combination of the two concepts in my rendering of ‘‘adn’ as ‘perpetual bliss.’”

71. That is, doors that will open and close on verbal command (Hasan: Ibn Jarir).

Although remote controlled doors have been made, sound-operated doors are still to be made in our times.

Yusuf Ali’s mind travels further than the ordinary mind. He writes, “The Final Bliss will not be a hole-and-corner thing, a pale reflection of some Palace or Retreat, where mystery reigns behind closed doors. Its doors will be open, and its inmates will be free to go in and out as they

[52] *And by their sides (maidens) of downcast eyes,⁷² of equal age.⁷³*

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ أَثْرَابٌ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] *This is what you were promised for the Day of Reckoning.*

هَذَا مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥٣﴾

[54] *Verily, this is Our provision: that which is inexhaustive.⁷⁴*

إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ تَفَادٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

[55] *This! And for the transgressor, there surely awaits an evil resort:*

هَذَا وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاعِينَ لَشَرَّ مَآبٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

[56] *Jahannum, where they are roasted,⁷⁵ and an evil cradling.*

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَيَسَّ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٥٦﴾

will, because their wills will be purified and brought into accord with the Universal Law.”

72. Yusuf Ali removes the doubts spread by Christians with regard to physical pleasures in Paradise: “As we conceive happiness in this life, it is not complete if it is only solitary. How we hanker after some one who can share in our highest joy! That feeling is also figured here.”

73. Yusuf Ali again, “To make the social happiness complete, we want companionship of equal age. Age and youth cannot be happy together. It is not suggested that in the Timeless state figured here, there will be old age; but if it is possible to conceive of temperamental differences then, the company will be so arranged that it will be congenial. Or we can accept the type of youth and freshness as common to all in that happy state.”

Inclination towards women then, adds Thanwi, is not against piety, nor a weakness as those have thought who lack understanding.

Thanwi might have had ignorant *Sufis* in mind, but Christians are foremost in denying physical pleasure to man in this and the next world - a claim entirely irrational that has no basis in Scriptures or in reason. They misguide others by assuring them that in this regard they are talking from a higher moral podium. But, is not a Paradise in which there are several kinds of pleasures e.g., physical, mental, spiritual, better than one which affords only one kind, the spiritual? (Au.)

74. In other words, provisions that will suffer no depletion (Au.).

75. Or, “(into) which they will enter (to be roasted)” - Alusi.

[57] This, so let them taste it: boiling water and puss.⁷⁶

هَذَا قَلْبِدُوفُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَعَسَاقٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] And others of its kind,⁷⁷ coupled together.

وَأَخْرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ ﴿٥٨﴾

[59] 'This (they will say) is a troop rushing in headlong with you. No Welcome for them.⁷⁸ Assuredly, they shall roast in the Fire.⁷⁹

هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُتَّحِمٌ مَعَكُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ
إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ ﴿٥٩﴾

76. Although "puss" is the preferred meaning, another interpretation of the word "ghassaq" that came down from authorities such as Ibn Jurayj and Dahhak is that the allusion is to extremely cold liquid in contrast with the extremely hot liquid "hamim" (Ibn Jarir). There have been other explanations from the *Salaf*, which, if put together would lead us to believe that there is a valley in Hell in which will be collected puss, blood, tears, urine and other wastes of the dwellers of Hell mixed with the poison discharged by scorpions, snakes and other poisonous animals - out of which the dwellers will drink. It could get as cold to be as torturous as boiling water (Qurtubi, Alusi and others).

A *hadith* on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and preserved by Tirmidhi (who declared it weak: Au.), Ahmad, (*Sahih* of) Ibn Hibban and Hakim who declared it worthy of *Sahih* works says,

لَوْ أَنَّ دَلْوًا مِنْ غَسَلِينَ أُهْرِيقَ فِي الدُّنْيَا،
لَأَتَتْ أَهْلَ الدُّنْيَا

"If a bucket of ghassaq were to be poured into this world, it will putrefy its people" (Alusi).

77. That is, other punishments (Ibn Jarir).

78. "In Arabic usage, the phrase 'no welcome to them' or 'to you' (la marhaban bihim, resp., bikum) is equivalent to a curse. In this context - carried on into the next verse - it expresses a mutual disavowal of the seducers and the seduced" (Asad).

79. This will be said by those who will already be there in the Fire, addressing newcomers. It is in the same sense as (7: 38),

كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعْنَتْ أُخْتَهَا

"Every time a nation enters (into the Fire), it will curse its sister (nation)" (Ibn Jarir).

It has also been said that the first part of the verse viz., 'This is a troop

[60] They will reply, 'But rather, it is you for whom there is no welcome. You have brought this upon us; so, an evil place of rest.'⁸⁰

قَالُوا بَلْ أَنْتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوهُ
لَنَا فَيَسِّنَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٦٠﴾

[61] They will say, 'O our Lord, whoso brought this upon us,- add to him a double chastisement in the Fire.'

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا
ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ ﴿٦١﴾

[62] And they will say, 'How is it with us that we do not see men here whom we counted among the evil ones?'⁸¹

وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ
مِنَ الْأَشْرَارِ ﴿٦٢﴾

rushing in headlong with you,' will be said by the keepers of Fire, while the second part, 'No Welcome for them. Assuredly, they shall roast in the Fire,' by the unbelievers already in Hell (Razi). This opinion has been attributed to Ibn `Abbas (Qurtubi).

80. This will be said by the new entrants (Ibn Jarir). To summarize Shabbir, "The above two verses refer to the conversation between the companions of the Fire when one of them will be posted at the gates of Hell. First group will be of the leaders in unfaith. Then will appear their followers. When the leaders sight the second group, they will say, 'Look! Another group is being forced forward about to jump into Hell. How unwelcome!' Those who follow them will respond, 'You say unwelcome?! May you not be welcome wherever you go? Is it not you who brought us here? Do we have any other place to

go? Do we have a choice but to suffer here together?'

81. This is what the likes of Abu Jahl, Walid b. al-Mughira and others will say about the likes of Bilal, Suhayb, Salman and others (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

They considered them as evil ones either because they were poor and not of the same social class as they, or because they were not of the same religion as which they followed (Razi).

And, to take the paraphrasing further to include the following couple of verses, it could be added, "Man's refusal to go along on the path of spiritual development was not an unexpected event for the Lord of the worlds; even angels – going by his qualities – had predicted this and had in fact disputed with their Lord over the new creation. But, they did not know that there was right there

[63] We took them for a laughing-stock! Or, do the eyes swerve away from them (now)?⁸²

أَتَّخَذْنَاَهُمْ سِحْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمْ
الْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٦٣﴾

[64] Surely, that is true: the wrangling of the companions of the Fire.⁸³

إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لِحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ ﴿٦٤﴾

[65] Say, 'Indeed, I am only a warner; no deity there is, but Allah, the One, the Subduer.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِن إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
الْوَّاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٦٥﴾

[66] Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them: the All-mighty, the All-forgiving.⁸⁴

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ ﴿٦٦﴾

among them – although of a different genus – he who was worse than Adam: Iblis. He will cause to take great many of them to perdition” (Au.). - Delete

82. That is, are they somewhere around in Hell without us being able to spot them? (Ibn Jarir)

Mujahid said that Abu Jahl will say, “What’ with me, I do not see Bilal, Suhayb, `Ammar, and so and so?” (Ibn Kathir).

83. That is, one might wonder: what with all the sufferings and burnings, what with the extremely hot and cold drinking, will the inhabitants of the Fire have any energy to be wrangling among themselves? The answer is, “this is the truth: the wrangling of the inhabitants of the Fire” (Shab-bir).

84. To paraphrase verses 65 to 68, “I am a warner, warning you of the events that you will encounter with death. It is a great news that you are turning away from. Remember! There is no deity save one Allah. He forces everyone to submission - not the living beings alone, but rather, all that there is, living or non-living. The demand of the fact of there being just One God is that He should subdue all and enforce His will on all. However, it must not be imagined that He merely controls the created, but rather, He is the Mighty Lord who is also the Sustainer who nurtures His creation. Yet, if He does not punish those who have a tiny bit of choice to do or not do His will, it is because He is very Forgiving” (Razi: abridged and slightly modified). – This has been moved here from above.

[67] Say, 'That is a great tidings,^{84a}

قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾

[68] From which you are turning away.

أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

[69] I had no knowledge of the High Council,⁸⁵ when they were disputing.⁸⁶

مَا كَانَ لِي مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

84a. It is something which only the extremely heedless can ignore (Zamakhshari).

85. We may not forget that "mala" is for a group of people who stand out from others because of their achievements, who command awe and fill the eyes of an onlooker.

86. The allusion is to the angels disputing among themselves the usefulness of Adam's creation, when they had been informed about it (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

In reference to disputation, another *hadith* could be cited, which speaks of the interest angels take in human affairs.

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ أَحْتَسِبَ عَنَّا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- ذَاتَ غَدَاةٍ عَنِ صَلَاةِ الصُّبْحِ حَتَّى كِدْنَا نَرْتَأَى عَيْنَ الشَّمْسِ فَيُخْرِجُ سَرِيعًا فُتُوبًا بِالصَّلَاةِ فَصَلَّى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- وَتَجَوَّزَ فِي صَلَاتِهِ فَلَمَّا سَلَّمَ دَعَا بِصُورَتِهِ قَالَ لَنَا « عَلَيَّ مَصَافِكُمْ كَمَا أَنْتُمْ ». ثُمَّ انْقَلَبَ إِلَيْنَا ثُمَّ قَالَ « أَمَا إِنِّي سَأُحَدِّثُكُمْ مَا حَبَسَنِي عَنْكُمْ الْغَدَاةَ إِنِّي

قُمْتُ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَوَضَّأْتُ وَصَلَّيْتُ مَا قَدَّرَ لِي فَتَعَسْتُ فِي صَلَاتِي حَتَّى اسْتَفْلَقْتُ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِرَبِّي تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى فِي أَحْسَنِ صُورَةٍ فَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ. قُلْتُ لَبَّيْكَ رَبِّ. قَالَ فِيْمَ يَخْتَصِمُ الْمَلَأُ الْأَعْلَى قُلْتُ لَا أَدْرِي. قَالَهَا ثَلَاثًا قَالَ فَرَأَيْتَهُ وَضَعَ كَفَّهُ بَيْنَ كَتِفَيْ حَتَّى وَحَدَّتْ بَرْدٌ أَنَامِلِهِ بَيْنَ تَدْيِي فَتَجَلَّى لِي كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَعَرَفْتُ فَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ. قُلْتُ لَبَّيْكَ رَبِّ قَالَ فِيْمَ يَخْتَصِمُ الْمَلَأُ الْأَعْلَى قُلْتُ فِي الْكُفَّارَاتِ قَالَ مَا هُنَّ قُلْتُ مَشَى الْأَقْدَامَ إِلَى الْجَمَاعَاتِ وَالْجُلُوسُ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ بَعْدَ الصَّلَوَاتِ وَإِسْبَاغِ الْوُضُوءِ فِي الْمَكْرُوهَاتِ. قَالَ فِيْمَ قُلْتُ إِطْعَامِ الطَّعَامِ وَلَيْنِ الْكَلَامِ وَالصَّلَاةِ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسِ نِيَامًا. قَالَ سَلِّ. قُلْتُ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَتَرْكِ الْمُنْكَرَاتِ وَحُبِّ الْمَسَاكِينِ وَأَنْ تُغَيِّرَ لِي وَتَرْحَمَنِي وَإِذَا أَرَدْتَ فِتْنَةَ قَوْمٍ فَتَوَفَّنِي غَيْرَ مَفْتُونٍ أَسْأَلُكَ حُبِّكَ وَحُبِّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَحُبِّ عَمَلٍ يُقَرِّبُ إِلَى حُبِّكَ ». قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- « إِنَّهَا حَقٌّ فَأَدْرُسُوهَا ثُمَّ تَعَلَّمُوهَا ». قَالَ أَبُو عِيْسَى (الترمذي) هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

Mu`adh ibn Jabal reports: One morning the Prophet was held back

from us for the dawn Prayer until we began to see the sun's horns. Then he emerged in haste. The call for starting the Prayer was made. He led in the Prayer, shortening it. After he had said the termination formula, he said, "Remain in your rows." Then he turned to us and said, "Let me tell you what held me back. This morning I rose up after the night and Prayed as much as I was destined to. Then I dozed off in my Prayer, until I felt heavy. And lo! I was in the presence of my Lord, the Exalted, the Supreme - in the best form. He asked, 'Muhammad! What are the angels of the upper-most constellation disputing over?' I said, 'I do not know, my Lord!' He asked, 'Muhammad! What are the angels of the upper-most constellation disputing over?' I replied, 'I do not know, my Lord!' He repeated, 'Muhammad! What are the angels of the upper-most constellation disputing over?' I answered, 'I do not know, my Lord!' Then I saw Him placing His palm between my shoulders until I felt the coldness of His fingers over my breast, and everything became clear to me. And I knew. Then He asked, 'Muhammad! What are the angels of the upper constellation disputing over?' I said, 'Over expiations

and ranks.' He asked, 'What are the expiations?' I replied, 'Walking over towards the mosques, sitting in the mosques after the Prayers and doing the ablution well despite discomfort.' He asked, 'What are the ranks?' I replied, 'Feeding (the people), kind words, and Prayers when people are asleep.' He said, 'Ask.' I asked, 'O Allah. I ask you for doing of the good deeds, avoidance of evil deeds, love of the poor and the humble, that You forgive me and show me mercy. And, when You wish tribulation for a people, deal me death untried. And I seek Your love, the love of those who love You, and love of the deeds that take one nearer to You.'" Then the Prophet added, "This is the truth, therefore, learn and teach." – Ibn Kathir. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Khuzaymah in "*Kitab al-Tawhid*," and in several other books of Traditions, through dozens of different narrators, with variations in words, additions and deletions, with some experts declaring the report weak, but others as trustworthy, such as Haythami, Hafiz, Hakim, Ahmad Shakir and Tirmidhi, the last of whom reports that when he spoke to Imām Bukhari about it, he said it was trustworthy) – Au.

[70] All that is revealed to me is that I am a clear warner.¹⁸⁷ إِن يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to create a human being⁸⁸ from clay.' إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ ﴿٧١﴾

The *hadīth* is also known as “*hadīth* Ikhtisam al-Mala` al-A`la” meaning, “*hadīth* concerning the dispute between angels of the highest constellation” (Au.).

The companionship of `Abdul Rahman b. `A`ish has been questioned by some scholars. Some say he never met with the Prophet. Nevertheless, various other versions of the *hadīth* have been narrated by the following Companions of the Prophet: Ibn `Abbas, Thawban, `Abdullah ibn `Umar, Abu Umamah, Abu Rafe`, Abu Hurayrah, Anas, `Adiyy b. Hatim and Abu `Ubaydah b. al-Jarrah. (Au.).

Alusi informs us that some scholars have thought that the Ikhtisam al-Mala` in discussion of the *ayah* actually refers to the *hadīth* above.

87. This much-occurring Qur`ānic term has both the connotations of “being clear [by itself]” as well as “making clear” (Au.).

Yusuf Ali explains one aspect: “Mubin’ (implies) (1) that the warning should be clear and perspicuous; there should be no mincing of matters, no ambiguity, no compromise with evil, vii. 184; (2) that the warning should be delivered publicly, before all people, in spite of opposition and persecution.”

The manner of expression of this little passage seems to be conveying to us the truth that although a Prophet is sent with several purposes in sight, the gist of the message, the crowning truth and the matter of paramount importance is that the Prophet (*saws*) is a warner. He warns of most drastic things to happen in the Hereafter (based on Zamakhshari).

88. The lexicon meaning of the word “basha” is ‘someone who is bare of hair and wool,’ and is applicable to human beings in this sense (Alusi). Hence, “basha” would mean he pared or trimmed (a hide) – Lane.

[72] So, when I have fashioned him and have blown into him a spirit from Me,⁸⁹ then fall you all in prostration unto him.⁹⁰

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي
فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

[73] So the angels fell prostrate, all of them together.⁹¹

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

[74] Except for Iblees. He waxed proud and was of the unbelievers.⁹²

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ
﴿٧٤﴾

89. "Min Ruhi" has been explained by Dahhak as meaning, "My power" (Ibn Jarir); i.e., "when I have infused some of My powers in him," perhaps meaning, "some of My Qualities" (Au.).

On the rational plain, writes Razi, it is unimaginable that man's spirit should be "a part of Allah's own substance." For, that would mean Allah (*swt*) is made up of parts that go to make the "whole" of Him. But one that is made up of parts is a composite substance, and not one substance, which is unimaginable of Allah since, a composite being has to be composed by another, and is, in consequence, "possible of existence" as against Allah, who is a "necessary Being." As for the "spirit" we do not know its reality, but the closest possible explanation is that it is a clear substance, shining, made of the best

of elements, and, sacrosanct; and that, because of its subtleness, it can pass through bodies as fast as light through air, and as successfully as heat through an element.

90. Apart from others, one reason the event was repeated here was to impress upon the Quraysh that a single sin of a stubborn Iblis condemned him to Hellfire for ever, how could you, who carry mountains of sins upon yourselves ever aspire to Paradise? (Alusi).

91. That is, all the angels who were then there in the heavens (Ibn Jarir).

92. That is, Ibn `Abbas said, (although living among the angels), he was an unbeliever in Allah's knowledge (Ibn Jarir). Many other commentators have expressed the same opinion.

[75] He asked, 'O Iblees. What prevented you that you should prostrate yourself unto one I created with My two hands?⁹³ Did you wax proud, or are you of the lofty ones?'

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإَيْدِيَّ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

[76] He replied, 'I am better than he. You created me of Fire, and created him of clay.'

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

93. That is, how could you O Iblis, refuse to kowtow to him whom I created, and, therefore, it is I who knows best who stands where! (from Zamakhshari).

What is the meaning assigned to the words, "I created with My two hands?" Most classical commentators have not dealt with the question but in passing, such as, for example, Ibn Jarir who points out that according to Mujahid there are four that Allah (*swt*) created with his Hands: "Adam, the `Adn Paradise, `Arsh and the Pen." *hadith* literature counts a few more. Shawkani quotes a *hadith* preserved by Ibn Abi Dunya, Abu al-Sheikh (in his Al-`Azamah) and Bayhaqi (in his Asma wa Sifat), on the authority of `Abdullah ibn al-Harith,

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ثَلَاثَةَ أَشْيَاءَ بِيَدِهِ : خَلَقَ آدَمَ بِيَدِهِ ،
وَكَتَبَ التَّوْرَةَ بِيَدِهِ ، وَغَرَسَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ بِيَدِهِ

The Prophet said, "There are three that Allah created with His own Hands: He created Adam with His Hand, He wrote *Tawrah* with His Hand, and planted Firdaws with His Hand." It is declared *Sahih* by Albani and mentioned by Dhahabi in his "Uluww" (Sayyid Ibrahim).

Ibn Qayyim has pointed out that whoever explained "bi-yadayya" as "blessings" committed an error. Qurtubi however, has a clear and correct explanation: "Yadayya" has been added by way of honor to the human beings. (It was as if said to Iblis, "Here is someone, a prize creation, so will you prostrate yourself to him?": Au.).

Others, such as Alusi and Thanwi have said that the allusion is to the special attention paid during the creation. Creation of Adam was quite unlike the creation of his progeny. The latter acquire existence through a process of creation not requiring special attention.

Another explanation, based on Arabic usage is that “yadayya” is for power (Au.).

Imām Razi devotes a couple of pages to discuss the several meanings that could be attributed but which cannot be right. He also contends that to think of the creation “with His own hands” in the literal sense presents several difficulties and rejects as wrong any opinion that attributes parts and limbs to Allah. To abridge what he writes, (1) He who attributes parts and limbs to Allah has to either (a) restrict himself to those organs that have been mentioned in the Qur’ān, or, (b) add over them. If the former position is adopted then, he must accept that Allah (*swt*) has a flat face (following the usage, “Everything will encounter destruction except His Face”: 28: 88); He has several eyes (following the usage, “[Nuh’s boat] was sailing under Our eyes”: 54: 15); has just one side (following the usage, “O my woe over the excesses I committed on one side of Allah”: 39: 56); allow for several hands (e.g., “Of what Our hands have wrought”: 36: 71); but a single shank (following, “The day the Shank will be bared”: 68: 42), etc. (2) If He is allowed in our conception to be incapable of movement,

then He is bound to remain confined to one place, but if we allow Him to move from place to place, then He is subjected to change: He would then be considered as one of those (about whom Ibrāhīm) said, “I do not approve of those that go down”: 6: 86; (3) Also, if He is allowed to move down every night from the ‘*Arsh* to the firmament closest to the earth then we can ask, “Is He still in control of the ‘*Arsh* and the firmaments above or not?” (4) It is admitted that He is greater than the ‘*Arsh* and that the ‘*Arsh* is greater than the firmaments. How can then the area under the ‘*Arsh* accommodate Him? (5) It is known that the universe is spherical. If He is considered right above the humans in the Heaven, then He is limited, but if considered all around them, then He becomes spherical. (6) If He is considered to be in the firmament closest to the earth during the last third part of the night, then, since the earth is spherical, He has to be everywhere at the same time. In short, there are many arguments to counter the anthropomorphists (“mushabbihin.” In the light of the above, we are not allowed to imagine parts and limbs for Allah, nor are we allowed to interpret the word “yadayya” literally as “two hands.” Perhaps the best one can do,

ends Razi, is to say that “yadayya” indicates special attention.

It should be evident on some consideration that the soLūtion the Imām offers is also not wholly satisfactory. Therefore, it is best to go by the opinion of the majority of the “Ahl al-*Sunnah* wa al-Jama`ah” to say, as in the tenets of faith worked out by Imām Abu Ja`far Tahawi, in the well-known `Aqeedah Tahawiyah. He writes there,

فإن ربنا جل وعلا موصوف بصفات
الوحدانية منعت بنعوت الفردانية ليس في
معناه أحد من البرية وتعالى عن الحدود
والغايات والأركان والأعضاء والأدوات لا
تحويه الجهات الست كسائر المبتدعات

“Our Lord, the Exalted, the Supreme, is qualified with the Attributes of Oneness, characterized with the characteristics unique to Him, with none of the creations sharing the same meaning. For our Lord is above limits and confines, parts, limbs and instruments. The six directions cannot contain Him in contrast to the creations.”

Imām Tahawi’s commentator, Ibn Abi al-`Izz explains the above lines:

“With reference to the above words we can say that there are three kinds of people: 1) Those who deny, 2) those who confirm, and 3) those

who seek details. The last mentioned are the followers of the pious predecessors. They neither reject nor accept until the issue is clear to them. They accept what is clearly stated and reject what has been denied. But among the later generations, these words acquired ambiguity in their usage, as happens to be the case with many of the technical terms of Islam. As a result, not everyone seems to be using the words in the same sense. Consequently, there are those who deny both the true as well as the false. They report on behalf of those who accept things that they did not utter. There are others of those who confirm but who introduce connotations that are not part of it. In this they are opposed to the earliest scholars as well as what the Qur`ān and the Criteria lead us to, since neither the Qur`ān nor the *Sunnah* have said anything about their acceptance or rejection. It is not for us to attribute to Allah Most High what He did not attribute to Himself nor did the Prophet (on whom be peace): neither in conformity nor in denial. In these matters we are followers and not innovators.

“It is required of us to confirm in matters of Attributes what Allah and His Messenger confirmed, and deny, what Allah and His Messenger

have denied. Accordingly, the words that have appeared in the texts alone might be employed while accepting or denying. As for those words about which there is neither confirmation nor denial, they may be left suspended until it can be determined what the speaker intended. If the meaning were to be correct, it should be acknowledged. It must be observed that the expression of the meaning has to be in the words of the texts themselves, and not those that carry ambiguity, unless there were to be a pressing need for it, but, in such a case, it should be provided with the context that gives the intended meaning clearly.

“The *Sheikh* (Tahawi), may Allah show him mercy, has intended to refute those of the anthropomorphists who say: Allah has a body, or that He has a torso, or limbs, etc. Allah is exalted high above what they allege. The meaning that the *Sheikh* intended by his denial is true. But, after him came people who introduced new connotations both true as well as false. That needs to be explained and is as follows. There was agreement between the pious forefathers that the people do not know Allah’s limits, and that they should not place a limit to any of His Attributes.

“Abu Da’ud Tayalisi said: ‘Sufyan Thawri, Sho’ba, Hammad b. Zayd, Hammad b. Salamah, Sharik and Abu ‘Uwanah would not set limits, would not commit anthropomorphism, and would not strike similes. They narrated reports without saying “how.” When inquired, they would speak from the reports alone.’

“Now, it is known that a limit or a boundary is something that helps separate a thing from another and by which a thing can be distinguished from another. Allah Most High does not dwell in His creation, nor is dependent for His existence upon them. Rather, He subsists by Himself and by Whom all else subsists. Consequently, the word “limit” cannot be used in a way that will contradict the above. For, behind its denial, there is nothing but the denial of the existence of the Lord Himself and the denial of His Reality. As for the limits pertaining to knowledge and the Word, these are limits assigned to Him by the people. This is something that is rejected by the Ahl al *Sunnah* by consensus.

“Abu al Qasim al Qushayri has written: ‘I heard ‘Abdul Rahman al Sulami, who heard from Abu Mansur b. ‘Abdullah, who heard from Abu al Hasan al ‘Anbari, who heard Sa-

hal b. `Abdullah al Tustari say when asked about the Person of Allah, "Allah's Person is Qualified with Knowledge, one who cannot be encompassed in limits, who cannot be seen in this world. He is present with the truths of faith, without limits, beyond comprehension, and not incarnated (in anyone or anything). The eyes will see Him in the next world. He is apparent in His Kingdom and in His Power, yet has veiled His creation from knowing the essence of His Person, leading them (to Himself) by His signs. Therefore, the hearts recognize Him. And the eyes will see Him. The believers will look at Him with their eyes, but without comprehending Him and without encompassing Him to the full."

"As for the words 'parts,' 'limbs' and 'instruments,' the deniers use them to deny certain of His Qualities that are proven by the irrefutable texts: such as those that speak of Hand and Face.

"Abu Hanifah, may Allah be pleased with him, said in his *Al Fiqh al Akbar*: 'He has Hands, Face and a Person, as He spoke of them in the Qur'an. He possesses them as Attributes, without us questioning the how of them. It should not be said that by the Hands He meant Power

or Blessing, for that denies Him an Attribute.'

'Nevertheless, it should not be thought by these Attributes that they are limbs or members of the body, or instruments, or parts of the body. For any part is a part of a whole. But Allah Most High is One, the Eternal, who cannot be divided, Glorified is He. The concept of limbs presupposes divisions. Allah is Exalted above that. Organs of a body have the sense of accruing benefit or earning something for themselves. So also, instruments help in certain functions of gaining an advantage or removing a harm. But all these concepts are un-befitting of Allah Most High. Accordingly, these have not been mentioned in the list of Attributes of Allah. These words themselves lend the right meaning, and are free from possibilities and unbecoming probabilities. Therefore, it is incumbent that the words be not given new meanings, either in denial or in acceptance, in order that neither an erroneous meaning is attached to them nor a correct meaning is denied. Undeniably, the words that have been used here are open to misuse.'

"Insofar as the word 'direction' is concerned, sometimes it is used for indicating what is existent and some-

times for what is non-existent. Now, we know that there is nothing in true existence except the Creator and the created. Therefore, if by pointing to a 'direction,' the allusion is to something that is present apart from Allah, then that thing has to be a created being. As for Allah, He is not bound by anything and cannot be encompassed by His creation - Exalted He is above that. And, if what is meant by pointing to a direction is something that is non-existent, over and above the created world, then, nothing exists in that realm except Allah Most High, the One. Now, if it is said that He is in a particular direction and that, in this particular sense it is alright to say so, then the answer would be that the meaning of the words then would be that He is above where His creations end. In other words, He is above all, superseding everything.

"Now, the deniers of the term 'direction' (when used for Allah) - those who meant to deny the 'above all' sense through their denial - say in defense of their statements the following: All directions are creations of Allah. He existed before the directions existed. Now, if someone says that He is in a certain 'direction,' then he declares a created being as

pre-existent. As if, the One who was above a direction came to be contained in it.

"This kind of argument leads us to believe that He is not within any part of His creation, whether we call it direction or anything else. This of course is true. But, direction itself does not enjoy an existence of its own. Rather, it is a thing of convention. Nonetheless, there is no doubt about it that directions have no limit, and that what is not found in what is limitless, has no existence.

"The *Sheikh's* words, may Allah show him mercy, 'The six directions cannot contain Him in contrast to the creations,' is in the sense that none of His creations can encompass Him. Rather, He encompasses everything and is above them. The *Sheikh* further elaborates this when He adds, later in this work, that Allah is, 'overencompassing everything, and He is above all.' Therefore, if we put together his two statements, that is, 'The six directions cannot contain Him in contrast to the creations,' and, 'overencompassing everything, and He is above all,' then it can be deduced that the meaning he intended is that He is not contained by anything, nor can anything encompass Him, as it can happen to the

[77] He said, "Then out you go from here, you are an outcast."⁹⁴

قَالَ فَاحْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

created beings, Allah encompasses everything, and that He is above everything.

"Invariably, the ignorant suffer various distortions in the meaning; especially when things such as Allah coming down to the earth's firmament every night are spoken of. They imagine that when He descends, as informed by the Prophet (*saws*), then the *'Arsh* is above Him, and that, He is then, confined between two heavens. This kind of thinking is contrary to the consensus of opinion of the pious fore-fathers, as also contrary to the Book and the *Sunnah*.

"*Sheikh* al-Islam Abu `Uthman b. `Abd al-Rahman al-Sabuni says he heard his teacher Abu Mansur b. Hammad say, after he spoke of the descending down of Allah: 'Abu Hanifah was asked about it. He replied, "Yes, He descends, without (us being able to understand) the how of it.""

"Some others, unable to reconcile things, because of the lack of a thorough understanding of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and the statements of the earliest scholars, are left quite

puzzled. They resort to denial that Allah is above the *'Arsh*. They say: 'He is neither attached to it nor detached, neither within nor without (the created world).' Thus they describe Him with the Attributes of non-existence and what is impossible in itself. They do not describe Him in the manner He described Himself as being High above and over the *'Arsh*."

Quotation from Ibn Abi al-`Izz ends here.

94. "Rajim" carries both the connotations of an outcast denied every blessing as well as one stoned (in this case flung) with flames whenever he tries to get any nearer to the abode of the angels than allowed (Au.).

It might also be noted that the crime of refusal to obey on the part of Iblis was greater in magnitude because it was verbal (and not simply failure to act: Au.) - Alusi.

The result of the expulsion from the heavens was that he who was originally bright became dark, ugly after he was pretty, and gruesome after he was shining (Zamakhshari).

[78] And, surely, upon you shall rest My curse, till the Day of Reckoning.⁹⁵

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٧٨﴾

[79] He asked, 'My Lord. Respite me till the day they are resurrected.'⁹⁶

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

[80] He said, 'Then you are among those respite;

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

[81] Until a known Day.'

إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٨١﴾

[82] He claimed, 'By Your Might,⁹⁷ I shall seduce them, all.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

[83] Except for Your chosen slaves from among them.'

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

[84] (He replied, 'This is) the truth.⁹⁸ And I say the truth;

قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ أَقُولُ ﴿٨٤﴾

95. The words "until the Day of Reckoning" should not lead someone to believe, as some of the *Sufis* do, that he will be relieved of the curse and punishment on the Day of Judgment, but rather, his punishments will be multiplied with other varieties added (Alusi).

96. How did Iblis know that there is going to be a Day of Reckoning? Alusi answers that either he must have heard it from the angels (of High Council) or, could have rightly guessed it from the nature of the world that it should have a Day of end, and from Adam's nature that he and his progeny will do each other wrongs and so will have to be subjected to reckoning.

97. Yusuf Ali comments on Satan's oath by Allah's power, "This phrase, this oath of Satan, is a fresh point introduced in this passage, because here we are dealing with Power - the Power of Good contrasted with Evil,- the Power of Allah as contrasted with the power that we see in our earthly affairs. Satan acknowledges that even his Power, such as it is, has no reality except in so far as it is permitted to operate by Allah in Allah's wise and universal Plan, and that it cannot harm the true and sincere worshippers of Allah."

98. This has also been understood to mean, "I am the Truth, and I say the Truth" (Zamakhshari, Shawkani from Mujahid).

[85] I shall surely fill Jahannum with you and with those who follow you, all together.⁹⁹

لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ
أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

[86] Say, 'I do not seek wage for this, neither am I of the affecters.'¹⁰⁰

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

99. That is, anyone who followed you, whether of the Jinn or mankind, shall end in Hell, none shall be spared (Zamakhshari).

“The punishment of defiance, disobedience, and rebellion is inevitable and just, and the followers who chose to identify themselves with the disobedience must suffer as well as the leaders” (Yusuf Ali).

100. Or, to put it differently, “I am not ceremonial, artificial, a dissimulator, or someone who takes such things upon himself as he cannot execute” (Au.).

In Yusuf Ali's words: “Mutakallif:- a man who pretends to things that are not true, or declares as facts things that do not exist, one who takes upon himself tasks to which he is not equal. True prophets are not people of that kind.”

Qurtubi adds a narrative brought to us by Nafi' (Ibn 'Umar's freed-slave), he from Ibn 'Umar who said,

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- فِي بَعْضِ أَسْفَارِهِ فَسَارَ لَيْلًا فَمَرُّوا عَلَى رَجُلٍ جَالِسٍ عِنْدَ مَقْرَآةٍ لَهُ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ يَا صَاحِبَ الْمَقْرَآةِ أَوْلَعْتَ السَّبَابِغَ اللَّيْلَةَ فِي مَقْرَاتِكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ النَّبِيُّ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- « يَا صَاحِبَ الْمَقْرَآةِ لَا تُخْبِرُهُ هَذَا مُتَكَلِّفٌ لَهَا مَا حَمَلَتْ فِي بَطُونِهَا وَلَنَا مَا بَقِيَ شَرَابٌ وَطَهُورٌ ». - سنن الدار قطنی

Once the Prophet was traveling by night when they passed by a man squatted near his water tank. 'Umar asked him, “O owner of the tank. Has any wild animal drunk from your tank this night?” The Prophet interjected, “O owner of the tank. Do not tell him. This is being fastidious (mutakallif). The wild beasts took away in their belly what was their share, while that which is left is a drink pure for us.”

The report was declared as munkar by quite a few, but Ibn Hibban treated a questionable narrator as trustworthy while Imām Malik thought it worth to give space to this *hadith* in his Muwatta' (Au.).

[87] It is not but a Reminder for the worlds.

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

[88] And you shall surely know its tiding after a while.¹⁰¹

وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ تَبَاهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ ﴿٨٨﴾

Shawkani cites other references in *hadith* works. `Umar's words are preserved in Bukhari,

نُهَيْنَا عَنِ التَّكَلُّفِ

“We were forbidden affectation (or fastidiousness).” And Tabarani, Hakim and Bayhaqi report on the authority of Salman that he said,

نَهَانَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ
تَتَكَلَّفَ لِلضَّيْفِ

“The Prophet forbid us that we stretch ourselves unnecessarily for a guest.” (Haythami also mentioned it in his “Majma`” saying that its narrators are those of the *Sahih* works except Tusi who was trustworthy anyway. Albani also declared it *Sahih*: S. Ibrahim).

Ibn Mas`ud has said that if one does not know, let him say he does not

know. To air opinion about what one does not know is to indulge in “takalluf” (Ibn Kathir and others). In fact, some have pointed out that to say, “I do not know” speaks of a man's depth of knowledge.

Zamakhshari, and following him Alusi, report that according to some scholars pretentious behavior (takalluf) implies one of the three: to descend from one's position, to try to reach out to what one cannot achieve, and to say what one has no knowledge of. And, *Sufi* Thanwi points out, if you looked at the *Masha'ikh* and scholars of our time, you will discover that most of them are of mutakallifin.

101. The allusion is to death in reference to individuals, and to Badr in reference to the Quraysh (Au.).

Surah 39
*Al-Zumar*¹

Makkan²



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE KIND,
THE COMPASSIONATE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[1] The revelation of the Book is from Allah,
the All-mighty, the All-wise.

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾

[2] Surely, We have sent down to you the Book
with the truth,³ so worship Allah making the
religion pure for Him.⁴

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ
مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ ﴿٢﴾

1. The *Surah* is also known as *Al-Ghuraf* (Zamakhshari, Alusi).

Tirmidhi and Nas a' i have recorded on the authority of `A'isha (ra),

قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ : كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا يَنَامُ حَتَّى يَفْرَأَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَالرُّمَرِ .

that the Prophet would not sleep (any night) before having recited *Surah Al-Zumar* and Bani Israel (Qurtubi, Shawkani). The *hadith* was declared *Sahih* by Albani (S. Ibrahim).

2. The whole of the *Surah* is Makkan except for perhaps two, three, or seven *verses* (Qurtubi, Alusi, Shawkani).

3. Two meanings can be ascribed to the words, "with Truth," or "in

Truth." (1) The Book has been revealed carrying the Truth, and, (2) it is Truly Allah's revelation to you, since no man could have written it (Razi).

4. That is, all your acts of worship should be aimed at winning His approval. Mere utterance of the words of faith will not be sufficient although forgiveness on its basis alone is not ruled out.

It is said that when Farazdaq's wife felt she was near her death, she instructed that her burial Prayers be led by Hasan al-Busri. When she died and Hasan had led the Prayers over her, he asked Farazdaq: "What have you prepared for this day?" Far-

azdaq replied, “The kalimah shahadah.” Hasan said, “That is the central pole. But where are the tent-ropes?” – meaning, deeds – which hold the tent poles in place (Razi).

Hasan and Farazdaq were actually friendly with each other (EI., art. Hasan).

Shamar is reported as having said, “A man will be brought with a Record of deeds as huge as mountains. Then Allah will say, ‘You prayed on such and such a day so that it might be said that you prayed. But I am the God besides whom there is no god. You fasted on such and such a day so that it might be said that you fasted. But I am the God besides whom there is no god. You spent so that it may be said, so and so is charitable. But I am the God besides whom there is no god.’ One after another He will keep on erasing deeds from his Record until nothing will be left. Thereat his two companion angels will remark, ‘O so and so. Were you practicing for the sake of others?’” (Ibn Jarir).

Mawdudi comments: This is an important *verse* of the Qur’ān which

needs to be understood carefully in order to understand the central theme of the message of Islam. It contains two parts: one, man should worship Allah alone, and two, the religion should purely be for Him. The two terms “*Ibadah*” and “*din*” need some attention. According to the authoritative “*Lisan al-‘Arab*” the word “*Ibadah*” derived from “‘abd” is an antonym of a free man, meaning, a slave, bondman, etc. Accordingly, “*Ibadah*” implies (i) worship and devotion and (ii) humble and willing obedience.

On the other hand the word “*din*” has several connotations. It implies (i) dominion, sovereignty, suzerainty, and the authority to enforce one’s decisions on others; (ii) obedience, compliance with commands in servitude; and (iii) practices and ways of a man or people.

To combine together, the sense we get is that of worship and complete devotion to Allah (*swt*) in all sincerity, without the adulteration of any other’s obedience or subservience in any area of life.

[3] Lo, religion is purely for Allah.⁵ As for those who took protectors apart from Him (claim), 'We do not worship them except that they may take us nearer to Allah in station.'⁶ Truly, Allah will judge between them in what they were differing; surely Allah does not guide him who is a liar, a (stubborn) ingrate.⁷

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الخَالِصُ وَالدِّينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ
 دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا تَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى
 اللَّهِ زُلْفَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ
 فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ
 كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٧﴾

5. Sayyid writes: "The demand to assign religion (strictly speaking 'din') to none other than Allah was made on no less than the Prophet himself, the very bearer of the Message. The demand was to accept it as the way of life, building the whole life and society on this basis; a system which starts with belief in the heart and grows to dominate the individual's life and finally, covers the entire society.

"A heart which believes in Allah's Oneness, also leads a life in accordance with the demands of that Oneness. No other concern engages it other than this. He neither demands anything nor relies upon any of His creations. To him, Allah alone is the Strong, the One who is the Subduer, above all His creations. And humans – all together – are weak and incapable of any benefit or harm. Therefore, there is no need for him to devote his attention to any of them. They are like him: incapable of harm or benefit. It is Allah who

is the Bestower and the Withholder. What need is there for him to turn his attention to any other than Allah who is Self-sufficient while the creations are dependents and poor?

"A heart which believes in Allah also believes in the unity of the system of divine laws that turn the whole creation about. It believes that the compendium of laws given by Allah, is a part of the whole and therefore, humanity's existence, its establishment and growth, is unachievable without meeting with its demands. Consequently, such a heart cannot choose to live by a system other than that Allah has chosen for it. It cannot obey laws but those of Allah, such laws as are in harmony with the laws governing the rest of the world.

"Accordingly, a heart that believes in Allah's Oneness feels the existence of a relationship between itself and all that Allah's Hands have wrought. It lives in a friendly world, one in which he feels Allah's Hand work-

ing in everything that works, and obtains comfort in everything his hands touch and his eyes fall upon. In consequence, he does not wish to harm anything that he touches or to indulge in anything but for which he has received the commands and approval from Allah, the Creator of all, the Giver of life and death, his Lord, Lord of everything, and of every living being.

“That is how the effects of Allah’s Oneness appear in every belief or opinion held, as they also appear in attitudes and behavior. They help to design life on a clear pattern, complete, distinct. It does not remain a mere verbal utterance. The special attention accorded to *Tawhid*, its explanation, and the repeated stress on it in Allah’s Book demands special attention on the part of the Muslims, in every epoch and in every milieu. *Tawhid* in its extended and complete sense is a colossal reality that needs awareness, understanding and full comprehension.

“‘Lo, the religion is purely for Allah...’ the Revelation announces its importance by phrasing it in this high sounding, reverberating manner... opening up the short sentence with ‘Lo!’ demanding our immediate and fullest attention.”

6. This is not, as Majid writes, “the ever recurring plea of the polytheists” alone. But rather, if revived, Christianity is ever likely to go back to its ways of saint-worship. Majid further writes, “Compare and contrast with the absolute, pure, and unadulterated monotheism of Islam the palpable polytheistic attitude of Christianity. ‘The faithful who belong to the Church militant upon earth, in offering their prayers to God, call at the same time to their aid the saints who belong to the Church in heaven; and these, standing on the higher steps of approach to God, by their prayers and intercessions purify, strengthen, and offer God the prayers of the faithful living upon earth, and by the will of God work graciously and beneficently upon them.’ (Longer Orthodox Catechism, quoted in ERE, XI, p.51). ‘We ask God to grant blessings, we ask the saints to be our advocates. To God we say, “Have mercy on us;” to the saints we commonly say, “Pray for us ...” We beg of them as they are pitiful, to take compassion on us and interpose in our behalf.’ (Roman Catechism, quoted in ERE. XI. P.51). This mentality, perhaps, is at the root of the primitive man’s worship and the Christian cults of the dead. ‘A crowd of saints, who were

[4] Had Allah wished to take a son, He would have surely chosen out of those He creates whom he willed.⁸ Glorified is He, the One, the Subduer.

لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَأَصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ
الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٤﴾

[5] He created the heavens and the earth in truth. He rolls the night over the day and rolls the day over the night⁹ and has subjected the sun and the moon: each running to an appointed course (of time).¹⁰ Lo, He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ
اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى
اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي
لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ
﴿٥﴾

once men and women, now form a crowd of inferior deities, active in the affairs of men and receiving from them reverence and prayer' (PC. II, p. 120)."

7. "Yet humanity deviates from the natural and logical path of pure but simple to understand concept of *Tawhid* that Islam has brought, and which every Messenger had brought. Today we notice everywhere in our Islamic world devotion to the so-called holy men and ecclesiasts in a manner that reminds us of the pre-Islamic Arab devotion to angels, or carved images, seeking Allah's nearness through them, hoping to win their intercession while Allah has clearly laid down the path: the path of pure *Tawhid* which neither relies on, nor is in any need of intercessors. We observe devotion to them being practiced all around us, in the

mythical style, 'Surely, Allah does not guide a liar, ingrate'" (Sayyid).

8. "The argument is," writes Majid, "assuming that God betook for Himself a Son, is that Son an uncreated Being like Himself, or a created being inferior to Him, and belonging to another class? If the former, then the clear conclusion is a doctrine of Dualism; if the latter, does it befit a Perfect Being to beget one who is imperfect?"

9. "*Takwir*" is the act of wrapping something around an object. "*Kawwara al-`Imamah*" means he wrapped the turban (around his head) – Zamakhshari. This carries two connotations: (1) of the night overlapping the day (shortening it) and (2) circular movement. The latter is the first hint in any peice of writing that the earth is round (Au.).

[6] He created you out of a single soul, then from it He made its mate, and sent down for you¹¹ of the cattle eight, (making four) pairs;¹² He creates you in the wombs of your mothers – from one creation to another creation¹³ – in threefold darknesses.¹⁴ That is your Lord. His is the dominion. There is no deity save He. How then are you being turned away?¹⁵

خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقْكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ ﴿٦﴾

10. It has also been said that the meaning is, each has its position designated to it that it cannot go beyond, nor fall short of (Ibn Jarir).

11. Mujahid, Qat adah and Dahh ak have said that the allusion is to the four kinds of flock: sheep, goat, camels and oxen as Allah said (8: 143-144),

ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ مِنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلذَكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ تَبَيَّنَ لِي بِعِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ [الأنعام: ١٤٣-١٤٤]

“Eight (that make) couples: of the sheep a pair, of the goats a pair. Say, ‘Has he forbidden the two males or the two females? Or what the wombs of the two females carry? Tell me by knowledge, if you are true.’ Similarly, of the camel is a pair, and of the oxen a pair” (Ibn Jarir).

12. In the words, “sent down for you” is the clear indication that the domes-

tication of cattle was by Allah’s design, and not through human effort. Human’s have not been able to add a fifth to Allah’s four (Au).

As for “sending down” (of them), similar expressions have been used for water, iron and clothes (Shafi’).

13. The allusion is to various stages that a fetus passes through within the womb until birth as said Allah (23: 12-14),

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

“Surely, We created man from the quintessence of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm drop in a safe lodging. Then We fashioned the sperm drop into a leech like structure, then of that leech like structure We made a chewed like substance. Then out of the

[7] If you disbelieve, then Allah is independent of you, yet He does not approve of disbelief for His slaves.¹⁶ But if you are grateful, He approves it for you. And no burden-carrier will carry the burden of another. Ultimately, to your Lord is your return when He will inform you of what you were doing. Surely, He is knowing of what is in the breasts.

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَنِّي وَعَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَى لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٧﴾

[8] And when an affliction touches man, he invokes his Lord, turning to Him (in sincerity), then, when He confers upon him a blessing (directly) from Him, he forgets all that He prayed for earlier and sets up compeers to Allah – so as to mislead away from His way.¹⁷ Say, ‘Enjoy your disbelief a little, surely, you are of the inhabitants of the Fire.’

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا حَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَنَّعَ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ ﴿٨﴾

chewed like substance We created the bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We developed him into a new creation. So, blessed is Allah, the Best of creators.”

14. The threefold darkness is created by the outer skin (*batn*), the skin of the womb (*rahm*), and the membrane (*al-mashimah*) that covers the fetus within the womb (placenta): Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Suddi, Ibn Zayd and Dahh ak (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

15. The implication is clear: It seems you are under the influence of others and are “being turned away” rather

than you making the decision independently, all by yourself (Au.).

16. This implies that disbelief is not planted into the humans from Allah, although, in the final analysis, both belief and disbelief are His creation. If disbelief had been planted by Allah, He would not have been displeased with disbelief and would not have disapproved it for His slaves (Razi and others).

17. That is, not only does the man in question alter his attitudes towards Allah depending on whether he is going through hardship or ease, devoting himself sincerely to Him when in trouble, and turning away

[9] Is he then who is given to worship¹⁸ during the deep hours of night,¹⁹ prostrating himself or standing (in prayers), who fears the Hereafter and hopes for his Lord's mercy²⁰ (like one who does not)? Say, are equal those who know and those who do not know?²¹ Surely, none receive the admonition but men of understanding.

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾

as soon as granted ease, but he also attributes his relief to other than Allah telling others that he seems to have won relief through the help of such and such a saint, deity or, perhaps physical causes, misleading others too besides himself (Mawdudi summarized).

18. The general meaning of “*qanata*” is to obey, but, technically, it refers to standing in prayer. Hence the “*qunut*” in “*witr*” which is a supplication from the standing position. A *hadith* of Muslim says,

أَفْضَلُ الصَّلَاةِ طُولُ الْقُنُوتِ

“The best Prayer is that which consists of a lengthy standing” (Zamakhshari).

Some scholars have thought that “*qunut*” (in reference to Prayers) is not merely standing in prayer, but one which also involves “*khushu*” (humbleness accompanied by fear) - Ibn Kathir.

19. ‘Ana’ has been explained by Ibn ‘Abbas, Hasan, Suddi and Ibn Zayd as meaning, depth of the night. See *Surah ‘Al-‘Imran*, note 184 in support of this understanding. But a few others have not restricted it to the depth of the night but to any part of it (Ibn Kathir).

In *Surah Ta-ha*, *ayah* 130, we have adopted the latter meaning in view of the context there (Au.).

It is said that reciting this *ayah* Ibn ‘Umar remarked, “That was ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan who spent most of his night in Prayers.” It is said that sometimes he would recite the whole of the Qur’an in one *raka’ah* (Ibn Kathir).

Other names have also been cited such as that of Ibn Mas’ud, ‘Ammar b. Yasir, Suhayb and Salim the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfah (Alusi). Tamim D ari has been preserved by Ahmad as reporting the Prophetic words,

عَنْ تَمِيمِ الدَّارِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ قَرَأَ بِمِائَةِ آيَةٍ فِي لَيْلَةٍ كُتِبَ لَهُ فُتُوْتُ لَيْلَتِهِ.
- مسند أحمد

“Whoever recited a hundred *verses* of the Qur’ān in a night, is recorded as if he was in prayers the whole night.” Nas a’ i has also recorded it in his “*Al-yawm wa al-laylah*” (Ibn Kathir).

Haythami noted in Majma` that Ibn Ma` in and Abu Hatim trusted one of the narrators, while Bukhari did not. But Haythami adds his weight to the narrative (Au.).

20. That is, they are in a state of fear and hope. Tirmidhi, Nas a’ i and Ibn Majah have preserved through Anas that

عن أنس بن مالك - رضي الله عنه - : «أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- دَخَلَ عَلَى شَابٍ وَهُوَ فِي الْمَوْتِ، فَقَالَ: كَيْفَ تَجِدُكَ؟ قَالَ: أَرْجُو اللَّهَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ دُنُوبِي، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ-: لَا يَجْتَمِعَانِ فِي قَلْبِ عَبْدٍ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الْمَوْطِنِ إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ مَا يَرْجُو مِنْهُ، وَأَمَّنَّهُ مِمَّا يَخَافُ»- الترمذي

“the Prophet entered upon a man who was in the throes of death. He asked him, ‘How do you find yourself?’ He said, ‘I am hopeful, yet fearful of Allah.’ The Prophet remarked, ‘The two do not get together in the heart of a believer during such moments but Allah

gave him what he hoped for and withheld what he feared” (Alusi, Shawk ani).

According to Albani the report is of Hasan status (S.Ibrhim).

21. Although Ibn `Umar named `Uthman b. `Aff an, and `Abdullah ibn `Abbas named `Amm ar b. Yasir as those in whose connection this *verse* was revealed, the application is obviously general (Ibn Kathir, Shawkani).

Sayyid devotes a few paragraphs to this *verse*. We present the briefest possible summary here: “Say, are equal those who know and those who do not know?” – the juxtaposition of this *ayah* with the previous one, which spoke of Prayers in the depth of night, leads us to believe that by the words “those who know” the allusion is “those who act.” Conversely, evil is the case of the man who knows, but does not act. “

It could also mean, however, that just as those who know and those who do not, are not equal, those who stand in Prayers at night cannot be equal to those who do not (Zamakhshari).

Imām Razi sees another connection between the last two *verses*: one is about deeds, the other about knowledge. Deed is the basis – performed

[10] Say, 'My servants who have come to believe, fear Allah.²² For those who do well in this world, is good.²³ And Allah's earth is spacious.²⁴ Surely, those who endure in patience²⁵ will be given their reward without measure.'²⁶

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿١٠﴾

consistently, accompanied by fear and hope. Knowledge follows, which is *ma`rifah* and mukashafa. But the unbelievers do not know. They are Unitarians when in trouble, Trinitarians and above when in peace. They are fated never to become 'men of understanding' (slightly modified).

In the words of Sayyid, "The knowledge of the Truth is the gnosis. It is the comprehension of the Truth. It opens the eyes. It is the union with the fixed and firm realities of existence. Knowledge is not those unconnected pieces of data that are amassed in the mind in a heap. Such a heap does not lead to the grand truths of existence. It does not take beyond the apparent, physical manifestation of things.

"And this is the way to the knowledge and electric gnosis.. it is this ... standing before Allah, the hearts in wakefulness, fear of the Hereafter, in the hope of mercy and blessings.. this is the way to knowledge. It is then that one gets at the kernel, begins to know, and benefit from what

he sees, hears and experiences, traveling up the path, ending at the Truth that lies behind the apparent. As for those who halt at the haphazardly conducted, isolated experiences, and at apparent meanings of the observable, they are collectors of pieces of knowledge. They are not Gnostics."

22. The textual word is "*ittaquAllah*" meaning, fear Allah, acquire *taqwa*, and so on.

"That Allah addressed the believers in Him as the faithful, and then demanded that they acquire *taqwa* leads us to believe that a '*fasiq*' (one without any *taqwa*) is still a believer. In short, '*fisq*' does not preclude 'iman'" (Razi).

23. The allusion could either be to peace and tranquility during this life, as Suddi said, or to Paradise as others have said (Tabari).

24. The indication is concealed, says Mujahid, that it is time the (persecuted) Muslims (at Makkah) should migrate to the lands of peace (Ibn Jarir).

[11] Say, 'I have been ordered that I should worship Allah making religion purely for Him.²⁷

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ
الدِّينَ ﴿١١﴾

[12] And I have been ordered (this) so that I should be the first of those who surrender.²⁸

وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ
﴿١٢﴾

[13] Say, 'I fear the punishment of a great Day²⁹ if I disobeyed my Lord.'

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ
يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾

[14] Say, 'I worship Allah making my religion purely for Him.'

قُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي ﴿١٤﴾

Indeed, adds Qurtubi, there is indication in it that one may migrate from an expensive place to a cheaper one. Sufyan Thawri has said, "Live in a place where you can fill a bag with bread for a *Dirham*."

25. That is, show patience and persistence in the face of difficulties you will encounter during emigration and settling into a foreign land (Razi).

26. "*Bi-ghayri hisab*" has two connotations. One, the reward will be of unimaginable magnitude and second, it will be ever-lasting (Razi).

It might be noted that "*sabr*" is the only quality that has been promised in the Qur'an as whose reward will

be "without measure," as fasting is the only deed whose reward has been promised in the *hadith* as "without measure" (Au.).

27. Or, to put it differently, making the religion exclusively for Him (Au.).

That is, making my obedience for Him alone, and declaring Him as the only true One Lord (Ibn Jarir).

28. That is, I do not behave in the manner of kings and rulers who command and order but fail to live by what they command and order (Razi).

29. A Great Day because its hardships will be of great magnitude (Tabari).

[15] Therefore, worship what you will, apart from Him.' Say, 'Surely, losers are those who lost themselves and their families on the Day of Standing.³⁰ Lo! That is the clear loss.'

فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ
الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ
﴿١٥﴾

[16] Above them will be overshadowings of the Fire and from below them overshadowings.³¹ That is what Allah frightens His slaves with. Fear Me then, O My slaves.

لَهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ
ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهَ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ
فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿١٦﴾

[17] As for those who avoided the Devils lest they worship them,³² and turned penitent to Allah, for them is the good tiding. So give glad tiding to My servants.

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا
وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ
﴿١٧﴾

30. That is, those are true losers who will stand alone on Judgment Day and in Hell, without anyone of the large family they lived amongst in this world. Although Ibn `Abbas did not support this, this was the understanding of Mujahid and Ibn Zayd (Ibn Jarir).

Another understanding is that they did not bother to put their families on the right track and so they perished, as they themselves perished (Shawkani).

Ibn `Abbas however said that Allah (*swt*) has prepared spouses, servants and others in Paradise for every one of the humankind. But when a man enters into the Fire, he loses them all (Razi). The confirmation of this may be sought in another *verse* which says

(23: 10), "They are the inheritors" (Qurtubi). That is, the believers will inherit what the unbeliever loses of his share in Paradise.

31. Or, layers of fire from above and below (Tabari). This has the same meaning as another *verse* (7: 41),

لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ [الأعراف:
﴿٤١﴾

"Jahannum shall be a cradle for them, and from above them (several folds of) covering of fire" - Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir.

32. As explained earlier, the term "taghut" carries several connotations. At this point however, the allusion, as Ibn Zayd said, is to *Shaytan*. The word yields both singular as well as plural meanings (Ibn Jarir).

[18] Those who listen to the word and follow the best of it.³³ They are the ones whom Allah has guided; and they are the people endowed with understanding.

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ
أُولُوا الْأَنْبَابِ ﴿١٨﴾

33. Ibn Marduwayh has recorded Ibn `Umar as saying that Sa` id b. Zayd, Abu Dharr and Salman (al-Farsi) were of those in the pre-Islamic time who followed the best of speech viz., “God can only be One.”

(I.e., the words, God can only be One” is the “best of speech”: Au.).

Ibn Marduwayh has another report which says that when this *ayah* was revealed, the Prophet (*saws*) sent across a caller announcing, “He who died without associating partners with Allah will enter Paradise.” When `Umar came to know he turned the caller back explaining to the Prophet that he feared people would begin to depend on this single statement. The Prophet remarked, “If the people knew the extent of Allah’s mercy they would never be without hope and if they knew the extent of His anger they would look down upon their deeds as worthless” (Shawkani remarks that the ending part of the above text is found in *Sahih* works).

(But, in addition to reports from Sa` id b. Zayd and others), there are

others who said that the *ayah* applies very well to `Uthman, `Abdul Rahman ibn `Awf, Sa` d (ibn abi al-Waqq as), Sa` id (b. Zayd), Talha and Zubayr following the good word (Qurtubi). [They all embraced Islam through Abu Bakr, right at the start of the Prophetic mission: Au.].

Yet another aspect of the meaning, as worded by Ibn `Abbas, is that those are meant who hear both good and evil things. But they suppress the evil, mentioning them to no one, but talk about the good things and put them to practice (Qurtubi: reworded).

In sum, the commentators have explained with regard to the best of the word, that the allusion is to words of all kinds that the people in question listen: good and bad, true and false, *Tawhid* and Association, originating from the pious and the fraudulent, the believers and unbelievers, but follow only the good ones of them. Hence the ending remarks: “they are the ones guided and they are people of understanding.” This is why it has

[19] Is he then, against whom the word of Chastisement has realized³⁴ – can you then rescue him who is in the Fire?

[20] But those who feared their Lord, for them are chambers over which are built chambers, underneath which flow rivers: Allah's promise; and Allah does not fail in the promise.³⁵

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ أَفَأَنْتَ
تُنقِذُ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ ﴿١٩﴾

لَكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ عُرفٌ مِّنْ
فَوْقِهَا عُرفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ
﴿٢٠﴾

been said that the *verse* applies to the earliest Muslims who, apart from other reasons, listened to all kinds of words from the pagans, Jews and Christians, but followed the good of them (Shafi` from Qurtubi).

34. Because of his consistent denial and refusal to accept the call (Ibn Jarir from Qat adah) – can such a one be rescued from the Fire?

35. This is in contrast with the Fire of *ayah* 16 that will be above the inhabitants of the Fire and below them (Qurtubi).

Ibn Kathir quotes the following to explain the *verse*. The first is in the *Sahihayn* as well as in Tirmidhi who declared it *Hasan Sahih*:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ -
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ « إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ يَتَرَاءَوْنَ
أَهْلَ الْعُرْفِ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ كَمَا يَتَرَاءَوْنَ الْكُؤُكِبَ الدَّرِيِّ
الْعَابِرِ فِي الْأَفْقِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ أَوْ الْمَغْرِبِ ، لِيَتَفَاضِلَ مَا
بَيْنَهُمْ » . قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، تِلْكَ مَنَازِلُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ لَا
يَبْلُغُهَا غَيْرُهُمْ قَالَ « بَلَى وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ ، رِجَالٌ
آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَصَدَّقُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ » - صحيح البخاري

Abu Sa` id al-*Khudri* reported the Prophet (*saws*) as having said, “The inhabitants of Paradise will see the people of the upper chambers from above them, as you see the shining star about to set in the horizon, in the east or the west – because of the differences in ranks between them.” They asked, “Messenger of Allah. Those must be places for Prophets that other than them will not get!” He answered, “Not at all. By Him in whose hands is my life, they would be people who believed in Allah and testified to the Messengers.”

Ahmad, Tirmidhi (in parts) and Ibn Majah carry a trustworthy *hadith* which says that the Companions once said to the Prophet,

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْمُدَبِّلَةِ مَوْلَى أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَمِعَ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ
يَقُولُ قُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذَا رَأَيْنَاكَ رَقَّتْ قُلُوبُنَا
وَكُنَّا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا فَارَقْنَاكَ أَعْجَبْنَا الدُّنْيَا
وَسَمَّئْنَا الْبِسَاءَ وَالْأَوْلَادَ قَالَ لَوْ تَكُونُونَ أَوْ قَالَ لَوْ

أَنْتُمْ تَكُونُونَ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ عَلَى الْحَالِ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهَا عِنْدِي لَصَافِحَتِكُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِأَكْفِهِمْ وَلَرَّازِكُمْ فِي بَيْوتِكُمْ وَلَوْ لَمْ تُذْئِبُوا لَجَاءَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُذْئِبُونَ كَمَا يُعْفِرُ لَهُمْ قَالَ قُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ حَدِّثْنَا عَنِ الْجَنَّةِ مَا بِنَاؤُهَا قَالَ لَبِنَةٌ ذَهَبٌ وَلَبِنَةٌ فِضَّةٌ وَمِلَاطُهَا الْمِسْكُ الْأَذْفَرُ وَحَصْبَانَاؤُهَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْيَاقُوتُ وَثَرَابُهَا الرَّعْفَرَانُ مَنْ يَدْخُلُهَا يَنْعَمُ وَلَا يَبْأَسُ وَيَخْلُدُ وَلَا يَمُوتُ لَا تَبْلَى ثِيَابُهُ وَلَا يَفْتَنَى شَبَابُهُ ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا تُرَدُّ دَعْوَتُهُمُ الْإِمَامُ الْعَادِلُ وَالصَّائِمُ حَتَّى يَفْطَرَ وَدَعْوَةُ الْمَظْلُومِ تُحْمَلُ عَلَى الْعِمَامِ وَتُفْتَحُ لَهَا أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَيَقُولُ الرَّبُّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَعَزَّيْ لِأَنْصُرَنَّكَ وَلَوْ بَعْدَ حِينٍ. — مسند أحمد

“Messenger of Allah, when we see you, our hearts soften up and we become (as if) people of the other world. But when we leave you, the world seems enchanting and we smell our women and children!” He said, “If you remained all the time in the state in which you are with me, angels would shake hands with you with their palms and would visit you in your homes. The fact is, if you were not to sin, Allah would bring another set of people who would sin so that He might forgive them.” They asked, “Messenger of Allah, tell us something about Paradise and what it is made of.” He replied, “A brick of gold over a brick of silver, plastered with fragrant musk, its gravel is of pearls and gems, and

its soil saffron. Whoever entered it, will be in blessings and never suffer, will stay therein forever and never die. His clothes will not get worn and he will not lose his youth. (Then he added), there are three whose supplication is not rejected: A just leader, a fasting person until he breaks his fast, and the supplication of a wronged person which is carried on through the clouds, for which doors of the heavens are opened and the Lord says,

عَنْ عَلِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَعُرْفًا يَرَى بُطُورَهَا مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَظُهُورَهَا مِنْ بُطُورِهَا فَقَالَ أَعْرَابِيٌّ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لِمَنْ هِيَ قَالَ لِمَنْ أَطَابَ الْكَلَامَ وَأَطَعَمَ الطَّعَامَ وَصَلَّى لِلَّهِ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ. — مسند أحمد

‘By My Power. I shall surely help you, even if after a while.’”

(In view of the above two, the following report can also be brought in from Ibn Kathir, although it has not been declared free of defects: Au.). It is in Ahmad: ‘Ali reported that the Prophet said, “Surely, in Paradise are chambers whose inside can be seen from outside and outside from inside.” At that a Bedouin said, “Messenger of Allah, for whom are they?” He replied, “For him who spoke well, fed

[21] Have you not observed that Allah sent down water out of heaven, then He threaded it as springs in the land, then He brings out therewith crops of diverse hues, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow. Then He reduces it to broken stubble. In that surely is a reminder for men of understanding.³⁶

أَمْ تَرَأَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَسَلَكَهُ يَنْبِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ
زَرْعًا مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهْبِجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا
ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا
لِلْأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢١﴾

[22] Is he then whose heart Allah has opened for Islam,³⁷ so that he is on a light from his Lord³⁸ (equal to him who is stumbling in the dark)? Woe then to those whose hearts are hardened against the Reminder of Allah.³⁹ They are in manifest error.

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِإِسْلَامٍ فَهُوَ
عَلَى نُورٍ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ قَوْلًا لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ
مِّنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَوْلَيْكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ
﴿٢٢﴾

the food and Prayed for Allah in the night while the people are asleep.”

36. Asad writes: “As in many other instances, the above Qur’anic reference to the endless transformation and the miraculous cycle of life and death in all nature serves to emphasize God’s almightiness and, specifically, His power to resurrect the dead – thus alluding, indirectly, to the statement at the end of the preceding *verse* that ‘never does God fail to fulfill His promise.’”

Yusuf Ali writes from another, but equally useful perspective: “The circuit of water, by which the rain falls from the clouds, is absorbed through the earth, and flows through rivers or underground streams to the sea,

where it again rises as vapour and forms clouds, was explained in notes 3111-12 to xxv 53. Here our attention is drawn to one portion of the process. The rain fructifies the soil and the seeds. Produce of various kinds is raised. The harvest ripens and is gathered in. The plants wither, dry up, and crumble away. Men and animals are fed. And the circuit starts again in another season. Here is a Sign of the Grace and Goodness of Allah, clear to those who understand.”

37. That is, opened his heart for higher knowledge (*ma`rifah*), to acknowledgement of His Oneness, submission to his Lordship, and readiness to obey Him (Ibn Jarir).

[23] Allah has sent down the best of discourses:⁴⁰ a Book, consimilar⁴¹ in its oft-repeated (content),⁴² whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah.⁴³ That is Allah's guidance whereby He guides whom He will.⁴⁴ But whomsoever Allah misleads, then, no guide has he.

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا
مَثَابِي تَفْشَعِرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودَ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ
رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

38. That is, the light of His guidance (Ibn Jarir).

39. The *Bible* echoes this. Majid quotes from the NT: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted and I should heal them." (Jn. 12: 40).

The allusion by the textual "*dhikr*" is to the Qur'an (Ibn Jarir).

Malik b. Din ar has said that individually, a man is not struck with anything worse than hardness of heart, and collectively a people with removal of kindness from their hearts (Qurtubi).

Thanwi, although a *Sufi*, cautions that this "hardness of heart" should be understood in contrast with the "openness of the heart" and not in the sense of "its lack of softness" (*riqqah*). Some people, when they discover that their heart is not soft,

become apprehensive that perhaps they suffer hardness of the heart. Such a conclusion, and derivation of such a meaning is incorrect.

40. Qushayri has said that some people have thought that the term "*hadith*" is in the sense of something new, freshly created. But this is not the sense wherever used in the Qur'an. The words of the Qur'an are "*qadim*" (eternal, since it is "uncreated"). It is true that an additional meaning of the term "*hadith*" is "new," but in Qur'anic usage, it lends the meaning of "new" or "fresh" in reference to the listener or hearer, while it remains "*qadim*" (in reference to the created world) - Qurtubi.

Imām Razi has a lengthy discourse in favor of this point.

This is because Allah's speech (*kalamuAllah*) is an Attribute of Allah (*sifah min sifatillah*) which is part and parcel of His Person (Au.).

41. That is, as Sa`id b. Jubayr put it, similar to each other and not contradictory or inconsistent (Ibn Jarir).

The allusion could also be to the Qur'anic mention of a thing, a fact, a phenomenon and then its opposite such as, e.g., Paradise against the Fire, good against evil, this world against the Hereafter, a believer against an unbeliever and so on. This "mutashabih" warns Ibn Kathir, is different from the "mutashabihat" (mentioned in 3: 7) which speaks of a particular category of verses.

42. That is, one that repeats its verses, commands, injunctions, stories, admonitions, etc. (Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Suddi, Hasan and others: Ibn Jarir).

"Mathani" is the plural of "mathna" which means to repeat and reiterate (Zamakhshari). So an added allusion is that this is a Speech whose recitation is repeated by those who believe in it (Qurtubi).

43. That is, their hearts soften and their bodies become pliant for Allah's obedience (Ibn Jarir).

The meaning is, when they hear the Qur'anic verses such as those, for instance, that threaten punishment, a shiver runs through their body. And when they hear verses speaking of Al-

lah's mercy promising rewards, their fear turns into hope and they feel more attracted to His remembrance (Alusi, Thanwi).

The same thing has been said elsewhere, writes Ibn Kathir. For example (8: 2-4),

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ.
الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ. أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ
وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ [الأنفال: ٢-٤]

"Surely, believers are those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned. When His revelations are recited to them, they cause increase in their faith; and they place their trust in their Lord. Those: who perform the Prayer (well) and expend of what We have provided them. These in truth are the believers. For them are ranks with their Lord, forgiveness, and a noble provision."

There are other verses of this nature. A third meaning comes to us from Qatadah through `Abdul Razaq who reports him as having said after reciting this verse:

هَذَا تَعَثُّ أَوْلِيَاءِ اللَّهِ ، تَعَثُّهُمْ اللَّهُ بِأَن تَتَشَعَّرَ
جُلُودُهُمْ ، وَتَبْكِي أَعْيُنُهُمْ ، وَتَطْمَعَنَّ قُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ، وَلَمْ يَنْتَعْنَهُمْ بِذَهَابِ عُقُولِهِمْ وَالْعَشْيَانِ
عَلَيْهِمْ ، إِنَّمَا هَذَا فِي أَهْلِ الْبَدْعِ ، وَهَذَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ .

“This is the description of Allah’s friends. Their skins shiver, and their eyes shed tears as their hearts find peace through Allah’s remembrance. Allah did not describe them as those who lose their minds (when listening to the Qur’ān), or pass out in a swoon. This kind of behavior belongs to the innovators and are straight from *Shaytan*” (Ibn Kathir).

Preceding Ibn Kathir, Qurtubi expands on this last issue. He reports Asm a’ bint Abi Bakr as saying, “When the Prophet’s Companions listened to the Qur’ānic recitation, their skins shivered, and their eyes shed tears.” She was told, “But today when one of the people hears the Qur’ānic recitation he falls to the ground unconscious?!” She said, “I seek Allah’s refuge from *Shaytan* the accursed.”

Alusi adds from Zubayr b. Bakkar’s Al-Muwaffaqiyat that ‘Abdullah b. al-Zubayr said to his mother (Asm a’ bint Abi Bakr), “I have discovered a people better than whom I have never come across any time. They remember Allah and one of them shivers until he swoons because of his fear of Allah.” She replied, “Never sit in their company.” Then she added, “I have seen the Prophet reciting the

Qur’ān, and I have seen Abu Bakr and ‘Umar recite the Qur’ān but no such thing ever happened to them. Do you think these people are more fearful of Allah than those?”

Sa’id b. ‘Abdul Rahman al-Jumahi says that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar passed by a man who had fallen unconscious while listening to Qur’ānic recitation. He asked, “What’s wrong with this man?” He was told, “The Qur’ān was recited to him, he was reminded of Allah, and he swooned.” He remarked, “We fear Allah and do not swoon.” Then he added, “*Shaytan* enters into these people. The Prophet’s Companions never experienced anything of this sort.” ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Aziz reports that Ibn Sirin was told about a people who swoon when the Qur’ān is recited before them. He said, “(Let there be a test) between us and them. Let one of them sit on a roof with his feet dangling down. Then let the Qur’ān be recited to him. If he jumps down, he is genuine” (Qurtubi, Alusi).

Alusi maintains, however, that if some people swoon, it is because of their weakness at the emotional level, over which they have no control, and on which account are perhaps forgivable. If the *Salaf* never underwent such states, it was because they

[24] Is he then who will fend off with his face an evil torment⁴⁵ on the Day of Judgment (like him who escaped)? And it will be said to the wrongdoers, 'Taste (now) what you were earning.'

أَفَمَنْ يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[25] Those who were before them (also) cried lies, then the chastisement came upon them from whence they did not perceive.

كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَآتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

were deeply knowledgeable (*rasikh-huna fi al-'ilmi*), and strong of mind and heart. He also states that some stray cases of a Companion or two who also underwent such states have been reported, and which he, Alusi, has mentioned in his paper on "*Haqiqatu al-Tariqah*." As for the criticism by the *Salaf*, it was perhaps directed at men who show off (*mura'in*), or were impious.

For example, we are told of 'Umar that once he heard a recitation emerging from a house. He was so affected that he had to seek a wall's support, and wasn't well for a whole month (Au.).

Qurtubi adds a few reports on good effects of the skins shivering with Allah's remembrance, such as, acceptance of supplication made at such moments. But all of them carry some defect or the other in their chains of narration (Au.).

Also see *Al 'Imran*, verse 125 of this work for some commentary there (Au.).

44. The comparison of rain water with Revelation is quite apt. The previous passage spoke of the cycle of water which, sent down from the heavens, causes life's renewal which appears in a variety of hue. This *verse* speaks of the Revelation coming down from the heavens that some hearts welcome. They open up, get activated and bloom with life. On the other hand, hardened hearts receive the guidance just as hard rocks receive rain water. It fails to penetrate (Sayyid).

45. Because their hands will be tied (Zamakhshari), an opinion attributed to the *Salaf* (Au.).

Taking the torment on the face expresses utter helplessness (Majid).

[26] So Allah made them taste humiliation in the life of the world, but surely, the chastisement of the Hereafter is greater, if only they knew.

فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[27] Surely, We have struck for the people in this Qur'ān all manner of similitude haply they will heed:

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ
كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[28] An Arabic Qur'ān wherein there is no crookedness,⁴⁶ haply they will fear.

قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرِ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

[29] Allah strikes a parable: a man belonging to several partners at variance with each other,⁴⁷ and a man belonging exclusively to one man - are the two equal in comparison?⁴⁸ Praise to Allah.⁴⁹ But rather, most of them know not.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ
مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِرَجُلٍ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

46. That is, as Asad puts it, 'without any deviousness that could obscure its meaning.'

47. The textual "shakasa" also carries with it the connotation of ill-temper (Ibn Jarir). This opinion is attributed to Mujahid, 'At a' and Ibn Zayd (Qurtubi).

48. "This parable fully depicts the truth concerning *Tawhid* and *shirk* in every situation of life. A believer's heart filled with *Tawhid* is one that traverses this journey following a clear guidance. His eyes are fixed upon a single star in the horizon and, therefore, does not miss his direction. He realizes that there is just one source of life, strength and provision; a sin-

gle source of benefit and loss, and a single source of bestowal and denial. So, he straightens his steps towards this single source, seeking help from this single origin, holding with his hand a single rope anchored to a handle. He is satisfied with his direction towards a single goal and does not remove his eyes off it. He serves a single Master, and so, does what pleases Him and abstains from what displeases Him. In this manner his potentials derive inner strength and remain united. He does, whatever he does, with his full vigor since he is firmly footed on the ground turned towards a single Lord in the heavens" (Sayyid).

[30] You are sure to die (O Muhammad) and they are sure to die.⁵⁰

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Mawdudi writes, “It is not difficult to imagine that if someone has several masters who are at variance with each other, and, at the same time, ill-tempered, each making unreasonable demand on his slave, will jointly leave the slave in a miserable state. Such is the example of *shirk* and *Tawhid*, several gods to serve and One. It may also be understood that the parable does not apply to images or idols but to living entities who behave as if they are godlings. There is one’s own self, its never ending demands, then the family, friends’ circle, the society, and finally the state. Each behaves as if it is a god and makes incessant demand on the individual. Their contradictory demands keep pulling the individual to this side and that, making his life miserable. Not merely that, but, failing to meet with their demands, if one causes him a heart-break, then the other takes offence. One humiliates, another boycotts, and so on. The man can never please all of them.”

49. After presenting the dilemma of the two, one serving one God, and the other several, it is asked, “can the two be equal?” The polytheist has no

answer except for the muted reply that they cannot be equal. So, in response it is said, “Praise be to Allah” who explains it so lucidly (Au.).

50. The difference between “*mayyit*” (āíøöÊ) and “*ma’it*” (ãÇÆÊ) is that of emphasis. “*Ma’it*” is one who is to die, maybe tomorrow, maybe later. But “*mayyit*” is an adjective attached to the noun, like “*sayyid*” which is a quality (of “leadership” or “chieftainship”) attached to a person thus qualified. The quality in this case is such a permanent feature of the humans, that they are as good as dead (especially, when compared with the true life of the Next: Au.). In short, “*mayyit*” is someone sure to die (Zamakhshari). The simple “*mayt*” (áíúÊñ) on the other hand, is for the dead (Shafi’).

The information that the Prophet is going to die was aimed at his followers: he will not abide with them forever. Yet we find a man like `Umar declaring after the Prophet’s death that he was not dead, and that he would come back (Qurtubi); which explains why this had to be here (Au.).

[31] Then, surely, on the Day of Judgment you will be disputing before your Lord.⁵¹ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

51. Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir (some of which Alusi shares) write that we have several reports in explanation of this *verse*. Tirmidhi has one of *Sahih* status:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الزُّبَيْرِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ لَمَّا تَرَلَّتْ (ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ) قَالَ الزُّبَيْرُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَتُكْرَرُ عَلَيْنَا الْحُصُومَةُ بَعْدَ الَّذِي كَانَ بَيْنَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا قَالَ « تَعَمَّ ». فَقَالَ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ إِذَا لَشَدِيدٌ. قَالَ أَبُو عِيْسَى (الترمذي) هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ.

‘Abdullah ibn Zubayr says that Zubayr (b. al-`Aww am) asked (in reference to this *verse*), “Messenger of Allah. Is there going to be a repetition of disputes and mutual claims, after what we have been through in this world?” When he said yes, Zubayr said, “Then the affair is going to be difficult.”

Ahmad’s report adds that upon being asked by Zubayr the Prophet replied, “Yes, there will be a repetition until everyone restores every other (claimant’s) rights.”

There is another report (which is also presented by Zamakhshari) in words:

عن ابن عمر قال لقد غشيتنا برهة من دهرنا ونحن نرى أن هذه الآية نزلت فينا وفي أهل الكتاب من

قلنا { إنك ميت وإهم ميتون ثم إنكم يوم القيامة عند ربكم تختصمون } الآية قلنا كيف تختصم ونبينا واحد وكتابتنا واحد حتى رأيت بعضنا يضرب وجوه بعض بالسيف فعرفت أنها فينا نزلت. (رواه الطبراني ورجاله ثقات - الهيثمي)

And, Ibn `Umar says, “I had spent plenty of time believing that the *verse*, ‘You are sure to die (O Muhammad) and they are sure to die. Then, surely, on the Day of Judgment you will be disputing before your Lord,’ applied to us and the People of the Book. (As for disputes between ourselves) we used to wonder, ‘how can we dispute when our Prophet is same and our Book is same?’ That remained until we saw some of us striking others with the swords on their faces and I knew that it was revealed in our reference.”

(Haythami said that this report of Tabarani has trustworthy narrators: Au.).

Ibn Kathir adds Imām Ahmad’s report (which we take from Majma` : Au.), the Prophet (*saws*) said,

عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوَّلُ حَصْمَيْنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ جَارَانِ. (رواه أحمد والطبراني بنحوه، وأحد إسنادي الطبراني رجاله رجال الصحيح، غير أبي عشانة، وهو ثقة - الهيثمي)

“The first two disputants will be neighbors.”

(The report, which is in Ahmad and Tabarani has one of the two chains trustworthy: Au.).

And Ahmad’s *Musnad* has the following *hadith*:

وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهُ لَيُحْتَصِمُ حَتَّى الشَّاتَانِ فِيمَا اتَّطَحَا - مسند أحمد

The Prophet said, “By Him in whose hands is my life, disputes will take place to the extent of two goats over why was it that they locked horns.

وفي رواية: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَأَى شَاتَيْنِ تَتَّطِحَانِ فَقَالَ ” يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ هَلْ تَدْرِي فِيمَ تَتَّطِحَانِ ؟ ” قَالَ لَا قَالَ لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَدْرِي وَسَيَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمَا.

”According to another report, the Prophet saw two goats locked in horns and asked, “Abu Dharr. Do you know what is it they are fighting over?” He said, “No.” He said, “But Allah knows and He will judge between them.”

(Haythami writes: The report is in Ahmad, Bazzar, Tabarani, but has some weakness in the chain: Au.).

The application of the *verse*, however, adds Ibn Kathir is general. There will be many kinds of disputants so that, as is reported in *Kitab al-Ruh* of Ibn Mandah, Ibn `Abbas said that even the body will dispute with the soul, one blaming the other for evil deeds until Allah will send an angel to them. He will say, “You two are like a man who cannot walk but can see, while another can walk but cannot see. Agreeing together, one mounts the other, and the two steal fruit from a tree. So, (the angel will ask), which of them do you think is the wrongdoing?” They will say, “Both.” The angel will say, “You have passed the judgment on yourselves.” (Quote from Ibn Kathir ends here).

In any case, Alusi writes, the application is general. Accordingly, Ibn Jarir quotes Ibn `Abbas as saying that the true will contend against the false, the oppressed against the oppressor, the unguided against the guided, the weakened ones against the arrogant ones and so on.

And, Tabarani has recorded - through a chain of narrators which is not too bad for reliance - that Abu Ayyub al-*Ansari* said, “The first to dispute against each other on the Judgment Day will be a man and his wife. By Allah, it is not her tongue

[32] So who can be more unjust than he who uttered a lie against Allah and laid a lie against the Truth when it came to him? Is there not in Jahannum an abode for the unbelievers?⁵²

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَذَبَ
بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى
لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

that will speak but her hands and legs will bear witness against her in matters involving the rights on her, and his hands and legs will bear witness against him in matters involving the rights on him. Next will be between a man and his servant. They will dispute in a similar manner. Then will come people in business. And, there will be no coins nor any currency except that the wronging man's good deeds will be given away to the man he wronged. Thereafter tyrants will be brought up, fully chained, and it will be said, 'Take them all to the Fire.' By Allah, I do not know whether they alone will enter it, or, as Allah said, 'And there is none among you but will arrive at it.'

Ibn Kathir also quotes the above.

We can end with an oft-quoted *hadith* on the topic. It is in Bukhari:

عن أبي هريرة قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ مَظْلَمَةٌ لِأَخِيهِ مِنْ عَرَضِهِ أَوْ شَيْءٍ فَلْيَتَحَلَّلْهُ مِنْهُ الْيَوْمَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ أُخِذَ مِنْهُ بِقَدَرٍ مَظْلَمَتِهِ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ حَسَنَاتٌ أُخِذَ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِ صَاحِبِهِ فَحُمِلَ عَلَيْهِ. - صحيح البخاري

The Prophet said, "Whoever has a wrong on him which he did to his brother involving his honor or something else, may clear himself of it now, before (a day) when there will be neither Dinar nor *Dirham* (for exchange). If he has a good deed (in his account), it will be taken away from him in proportion to his wrong, and, if he did not have good deeds, then the other man's wrong deeds will be taken off him and loaded on to the (wrongdoing) man."

52. (In addition to the apparent meaning) the allusion could be to those (pseudo-*Sufis*) who claim "wilayah" falsely. As for the words, "laid a lie against the Truth when it came to him," the allusion could be to him who discarded the *Shari'ah* behind him saying, "this is only the skin" (while we possess the golden core). We seek Allah's shelter from them (Alusi, Thanwi).

[33] As for he who brought the Truth and (those who) testified it, they, such of them are the godfearing.⁵³

وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[34] For them is whatever they desire with their Lord,⁵⁴ that is the recompense of those who excel.

لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

[35] So that Allah may acquit them of the worst of what they did⁵⁵ and award them their reward in measures better than what they were doing.

لِيَكْفِرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

53. The allusion is to all those who bring the Truth and those who testify to its veracity, starting from Jibril who brought the Qur'an, down to the Prophet who brought the Message, and anyone else who preaches the truth as well as all those who follow it - in all times and in all climes (Tabari, Qurtubi and others).

But perhaps it is not suited to anyone else as it is suited to the Prophet, who brought the truth, and Abu Bakr, who was the first to testify. This was the opinion of `Ali ibn abi Talib. And, the reason is clear. Abu Bakr was the first to believe and offer moral and material support to the message. The situation remained for a long while: `Ali himself was too young, while other early believers were not powerful or rich enough to offer any support to the Prophet (Razi).

54. The words "For them is whatever they desire with their Lord," hold the promise that the believers will be allowed the Beatific Vision since, as we know after they would have tasted several pleasures of Paradise, one will remain, viz., the Beatific Vision, and, it will not be denied since the promise here is that they shall have all with their Lord that they desire (Razi).

55. This is in reference to the wrongs men commit against their Lord such as, e.g., declaring partners unto Him. He will acquit them of such of the evil deeds because of their subsequent repentance and return to Him (Ibn Jarir, Razi and others).

While mentioning the above interpretation as closer to being correct, Imām Razi, however, quotes Muqatil as of a different view. The lat-

[36] Is not Allah sufficient for His slave?⁵⁶
They frighten you with those besides Him.⁵⁷
And he whom Allah misguides, no guide has
he.

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ
بِالَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ
مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

[37] But he whom Allah guides, no misleader
has he. Is not Allah - the Mighty - the Lord of
Retribution?

وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُضِلٍّ أَلَيْسَ
اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

ter thought that the allusion by the forgiveness of the worst of evil deeds is to major sins committed after entry into Islam. Muqatil, Imām Razi thinks, was one of the leaders of the “murji’ah” (those who held great hope) who believed that no sin harms a man after his belief, just as, at the other end of the spectrum, no good deed is of any worth when accompanied by unbelief. Muqatil believed that the allusion here could not be to the “disbelief” of the pre-Islamic times, since the promise here is to the believers, after they have declared their faith. The *verse* says, it may be noted, “As for he who brought the Truth and (those who) testified to it, ... Allah will acquit them of the worst of what they did...” So, by the words, “worst of what they did” refer to sins in the state of belief, in other words, major sins.

We do not have Muqatil’s stand in this regard in its fullest detail, but the modification that the Ahl al-*Sunnah*

wa al-Jama`ah make is, “Allah could forgive major sins of the believers and let them into Paradise from the start, or He may punish them first in Hellfire before final entry into Paradise, if He so wills” (Au.).

56. That is, Allah is enough for a man that He should believe in Him and trust Him, and that he should be satisfied with the situation he is in. We have a *hadith* on this topic preserved by Tirimidhi who declared it trustworthy. the Prophet (*saws*) said,

عن فضالة بن عبيد - رضي الله عنه - : أنه سمع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول «طُوبَى لِمَنْ هَدِيَ للإسلام ، وكان عَيْشُهُ كَهَافَا وَقِنَعِ». - الترمذي.

“Good cheer for him who was guided to Islam, his provision (for life) was just enough for him and he was quite satisfied with it.”

The report is also in Ibn abi Hatim through another chain (Ibn Kathir).

Ibn Kathir has yet another quotable *hadith* on the topic,

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ كُنْتُ رَدِيفَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: يَا غُلَامُ أَوْ يَا عَلِيمٌ أَلَا أَعَلِمْتُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ يَنْفَعُكَ اللَّهُ بِهِنَّ فَقُلْتُ بَلَى فَقَالَ احْفَظْ اللَّهُ يَحْفَظُكَ احْفَظْ اللَّهُ يَجِدْهُ أَمَامَكَ تَعَرَّفْ إِلَيْهِ فِي الرَّحَاءِ يَعْرِفَكَ فِي السِّنْدَةِ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتَ فَاسْأَلِ اللَّهَ وَإِذَا اسْتَعْنَيْتَ فَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ قَدْ جَفَّ الْقَلَمُ بِمَا هُوَ كَائِنٌ فَلَوْ أَنَّ الْخَلْقَ كُلَّهُمْ حَمِيْعًا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَنْفَعُوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَكْتِبْهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَكْتِبْهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِعْلَمْ أَنَّ فِي الصَّبْرِ عَلَى مَا تَكْرَهُ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَأَنَّ النَّصْرَ مَعَ الصَّبْرِ وَأَنَّ الْفَرْجَ مَعَ الْكَرْبِ وَأَنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا. — الترمذي

Ibn `Abbas reported that the Prophet told him while he was riding behind him on a beast, “My boy. Let me teach you a few words: Be mindful of Allah, He will be mindful of you. Be cognizant of Allah, you will find Him before you. Turn to Allah in your times of ease, He will remember you in your difficult times. When you ask, ask Allah. When you seek help, seek Allah’s help. And know that if mankind were to gather together to do you a good that Allah has not written for you, they will not be able to do the good to you. And, if mankind were to gather together to do you a harm that Allah has not written against you, they will not

be able to harm you. The Scriptures have dried and the Pens have been withdrawn. Know that to show patience over a thing of dislike carries much good; that success comes with patience; that the opening accompanies (every) pain, and that with every hardship, there is an ease.” (Haythami said that the report is in Tabarani but is weak: Au.).

عن ابنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَقْوَى النَّاسِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَكْرَمَ النَّاسِ فَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَعْنَى النَّاسِ فَلْيَكُنْ بِمَا فِي يَدِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَقَ مِنْهُ بِمَا فِي يَدَيْهِ، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَكْرَمَ النَّاسِ، فَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ.»

The Prophet is also reported by Ibn Abi Hatim as having said to Ibn `Abbas, “He who wishes to be strongest of the people, may rely on Allah. He who wishes to be richest of the people, may have greater faith in what Allah has than in what his hands possess. And he who wishes to be the most honorable of the people, may always be conscious of Allah and fear him.” (The authenticity of this report could not be established: Au.).

57. Makkan pagans tried to frighten the Prophet off his preaching against their deities saying that their deities

[38] And, if you asked them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely answer, 'Allah.'⁵⁸ Say, 'Do you see then, whatever you invoke besides Allah, are they,⁵⁹ if Allah willed me an affliction, able to remove His harm? Or, are they, if He willed me a mercy, able to withhold His mercy?'⁶⁰ Say, 'Sufficient for me is Allah; in Him the trusting men place their trust.'

وَلَيْن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ
هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ
هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

would strike him with evil. Hence we find that when the Prophet sent Khalid ibn al-Walid to a valley in Hijaz where "Al-Uzzah" was installed, to destroy it, he was warned by its custodian. He told Khalid that this was no ordinary deity and that it would strike back in force. In response Khalid went up to the idol and chopped off its nose (before demolishing it altogether: Au.) - Ibn Jarir, Kashshaf, Qurtubi.

The application is also to Muslim-to-Muslim situation. The officers frighten their subordinates into doing something disallowed in Islam by threatening them with some sort of action against them if they would not co-operate. Good Muslims should hold on to their principles. Allah is the Protector. He has several ways of providing for His slaves (Shafi').

58. A mass of evidence tells us that the Arabs believed in a supreme Deity, Allah, even before the advent of Islam. Writes Majid: "The offence of the Arabs was not that they denied the Supreme Being or the Creator; they fully recognized His existence, but they associated other deities with Him."

59. The pronoun employed here is feminine because the allusion is to deities (Razi).

60. That is, do you not see the contradiction, that while on the one hand you believe in One Supreme Deity, Allah, the all-Archiving, the Overwhelming, on the other hand you also ascribe partners unto Him! Your behavior is all the more ridiculous when you realize that the deities that you ascribe to Him are totally powerless, neither capable of good nor harm.

[39] Say, 'My people. Keep working according to your condition,⁶¹ I am also working. You shall soon know:

[40] To whom comes the chastisement that will humiliate him and upon whom descends an enduring torment.'

[41] Surely, We have sent down upon you for mankind the Book in Truth. So, whosoever receives guidance, then, it is for his own self; while he who goes astray, then upon him is the detriment. And you are not over them a custodian.⁶²

[42] Allah takes the souls⁶³ at the time of their death,⁶⁴ and of that which does not die in its sleep.⁶⁵ Then He withholds that for which He has destined death and releases the others till a stated term.⁶⁶ Surely, in that are signs for a people who reflect.⁶⁷

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

61. The translation here follows Alusi's understanding. Otherwise, the word "makanat" can also be understood as place or station, as noted by Zamakhshari.

62. The Prophet used to get extremely worried over the rejection by the Makkans. He is being told here not to vex himself unduly. None but Allah can guide a man. Guidance is for the soul what life is for the body: the rightly-guided is alive, while the unguided is dead. And, just as life to the body is given by Allah, life to the soul is also given by Allah. This

should have gone a long way in consoling the Prophet (Razi).

63. Nafs and Ruh

What is the difference between "nafs" and "ruh"? There does not seem to be a clear way to distinguish one from the other. The difficulty arises from the Qur'an itself which seems to treat them as synonyms. And so does the *hadith* (Au.).

A report coming from Ibn `Abbas says that between "nafs" and "ruh" there is a barrier like the sun's rays. (Nafs has the power of intellect and

cognition while ruh has the power of breathing and movement: Zamakhshari from same source). Allah withdraws the “nafs” from the body during sleep, leaving the “ruh” within it. If Allah wills, He withdraws the “ruh” also to deliver death to the body. Otherwise, he sends back the “nafs” until an appointed term (Kashshaf). The report is in Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim (Shawkani).

Qurtubi also quotes the above but disagrees that the “nafs” and “ruh” are different entities. He quotes several *ahadith* that use the terms synonymously. E.g., The Prophet said,

عن أبي هريرة قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَلَمْ تَرَوْا الْإِنْسَانَ إِذَا مَاتَ شَخَصَ بَصْرُهُ ” ،
قَالُوا : بَلَى ، قَالَ : ” فَذَلِكَ حِينَ يَنْشَعُ بَصْرُهُ نَفْسَهُ .

“Have you not seen that when a man dies his eyes are fixed in stare?” They said, “Indeed.” He said, “That is the time when the eyes follow its ‘nafs’ (as it leaves the body)”- Muslim.

According to another report he said,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ: ” إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ تَحْضُرُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ، فَإِذَا كَانَ الرَّجُلُ الصَّالِحَ، قَالُوا: اخْرُجِي أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ، كَأَنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ الطَّيِّبِ. — مسند أحمد

“Angels appear before a dying man. If he happens to be a righ-

teous man they say, ‘Come out O good nafs. You were in a good body ...’ (Ibn Majah).

On the other hand, the Prophet used the word “ruh” describing the same situation. He said, as in a *hadith* of Muslim,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ، قَالَ : ” إِذَا خَرَجَتْ رُوحُ الْمُؤْمِنِ تَلْقَاهَا مَلَكَانِ يُصْعِدَانَهَا“ .

“When a believer’s ‘ruh’ leaves, it is received by two angels that ascend with it.”

More clearly, in a single incident the words “nafs” and “ruh” were used together. It happened when, after a campaign night-halt no one woke up for *Fajr* until the sun was up. When the Prophet questioned Bilal who had promised to watch the dawn, he explained,

أَخَذَ بِنَفْسِي الَّذِي أَخَذَ بِنَفْسِكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

“My ‘nafs’ was seized by Him who had seized your ‘nafs,’ O Messenger of Allah.” the Prophet (*saws*) later explained the reason why they slept off their *Fajr*:

أرواحنا كانت بيد الله فأرسلها أنى شاء . — أبو داود

“Our ‘arwah’ were in the hands of Allah. He restored them when He willed” (Abu Da’ud).

The above goes to prove that “nafs” and “ruh” are one and the same entities (Qurtubi).

The matter, however, remains undecided and Zamakhshari’s report mentioned above carries greater conviction (Au.)

Sleep

Modern science is unable to explain sleep, far from giving any clue about the nature of the soul. Almost every biological organism sleeps. Whales and dolphins sleep either at the surface of water, or sink deep to sleep.

Until recently it was thought that the body needed rest and hence sleep. But it has been found that although the body is inactive, every cell in the human body is feverishly as active as during wakefulness. Further, elephants sleep from standing position. Surely, the whole body is not resting. It was then suggested that perhaps the brain needed rest. But that also proved wrong. The brain is quite active during sleep. Although theories abound, a century of intense research has failed to yield any data explaining sleep. The so-called “data-processing” theory (removal of unnecessary data from memory, by the mind, during sleep) has also been discarded. If anything, the mystery has deepened. Research shows that

larger a body, lesser sleep it needs, and smaller the body, the longer it sleeps – although the opposite should have been true. The giraffe and elephant, for instance, sleep 2-4 hours a day. But bats, opossums, and some other small mammals sleep 18 hours a day or more. Human beings tend to sleep 8 hours a day, and, it is assumed that less than that is not free of harm. However, Allah (*swt*) has power over everything. Many scholars, politicians, students and even scientists just manage a couple of hours at night, without any apparent effects, except for the feeling of fatigue. The Qur’ān itself said praising the pious (51: 17),

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ [الذاريات: ١٧]

“And little it is they used to sleep at nights” (Au.).

64. “The mystery of life and death, sleep and dreams, is a fascinating enigma, of which the solution is perhaps beyond the ken of man. A vast mass of superstition as well as imaginative and psychological literature has grown up about it. But the simplest and truest religious doctrine is laid down here in a few words. In death we surrender our physical life, but our soul does not die; it goes back to a plane of existence in which it is more conscious of the realities of

the spiritual world: ‘Allah takes the soul’” (Yusuf Ali).

65. Qurtubi leads us to a *hadīth* in Dara Qutni about sleep in the Hereafter. It says,

عن جابر بن عبد الله قال سئل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقيل يا رسول الله أينام أهل الجنة فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم النوم أخو الموت وأهل الجنة لا ينامون. - رواه الطبراني في الأوسط والبخاري ورجال البزار رجال الصحيح

The Prophet (*saws*) was asked, “Will the inhabitants of Paradise sleep?” He answered, “Sleep is death’s twin-brother and the inhabitants of Paradise will not sleep.”

It is also in Tabar ani and Bazz ar with the one in Bazz ar declared trustworthy by Haythami (Au.).

66. Sa` id b. Jubayr and Suddi held the opinion that when people sleep their souls meet with those of the dead in the higher realm. Then, Allah (*swt*) retains the souls of the dead and restores the souls of those in sleep (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). The above opinion is attributed to Ibn `Abbas and can be found in `Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabar ani (in his *Awsat*), Abu al-Sheikh (in his *al-`Azamah*), Ibn Marduwayh and Diyaa’ (in his *Mukhtarah*) – Shawkani.

This, one might note, is not supported by a *hadīth*. Also see *Surah al-An`am*, *ayah* 60 and 61 and the corresponding notes (Au.).

Imām Razi however opts for the plain meaning: Allah withdraws the souls at sleep. Then, He withholds those whose death is destined, restoring the rest to the sleepers.

At all events, the manner of Allah taking the souls away at death has been described elsewhere. Allah said (32: 11),

فَأَن يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ [السجدة: ١١]

“Say, ‘The angel of death given charge of you draws your souls’” (Razi).

A related *hadīth* can be quoted here. It is in the *Sahihayn*:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «إذا أوى أحدكم إلى فراشه فلينبض فراشه بداخلة إزاره فإنه لا يدري ما خلفه عليه ثم يقول: باسمك ربي وضعت جنبي وبك أرفعه إن أمسكت نفسي فارحمها وإن أرسلتها فاحفظها بما تحفظ به عبادك الصالحين». - صحيح البخاري

Abu Hurayrah reports the Prophet, “When one of you goes to bed, he should dust his bed with the hem of his lower garment, for he does not know what has come on to it after him,

and then he should say, ‘In Your name my Lord, I place my side, and in Your name do I raise it. If You hold back my soul, show it mercy. And if you send it back, protect it as You protect Your righteous slaves’ (Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, Alusi, Shawkani).

(By the words “he does not know what has come on to it after him” the allusion is to the possibility of insects or creepers invading the bed: Au.).

67. Asad comments: “According to Razi, this passage connects allegorically with the preceding – the light of guidance being likened to life, and man’s going astray, to death or, if it is not permanent, to death-like sleep followed by awakening. Beyond this, however, we have here a reminder – in tune with the subsequent passage – of God’s almightiness, and especially of His exclusive power to create and to withdraw life. As to the operative verb ‘yatawaffa,’ it primarily denotes ‘He takes [something] away in full;’ and because death is characterized by disappearance of all vital impulses (the “soul”) from the once-living body – their being ‘taken away in full,’ as it were – this form of the verb has been used tropically, since time immemorial, in the sense of ‘causing to die,’ and (in its intransitive

form) ‘dying’ or (as a noun) ‘death:’ a usage invariably adhered to in the Qur’ān. The traditional likening of sleep to death is due to the fact that in both cases the body appears to be devoid of consciousness, partially and temporarily in the former case, and completely and permanently in the latter. (The popular translation of ‘anfus’ – pl. of ‘nafs’ – as ‘souls’ is certainly inappropriate in the above context, since, according to the teaching of the Qur’ān, man’s soul does not ‘die’ at the time of his bodily death, but, on the contrary, lives on indefinitely.”

Yusuf Ali has the spiritual aspect in mind. He writes: “If we contemplate these things, we can see more clearly many spiritual truths: e.g. (1) that our bodily life and death are not the whole story of our existence; (2) that in our bodily life we may be dead to the spiritual world, and in our bodily death, may be our awakening to the spiritual world; (3) that our nightly Sleep, besides performing the function of rest to our physical life, gives us a foretaste of what we call death, which does not end our personality; and (4) that the Resurrection is not more wonderful than our daily rising from Sleep, ‘twin-brother to Death.’”

[43] Or, have they taken intercessors apart from Allah? Say, 'Even if they do not have power over anything, nor can they reason?'

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ قُلْ
أَوْ لَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

﴿٤٣﴾

[44] Say, 'To Allah belongs intercession altogether.⁶⁸ His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth, then, to Him you will be returned.'

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

[45] And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter shrink in aversion, but when those are mentioned that are besides Him, then behold, they are rejoicing.⁶⁹

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْتَمَزَتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

68. That is, on Judgment Day intercession will be in the hands of Allah alone. He will grant whom He will (Ibn Jarir).

Two conditions are attached to intercession: Only he can intercede whom Allah allows, and in favor of only him whom Allah allows (Zamakshari, Alusi).

Majid quotes a Western scholar to lay his finger on the error committed by the Christian Church. He writes, "Referring to four passages in the NT says a modern spokesman of Christianity: 'In all these passages Christ is represented as mediating between God and man. God and man have been estranged. The relation which normally subsists between them has been destroyed, and the work of the mediator is to restore it. In 1 Timo-

thy this work is explicitly connected with the redemptive death of Christ; there is one meditative between God and man, Himself man. Jesus Christ who gave Himself as ransom for all (ERE., VIII, p. 516)."

69. Such is the state of many Muslim groups today. They call upon "Awliya' Allah," seeking their help - which is nothing less than *shirk* - but when they are told to call upon Allah alone, the All-powerful, the Quick to Respond, they turn away in disgust (Alusi, Thanwi).

(Even if not to the above extent, but it is common to see how people brighten up, and joy is visible on their faces when other than Allah are talked about: stories of feats and miracles on the part of the so-called saints and holy men, but which have

[46] Say, 'O Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, You will judge between Your slaves in matters in which they were differing.⁷⁰

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ
الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ
فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

[47] And, were there to be for the wrongdoers all that there is in the earth, and the like of it along with it, surely they will offer it to ransom themselves from the evil of the chastisement on the day of Standing. Yet there would appear for them from Allah that which they were not envisaging.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا
وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِنْ سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ
يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

[48] There would appear for them the evil of that which they earned and that would encompass them which they were mocking.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا
كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

[49] Now, when an affliction touches man he calls upon Us. But when We confer on him a blessing from Us, he says, 'I was given this only because of a knowledge (I have).' But rather, it is a trial but most of them realize not.

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا
خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَى
عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

no basis in truth. Talk to the same people about Allah, and a sudden cooling of interest is markedly visible (Shabbir).

“Not very different,” adds Majid, “is the case of the Christians. Look at their invocation of the saints, their patronage of relics and their use of images. And look at their Litany of the Blessed Virgin: ‘We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! Despise not our petition in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed vi-

gin-Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us .. God the father of heaven, God the Son, Redeemer of the world. God the Holy Christ. Holy Trinity .. Lord God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Pray for us, O holy mother of God.’ (Butler’s Catechism, pp. 9-12).”

70. In reference to the words, “Originator of the heavens and the earth,” Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir quote a *hadith* from Muslim:

(عن) أَبُو سَلَمَةَ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ قَالَ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ كَانَ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَفْتَتِحُ صَلَاتَهُ إِذَا قَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ قَالَتْ كَانَ إِذَا قَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ افْتَتَحَ صَلَاتَهُ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ جِبْرَائِيلَ وَمِيكَائِيلَ وَإِسْرَافِيلَ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ اهْدِنِي لِمَا احْتَلَفَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِكَ إِنَّكَ تَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ. - صحيح مسلم

`Abdul Rahman ibn `Awf says he asked `A'isha about how the Prophet began his Prayers deep at night? She answered that he began by saying, "O Lord of Jibril Mik a'il and Isr afil, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the seen and the unseen, You will judge between the people in what they are differing. Lead me in what has been differed with in truth, by Your leave. Verily, You guide whom You will to the straight path."

Shawkani also quotes this *hadith*.

Ibn Kathir quotes a few more *ahadith* on the topic. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud is recorded in Ahmad as reporting the Prophet, "Whoever said:

اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ، عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ، إِنِّي أَعْهَدُ إِلَيْكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ، أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ ، وَحَدِّكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُكَ وَرَسُولُكَ ، فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ تَكَلَّمْتَ إِلَيَّ نَفْسِي ، تَقْرَبْنِي مِنَ الشَّرِّ ، وَتُبَاعِدْنِي مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ، وَإِنِّي

لَا أَتَّقِي إِلَّا بِرَحْمَتِكَ ، فَاجْعَلْ لِي عِنْدَكَ عَهْدًا ، تُؤَقِّبِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ. - مسند أحمد

'O Allah, Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Knower of the seen and the unseen, I pledge to You in the life of this world that there is no deity except You, alone. You have no associates and Muhammad is Your slave and Messenger. If you leave me to myself, You will only take me closer to evil and away from good. I do not place any trust except on Your mercy. Therefore, let there be a pledge remaining with You, which You will fulfill on the Day of Standing, surely, You do not break the trust,'

... whoever said this ... but Allah will say on the Day of Standing, 'My slave has made a compact with Me, so fulfill it now.' Then he will be admitted into Paradise." "So," said Suhayl, "I informed Qasim b. `Abdul Rahman that `Awn says such and such a thing." He said, "There is not a maiden in our household but who says these words in her apartments."

Haythami wrote: Its narrators are those of the *Sahih* except that one narrator is missing after `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (Au.).

[50] Thus said those that were before them,⁷¹ but that was of no profit to them which they were earning.

قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَعْنَى
عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The above report, adds Ibn Kathir, has been recorded through a second chain which is also in Ahmad. And a third chain says that Abu Rashid al-Habrani went to `Abdullah ibn `Amr and told him, "Narrate to me something from the Prophet." He took out a collection spread it before me and said 'this is what the Prophet dictated to me.' I read out of it. (One of the things) it said was that Abu Bakr asked the Prophet to teach him what he should say in the morning and in the evening, in response to which the Prophet said, 'O Abu Bakr, say the following:

اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ رَبِّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَمَلِيكُهُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ
شَرِّ نَفْسِي وَمِنْ شَرِّ الشَّيْطَانِ وَشَرِّكَهِ وَأَنْ أَقْتَرِفَ عَلَى
نَفْسِي سُوءًا أَوْ أُجْرَهُ إِلَى مُسْلِمٍ. - مسند أحمد

"O Allah, Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Knower of the seen and the unseen, there is no deity save You, Lord of all things and their Owner. I seek Your refuge from the evil of myself, from the evil of *Shaytan* and

his associates and that I should perpetrate upon myself an evil or should push it towards a Muslim."

Tirmidhi declared this report as of *Hasan Gharib* status (Au.).

To touch on another aspect, it is reported that when Rabi` b. Khuthaym was informed about Hussain's martyrdom, all he said was "Ah," and then recited this *verse*. The *Salaf* have said that when one is told about the differences between the Companions, he might recite this *verse* to great relief: "O Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, You will judge between Your slaves in matters in which they were differing" (Alusi, Shafi').

71. Q ar un for example said the same thing. He said (28: 78),

إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي [القصص: ٧٨]

"I have been given it (the wealth) because of a knowledge that I have" (Razi, Qurtubi).

[51] *The evil (consequence) of what they earned struck them, and (thus), the wrongdoers of these – them also the evil of what they have earned will strike them.⁷² And they will not be able to frustrate (Us).*

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا
كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

[52] *Have they not known that Allah extends provision unto whom He will and constricts. Surely, in that are signs for a people who believe.⁷³*

أَوْمَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ
يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

[53] *Say, 'O My slaves who have committed excesses against their own souls, despair not of Allah's mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins.⁷⁴ Indeed, He is the All-forgiving, the All-kind.⁷⁵*

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ
لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الدُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ
﴿٥٣﴾

72. That is, said Suddi, a similar calamity will strike these, the unbelievers from the *Ummah* of the Prophet, as struck those of the previous prophets (Ibn Jarir).

73. When a man succeeds, he attributes it to his abilities, education and qualifications. But, how can he fail to notice that many there are who are better qualified than he, but are doing worse, while, on the other hand, there are men of modest abilities, if not altogether quite unworthy, who do far better than him. Should not the man in question conclude that provision seems to rest in somebody's else hands? (Abridged from several commentators).

74. Sayyid is worth quoting at this point: "The *verse* offers an unlimited mercy that covers every sin, however serious: it is the invitation to turn back. It is the invitation addressed to the disobeying, bounds-breaking, rebellious people that have strayed deep into the valleys of error. They are being invited to faith, optimism and trust in Allah. Allah is kind with His slaves. He knows their weakness and their helplessness. He knows of the factors working upon them deep from within the bottom of their inner beings as well as those acting from outside. He knows that *Shaytan* sits in ambush at every spot, picking them up from every path, attacking them with his foot and mounted

soldiers; and that he functions in an extremely efficient manner. The believer knows that the construction in which he is engaged is a vain effort, and that he is the meek one who quickly stumbles the moment he lets loose the rope that binds him to the anchor; and that all such tendencies within his inner self to base desires make him prone to lose balance, to make him fall here or there throwing him into a spree of sins; and that he is too weak to maintain a goodly balance.

“Allah Most High knows all this about His creation and, therefore, extends this help, stretches towards him His mercy, and does not seize him for his sin until He lays down around him every means by which he could escape being disobedient to Him and which straighten him up whenever he stumbles. All the same, after he has sunk deep in sins, exceeded in error, and begun to feel that he has been abandoned, and that his affair is all but over, and that he might never return (to his innocent state) – in such a state - a state of despair and pessimism - he hears the majestic soothing call of mercy: ‘O My slaves who have committed excesses against their own souls, despair not of Allah’s mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins.’”

The majority opinion of the *Salaf* is that the *verse* is addressing the non-Muslims whose sins of pre-faith days would all be forgiven if they believed and attempted righteous deeds hereonward (Ibn Jarir, Razi in sum, Qurtubi).

Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir make it more specific by quoting a few *ahadith*: It is reported in the *Sahihayn* that some pagans who had committed killing and fornication to the extreme end went up to the Prophet (*saws*) and said, “What you say and call to, is indeed good, but if you could tell us whether there is expiation for what we did.” So Allah revealed (25: 68),

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ
الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ [الفرقان: ٦٨]

“And those who do not invoke along with Allah other deities, do not kill a soul that Allah has forbidden, except by right, and do not commit fornication.”

He also revealed the *verse* in question, “Say, ‘O My slaves who have committed excesses against their own souls, despair not of Allah’s mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins.’”

Ibn Kathir has a few *ahadith* on the topic. Imām Ahmad has a *hadith* which says:

عَنْ عَمْرٍو بْنِ عَبْسَةَ قَالَ أَقْبَلَ شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ يَدْعَمُ عَلَى عَصَا لَهُ حَتَّى قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ إِنَّ لِي عَذْرَاتٍ وَفَجَرَاتٍ فَهَلْ تُعْفَرُنَّ لِي قَالَ أَلَسْتَ تَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ قَالَ بَلَى وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ قَدْ عُفِرَتْ لَكَ عَذْرَاتُكَ وَفَجَرَاتُكَ.

That a very old man went up to the Prophet leaning on his walking staff and said, “Messenger of Allah. I have in my account many treacheries and debaucheries. Will I be forgiven?” He asked, “Do you not testify that there is no deity save Allah?” He replied, “Indeed I do. I also testify that you are a Messenger of Allah.” the Prophet (*saws*) said, “Allah has forgiven you your treacheries and debaucheries.”

(Except for the doubt, writes Haythami, about one narrator in the chain whether he had met the one he heard from, the rest of the chain is trustworthy: Au.).

In addition to the above, we have already noted the story in the *Sahihayn* of a man who had killed ninety-nine people. The version in Muslim goes like this, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri is the first narrator:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ أَنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- قَالَ «كَانَ فِيمَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ رَجُلٌ قَتَلَ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ نَفْسًا فَسَأَلَ عَنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ

فَدَلَّ عَلَى رَاهِبٍ فَأَتَاهُ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُ قَتَلَ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ نَفْسًا فَهَلْ لَهُ مِنْ تَوْبَةٍ فَقَالَ لَا. فَتَتَلَّهُ فَكَمَلَ بِهِ مِائَةً ثُمَّ سَأَلَ عَنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَدَلَّ عَلَى رَجُلٍ عَالِمٍ فَقَالَ إِنَّهُ قَتَلَ مِائَةً نَفْسٍ فَهَلْ لَهُ مِنْ تَوْبَةٍ فَقَالَ تَعَمَّ وَمَنْ يُحُولُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ التَّوْبَةِ انْطَلِقْ إِلَى أَرْضٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَإِنَّ هُنَا أَنَسًا يَبْعُدُونَ اللَّهَ فَاغْبُدِ اللَّهَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا تَرْجِعْ إِلَى أَرْضِكَ فَإِنَّهَا أَرْضٌ سَوْءٌ. فَاَنْطَلَقَ حَتَّى إِذَا نَصَفَ الطَّرِيقَ أَتَاهُ الْمَوْتُ فَاحْتَصَمَتْ فِيهِ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْعَذَابِ فَقَالَتْ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ جَاءَ تَائِبًا مُقْبِلًا بِقَلْبِهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ. وَقَالَتْ مَلَائِكَةُ الْعَذَابِ إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ خَيْرًا قَطُّ. فَأَتَاهُمْ مَلَكٌ فِي صُورَةِ آدَمِيٍّ فَجَعَلُوهُ بَيْنَهُمْ فَقَالَ قِيسُوا مَا بَيْنَ الْأَرْضَيْنِ فإِلَى أَيِّهِمَا كَانَ أَذْيُ فَهُوَ لَهُ. فَقَاسُوهُ فَوَجَدُوهُ أَذْيُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي أَرَادَ قَبْضَتَهُ مَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ».

The Prophet said, “There was a man from among those before you (from among the Israelites: Bukhari) who killed ninety-nine people. Then he inquired about the most knowledgeable man on earth. He was directed to a monk. He went up to him and asked him whether there was repentance for him. He said no. So he killed him also and completed their hundred with him. Then he inquired about the most knowledgeable man on earth and was led to a scholar. He told him that he had killed a hundred men. Was there any chance of repentance? He told him, “Of course. Who could come between him and repentance?” He suggested him to go to a village in

which there were people devoted to Allah: "You too devote yourself to Allah in their company. And do not return to your town which happens to be an evil place." He started off until he had covered half the distance. But death overtook him there. Angels of mercy and angels of chastisement disputed over him. Said the angels of mercy, "He had come repentant, with his heart turned to Allah." The angels of torment said, "He never did a good thing in his life." Then an angel appeared in the form of a human. They made him an arbiter. He said, "Measure the two lands and treat him as belonging to that which happens to be closer." They found him closer to the land he was migrating to (by a hand span). So the angels of mercy took his soul.

(Other reports suggest that he had crawled on his chest while death was on him and that Allah ordered the land that was of the good people to contract itself and the other land to stretch itself away from him).

A second opinion however comes from the *Salaf* – Ibn Mas'ud being one of them - to the effect that the allusion is to Muslims who, after their sins, major or minor, could be

forgiven if they sought forgiveness (Ibn Jarir).

In sum, the *verse* is addressing both believers as well as unbelievers. One has to repent sins of disobedience, the other has to repent paganism, atheism, and other forms of beliefs in other than Allah (Au.).

It is also reported as context of revelation (preserved by Ibn Is-haq: Ibn Kathir), that `Umar (b. al-Khattab) said, "I used to say to myself that Allah will never accept anything as expiation, or repentance from those who believed but because of the trials that befell their lot, fell into apostasy (or, did not migrate, but remained in Makkah); until Allah revealed these *verses*."

"So," `Umar said, "I wrote down this *verse* and sent it to Hish am b. al-` As (at Makkah)." Hish am said, "When it reached me, I began to go up and down in Dhu Tuwa, reading it in a loud voice, but could not make out what it all meant until I said, 'O Allah, make me understand them.' So Allah cast the meaning in my heart that they were meant for us, and in connection with what we used to think about ourselves, and was being said about us. So I jumped on my camel and went and joined the Prophet" (Ibn Jarir, Qurtubi).

Haythami remarked that the chain of this report has trustworthy narrators (Au.).

As an aside Ibn Kathir offers us the report that `Abdullah ibn Mas` ud said: The greatest of Qur`anic verses is (2: 255):

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ [البقرة: ٢٥٥]

“Allah, there is no deity but He, the Living, the One by Whom all subsist...” (Ibn Jarir).

The most comprehensive of Qur`anic verses, so far as good and evil is concerned is (16: 90):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرٍ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ [النحل: ٩٠]

“Allah orders you justice and doing good...”

The Qur`anic verse that lends most hope is the one under discussion (39: 53):

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ [الزمر: ٥٣]

“Say, ‘O My slaves who have committed excesses against their own souls, despair not of Allah’s mercy...”

The strongest of the Qur`anic ayah in terms of entrustment is (65: 2-3):

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا (٢) وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا [الطلاق: ٢-٣]

“And whoever feared Allah, He

will find for him a way out and feed him from where he does not reckon. And whoever trusted Allah, Allah is sufficient for him. Surely, Allah is the Accomplisher of His affair. Surely, Allah has – for everything – determined a measure.”

Ibn Kathir also has a word to say on despair: There are several reports regarding despair. One is in Ahmad. The Prophet (saws) said,

(عن) أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- يَقُولُ « وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ - أَوْ قَالَ وَالَّذِي تَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ - لَوْ أَحْطَأْتُمْ حَتَّى تَمْلَأَ خَطَايَاكُمْ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ اسْتَعْفَرْتُمْ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَعَفَرَ لَكُمْ وَالَّذِي تَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ - أَوْ وَالَّذِي تَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ - لَوْ لَمْ تُحْطُوا لَجَاءَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِقَوْمٍ يُحْطُونَ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ فَيَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ». - مسند أحمد

“By Him in whose hands is my life (or he said, “in whose hands is Muhammad’s life”), if you were to sin until your sins filled the space between the heaven and the earth, but then sought Allah’s forgiveness, He would surely forgive you. And, by Him in whose hand is my life, (or he said, “in whose hands is Muhammad’s life”), if you were not to sin, Allah would have brought a people who would sin, then seek Allah’s forgiveness, and He would forgive them.”

(Haythami commented that the report has a trustworthy chain). The second half of this tradition is also in a report in Muslim,

عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ حِينَ حَضَرْتُهُ الْوَفَاةَ كُنْتُ
كَتَمْتُ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا سَمِعْتُهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ -صلى
الله عليه وسلم- سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه
وسلم- يَقُولُ « لَوْلَا أَنَّكُمْ تُذْنِبُونَ لَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ خَلْقًا
يُذْنِبُونَ يَعْفِرُهُمْ » - صحيح مسلم

Abu Ayyub al-*Ansari* said in his death-bed, “I had concealed from you something I had heard from the Prophet. He said, ‘If you were not to sin, Allah would bring a people who would sin, then seek Allah’s forgiveness, and He would forgive them.’”

‘Abdullah b. Imām Ahmad narrated the following words,

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْحَنَفِيَّةِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْعَبْدَ الْمُؤْمِنَ
الْمُقْتِرَ التَّوَابِ. مسند أحمد

“Verily, Allah approves of a tried (but failed) yet oft-turning slave.”

75. One may note the number of ways the *ayah* promises mercy, directly or indirectly:

(i) It starts with “O My slaves” – Allah addresses the rebellious as “My slaves.”

(ii) He addressed them as “slaves” and slaves deserve to be treated with kindness.

(iii) He said, “Those who committed excesses against themselves.” So, they are the “wronged ones,” though at their own hands, but, all the same, the wronged ones deserve mercy and not addition of afflictions. 3257 Al-Zumar *Surah-39*

(iv) He said, “Do not despair.”

(v) Promises them His own mercy.

(vi) Instead of saying after preventing them from despair that “He is the Forgiving ..” He mentioned His own name in saying, “Surely, Allah is..”

(vii) He promised His forgiveness

(viii) He promised forgiveness of “all” sins.

(ix) He mentioned His quality of Forgiveness and

(x) of mercy, both preceded by “innahu” which emphasize that He alone is capable of such forgiveness and such mercy (Razi).

Alusi has a different aspect in mind when he counts the above, and more: altogether sixteen.

[54] And turn to your Lord (in repentance)⁷⁶ and submit to Him⁷⁷ before the chastisement comes upon you, then you will not be helped.

[55] And follow the best of what has been sent down to you from your Lord⁷⁸ before the chastisement comes to you of a sudden, and you are unaware.⁷⁹

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلُمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

On the comparative side, a point may be noted: In the Christian system of belief, Allah has been replaced by Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. Majid quotes, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.” (Matthew, 12: 31,32).”

76. On the topic of “inabah” we have a report (in Hakim: Au.). It says,

(عن) جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ : إِنَّ مِنْ سَعَادَةِ الْمَرْءِ أَنْ يَطُولَ عُمُرُهُ وَيَرْزُقَهُ اللَّهُ الْإِنَابَةَ. (هَذَا حَدِيثٌ صَحِيحٌ الْإِسْنَادِ وَلَمْ يُحَرِّجَاهُ. - الْحَاكِم)

“It is man’s good fortune that his age should prolong and Allah should award him inabah” (Qur-tubi).

“Inabah” is the act of turning to Allah. We have cut short the above *hadith* to reproduce the portion that Hakim has in his Mustadrak and which he declared as carrying a trustworthy chain (Au.).

77. The words “turn to your Lord (in repentance) and submit to Him,” tell us by implication that it should not be imagined that if Allah (*swt*) is Forgiving and Merciful, repentance might not be necessary. But rather, it is repentance, sincerity and submission to Allah’s will that qualifies one to receive Allah’s mercy (Kashsh af, reworted).

78. That is, this – the Qur’anic guidance – is the best of what could be sent to you (Ibn Jarir).

79. Yusuf Ali has a few very pertinent words here: “Allah’s Command meets the weakness of His weakest servants, and only asks that His servants should surrender their selfish will to Allah’s Will. In divine com-

[56] Lest a soul should say, "Alas for me, that I have been remiss in respect of Allah, and I was but of the scoffers."⁸⁰

أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتِي عَلَى مَا
فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُ لَمِنَ
السَّاحِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[57] Or it should say, "If only Allah had guided me, I would have surely been of the godfearing."⁸¹

أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ
الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

[58] Or lest it should say when it sees the chastisement, "If only I had another turn, so I could be of those who do good."⁸²

أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي
كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

passion, therefore, we are allowed to do just what we can, even though our standard should fall short of the highest standard. But our aim should be to follow the highest standard, and Allah's Grace will come to our assistance. But we must do so in this life-and at once, as soon as the Word penetrates our mind or understanding. We must not delay a moment, for the Judgment may come at any time, suddenly, before we even perceive where we are."

80. That is, write Ibn Jarir and Zamakhshari, not only did he disobey his Lord's commands, but took one step forward to become one of the scoffers. The opinion is attributed to Qatadah (Razi, Qurtubi).

81. We have a Tradition in this context. Nas a' i and Ahmad have it,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ- «كُلُّ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يَرَى مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَيَقُولُ

لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي فَيَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً - قَالَ - وَكُلُّ
أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ يَرَى مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ فَيَقُولُ لَوْلَا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
هَدَانِي - قَالَ - فَيَكُونُ لَهُ شُكْرًا».

the Prophet (saw's) said, "Everyone of the inhabitants of the Fire will see his place in Paradise (that had been reserved for him), and say, 'Only if Allah had guided me.' Thus it will be a source of regret for him."

He also said, "Everyone of the inhabitants of Paradise will see his place in Hell-fire (which had been reserved for him), and say, 'If Allah had not guided me (I would not have made it).' Thus it will be a source of gratefulness for him" (Ibn Kathir).

82. It is another thing that were he to be given another chance, he would remain on his disbelief. Allah (swt) has told us about men of his class (6: 28),

[59] No indeed, My signs did come to you, but you cried lies to them, waxed proud, and you were of the unbelievers.'

[60] And, on the Day of Standing you will see the faces of those who fastened lies upon Allah blackened.⁸³ Is not Jahannum an abode for the proud?

[61] And Allah will rescue those who were godfearing by their attainment.⁸⁴ No evil shall touch them nor shall they grieve.

[62] Allah is the Creator of all things and He is upon everything a Custodian.

[63] His are the keys to the heavens and the earth. As for those who cried lies to Allah's signs, those - they (indeed) are the losers.

[64] Say, 'Is it other than Allah that you bid me serve, you ignorant ones?'

[65] While it has been revealed to you and to those before you, 'Surely, if you associate (with Allah), your deeds will certainly go vain, and you will surely be among the losers.

بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَتْكَ آيَاتِي فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا
وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ
وُجُوهُهُمْ مُسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى
لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا
يَمَسُّهُمْ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَكَيلٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ
﴿٦٣﴾

قُلْ أَفَعَبَّرَ اللَّهُ تَأْمُرُوَنِي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا
الْجَاهِلُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ
لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ
مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ [الأنعام: ٢٨]

"If they are returned, they will return to what they were forbidden"
(Ibn Jarir).

83. The unbelievers fasten such lies upon Allah as to say, for example, that He has ordered them commit indecencies; or, about the deities that they are their intercessors; or, attribute qualities to Allah that do not belong to Him (Kashshaf).

(The translation is literal) otherwise it is not the darkness of the face that is alluded to, but rather, darkness of the soul which will reflect on the face (Razi, Alusi, Thanwi).

84. Literally, "mafazat" (from faza) is, in Yusuf Ali's words, "place or state of safety or salvation, place or state of victory or achievement, accomplishment of wish or desire."

[66] *But rather, you worship Allah (alone), and be among the thankful.'*

بَلِ اللَّهِ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

[67] *And, they esteemed not Allah, in the manner of estimation due to Him; while all of the earth⁸⁵ shall be but His handful on the Day of Standing and the heavens rolled around His right hand.⁸⁶ Glory to Him, high above what they associate (with Him).*

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

If it is asked, what exactly that attainment is, the answer is, it is stated in the words that follows: “No evil shall touch them nor shall they grieve” (Kashshaf).

85. The textual “jami`an” qualifying the earth does not denote “the whole of it” but rather, “all of the earths” there being seven of them (Zamakhshari, Razi, Qurtubi).

86. Their disbelief in Allah is the proof that they did not give Allah the regard due to Him. Had they esteemed Him in the true measure, they would have believed in Him (Ibn Jarir).

Ibn Jarir also writes as the context of revelation (as do Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir) that there are several reports of the following nature:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ جَاءَ خَبِيرٌ مِنَ الْأَخْبَارِ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ، إِنَّا نَجِدُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلُ السَّمَوَاتِ عَلَى إِصْبَعِ وَالْأَرْضِينَ عَلَى إِصْبَعٍ، وَالشَّجَرَ عَلَى إِصْبَعٍ

، وَالْمَاءَ وَالشَّرَى عَلَى إِصْبَعٍ ، وَسَائِرَ الْخَلَائِقِ عَلَى إِصْبَعٍ ، فَيَقُولُ أَنَا الْمَلِكُ . فَضَحِكَ النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - حَتَّى بَدَتْ تَوَاجِهُهُ تَصْدِيقًا لِقَوْلِ الْخَبِيرِ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - (وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ) . - صحيح البخاري

On the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, “One of the Jewish scholars went to the Prophet and said, ‘O Muhammad! We find (in our Scriptures) that Allah will place the heavens on one Finger, the earths on another, the trees on another, water and dust on another Finger, and the rest of the creations on another Finger and say, “I am the King.” The Prophet (*sams*) smiled so broadly that his teeth became visible as if attesting the Jewish scholar’s statement. Then he recited, “And they esteemed not Allah, in the manner of estimation due to Him while the whole of the earth

shall be but His handful on the Day of Standing and the heavens rolled around His right hand. Glory to Him, high above what they associate (with Him).”

Ibn Kathir adds: The above is as reported in the *Sahihayn*, as well as in Tirmidhi and Nas a' i (with minor differences). According to another version in Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet said, “Allah will hold the earth in one hand, and wrap the heavens in His Right Hand and say, ‘I am the King. Where are the kings of the earth?’”

As regards the statement in the above report to the effect, “as if attesting the Jewish scholar’s statement,” Nawawi writes in his commentary, that these are words of the commentator. There is every possibility that the Prophet smiled in disapproval (and then stated the correct version: Au.).

When dealing with such reports, adds Ibn Kathir, we treat the words (such as Finger or Hand) literally, without offering an interpretation or futher explanation.

Qurtubi and Alusi clarify the situation on the Day of Judgment by quoting a *hadith* from Tirmidhi who declared it Hasan-*Sahih*-Gharib:

(عن) عَائِشَةُ أَتَتْهَا سَأَلَتْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- عَنْ قَوْلِهِ (وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ) قَالَتْ قُلْتُ فَأَيْنَ النَّاسُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ « عَلَى جِسْرِ جَهَنَّمَ ». (قَالَ [الترمذي] هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ غَرِيبٌ مِنْ هَذَا الْوَجْهِ).

`A'isha says she asked the Prophet in reference to Allah’s words, “the whole of the earth shall be but His handful on the Day of Standing, and the heavens rolled around His right hand,” as to where will the people be on that Day? He answered, “On the Bridge laid over *Jahannum*.”

Yet another report that could be cited in this connection – adds Alusi – is in Muslim and others. It says,

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ تَكُونُ الْأَرْضُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حُبْرَةً وَاحِدَةً يَكْفُوها الْجَبَّارُ بِيَدِهِ كَمَا يَكْفُو أَحَدُكُمْ حُبْرَتَهُ فِي السَّقَرِ تَرْتَلًا لِأَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ. صحيح مسلم

Abu Sa` id al-*Khudri* reports the Prophet as having said, “The earth will be like a single disk of bread that the Compeller will turn over in His hand, as one of you turns bread over in his hand (to flatten and shape it), in preparation of the dwellers of Paradise.”

Another report quoted by Ibn Jarir, (in Ahmad, Muslim, Nas a' i and others: Ibn Kathir and Alusi) says,

عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مِقْسَمٍ أَنَّهُ نَظَرَ إِلَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ كَيْفَ يَخْكِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ يَأْخُذُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ سَمَاوَاتِهِ وَأَرْضِيهِ بِيَدَيْهِ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا اللَّهُ وَيَقْبِضُ أَصَابِعَهُ وَيَسْطُهَا أَنَا الْمَلِكُ حَتَّى نَظَرْتُ إِلَى الْمَنْبَرِ يَتَحَرَّكُ مِنْ أَسْفَلِ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ حَتَّى إِنِّي لَأَقُولُ أَسَاطِطُ هُوَ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. صحيح مسلم

The above is Muslim's version reported by Ibn `Umar. To put various versions together:

The Prophet once recited this *verse* on the mimber waving his hands, moving forward and backward and saying, "The Lord exalts Himself. He says, 'I am the Enforcer. I am the Proud. I am the King. I am the Powerful. I am the Noble.'" The mimber began to vibrate with him, and, says the narrator, "we feared he might fall off."

According to another version in Muslim, "I could see the mimber vibrating at its base and I thought it will bring the Prophet down in a fall."

But of course, the statement to the effect that Allah (*swt*) will wrap the *universe* around His Hand, should not be treated literally. The allegorical nature of the statement, so force-

fully presented, cannot be missed. The Hand, for example, expresses Might, and by the "wrapping of the Universe," the allusion is to absolute Power (Zamakhshari).

Qurtubi offers a similar meaning and cites other examples; while Shab-bir quotes a *hadith* to demonstrate the allegorical nature of the term "Hand." (He quotes only a part, but the whole, as in Abu Ya`la's collection – declared trustworthy by Hay-thami, is as follows:

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ حُمَيْرَةَ قَالَ : سَمِعْتُ عِكْرِمَةَ يَقُولُ : كَلْنَا يَدَيِ اللَّهِ يَمِينَانَ ، فَيَطْوِي السَّمَاوَاتِ فَيَأْخُذُهُنَّ بِيَدِهِ ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ : أَنَا الْمَلِكُ ، أَيُّنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ ؟ أَيُّنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ ؟ قَالَ : ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُ الْأَرْضِينَ بِيَدِهِ الْأُخْرَى ، وَيَقُولُ : أَنَا الْمَلِكُ ، أَيُّنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ ؟ أَيُّنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ ؟ قَالَ عُمَرُ : فَحَدَّثْتُ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ سَلَمُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ، فَقَالَ سَلَمٌ : أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : يَطْوِي اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُهُنَّ بِيَدِهِ الْيُمْنَى ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ : أَنَا الْمَلِكُ ، أَيُّنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ ؟ أَيُّنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ ؟ ثُمَّ يَطْوِي الْأَرْضِينَ ، ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُهُنَّ بِشِمَالِهِ ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ : أَنَا الْمَلِكُ ، أَيُّنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ ؟ أَيُّنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ ؟ . - مسند أبي يعلى

Au.), Ikrimah said, "Both the Hands of Allah are Right Hands. He will wrap the heavens on the Day of Judgment then take them into His right Hand and say, 'I am the Sovereign. Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant ones?'" Then He will take the

[68] And the Trumpet will be blown⁸⁷ and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth will swoon, save whom Allah wills.⁸⁸ Then it will be blown a second time,⁸⁹ and behold, they will be standing, staring on.⁹⁰

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ
فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

earths in His other hand and say, 'I am the Sovereign. Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant ones?'"

When S alim was informed of the above, he said that he had heard `Abdullah ibn `Umar narrate this *hadith* from the Prophet himself (but without the statement, "Both the Hands of Allah are Right Hands: Au.).

Strangely, Imām Razi, after quoting Zamakhshari, (from whom he draws quite often) criticizes him at this point for rejecting the apparent meaning, but, after some discussion states what sounds like adopting a position that is close to Zamakhshari's. He elaborates in the following manner: We say, "The house is in somebody's hand," or, as the Qur'an says about slaves, "what your right hands possess," in all such cases there is no need to resort to the allegories. The "apparent" and "real" meaning, in this case of the word hand, is the expression of power and possession. In short, what Zamakhshari consid-

ers as allegorical expression, Imām Razi thinks is the true meaning. He denies of course, parts and limbs for Allah.

Ibn Kathir remarks, however, that the understanding of such statements is beyond human intellect and hence it is best to submit the mind and say that the meaning is best known to Allah Himself. The "Right Hand" of the Qur'an and the "Fingers" of the *ahadith* should be treated as mere words meaning exactly what they say viz. "Right Hand" and "Fingers" - without offering any explanation, without suggesting a form, and without venturing an interpretation.

87. Qurtubi offers us a report from Ibn Majah to the effect that there are two in charge of the Trumpet: Jirbril and Isr afil (and so, anyone or both could blow into it. But Haythami declared it weak. The consensus is that Isr afil alone is in charge of the Trumpet: Au.).

Ibn Kathir cites a lengthy narrative on this topic which can be found in Ahmad and Muslim,

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُعَاذٍ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ عَنِ النَّعْمَانِ بْنِ سَالِمٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ يَعْقُوبَ بْنَ عَاصِمِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ بْنَ مَسْعُودٍ التَّمِيمِيَّ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَمْرٍو وَجَاهَهُ رَجُلًا فَقَالَ مَا هَذَا الْحَدِيثُ الَّذِي تُحَدِّثُ بِهِ تَقُولُ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ تَقُومُ إِلَى كَذَا وَكَذَا فَقَالَ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ أَوْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ أَوْ كَلِمَةً تَحْوِيهَا لَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ أَنْ لَا أُحَدِّثَ أَحَدًا شَيْئًا أَبَدًا إِنَّمَا فُلْتُ فِيكُمْ سَتَرُونَ بَعْدَ قَلِيلٍ أَمْرًا عَظِيمًا يُحْرِقُ الْبَيْتَ وَيَكُونُ وَيَكُونُ ثُمَّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَخْرُجُ الدَّجَالُ فِي أُمَّتِي فَيَمُوتُكُمْ أَرْبَعِينَ لَا أَدْرِي أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا أَوْ أَرْبَعِينَ شَهْرًا أَوْ أَرْبَعِينَ عَامًا فَيَسْمَعُ اللَّهُ عَيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ كَأَنَّهُ عُرْوَةُ بْنُ مَسْعُودٍ فَيَطْلُبُهُ فَيَهْلِكُهُ ثُمَّ يَمُوتُ النَّاسُ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ لَيْسَ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ عِدَاوَةٌ ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ رِيحًا بَارِدَةً مِنْ قِبَلِ الشَّامِ فَلَا يَبْقَى عَلَى وَجْهِ الْأَرْضِ أَحَدٌ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَوْ إِيمَانٍ إِلَّا قَبِضَتْهُ حَتَّى لَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ دَخَلَ فِي كَبِدِ جَبَلٍ لَدَخَلَتْهُ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى تَقْبِضَهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ فَيَبْقَى شِرَارُ النَّاسِ فِي خِيفَةِ الطَّيْرِ وَأَخْلَامِ السَّبَاعِ لَا يَعْرِفُونَ مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا يَنْكُرُونَ فَنُكْرًا فَيَسْتَمْتَلُونَ هُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَيَقُولُ أَلَا تَسْتَجِيبُونَ فَيَقُولُونَ فَمَا تَأْمُرُنَا فَيَأْمُرُهُمْ بِعِبَادَةِ الْأَوْثَانِ وَهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ دَارٌ رَزَقَهُمْ حَسَنٌ عَيْشُهُمْ ثُمَّ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا يَسْمَعُهُ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَصْعَى لَيْتًا وَرَفَعَ لَيْتًا قَالَ وَأَوَّلُ مَنْ يَسْمَعُهُ رَجُلٌ يَلُوطُ حَوْضَ إِبِلِهِ قَالَ فَيَصْعَقُ وَيَصْعَقُ النَّاسُ ثُمَّ يُرْسِلُ اللَّهُ أَوْ قَالَ يَنْزِلُ اللَّهُ مَطَرًا كَأَنَّهُ الطَّلُّ أَوْ الظَّلُّ تُعْمَانُ الشَّاكُ فَيَنْبُثُ مِنْهُ أَجْسَادُ النَّاسِ ثُمَّ يُنْفَخُ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ هَلُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ { وَفَقُوهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ } قَالَ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ أَخْرَجُوا بَعَثَ النَّارَ فَيُقَالُ مِنْ كَمْ فَيُقَالُ مِنْ كُلِّ أَلْفٍ تِسْعَ مِائَةٍ وَتِسْعَةَ وَتِسْعِينَ قَالَ فَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ { يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا } { وَذَلِكَ } يَوْمٌ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ {

Someone said to `Abdullah ibn `Amr, "I believe you say that the

Day of Reckoning will happen in such and such a manner?" He said something to disown it and then added, "I am considering whether to stop narrating to you altogether. What I have said is that after a while you will witness a few major events." Then he said about the Prophet that he said, "Dajjal will appear in my *Ummah* and abide among them for forty. (I do not know whether it will be for forty days, forty months or forty years). Then Allah will send `Isa ibn Maryam as if he is `Urwah ibn Mas`ud the Thaqaafi. He will go after him (Dajjal) and destroy him. Thereafter, the people will live for seven years without any enmity between them. Then Allah will send a cold wind from the Syrian direction so that no one who had an atom weight of faith in him will remain on the earth but that it will take away his soul, until if one of you happened to be in the interior of a mountain, it will enter upon him and seize his soul." He (Ibn `Amr) added that he heard the Prophet say, "Thereafter the worst of the people will remain: as light as birds and endowed with beastly characteristics; not knowing a good nor disapproving a reprehensible

thing. *Shaytan* will go to them in the form of a human and say, 'Will you not respond?' They will ask, 'So what do you suggest?' He will command them to worship idols and they will worship them. They will then be in the best of conditions: abundant food and good quality living. Then the Trumpet will be blown and none hears it but he will bend his neck and stretch it forward (trying to pick up the sound). The first to hear will be a man who will be repairing his cistern for his camels. He will faint and no one will remain but will fall unconscious. Then Allah will send rains, as if a short shower (or maybe he said "shades," Nu`man was doubtful), and bodies of the people will grow thereby. Then another blow will follow and there they will be, standing, looking around. Then it will be said, 'People: unto your Lord.' But, 'Hold them on. They will be questioned.' Then it will be said, 'Remove those destined for the Fire.' It will be asked, 'How many?' It will be said, 'Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand.' It is then that the young will turn old. It is that day when the Calf will be revealed."

(The above version is from Imām Muslim: Au.)

88. A report in Ibn Jarir would have it that with the second blow of the Trumpet, all the living beings in the heavens and the earth will die, except martyrs in heaven who will be spared because they would have already tasted death. The report names Jibril, Mik a'il, Isr afil, the carriers of 'Arsh, and even the angel of death as those that will suffer death.

(The report however, as in Ish-aq b. Rahwayh, has not been declared *Sahih* by any of the well-known *hadith* masters: Au.).

Shawkani on the other hand states that Jibril, Mik a'il, and Isr afil are exempt; and perhaps even the carriers of the 'Arsh, and keepers of Paradise and Hell. He quotes a *hadith* from Abu Ya'l a, D ara Qutni (in his Ifrad), Ibn al-Mundhir, and H akim who declared it *Sahih* that the Prophet said that martyrs are exempt who will have drawn-swords in their hands going about the 'Arsh. Yet another report in Al-Faryabi, Ibn Jarir, Abu Nasr Sijzi (in his Ibanah), and Ibn Marduwayh exempts Jibril, Mik a'il, the angel of death, Isr afil and the carriers of 'Arsh.

(This is also an unverified report: Au.).

Ibn Jarir (as also Qurtubi and Alusi) offer another report (found in the *Sahihayn*: Shawkani). It says,

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخَدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ
مِنَ الْيَهُودِ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ لَطَمَ
وَجْهَهُ وَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ إِنَّ رَجُلًا مِنْ أَصْحَابِكَ مِنْ
الْأَنْصَارِ لَطَمَ فِي وَجْهِي قَالَ ادْعُوهُ فَدَعَاهُ قَالَ لِمَ
لَطَمْتَ وَجْهَهُ قَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي مَرَزْتُ بِالْيَهُودِ
فَسَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ وَالَّذِي اصْطَفَى مُوسَى عَلَى الْبَشَرِ
فَقُلْتُ وَعَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَخَذْتَنِي غَضَبَةً فَلَطَمْتُهُ قَالَ لَا
تُخَيِّرُونِي مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ فَإِنَّ النَّاسَ يَصْعَقُونَ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَكُونُ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يُعْفَقُ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِمُوسَى آخِذًا
بِقَائِمَةٍ مِنْ قَوَائِمِ الْعَرْشِ فَلَا أَذْرِي أَفَاقَ قَبْلِي أَمْ
جُرِي بِصَعْفَةِ الطُّورِ { الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى } . - صحيح
البخاري

A Jew went to the Prophet and complained, “Muhammad.

One of your *Ansari* companion slapped me in the face.” The Prophet asked the man to be brought and asked him why he had slapped him. He said, “I passed by this Jew and I heard him say, ‘By Him who chose Musa over all the people..’ I asked, ‘Over Muhammad also?’ And anger overtook me and so I slapped him.” The Prophet remarked, “Do not declare me better than the Prophets, for, the people will swoon on the Day of Standing, and I will be the first to regain myself, and behold I will find Musa holding one of the posts

of *Arsh*. Now, I do not know whether he came to himself before me, or spared because of his swoon on the Tur of the Mann and Salwa.”

89. What will be the time gap between the two? Abu Hurayrah has a report, but he refused to specify it. It is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا بَيْنَ النَّفْخَتَيْنِ
أَرْبَعُونَ قَالَ أَرْبَعُونَ يَوْمًا قَالَ أَبَيْتُ قَالَ أَرْبَعُونَ شَهْرًا
قَالَ أَبَيْتُ قَالَ أَرْبَعُونَ سَنَةً قَالَ أَبَيْتُ قَالَ ثُمَّ يَنْزِلُ
اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيَنْبُتُونَ كَمَا يَنْبُتُ الْبَقْلُ لَيْسَ
مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ شَيْءٌ إِلَّا يَبْلَى إِلَّا عَظْمًا وَاحِدًا وَهُوَ
عَجَبُ الدَّنَبِ وَمِنْهُ يَرْكَبُ الْخَلْقُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. -
صحيح البخاري

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (saws) said, “Between the two blows, it will be forty.” (Abu Hurayrah was asked), “Forty days?” He (Abu Hurayrah) replied, “I reject.” He was asked, “Forty months?” He replied, “I reject.” He was asked, “Forty years?” He replied, “I reject.” Then he added, “Thereafter Allah will send down water from the heaven and they will begin to grow like vegetation appears. There is nothing in man but undergoes decay except for a single bone and that is his spinal tail-bone. It

[69] And the earth⁹¹ will shine with the light of its Lord,⁹² the Book will be placed,⁹³ Prophets and witnesses will be brought,⁹⁴ and judgment will be pronounced between them in truth, and they shall not be wronged.

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ
الْكِتَابُ وَحِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ
وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

is upon this that the creation will
.(be rebuilt” (Ibn Jarir

The *hadith* is in Bukhari (Au.).

90. Ibn Jarir reports at this point the state in which the believers will be raised:

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ قَالَ قَالَ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُبْعَثُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ جُرْدًا مُرْدًا مُكَحَّلِينَ بَنِي ثَلَاثِينَ سَنَةً. — مسند أحمد

The Prophet said, “The believers will be raised on the Day of Standing naked, beardless, of age thirty.”

The above *hadith* is variously reported and Haythami declared one of the versions as trustworthy. Other reports tell us that the entire human-kind will be raised naked (Au.).

91. The allusion of course, by “the earth” is to another “earth,” since, as another Qur’anic passage tells us, the present earth will be destroyed. The reference is to (19: 48),

يَوْمَ يُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ [إبراهيم: ٤٨]

“The day when the earth will be replaced with another earth.”

There are other *verses* supporting the destruction of the earth in which we live (Razi).

92. The “nur” of this occurrence has been interpreted by authorities such as Hasan and Dahhak as meaning “justice,” (that is, the earth will shine because of the complete justice rendered to everyone: Au.).

Ibn ‘Abbas however said that Allah will create a “nur” specifically for that Day which will engulf the earth (Qurtubi, Alusi).

Imām Razi refutes the anthropomorphists who use this present *verse* and others of the Qur’ān to believe that Allah is made of “nur.” Several errors are committed. Firstly, the true meaning of the term “nur” has not been established. If by any chance it could be established, we cannot be sure that the word as used in this context, carries the same meaning. Again, (as Zamakhshari has pointed out) it is said, “the rule of such a sov-

[70] Every soul will be paid in full for what it wrought, and He knows best what they do.

وَوُؤْيِتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

[71] And those who disbelieved will be driven to Jahannum⁹⁵ in throngs until, when they have arrived there, its gates will be opened and its keepers will ask them, ‘Did not Messengers come to you from among yourselves,⁹⁶ reciting to you your Lord’s revelations and warning you against the encounter of this your day?’ They will answer, ‘Yes indeed, but the word of chastisement has proven true against the unbelievers.’

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ
إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فَتُحْتِ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ
حَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ
يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ
كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

[72] It will be said, ‘Enter you into the gates of Jahannum, abiding therein forever. And evil is the lodging of the arrogant.’⁹⁷

قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
فَبئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

ereign has filled the land with light,” or, it is said, “the oppression of such and such a ruler has filled the land with darkness.” Is the usage literal?

93. That is, said Suddi and Qatadah, the Record of Deeds (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

94. That is, said Ibn `Abbas, when nations will deny that any Prophet ever came to them, witnesses will be brought forward to testify that the Prophets did deliver the message (Ibn Jarir).

95. In reference to this *verse* Ibn Zayd has said that although the word used for both dwellers of Hell and Para-

dise is same (“siqa”), the meanings are different. When applied to the criminals it means they will be driven, pushed and pulled to the gates. This is in view of other Qu’anic *verses* (Ibn Jarir, Razi, Qurtubi, reworded).

96. That is, humans like you (Razi).

97. This remark of the angels may be contrasted with that of the unbelievers themselves who will, by implication, blame their fate by saying, “Yes indeed, but the word of chastisement has proven true against the unbelievers.” Angels will offer the correction by remarking that it is their arrogance that led them to this end and not their fate (Au.).

[73] And those who feared their Lord will be led to Paradise in groups⁹⁸ until, when they have arrived there - and its gates will have already been opened⁹⁹ - they will be told by its keepers, 'Peace upon you. You attained purity.¹⁰⁰ So, enter it, abiding forever.'¹⁰¹

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

98. As against the throngs of unbelievers driven to the Hellfire, the believers will arrive in groups: scholars, Qur'an-reciters, martyrs, and so on (Qurtubi).

99. The rendering as, "and its gates will have already been opened," is in view of the Qur'anic statement in *Surah Sad, verse 50*,

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مَّفْتُوحَةً لَهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ [ص: ٥٠]

"Gardens of `Adn, (their) gates thrown open for them" (Shawk ani). The "waw" that has been added in this passage is the supporting evidence for the difference in connotations (Qurtubi).

Qurtubi also identifies the "waw" of this context as the "eighth-waw" of the Quraysh. The short but interesting discussion at this point is far from easy to present in English, but for the Arabic knowing persons it is worth a reading. The other Qur'anic examples that he offers in this connection is an indication of how deep the understanding of previous gen-

erations was in comparison with the modern, materialistic, this-earthly understanding and interpretation.

It is easy to understand why the gates of Hell will be opened for the unbelievers only after they arrive. Prison gates are opened only upon the arrival of the criminals. In contrast, doors of the hosts are thrown open in anticipation of the arrival of guests (Au.).

Qurtubi writes that some people have held the opinion that there are eight gates to Paradise. They quote the following *hadith* of the *Sahihayn*,

عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ ثَمَانِيَةُ أَبْوَابٍ فِيهَا بَابٌ يُسَمَّى الرَّيَّانَ لَا يَدْخُلُهُ إِلَّا الصَّائِمُونَ. - صحيح البخاري

"Paradise has eight doors. Of them one is called 'Rayyan,' through which will enter those who used to fast (much)."

However, adds Qurtubi there seem to be more than eight gates of Paradise. A *hadith* in Tirmidhi can be

cited as evidence. He says he has discussed this issue thoroughly in his another work “Al-Tadhkirah” concluding that there must be 13 gates to Paradise.

(At all events, the *hadith* quoted above could not be traced in the source works in exactly similar words, but is quoted by Ibn Hajr in his commentary on Bukhari: Au.).

Another tradition that has come down to us on this topic, writes Ibn Kathir, is also in the *Sahihayn* with some differences in words (the version below is from Bukhari):

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ أَتَقَقَّ رُؤُوحِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ نُودِيَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ الْجَنَّةِ يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ هَذَا خَيْرٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الصَّلَاةِ دُعِيَ مِنْ بَابِ الصَّلَاةِ وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجِهَادِ دُعِيَ مِنْ بَابِ الْجِهَادِ وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الصِّيَامِ دُعِيَ مِنْ بَابِ الرِّيَّانِ وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الصَّدَقَةِ دُعِيَ مِنْ بَابِ الصَّدَقَةِ فَقَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ يَا بِي أَنْتَ وَأَمِّي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا عَلَيَّ مِنْ دُعَى مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأَبْوَابِ مِنْ ضَرُورَةٍ فَهَلْ يُدْعَى أَحَدٌ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأَبْوَابِ كُلِّهَا قَالَ تَعَمَّ وَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنْهُمْ. - صحيح البخاري

The Prophet (*saw*s) said, “Whoever spent a pair (of anything) in Allah’s way will be called from the gates of Paradise, ‘O Allah’s slave, this is good.’ So, whoever is of the people of Prayer, will be called from Prayer-gate. Whoev-

er is of the people of *Jihad* will be called from the *Jihad*-gate. Whoever is of the people of fasting, will be called by the Rayyan gate. Whoever is of the people of charity, will be called from the Charity-gate.”

Abu Bakr broke in, “May I sacrifice my parents for you, O Messenger of Allah, it does not matter from which gate someone is called, yet, will there be anyone who will be called from all the gates?” The Prophet replied, “Yes. And I hope you will be one of them.”

Another report speaks of the eight doors of Paradise. It is from Muslim and is reported by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. It says,

(عن عمر بن الخطاب) ”مَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَتَوَضَّأُ فَيَبْلُغُ أَوْ فَيَسْبُغُ الْوُضُوءَ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا فُتِحَتْ لَهُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ الثَّمَانِيَةِ يَدْخُلُ مِنْ أَيِّهَا شَاءَ“. - صحيح مسلم

“None of you makes ablution and does it well and then says, ‘I bear witness that there is no deity save Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger,’ but all the eight gates of Paradise are opened for him, to enter by the gate of his choice.”

100. The allusion could be, writes Qurtubi, to the cleansing organized on a Flyover near Hellfire. Muqatil said, “When the believers would have crossed the Bridge (Sirat), they will be held on a Flyover between Hell and Paradise. There, retaliation will take place involving the wrongs they did to each other during the previous life. When they would have thus been cleansed, the keepers of Paradise will say to them, ‘You have attained purity. So, enter into it, abiding forever.’” In fact, adds Qurtubi, there is a *hadith* in Bukhari which confirms the above event taking place on the Flyover (but which does not cite the Qur’anic *ayah* in reference: Au.). The *hadith* of Bukhari ends by saying that after the cleansing, the believers will know their dwelling places in Paradise better than one knows his house in this world. The text whose substance is given above is as follows:

(عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يخلص المؤمنون من النار فيحسبون على قنطرة بين الجنة والنار فينقص لبعضهم من بعض مظالم كانت بينهم في الدنيا حتى إذا هذبوا وثقوا أذن لهم في دخول الجنة فولدني نفس محمد بيده لأحدكم أهدى بمنزله في الجنة منه بمنزله كان في الدنيا. - صحيح البخاري

101. The first to enter Paradise will be our Prophet as says a *hadith* in Muslim and Ahmad,

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ آتَى بَابَ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَسْتَفْتَحُ فَيَقُولُ الْخَازِنُ مَنْ أَنْتَ فَأَقُولُ مُحَمَّدٌ فَيَقُولُ بِكَ أُمِرْتُ لَا أَفْتَحُ لِأَحَدٍ قَبْلَكَ. - صحيح مسلم

“I will go to the gate of Paradise on the Day of Judgment and seek it to be opened. The keeper will ask, ‘Who are you?’ I will say, ‘Muhammad.’ He will say, ‘For you I have been ordered to open and for none before you.’” Another *hadith* on the topic is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوَّلُ زُفْرَةٍ تَلِجُ الْجَنَّةَ صُورَتُهُمْ عَلَى صُورَةِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ لَا يَبْصُقُونَ فِيهَا وَلَا يَمْتَخِطُونَ وَلَا يَتَعَوَّطُونَ آيِنُهُمْ فِيهَا الذَّهَبُ أَمْسَاطُهُمْ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَمَجَامِرُهُمْ الْأَلْوَةُ وَرَشْحُهُمْ الْمِسْكُ وَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ زَوْجَتَانِ يَرَى مِخُّ سَوْقِيهِمَا مِنْ وَرَاءِ اللَّحْمِ مِنَ الْحَسَنِ لَا اخْتِلَافَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَا تَبَاغُضَ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَلْبٌ وَاحِدٌ يَسْتَسْحُونَ اللَّهَ بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا. - صحيح البخاري

the Prophet (*saws*) said, “The first group to enter Paradise will have faces glittering like the moon of the full moon night. There, they will not spit, nor blow their noses, nor attend a nature’s call. Their utensils will be of gold, combs of gold and silver, incense of pearls, and sweat of misk. Each one of them will have two spouses whose bone marrow

could be seen from the flesh because of their beauty. There will be no difference between them and no rancor. They will be of one heart chanting glory to their Lord morning and evening.”

Another report in the *Sahihayn* is in different words,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ أَوَّلَ زُمْرَةٍ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ عَلَى صُورَةِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُوتُهُمْ عَلَى أَشَدِّ كَوَكَبِ ذُرِّي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِضَاءَةً لَا يَبُولُونَ وَلَا يَتَعَوَّطُونَ وَلَا يَنْفِلُونَ وَلَا يَمْتَخِطُونَ أَمْسَاتُهُمْ الذَّهَبُ وَرَشْحُهُمْ الْمِسْكُ وَجَاهِرُهُمُ الْأَلْوَةُ الْأَنْجُوخُ عُوْدُ الطَّيِّبِ وَأَرْوَاجُهُمُ الْحُورُ الْعِينُ عَلَى خَلْقِ رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ عَلَى صُورَةِ آدَمَ سِتُونَ ذِرَاعًا فِي السَّمَاءِ. - صحيح البخاري

“The first group to enter Paradise will be glittering like the moon (as it appears) on a full moon night. Those to follow them will be like the most shiny star in the sky. They will not spit therein, nor blow their noses, nor attend a nature’s call. Their combs will be of gold and silver, and sweat of misk. Their incense of pearls, and aloes wood used for fire. Their spouses will be wide-eyed Houries. All of them on one nature, on the face of their father Adam, sixty feet (tall) in the heaven.”

There are a few other reports about those who will enter first through the gates of Paradise. The following is in the *Sahihayn*:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ) قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي زُمْرَةٌ هُمْ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا تُضِيءُ وَجُوهَهُمْ إِضَاءَةَ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ وَقَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ فَقَامَ عُرْكَاشَةُ بْنُ مَخْصَنٍ الْأَسَدِيُّ يَرْفَعُ نَمْرَةً عَلَيْهِ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَنِي مِنْهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ قَامَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَنِي مِنْهُمْ فَقَالَ سَبَقَكَ بِهَا عُرْكَاشَةُ. - صحيح البخاري

Abu Hurayrah reported the Prophet as having (once) said, “Seventy-thousand of my *Ummah* will enter Paradise, their faces shining as bright as the moon on a full moon night.” Abu Hurayrah said, “At that `Ukkasha got up lifting a shroud on him and said, ‘Messenger of Allah. Supplicate to Allah that He place me as one of them.’ He said, ‘O Allah, make him one of them.’ Then another man of the *Ansar* stood up and said, ‘Messenger of Allah. Supplicate to Allah that He place me as one of them.’ He replied, ‘Ukkasha overtook you therewith.” According to another report (of Bukhari and Muslim), the Prophet (*sams*) said,

عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِيَدْخُلَنَّ مِنْ أُمَّتِي سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا أَوْ

سَبْعُ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ لَا يَدْخُلُ أَوْهُمْ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ آخِرُهُمْ
وُجُوهُهُمْ عَلَى صُورَةِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ. - صحيح
البخاري

“Surely, seventy thousand of my followers, or seven hundred thousand, the first of whom will not enter Paradise until the last of them enters. Their faces shining bright like the moon on a full-moon night.”

According to another tradition recorded by Tirmidhi, the Prophet said,

(عن أبي) أَمَامَةَ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- يَقُولُ « وَعَدَنِي رَبِّي أَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي سَبْعِينَ أَلْفًا لَا حِسَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا عَذَابَ مَعَ كُلِّ أَلْفٍ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا وَثَلَاثُ حَتِّيَّاتٍ مِنْ حَتِّيَّاتِهِ ». (قَالَ أَبُو [الترمذي] عَيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ).

“My Lord has promised me that He will admit seventy thousand of my followers into Paradise, without they undergoing any reckoning or any punishment, along with another seventy thousand and (over and above them) three handfuls from the Handfuls of Lord” (Ibn Kathir).

The above report was declared *Hasan Gharib* by Tirmidhi. However, after mentioning the above in his “Fath”, Ibn Hajr quoted another *hadith* on the above topic from Ibn Hibb an

and Tab arani, which he declared trustworthy. It says,

وَفِي صَحِيحِ ابْنِ جِبَانَ أَيْضًا وَالطَّبْرَانِيِّ بِسَنَدٍ جَيِّدٍ مِنْ حَدِيثِ عُثْبَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ نَحْوِهِ بَلْفَظٍ ثُمَّ يَشْفَعُ كُلُّ أَلْفٍ فِي سَبْعِينَ أَلْفًا ثُمَّ يُخْتَبِي رَبِّي ثَلَاثَ حَتِّيَّاتٍ بِكَفِّيهِ وَفِيهِ فَكَبَّرَ عُمَرُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ السَّبْعِينَ أَلْفًا يُشَفِّعُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي آبَائِهِمْ وَأُمَّهَاتِهِمْ وَعَشَائِرِهِمْ وَإِنِّي لِأَرْجُو أَنْ يَكُونَ أَذَى أُمَّتِي الْحَتِّيَّاتِ (وَأَخْرَجَهُ الْحَافِظُ الضَّيَاءُ وَقَالَ: لَا أَعْلَمُ لَهُ عِلَّةً).

“Then every thousand will intercede for seventy thousand. Thereafter, my Lord will usher in three handfuls of His two Handfuls.” When `Umar said “Allah is the Greatest” the Prophet added, “The seventy thousand will be allowed to intercede for their fathers, mothers and family members, and I hope that the handfuls will be from the lowest of my followers.”

Hafiz Di a’ remarked that he did not know of any defect (in the report) - Au.

Quotation from Ibn Kathir ends here.

Ibn Kathir takes up another topic. How wide will the gates of Paradise be? There is a tradition in the *Sahihayn* about it. It says,

”وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ إِنَّ مَا بَيْنَ الْمِصْرَاعَيْنِ مِنْ مِصْرَاعِ الْجَنَّةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ مَكَّةَ وَهَجَرَ ، أَوْ هَجَرَ وَمَكَّةَ“

[74] And they will say, 'All praise belongs to Allah who fulfilled His promise to us¹⁰² and made us inherit the earth.¹⁰³ We can settle in the Garden wheresoever we will.¹⁰⁴ Excellent is the reward of the workers.'

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ
وَأَوْزَتْنَا الْأَرْضَ لِنَمْسُهَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ
نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

[75] And you will see the angels encircling about the `Arsh, chanting the praises of their Lord, and it will be judged between them in truth. And it will be said, 'All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds.'

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ
يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ
وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

“By Him in whose hands is the life of Muhammad, the distance between two posts (jambs) of the two shutters of the gate to Paradise is like the distance between Makkah and Hajr, or Hajr and Makkah.” (Hajr was a town at the Eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula: Au.)

102. Ibn Jarir reproduces a report which he had done in *Surah al-A`raf*, verse 43, except that this one is attributed to `Ali, while there, `Ali had attributed it to `Umar. It runs as follows:

عن علي رضي الله عنه قال: يساقون إلى الجنة، فينتهون إليها، فيجدون عند بابها شجرة في أصل ساقها عينان تجريان، فيعمدون إلى إحداها، فيغتسلون منها، فتحري عليهم نضرة النعيم، فلن تشعث رءوسهم بعدها أبدا، ولن تغبر جلودهم بعدها أبدا، كأنما دهنوا بالدهان، ويعمدون إلى الأخرى، فيشربون منها، فيذهب ما في بطونهم من قذى أو أذى، ثم يأتون باب الجنة فيستفتحون،

يفتح لهم، فتلقاهم خزنة الجنة فيقولون {سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ} [النحل: ٣٢] قال: وتلقاهم الولدان المخلدون، يطيفون بهم كما تطيف ولدان أهل الدنيا بالحميم إذا جاء من الغيبة، يقولون: أبشر أعد الله لك كذا، وأعد لك كذا، فينطلق أحدهم إلى زوجته، فيبشرها به، فيقول: قدم فلان باسمه الذي كان يسمى به في الدنيا، وقال: فيستخفها الفرح حتى تقوم على أسكفة بابها، وتقول: أنت رأيت، أنت رأيت؟ قال: فيقول: نعم، قال: فيجيء حتى يأتي منزله، فإذا أصوله من جندل اللؤلؤ من بين أصفر وأحمر وأخضر، قال: فيدخل فإذا الأكواب موضوعة، والنمارق مصفوفة، والزرايب مبنوثة قال: ثم يدخل إلى زوجته من الحور العين، فلولا أن الله أعدها له لالتمع بصره من نورها وحسنها، قال: فاتكأ عند ذلك ويقول: {الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ} [الأعراف: ٤٣] قال: فتناديهم الملائكة: {أَنْ تَلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةَ أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ} [الأعراف: ٤٣]

When the people arrive at the gates of Paradise they will find a tree there from whose roots two springs would be sprouting. They will take a bath in one of

them. With that they will feel enwrapped in blessings. After that their hair will never get unruffled again, and their faces never dusty; as if they are bathed in oil. Then they will drink from the other spring. That will remove any dirt or impurity they had within them. Then they will proceed to the gates of Paradise seeking it to be opened. Its gates will be opened for them and angels will greet them saying (39: 73): "Peace upon you. You have done well. So enter herein, to abide forever." Next, immortal children will greet them. They will surround them as children surround a dear one when he returns home from a journey saying, "Be of good cheer. Allah has prepared such and such a thing for you, such and such a thing for you." One of the children will leap back to his spouse and announce his arrival. They will identify him to her with a name by which he was known in the world. The woman will be overcome with joy and will stand by the threshold of her door. She will ask: "Did you see him yourself?" He will say yes.

He will proceed to the house and lo, its foundation of pearls of different

colors: yellow, red, or green. When he enters, behold: there are the cups arranged, the cushions lined up, and carpets spread. He will enter upon his spouse of the wide-eyed Hoorie, and, had not Allah prepared his eyes to behold her, he would go blind because of her shine and beauty. It is then that he will recline on the cushion and say, "Praise be to Allah for having guided us to this. We would have never found our way if we were not guided by Allah. Indeed, our Messengers brought the truth." And the angels will say (7: 43), "This is the Paradise that you have inherited because of what you were doing."

Ibn Kathir also reproduces the above report.

Ibn Hajr remarks in his "Al-Matalib al-'Aliyyah" that this is a trustworthy report which Baghawi and Abu Nu'aym have also preserved. It is attributable to the Prophet because, in such matters 'Ali would not speak on his own (Au.).

103. Qatadah, Suddi and Ibn Zayd have said that the allusion by "the earth" is to the earth of Paradise (Ibn Jarir).

As for inheritance, most commentators have said that they would inherit the area in Paradise marked for

an unbeliever, which he would have received had he believed (Ibn Jarir, Shawkani).

This is in the same vein, points out Ibn Kathir, as another *ayah* of the Qur'an which says (21: 105),

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا
عِبَادِي الصَّالِحُونَ [الأنبياء: ١٠٥]

“We wrote it in the Zabur – after the admonition – that the earth will be inherited by My righteous slaves,” where also, by earth the allusion is to Paradise.

104. This is an eloquent way of saying that the Paradise granted to each

individual will be so immensely, and immeasurably large that the dwellers might initially feel that the whole may not be exclusively theirs. But when they learn that the whole is really theirs, by actually visiting some of the places, they will cry out in joy that experience tells them that they have the freedom to visit any part of it. It should be obvious that if the place is restricted, then, even if allowed the freedom to visit any part of it, one will not cry out in joy, “Moreover, I have the freedom to visit any part of it” (Au., with a hint from Zamakhshari). ﴿١٠٥﴾

