

For example, the Holy Qur'ān applies the word to man in the phrase: ان اللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ : "Surely Allah loves those who repent" (2:222) - and in *al-tawwabin*, 'those who return to Allah'; on the other hand, it speaks of Allah too as *al-Tawwāb* : مُو التَّوَّابِ الرَّحِيمِ : "He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful." (2:37) So, with reference to man, the word signifies 'one who turns away from disobedience and sin, and returns to obedience', while with reference to Allah it signifies 'one who accepts repentance, and turns to man with mercy and grace'. There is another word, *Tā'ib* which also means 'one who returns', but it is not permissible to use this word with reference to Allah. For, in the case of Allah, only those nouns, adjectives and epithets are permissible which have been used in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* - all other words are disallowed, no matter what their lexical meanings are.

(4) Verse 37 shows that Allah alone has the authority to accept a man's repentance and to forgive his sins. By disregarding this principle, Jews and Christians fell into a great error, for they came to believe that if a priest or a saint forgave their sins, Allah too did the same. Even some ignorant Muslims behave as if they too entertain such a belief. But all such notions are doctrinally false. No religious scholar or saint, *'ālim* or *murshid*, has the authority to forgive sins; all he can do is to pray for the sinner, and seek Allah's pardon.

The obedient are freed of worries

(5) Verse 38 promises two great rewards to those who follow divine guidance - they will have no fear, and they will not grieve. Fear is the anxiety one feels in apprehending some trouble or pain in the future. Grief is the sorrow arising from the loss of something valuable or from one's failure in attaining a desired object. One can see that these two rewards comprehend all the possible forms of comfort and peace. Then, the text of the Holy Qur'ān makes a subtle distinction between the two. In saying that those who follow divine guidance will have no fear, it speaks in general terms and uses a noun - the Arabic phrase: لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ is to be translated literally as 'no fear upon them'. But in the next phrase وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ, the Holy Qur'ān employs a verb, placing before it a pronoun as the subject. The literal translation of the

phrase is: 'they shall not grieve'. The implication here is that being totally free from all sense of loss is possible only to Men of Allah or the saints¹⁸ who follow divine guidance in all its details; as for the others, no man whether an emperor or a billionaire, can help being grieved at the loss of a valued object or the frustration of a desire, all of which is but a necessary part of the scheme of things. The 'friends of Allah' do not have to grieve, because they annihilated their own desires and their very will in submitting themselves totally to the will of Allah. The Holy Qur'ān also tells us that those who go to Paradise will thank Allah for having removed from them all regret and sorrow: **الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ** : "All praise belongs to Allah who has put away all sorrow from us" (35:34). It means that some degree of sorrow is inevitable for every human being except those who have perfected and made fast their relationship with Allah.

Let us make it clear that the verse does negate all grief and sorrow in the case of the 'friends of Allah', but the negation applies only to the loss of worldly things and the frustration of worldly desires. As for the anxiety about the other world and the fear of Allah and the deep sense of awe before His Glory, the 'friends of Allah' are far ahead of other men in these. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ often appeared to be worried and in deep thought - this was not for fear of any trouble or loss in the worldly sense, but on account of his anxiety for his *Ummah*, and of his awe before Divine Glory.

Nor does this verse imply that prophets and saints should not feel the instinctive and all too human fear when confronted by things which are generally known to inspire dread. The Holy Qur'ān itself relates how the prophet Mūsā (Moses) عليه السلام was struck with fear when his stick turned into a dragon: **أَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى** : "Musa felt a fear in himself." (20:67)

18. The word "Saints" is very weak and only an approximate translation of the Arabic phrase "Awliyā-Allah", 'the friends of Allah' - a concept which has only a faint resemblance with the Christian idea of a 'saint'. Consequently, the term 'men of Allah' has been used most frequently throughout this commentary.

But it was only an instinctive and physical fear, and the incident anyhow belongs to the early days of his prophethood, for when Allah said: لا تخف : 'Do not be afraid', the fear disappeared altogether. We may explain the incident in another way also. His fear did not arise as it does in the case of ordinary men, from the apprehension of some harm or hurt from the dragon, but from the likelihood that the extraordinary event might lead the Israelites into misguidance. So, this fear was not worldly, but other-worldly.

Verses 40-42

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اِسْرٰٓءِٔلُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيْ الَّتِيْ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاَوْفُوا
بِعَهْدِيْٓ اَوْفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَاِيَّاىَ فَاَرْهَبُوْنِ ۝ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِمَا اَنْزَلْتُ
مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا اَوَّلَ كٰفِرِيْۤا بِهٖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا
بِآيٰتِيْ ثَمٰنًا قَلِيْلًا وَاِيَّاىَ فَاتَّقُوْنِ ۝ وَلَا تَلْبِسُوْا الْحَقَّ بِالْبٰطِلِ
وَتَكْتُمُوْا الْحَقَّ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

O Children of Isra'īl (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and fulfil the covenant with Me, so I fulfil your covenant, and have awe of Me alone. And have faith in what I have revealed, confirming what is already with you, and do not be the first to deny it, nor take a paltry price for My signs. And fear Me alone. And do not confound truth with falsehood, and do not hide the truth when you know. (Verses 40 - 42)

The Sūrah Al-Baqarah begins by speaking of the Holy Qur'ān itself, and tells us that although it provides guidance to all men, yet only true Muslims will derive a full benefit from it. The Sūrah proceeds to warn the disbelievers against the grievous punishment which awaits them in the other world, and also to delineate the misdeeds of the two kinds of disbelievers - those who deny openly, and the hypocrites. Then, addressing all the three groups, it urges upon them to worship Allah alone, and, presenting the Holy Qur'ān as a miracle which cannot be imitated by man, invites them to have faith in it. Next, the Surah recounts how Ādam عليه السلام was created to be

the viceregent of Allah, and thus shows the omnipotence and wisdom of Allah so that men may realize why they must obey and worship Him and never be disobedient to Him.

Now, in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ there were two kinds of people among the disbelievers and the hypocrites. On the one hand were *mushrikīn*, idolaters and associators who did not possess any religious knowledge, were even otherwise mostly illiterate, and followed the customs of their forefathers - for example, the inhabitants of Makkah in general whom the Holy Qur'an calls the *Ummiyyūn* (the illiterate). On the other hand were those who believed in the earlier prophets, had a knowledge of the earlier Divine Books like the Torah and the Evangile, and were known as being well-educated. Some of them were the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses), but did not accept Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus) as a prophet - these were the *Yahūd* or the Jews. Others were the followers of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, but did not believe that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was, being a prophet, divinely protected against all sin - these were the *Nasārā* or the Christians. On account of their belief either in the Torah or the Evangile or in both, the Holy Qur'an calls these two groups *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the people of the Book). Being well-educated, they were respected and trusted by the people around them, and their opinion had a great deal of weight. If they came to the straight path, others too could be expected to follow their example.

The Jews predominated in Madīnah and its environs. The Sūrah Al-Baqarah is also Madinite. So, after dealing with the idolaters and associators, it addresses the people of the Book in a special manner, from verse 40 to verse 123. Adopting a persuasive and friendly tone, the Surah refers to the noble family to which they belong and the honour which they receive from the people on account of such an affiliation; then, recounting the blessings which Allah has been showering on them, it asks them to be aware of their many misdeeds and their sins, and invites them to come to the Straight Path. All this has been said, to begin with, in a very brief manner - four verses inviting them to Islam, and three to good deeds. Then comes a long and detailed address to them, at the beginning of which, as also just before the end, occur the words, *yā Banī Isra'īl* (O children of Israel) -

the repetition is, of course, the usual rhetorical device for making the speech persuasive.

Isra'il is a Hebrew word, signifying 'the servant of Allah'; it is also the second name of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام. Certain scholars have remarked that among the prophets it is the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone who has several names, except for Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام who has two names, Ya'qūb and Isra'īl. The Holy Qur'ān addresses the Jews here, not as the "Children of Ya'qūb", but as the "Children of Isra'īl", so that the title may remind them that they are the children of the 'the servant of Allah', and hence they should follow the example of their father in worshipping Allah alone and in obeying Him.

In verse 40, Allah asks the Israelites to fulfil His covenant - that is to say, the one they had made with Allah. According to Qatadah and Mujāhid, the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān refers to this covenant which had been mentioned in Torah as well (For the Covenant, see Exodus, ch. XXXIV) (165):

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ
 إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ
 وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
 تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

Allah made a covenant with the children of Isra'il, and We raised up from among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and believe in My messengers and help them, and lend to Allah a good loan, I will forgive your evil deeds, and I will admit you to gardens underneath which rivers flow' (5:12).

The covenant mentions acts like prayers and alms, but the most important clause is having faith in all the messengers of Allah including the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Hence, according to the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, the covenant here signifies having faith in and obeying the Holy Prophet ﷺ (See Ibn Jarīr).

As for Allah fulfilling their covenant, the verse we have just quoted (5:12) makes the meaning clear - Allah will forgive the sins of those who fulfil the terms of the covenant, and will admit them to Paradise. Verse 41 makes it quite explicit that according to the covenant it is

obligatory for the Israelites to have faith in the Holy Qur'ān, for, after all, it has been sent down to confirm the essential teachings of the Torah. Now, the Israelite scholars were afraid that if they told the truth in this matter, they would be going against the public sentiment, and thus lose their adherents and income both. So, these three verses exhort them to speak the truth without fear, for Allah alone is worthy of being feared.¹⁹

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) Al-Qurṭubī remarks in his Commentary that Allah, in asking the Israelites to worship and obey Him, reminds them of the bounties and blessings He has showered on them, but in the case of the followers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم He asks them to do so without mentioning His bounties: **فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ** : "Remember Me, I will remember you." (2:152)

This is a subtle suggestion which brings out the superiority of this *Ummah* over the others - the Islamic *Ummah* has a direct relationship with Allah, for it begins by recognizing the Benefactor, and through this knowledge recognizes His bounties; other peoples, on the contrary, begin by recognizing the bounties, and proceed through this medium to a knowledge of the Benefactor.

(2) Verse 40 shows that it is obligatory to fulfil the agreement one has entered into, and it is forbidden to break one's promise. The injunction has been stated explicitly in another verse: **أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ** : "Fulfil your agreements." (5:1)

According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, those who break their promises would, before being finally punished in the other world, be humiliated before the whole human race when it assembles together on the Day of Judgment, for a flag would be placed as a stigma beside everyone who has committed this sin, and the bigger the crime, the higher would the flag be.

19. Let us add that what the Holy Qur'ān confirms with regard to the Torah and the Evangile is the fact that they are the Books of Allah. As for the distortions which have from time to time been introduced into them, they are no part of the original texts, and hence the question of confirming such interpolated passages does not arise.

(3) Verse 41 asks the Israelites not to be the first to deny the Holy Qur'ān, although being a disbeliever is in itself the ultimate sin, whether one be the first or the last. The verse, in fact, suggests that the man who is the first to deny and disbelieve will not only incur the sin of his own denial but also bear the additional burden of the sin of misleading all those who follow his example; and will thus have to undergo a multiple punishment.

It follows from here that the man who is in any way responsible for others falling into any kind of sin will have to bear the burden of this sin along with the sinners; similarly, the man who in some way helps others to do a good deed will receive a reward for it along with them. Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeatedly stress this point.

(4) Verse 41 warns the Israelites against taking a paltry price for His signs or verses (the Arabic word, *Āyāt* has both the meanings). The context makes it clear that it is forbidden to take money from people by misinterpreting or concealing the verses of the Book of Allah in order to please them or to serve their worldly interests. There is an absolute consensus of the *Ummah* on this point.

(5) As for the question of taking a wage for teaching the verses of the Holy Qur'ān or for reporting them correctly, verse 41 is not concerned with the matter. But it is an important question in itself whether it is permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. There is a divergence of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) in this matter. Imām Mālik, Imām al-Shāfi'ī and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, consider such wages to be permissible, while the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other jurists hold them to be impermissible, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has forbidden the use of the Holy Qur'ān as a means of livelihood. But there has been a radical change in the circumstances since then. Formerly, those who taught the Holy Qur'ān used to receive a subsistence allowance from the *Baytul-Māl*, or the public exchequer of the Islamic state. But since Islamic society fell into a disorder,²⁰ they lost their financial support. The teaching of the Holy Qur'ān to children being a full-time job, the teachers could

20. Through the onslaught of Western imperialism and other factors.

not turn to difficult professions without interrupting this essential chain of transmitting the Word of Allah from generation to generation.

In view of this situation, the jurists of the Hanafī school declared it permissible to accept wages for teaching the Holy Qur'ān. According to *Hidayah*, the famous book of *Hanafī* code, this should be the rule (*fatwā*) these days. Later jurists have extended the permission to similar duties like leading *Salāh (Imāmah)*, calling for prayers (*Adhān*), teaching the *Ḥadīth* and the *Fiqh*, etc., for they are related to the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān, and the survival of Islām equally depends on them. (See al-Durr al-Mukhtār, al-Shāmī)

(6) The famous Ḥanafī scholar Shāmī has, in his commentary on "al-Durr al-Mukhtār" and in his own book "*Shifā'-'Alīl*", explained in great detail and with convincing arguments that the later jurists have allowed the acceptance of wages for the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān etc. only in view of an essential religious need which must be fulfilled, or the whole Islamic order would be disturbed; hence the permission should be limited only to such essential needs. It logically follows from this principle that paying or receiving wages for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān for transmitting the reward to the dead or in the interest of some worldly purpose is forbidden, for it fulfils no essential religious need. Thus, the man who recites the Holy Qur'ān for wages in this manner and the man who pays him for it both commit a sin. When there is no merit earned in such a recitation, how can it be transferred to the dead? Al-Shāmī refers to many authoritative works like "*Tāj al-Sharī'ah*", 'Aynī's commentary on *Hidāyah*, the marginal notes by *Khayr al-Dīn Al-Ramālī* on "*al-Bahr al-Rā'iq*", etc., and specially cites *Al-Ramālī* to the effect that practices like paying for the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān beside the grave of a dead man or elsewhere in order to transmit the reward to him, have never been reported from the blessed Companions or their immediate successors or from other great scholars of the early centuries of Islām, and are hence an innovation (*Bid'ah*) in religion.

(7) Verse 42 explicitly shows that it is not permissible to mix truth and falsehood together in such a way that the addressee falls into a confusion as to what the truth is, and that it is forbidden to conceal the truth because of fear or greed.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in his commentary, related a very illuminating story in this context - a story which has come down to us through a chain of reliable reporters, and has been taken from the "Musnad" of Darimi.

During one of his visits to the Holy town of Madīnah, the Umayyid Caliph Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Mālik wanted to meet someone who had lived with a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, if such a man was still alive. On being informed that Abū Ḥāzim was the only man of this kind left in the town, he sent for him .

The Caliph said to him, "Abū Ḥāzim, why have you shown such discourtesy and disloyalty?"

"How have I been discourteous or disloyal to you?"

"Everybody who is anybody in Madīnah has come to see me, but you haven't", complained the Caliph.

"O chief of the Muslims, may Allah protect you against saying something which is not true to the fact", replied Abū Ḥāzim "You have not been familiar with my name before today, nor have I ever seen you. Things being what they are, how could I come to meet you? Is it disloyalty or discourtesy?"

The Caliph looked around questioningly. Imām Zuhri spoke up: "Abū Ḥāzim is right, and you are wrong."

Changing the subject, the Caliph asked: "Abū Ḥāzim, how is it that I don't like to die?"

"The reason is simple," Abū Ḥāzim said "You have made your world flourish, and turned your habitation in the other world into a desert. Naturally, you don't like to leave a flourishing city for a desert."

The Caliph admitted that it was true, and came out with another question: "What would it be like when we have to appear before Allah tomorrow?"

Said Abū Ḥāzim, "The man who has been doing good deeds will present himself before Allah like the man who returns from a travel to his loved ones, while the man who has been doing evil deeds will

appear like the slave who had run away and has now been brought back to his master."

The Caliph burst into tears, and said with a sigh, "I wish we could know how Allah would deal with us."

Abū Hāzīm replied, "Assess your deeds in the light of the Book of Allah, and you will know."

"Which verse of the Holy Qur'an can help us to do so?"

"Here is the verse: **إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ**: "Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, and the transgressors shall be in a fiery furnace." (82:13-14)

The Caliph remarked: "Allah's mercy is great; it can cover even the wrong-doers."

Abū Hāzīm recited another verse: **إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ**: "Surely the Mercy of Allah is close to those who do good deeds." (7:56)

The Caliph advanced another question: "Tell me, Abu Hazim, who is the most honorable among the servants of Allah?"

"Those who are mindful of their fellow-human beings, and possess the right kind of understanding to know the truth."

"Which is best among good deeds?"

"Fulfilling the obligations laid down by Allah, and keeping away from what He has forbidden."

"Which is the prayer that is likely to be accepted by Allah?"

"The prayer of a man for him who has done him some good."

"Which is the best form of charity?"

"Giving as much as one can, in spite of one's own need, to a man in misery without trying to make him feel grateful and without causing him pain by trying to put him off."

"Which is the best form of speech?"

"Speaking the truth plainly and unreservedly before the man who can harm you in some way or from whom you expect a favour."

"What kind of man is the wisest among the Muslims?"

"He whose actions are governed by obedience to Allah, and who invites others as well to it."

"What kind of man is the most stupid?"

"He who helps another man in committing some injustice, which comes to mean that he has been selling off his faith for serving the worldly interests of that man."

The Caliph agreed with all this, and then asked him pointedly, "What do you think of me?" Abū Hāzim wanted to be excused from replying to such a question, but the Caliph insisted that he should say a word of advice. Abū Hāzim said:

"O chief of the Muslims, your forefathers established their rule over the people with the help of the sword and against their will, after killing hundreds of men. Having done all this, they departed from the world. I wish you could know what they themselves are saying after their death and what people are saying about them."

Fearing that the Caliph would be displeased by such plain talk, one of his courtiers rebuked Abū Hāzim for having spoken so rudely. He replied: "No, you are wrong. I have not said anything rude but only what Allah has commanded us to say. For Allah has enjoined upon the 'ulamā' to speak the truth before the people and not to conceal it." And he recited this verse of the Holy Qur'an: *لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ*: "You shall make it clear to the people and not conceal it." (3:187)

The Caliph asked, "Alright how can we reform ourselves now?"

Abū Hāzim said, "Give up your pride, acquire a spirit of fellow-feeling for the people, and give them justly what is due to them."

"Abū Hāzim, is it possible that you come to live with us?"

"May Allah protect me from it!"

"Why?"

"Because I am afraid that if I live with you, I might begin to like your wealth and your grandeur, and have to suffer a grievous punishment for it in the other world."

"Well, is there anything you need? What can we do for you?"

"Yes, I have a need. Please help me to save myself from Hell and to enter Paradise."

"This is not in my power."

"Then, there is nothing you can do for me."

The Caliph asked him to pray for him. Abū Hāzim made this prayer: "O Allah, if you approve of Sulayman, make the well-being of this world and the next easily accessible to him; but if he is your enemy, drag him by the hair towards the deeds you approve of."

The Caliph then asked him for some special advice. Abū Hāzim said: "I shall make it short. You should have the fear of your Lord and reverence for Him to the degree that He never finds you present at the place He has forbidden, and never finds you absent from the place where He has commanded you to be."

Later on, the Caliph sent one hundred gold dinars to him as a present. Abū Hāzim sent the money back with a letter, saying: "If these dinars are the wages for my words, then blood and pork are, in my eyes, cleaner than this money. If you believe that this money is my due from the public exchequer, then there are hundreds of 'Ulamā' and servants of Islam. If you have sent the same amount to each one of them, I can accept the money, otherwise I do not need it."

Abū Hāzim's refusal to accept the wages for giving advice clearly shows that taking wages for an act of worship or obedience to Allah is not permissible.

Verses 43-46

وَاقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ۝
 أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۝
 أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۝ وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۝ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ
 إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ
 إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ۝

And be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*, and bow down with those who bow. Do you bid others to righteousness while you ignore your ownselves,

although you keep reciting the Book? Have you then no sense? And seek help through patience and prayer. And it is indeed exacting, but not for the humble in heart who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, and that to Him they are to return. (Verses 43 - 46)

In the last three verses and these four, Allah reminds the Israelites of the blessings He has bestowed upon them, and invites them to Islam and to good deeds. The earlier three verses were concerned with the true faith and doctrines; the present verses speak of good deeds, mentioning only the most important of them. It was usually the love of money and power that made it difficult for the Jews, specially for their scholars, to accept Islam. The verses prescribe the remedy for the twin diseases - they should fortify themselves with *Ṣabr* (patience) and *Salāh* (prayer).

"Patience" is a very weak translation of the Arabic word *Ṣabr*, which has three connotations: (a) bearing pain and misfortune patiently (b) restraining oneself from sin (c) being steadfast in obeying Allah.

Now, patience, in this wide sense, is the perfect remedy for the love of money. For, money cannot be an end in itself, but is sought only as a means of satisfying one's appetites; when a man has made a firm resolve not to follow his appetites like a slave, he will no longer need much money, nor will the love of money blind him to the distinction between his gain and loss. Similarly, *Salāh* is the remedy for ambition and the love of power. For, outwardly and inwardly both, *Salāh* involves the exercise of humility; naturally, the more one tries to perform it in the proper manner, the more it purifies him of the love of money and power, and of ambition and pride. These being the real substance of all spiritual disorder in man, once they are brought under control, it becomes easy for one to accept Islam and to be steadfast in one's faith.

Let us add that while patience (*Ṣabr*) requires only the restraining or giving up of excessive appetites and unnecessary desires, *Salāh*, in addition to all this, further requires the performance of certain actions, and also a temporary renunciation of perfectly lawful desires

and of many human needs which the Shari'ah allows one to fulfil, e.g., eating, drinking, speaking, walking etc. - and, at that, making such a renunciation five times during the day and the night regularly at fixed hours. Thus, *Salāh* means performing certain prescribed actions and restraining oneself from all lawful or unlawful activities at fixed hours.

Once a man has decided to give up unnecessary desires, the instinctive urge itself loses its intensity in a few days. So, the exercise of patience is not, after all, so difficult. But offering *Salāh* entails submitting oneself to the conditions laid down by the Shari'ah, observing the fixed hours, and giving up the basic human activities and desires, all of which is quite exacting for the instinctive disposition of man. So, one may very well raise an objection here: for the purpose of making it easy for a man to accept Islam and to be steadfast in his faith, the Holy Qur'an prescribes *Ṣabr* and *Salāh*, but to use this remedy is in itself a difficult thing, specially the *Salāh* and its restriction - now, how can this difficulty be overcome? The Holy Qur'an admits that performing *Salāh* regularly and steadfastly is, no doubt, exacting, and proceeds to show the way out of this impasse - *Salāh* is not a burden to the humble in heart.

To know the effectiveness of the remedy, we must know the disease, and find out why *Salāh* should be so burdensome. The human heart loves to roam about freely in the vast spaces of thought and fancy; all the organs of the human body being subservient to the heart, it requires them to be equally free. On the other hand, *Salāh* demands the renunciation of such freedom, - and prohibits eating, drinking, walking, talking etc. - a restriction which annoys the heart and is also painful for the human organs governed by it.

In short, *Salāh* is burdensome because the heart enjoys to keep the faculties of thought and imagination in a continuous motion. Motion being the disease, it can only be remedied by its opposite - restfulness. Hence, the Holy Qur'an prescribes *Khushū'* (خشوع) a word which we have rendered into English by the phrase "humbleness in heart", but which actually signifies "the restfulness of the heart."

Now, the question arises as to how one can acquire this

"restfulness of the heart." Everyone knows through his own experience that, if one deliberately tries to empty one's heart of all kinds of thoughts and fancies, the effort rarely succeeds. The only way to achieve it is that since the human mind cannot move in two directions simultaneously, one should make it absorb itself in one thought alone so that all other thoughts may disappear by themselves without any effort on one's part. So, having prescribed "the restfulness of the heart", the Holy Qur'ān also prescribes a particular thought which will, if one absorbs oneself in it, drive away all other thoughts: once the movement of thought and fancy has been reduced to the restfulness of the heart, the performance of *Salāh* becomes easy; regularity in offering the ordained prayers gradually cures the disease of pride and ambition, and thus the way to the perfecting of one's faith grows smooth. Such is the well-ordered and beautifully integrated art of spiritual medicine that the Holy Qur'ān has given us! ²¹

Now, the thought in which one should immerse oneself in order to acquire "the restfulness of the heart" has been explained by the Holy Qur'ān in describing "the humble in heart" - they are the people who bear in mind that they are to meet their Lord, when they shall receive the reward for their obedience, and also bear in mind that they are to return to Him, when they shall be required to present an account of their deeds. These twin thoughts produce hope and fear in the heart, and hope and fear are the best agents for inducing a man to devote himself to good deeds.

The prayer which the Holy Qur'ān prescribes is not a mere contemplation or meditation. *Al-Salāh*: الصلاة, in the terminology of Shari'ah, is a definite form of *Ibadah* or worship, the mode of which is divinely ordained. As often as the Holy Qur'ān insists on the performance of the *Salāh*, it employs the word *Iqāmah*, except in one or two instances. Lexically, the word means "making a thing straight,

21. As against this stand the fanciful systems of thought - concentration, wearing a pseudo-mystical look and some-times an Eastern make-up but all spawned in the Angst-ridden West - things like Yoga and Transcendental Meditation, which serve only to derange an already disordered psyche.

or keeping it firmly in its place." A tree or a wall or anything which is vertical and straight, usually lasts long in its place; so, the word also signifies "establishing a thing or making it perpetual." Thus, the conjunction of the two words, *Salāh* and *Iqāmah*, in the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* signifies, not merely offering the prayer, but performing the five ordained prayers steadfastly in the prescribed form at the prescribed hours and fulfilling all the necessary conditions. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* speak of the great rewards and blessings one can hope to receive for offering *Salāh*, and of other benefits which flow from it, but all of them are tied up with *Iqāmah* in the sense which we have just explained. For example, the Holy Qur'ān says: *إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ* : "The *Salāh* restrains one from indecency and evil." (29:45) The prescribed prayer will bear these fruits only when one has been performing it in the full sense of *Iqāmah*. It follows from it that if one finds people who are quite regular in offering their prayers indulging in immodest or even evil activities, one should not have misgivings about the veracity of this verse, for these people have, no doubt, been praying, but not been observing the conditions of *Iqāmah*.

Verse 43 also speaks of paying *Zakāh*, the prescribed alms. Now, lexically speaking, the Arabic word *زكاة* : *Zakāh* has two significations: (a) to purify (b) grow. *Zakāh* is not a tax levied by the State or society, but, in the terminology of the Shari'ah, means that portion of one's belongings which is set apart and spent in total accord with the injunctions of the *Shari'ah*.

This verse is addressed to the Israelites, and does not by itself show that offering prayers and paying alms was obligatory for them before the days of Islam. But the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ

Allah made a covenant with the Israelites and raised among them twelve chieftains. And Allah said, 'I am with you. Surely, if you perform *Salāh* and pay *Zakāh*'. (5:12)

does show that the two things were obligatory for them, even if the external modes might have been different.

The verse proceeds to say: "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)." Lexically, the Arabic word *Rukū'* means "to bow down", and may hence be applied even to prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), which is the ultimate form of bowing down. But in the terminology of the Shari'ah it pertains to the particular form of bowing down which has been prescribed for *Salāh*.

One may well ask why this particular gesture has been chosen for a special mention from among the different gestures involved in the *Salāh*. We would reply that it is a metonymy for *Salāh*, and a part has been made to stand for the whole - just as in verse 17:78 : *قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ* : "the recitation of the Qur'ān in the morning" refers to the morning prayers, and on several occasions in some *Hadith* narrations the use of the word *Sajdah* covers one set of movements (*Rak'āh*) in *Salāh* or even to the whole of it. Thus, the verse actually means: "Offer *Salāh* along with those who offer *Salāh*."

***Salāh* with *Jamā'ah* : (congregation)**

Then, there is a more comprehensive explanation for the specific reference to "bowing down" (*Rukū'*). The form of the ritual prayers ordained for the Israelites and others included prostrating oneself (*Sajdah*), but not bowing down. This particular way of bowing down called *Rukū'* is peculiar to the Islamic *Salāh* alone. Hence, *Rakī'in* or those who bow down (in worship) are, obviously enough, the members of the Islamic *Ummah*, and the verse, in effect, asks the Israelites to accept Islam, and to offer their prayers along with the Muslims.

The command, *أَقِمْوا الصَّلَاةَ* : "Be steadfast in *Salāh*", shows that *Salāh* is obligatory. The other command, *وَأَرْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّكْعَيْنِ* : "Bow down with those who bow (in worship)", establishes that *Salāh* is to be offered in the company of other Muslims (*Jamā'ah*).

A very important question arises here - what is the degree of the obligation intended in this injunction? There is a difference of views among the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) on this point. According to a large body of blessed Companions, their successors and of the jurists of the *ummah*, it is necessary (*wājib*) to offer *Salāh* in a congregation, and it is a sin to give up the *Jamā'ah*. Some of the blessed Companions have gone to the length of holding that it is not permissible to offer *Salāh* all by

oneself without a proper excuse allowed by the Shari'ah. Verse 43, in its literal connotation, provides an argument in favour of this view. Moreover, certain *ḥadīth* narrations too seem to suggest that the *Jamā'ah* is necessary (*Wājib*). For example, a *ḥadīth* reported by Abu Dawud says that for a man living near a mosque *Salah* is permissible only in the mosque.

According to another *ḥadīth* reported from the blessed Companion Abū Hurayrah رضى الله عنه by Imām Muslim, a Companion who was blind asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the permission to offer *Salāh* in his house, for there was no one to take him to the mosque and to bring him back. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم allowed him to do so, but, as he was leaving, asked him if he could hear the call for the prayers in his house. He said that he could. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم remarked: "In that case, you must come to the mosque." Another narration of the same *ḥadīth* as reported by Abū Dāwūd adds that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Then, I see no room for making a concession in your case." Similarly, al-Qurtubī cites a *ḥadīth* from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه who reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said: "The man who hears the call for the prayers but does not go to the mosque for the *Jamā'ah*, has not offered his prayers at all, except that he should have some valid excuse." On the basis of such *aḥadīth*, Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd and Abū Musa al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنهم have ruled that if a man lives close enough to a mosque to hear the call for prayers and yet does not attend the *Jamā'ah* without a valid excuse, his offering of the *Salāh* at home is not acceptable. (Let us explain that hearing the call refers to the call made by a man possessing an average voice, and not to that made by a man with an extraordinarily loud voice or broadcast by a loudspeaker). Presented this far were arguments advanced by our revered elders who consider that *Salāh* with *Jamā'ah* is *wājib* or necessary.

On the other hand, the majority of the blessed Companions, their successors and later jurists hold that the *Jamā'ah* is a *Sunnah* which has been particularly emphasized (*Mu'akkadah*), and that among the *Sunnah* of this kind it is, like the *Sunnah* offered in *Fajr Salāh*, the most emphasized so as to come very close to being necessary. On the

basis of certain other verses and *Ḥadīth* narrations, they interpret the imperative in "bow down with those who bow" as intended for emphasis only. As for the *aḥādīth* which appear to be saying that it is just not permissible for those who live near a mosque to offer their *Salāh* at home, they say that these only mean that this is not the perfect way to offer the prayers.

The most comprehensive explanation of the matter has been provided by the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mās'ūd, as reported by Imām Muslim: "The man who wishes to meet Allah tomorrow (i.e. the Day of Judgment) as a true Muslim, should offer these (five) prayers regularly and steadfastly in a place where the call for the prayers is habitually made (i.e. a mosque), for Allah has laid down for your Prophet certain ways of good guidance (*Sunnan al-Hudā*), and offering the five prescribed prayers with the *Jamā'ah* is one of them. If you offer these prayers at home," he added pointing towards a man, "as he does, keeping away from the *Jamā'ah*, you will have forsaken the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, and if you forsake the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, you will go astray. The man who (performs the *wudū'* or ablution and cleanses himself in the proper manner, and then) goes to a mosque, for every step that he takes, Allah forgives one of his sins, adds one good deed to his account and promotes him one rank higher. Our company was such that there was not a single man, except for people known for their hypocrisy who would offer their prayers at home away from the *Jamā'ah*, so much so that even when a man was ill or unable to walk, he was brought to the mosque with his hands resting on the shoulders of two men, and made to stand in the row of those who were praying."

This statement fully brings out the great importance of the *Jamā'ah*, but at the same time defines its exact position by including it among the "ways of good guidance" (*Sunan al-Hudā*) which are, in the terminology of the *Fuqahā'* (jurists), called *Al-Sunan al-Mu'akkadah* (the *Sunnah* on which the greatest emphasis has been placed). Thus, if a man does not go to the mosque for *Jamā'ah* and offers *Salāh* at home without having proper excuse like illness, his prayers will be valid, but he will have earned the displeasure of Allah for having given up a *Sunnah* which comes under the category of *Mu'akkadah*. If neglecting

the *Jamā'ah* becomes habitual for him, he will be committing a grave sin. If all the people living in the vicinity of a mosque leave it deserted and offer their prayers at home, they become, in the eyes of the *Shari'ah*, liable to punishment. Qādi 'Iyad says that if persuasion fails to mend such people, they must be challenged by a show of force. (Qurṭubī)

An admonition to preachers without practice

Verse 44 addresses the religious scholars of the Jews, and reprimands them for a strange contradiction in their behaviour - they used to advise their friends and relatives to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to be steadfast in their Islamic faith, which shows that they regarded Islam as the true faith, but, being enslaved to their desires, were not prepared to accept this faith themselves, although they were regular readers of the Torah and knew how emphatically it denounces the scholar who does not act upon his knowledge. Though externally addressed to the Jewish scholars, the verse, in a larger sense, condemns all those who preach good deeds to others but do not act upon this principle, who ask others to have fear of Allah but show no such fear in their own behaviour. The *Hadīth* speaks in detail of the dreadful punishments these men will have to bear in the other world. The blessed Companion Anas reports that on the Night of the Ascension (مِعْرَاج), the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by some people whose lips and tongues were being cut with scissors made of fire; on being questioned as to who they were, the Archangel Jibrā'il عليه السلام (Gabriel) explained that they were certain avaricious preachers of the Holy Prophet's عليه السلام *Ummah* who bade others to good deeds but ignored themselves. (Ibn Kathīr). According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn 'Asākir, certain people living in Paradise will find some of their acquaintances in the fire of hell, and ask them, "How is it that you find yourselves in hell, while we have attained Paradise just on account of the good deeds we had learnt from you"; those in hell will reply: "We used to say all that with our tongues, but never acted upon what we said." (Ibn Kathīr)

All this should not be taken to mean that it is not permissible for a man who has himself been slack in good deeds, or is in some way a transgressor, to give good counsel or preach to others, nor that a man who has been indulging in a certain sin may not try to dissuade others

from committing that sin. For, doing a good deed is one form of virtue, and persuading others to do this good deed is another form of virtue in its own right. Obviously, if one has given up one form of virtue it does not necessarily follow that he should give up the other form as well. For example, if a man does not offer his prescribed *Salāh*, it is not necessary for him to give up fasting too. Similarly, if a man does not offer his prayers, it does not argue that he should not be allowed to ask others to offer their prayers. In the same way, doing something prohibited by the Shari'ah is one kind of sin, and not to dissuade those whom he can influence from this misdeed is another kind, and committing one kind of sin does not necessarily entail committing the other sin as well. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Imam Malik has cited Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as saying that if everyone decides to refrain from persuading others to good deeds and dissuading them from evil deeds on the assumption that he himself is a sinner and can have no right to preach to others until and unless he has purged himself of all sins, there would be no one left to give good counsel to people, for who can be totally free of sins? According to Ḥasan of Basra, this is exactly what Satan wants that, obsessed by this false notion of purity, people should neglect their obligation to provide religious instruction and good counsel to others. (Qurṭubī)

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī used to say that when he became aware of a certain bad habit in himself, he would expressly denounce this particular tendency in his sermons so that the *barakah* of the sermon should help him to get rid of it.

In short, verse 44 does not imply that the man who has been indifferent to good deeds in his own life is not allowed to preach or to give good counsel, but that the man who preaches should not neglect good deeds in his own life. Now, a new question arises here - it is not permissible for a preacher and non-preacher alike to neglect good deeds, then why should the preacher alone be specifically discussed in this context? We would reply that such negligence is, no doubt, impermissible for both, but the crime of the preacher is more serious and reprehensible than that of the non-preacher, for the former commits a crime knowing that it is crime, and cannot plead ignorance as an excuse. On the contrary, the non-preacher, specially if he is illiterate, may be

committing the sin of not trying to acquire knowledge, but, as far as the transgression of the Shari'ah is concerned, he can, to a certain degree plead ignorance of the law as his excuse. Moreover, if a scholar or a preacher commits a sin, he is actually mocking at the Shari'ah. The blessed Companion Anas رضى الله عنه reports from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will forgive illiterate and ignorant people much more readily than He will the scholars.

Khushū' : The Humbleness of Heart

Verse 45 speaks of the humble in heart. The "humbleness of heart" (*Khushū'*), which the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith* speak of, connotes a restfulness of heart and humility arising out of the awareness of Allah's majesty and of one's own insignificance in comparison to it. This quality, once acquired, shows its spiritual fruitfulness in making the obedience to Allah and submission to Him easy and pleasant for one; sometimes it reflects itself even in the bodily posture and appearance of the man who has acquired it, for such a man always behaves in a disciplined and polite manner, is modest and humble, and seems to be "broken-hearted", that is to say, one who has lost all vanity and self-love. If a man does not bear genuine humility and fear of Allah in his heart, he does not, with all his external modesty and downcast looks, really possess the quality of *Khushū'* (humbleness of heart). In fact, it is not proper even to show the signs of *Khushū'* in one's behavior deliberately. On seeing a young man sitting with his head bowed down, the rightly-guided *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said: "Raise your head! Humbleness of heart is in the heart." Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī has said: "Humbleness of heart does not mean wearing rough clothes, eating coarse food and keeping the head bowed down. Humbleness of heart is to treat the high and the low alike in matters of truth, and to keep the heart free to devote itself entirely to Allah and to the performance of what Allah has made obligatory for you." Similarly, Ḥasan of Basra has said : "The Caliph 'Umar would speak loudly enough to be heard, whenever he spoke, would walk swiftly, whenever he walked, and would strike forcefully, whenever he struck a man. All the same, he undoubtedly was a man with a real humbleness of heart." In short, wearing deliberately and by one's own choice, the looks of a man who possesses the humbleness of heart is a

kind of self-delusion and a ruse of Satan, and hence reprehensible. But if a man happens to manifest such signs without knowing it, he can be excused. (Qurtubi)

Let us add that there is another word - *Khudū'* - which is often used along with *Khushū'*, and which appears several times in the Holy Qur'ān as well. The two words are almost synonymous. But the word *Khushū'*, according to its lexical root, refers to the lowering of the voice and of the glance when it is not artificial but arises out of a real modesty and fear of Allah - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "Voices have been hushed" (20:108). On the other hand, the word "*Khudū'*" refers to the bodily posture which shows modesty and humility - for example, the Holy Qur'ān says: "So their necks will stay humbled to it." (26:4) We must also define as to what, in the eyes of the Shari'ah, the exact position and value of *Khushū'* is with regard to *Salāh*. The Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* repeatedly stress its importance as in: "And perform the prayer for the sake of My remembrance." (20:14)

Obviously, forgetfulness is the opposite of remembrance, and hence the man who becomes unmindful of Allah while offering *Salah*, is not fulfilling the obligation of remembering Allah. Another verse says: "Do not be among the unmindful." (7:205)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "The *Salāh* simply means self-abasement and humility." Says another *ḥadīth*: "If his prayers do not restrain a man from immodesty and evil, he goes farther and farther away from Allah." *Salāh* offered unmindfully does not obviously restrain man from evil deeds, and consequently such a man goes farther and farther away from Allah.

Having quoted these verses and *ahadith* in support of other arguments in his *Ihyā' al-'Ulūm*, Imām al-Ghazālī suggests that *Khushū'* must then be a necessary condition for *Salāh*, and that its acceptability must depend on it. He adds that, according to the blessed Companion, Mu'adh ibn Jabal and jurists as great as Sufyān al-Thawri and Ḥasan al-Basrī, *Salāh* offered without *Khushū'* is not valid.

On the other hand, the four great Imāms of Islamic jurisprudence and most of the jurists do not hold *Khushū'* to be a necessary condition

for *Salāh*. In spite of considering it to be the very essence of *Salāh*, they say that the only condition necessary in this respect is that while saying *Allahu Akbar* at the beginning of the prayers one should turn with all one's heart to Allah, and have the intention (*niyyah*) of offering the prayers only for the sake of Allah; if one does not attain *Khushū'* in the rest of the prayers, one will not get any reward for that part of the prayers, but, from the point of view of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), one will not be charged with having forsaken *Salāh*, nor will one be liable to the punishment which is meted out to those who give up prescribed prayers without a valid excuse.

Imām al-Ghazālī has provided an explanation for this divergence of view. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists), he points out, are not concerned with inner qualities and states of the heart (*Aḥwāl*), but only enunciate the exoteric regulations of the Sharī'ah on the basis of the external actions of men's physical organs - it does not lie within the jurisdiction of *Fiqh* to decide whether one will get a reward for a certain deed in the other world or not. *Khushū'* being an inner state, they have not prescribed it as a necessary condition for the total duration of *Salāh*, but have made the validity of the prayers depend on the lowest degree of *Khushū'* - turning, as one begins the prayers, with one's heart to Allah and having the intention of only worshipping Him.

There is another explanation for not making *Khushū'* a necessary condition for the total duration of the prayers. In certain other verses, the Holy Qur'ān has clearly enunciated the principle which governs legislation in religious matters: nothing is made obligatory for men that should be beyond their endurance and power. Now, except for a few gifted individuals, men in general are incapable of maintaining *Khushū'* for the total duration of the prayers; so, in order to avoid compelling men to a task they cannot accomplish, the *Fuqahā'* have made *Khushū'* a necessary condition only for the beginning of the prayers, and not for the whole duration.

In concluding the discussion, Imām al-Ghazālī remarks that in spite of the great importance of *Khushū'* one can depend on the infinite mercy of Allah, and hope that the man who offers his prayers unmindful will not be counted among those who give up the prayers altogether, for he has tried to fulfil the obligation, has turned his heart

away from everything to concentrate his attention on Allah even for a few moments, and has been mindful of Allah alone at least while forming his intention for the prayers. Offering one's prayers in this half-hearted manner has, to say the least, the merit of keeping one's name excluded from the list of those who habitually disobey Allah and forsake the prescribed prayers altogether.

In short, this is a matter in which hope and fear both are involved - there is the fear of having incurred punishment as well as the hope of being ultimately forgiven. So, one should try one's best to get rid of one's laziness and indifference. But it is the mercy of Allah alone which can help one to succeed in this effort.

Verses 47-48

يَبْنَئِ إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَإِنِّي
فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ
نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ
وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ۝

O Children of Isrā'il (the Israelites), remember My blessing that I conferred upon you, and that I gave you excellence over the worlds. And guard yourselves against a day when no one shall stand for anyone for anything, nor shall intercession be accepted on one's behalf, nor shall ransom be taken from one and neither shall they be given support. (Verses 47-48)

Verse 47 asks the Israelites to call to their minds the blessing of Allah, so that the recognition of the benefits they have received may induce them to be thankful to Allah and thus to obey Him. The verse is addressed to the Jews contemporaneous with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while the blessing had been received by their forefathers. The point is that when a man receives a special favour, his children and grand children too usually partake of the benefits flowing from it; in this sense, the Jews who are being addressed may be said to have received the blessing themselves.

As for Allah giving preference to the Israelites "over the worlds", the phrase means that they were given preference only in certain matters, or only over a large part of men - for example, over the contemporaries of the earlier Israelites.

The day referred to in verse 48 is the Day of Judgment. As for no one being able to suffice another on that day, the phrase should be understood in the sense of one man paying the dues on behalf of another man. Let us, for example, suppose that a man is found wanting in the performance of obligatory acts of worship like *Salāh* and *Sawm* (fasting), and another man should suggest that his own prayers and fasts may be transferred to the account of the former in order to make up the deficiency. Such a transaction shall not be possible on that day. Ransom, of course, means the money paid for securing the release of a criminal - this too shall be out of the question.

As for intercession (*shafā'ah*) not being accepted, the phrase does not totally deny the possibility of intercession on the Day of Judgment; it only means that if a man does not have *'Īmān* (faith), no intercession in his favour shall be accepted. For the Holy Qur'ān makes it clear in certain other verses that Allah will allow intercession to be made on behalf of some people (53:26, 34:23, 2:55 etc.), and will disallow it in the case of those who do not possess *'Īmān* (21:28, 20:109). Since there would be no intercession on behalf of the latter, the question of its being accepted does not simply arise. 'Receiving support', in usual terms, means getting oneself released from a difficult situation with the help of a strong and powerful friend or patron. In short, none of the ways of receiving help possible in this world will be effective in the other world unless one possesses *'Īmān*.

A doctrinal point

On the basis of verse 48, the *Mu'tazilah* and some other groups of a more recent origin have denied the possibility of all intercession in favour of Muslims. But, as we have shown above, the negation of intercession applies only to disbelievers and infidels. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 49

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَكُمْ مِنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَدْبَحُونَ

أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَ يَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۗ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ
عَظِيمٌ ۝

And when We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh! They had been inflicting on you grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and leaving your women alive. And in all that there was a great trial from your Lord. (Verse 49)

Verse 47 had spoken of the special favours shown to the Israelites by Allah. Now, with Verse 49 begins the account of these favours.

Someone had made a prediction to the Pharaoh (فرعون) that a child was going to be born among the Israelites who would destroy his kingship. So, he began slaughtering all the male infants as soon as they were born. But he would spare the females, as there was nothing to fear from them, and, moreover, they could, on growing up, serve as maid-servants. So, even this leniency was motivated by self-interest. What the verse refers to as "a great trial" is either the slaughter of the sons - which was a calamity, and it is the quality of patience that is tested in a calamity - or the deliverance from the people of the Pharaoh - which was a blessing, and it is the quality of thankfulness which is tested when one receives a blessing.

The next verse gives us the details about this deliverance.

Verses 50 - 51

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ
تَنْظُرُونَ ۝ وَإِذْ أَوْعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ
الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ۝

And when We parted the sea for you; then We rescued you, and drowned the Pharaoh's people as you were looking on! And when We appointed forty nights for Mūsā, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter, and you were unjust! (Verses 50-51)

Verse 50 refers to certain things which had happened in the days of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Moses). He, in his capacity as a messenger of Allah, continued efforts for a long time to make the Pharaoh and his

people see Truth, but when they persisted in their denial, Allah commanded him to take the Israelites along with him and leave Egypt surreptitiously. On their way, they came across a sea while the Pharaoh was behind him with his army in hot pursuit. Allah commanded the sea to split, and make way for Sayyidnā Mūsā and his people. So, they went over smoothly. But when the Pharaoh and his army followed them into the sea, it gathered the water back so that the Pharaoh and his men were drowned then and there.

Verse 51 refers to other incidents in the same story. When the Pharaoh had been drowned, the Israelites, according to one report, went back to Egypt, or, according to another, began to live somewhere else. Having at last found a peaceful existence, they now wished they could receive a *Shari'ah*, or a religious code of laws, from Allah which they should follow. Allah answered the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and promised that if he came to the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and devoted himself to worship for a month, he would receive a Divine Book. He gladly obeyed the Commandment, and was granted the Torah. But he was ordered to continue to worship for ten days more, because he had broken his fast after a month and thus lost the special odour which rises from the mouth of a fasting person and which is very pleasant to Allah; so Allah commanded him to fast for ten additional days and regain that odour. Thus, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام completed forty days of total fasting and devotion. While he was on Mt. Sinai, something very odious happened to the Israelites. Among them there was a man called Samiriyy. He fashioned the figure of a calf out of gold or silver, and put into it some of the dust which he had picked up from under the hooves of the horse of Jibrā'il (the Archangel Gabriël عليه السلام), at the time when the Pharaoh and his army had been drowned by the Archangel. The golden calf immediately acquired life. The ignorant among the Israelites were so impressed that they started worshipping it.

Verse 51 calls them "unjust" for having committed this sin, for 'injustice' lies in putting things in the improper places, and idolatry is essentially just that.

A doctrinal point

Verse 50 speaks of the splitting of the sea, and clearly proves that

miracles do occur at the hands of prophets, which some Westernized Muslims have been trying to deny. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 52

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

Then We pardoned you, even after that, so that you be grateful. (Verse 52)

The Israelites were forgiven only when they had offered *Taubah* (repentance), as recounted in Verse 54. In saying that they were pardoned so that they might learn gratefulness, the present verse employs the Arabic word لعلة: *La'lla* which indicates expectation. In the present context it does not mean that Allah had or could have any doubt or misgiving about this or any other matter; what the word implies here is just that when a man receives a pardon, the onlookers may expect him to feel grateful.

Verse 53

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ۝

Then We gave Musa the Book and the Criterion (of right and wrong) so that you find the right path. (Verse 53)

Torah is the book which was given to Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام .

In the language of the Holy Qur'ān, *al-Furqān* is a term signifying something which separates truth from falsehood or distinguishes the one from the other. In the present verse, it refers either to (a) the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* which are to be found in the Torah, for the *Shari'ah* resolves all the differences that may arise with regard to the doctrines or the practice of good deeds; or to (b) miracles which decide between a true or a false claim in a palpable manner; or even to (c) the Torah itself which has the twin qualities of being a Book of Allah and of being an instrument for separating truth from falsehood.

Verse 54

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ ظَلِمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمْ الْعِجَلَ فَتَوَبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارئِكُمْ فَأَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

And when Musa said to his people: "My people, you have wronged yourselves by your taking the calf (as God). So, turn in repentance to your Creator and slay yourselves. That will be better for you in the sight of your Creator" Then, He accepted your repentance Indeed He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. (Verse 54)

This verse describes the special mode of offering their *Taubah* (repentance) which was prescribed for the Israelites in this situation, -- that is to say, those who had not indulged in the worship of the golden calf should execute those who had. Similarly, in the Islamic *Shari'ah* too, certain major sins necessarily entail capital punishment even when the sinner has offered this *Taubah* -- for example, life in return for a life in the case of intentional homicide, or death by stoning in the case of adultery established through proper evidence.

Then the Israelites acted upon this divine commandments, they became worthy of receiving the mercy and favour of Allah in the other world.

Verse 55

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً ۝
فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ۝

And when you said, "Musa, we will never believe you till we see Allah openly!" So, the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on. (Verse 55)

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) brought the Torah from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and presented it to the Israelites as the book of Allah, some of them were insolent enough to say that they could not believe it until and unless Allah Himself told them in so many words. With the permission of Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied that even this condition would be fulfilled, if they went with him to Mount *Tūr*. The Israelites chose seventy men for this purpose. Arriving there, they heard the words of Allah with their own ears. Now, in their perversity, they invented a new ruse. It was not enough, they said, to hear the speech, for they could not be sure whether it was

Allah Himself who had spoken to them or someone else. But they promised that they would be finally convinced if they could see Allah with their own eyes. Since it is beyond the power of a living being to be able to see Allah in the physical world, they had to pay for their impertinence, and were killed by a thunderbolt -- the next verse reports their death.

Verse 56

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

Then, We raised you up after your death, so that you be grateful. (Verse 56)

This verse refers to death, which suggests that the thunderbolt had killed them. Since the Israelites had always been mistrusting Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he feared that they would suspect him of having taken the men to a solitary place and got them slaughtered. So, he prayed to Allah to save him from such a vile accusation. Allah granted his prayer, and gave those a new life.

Verse 57

وَوَهَبْنَا لَكُمْ السَّلَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ يَوْمَآ ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ۝

And We made the cloud give you shade, and sent down to you Mann and Salwā: 'Eat of the good things We have provided you'. And they (by their ingratitude) did Us no harm, but were harming only themselves. (Verse 57)

These two incidents took place in the wilderness of *Tih*. The Israelites belonged to Syria, but had gone to Egypt in the time of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph عليه السلام), and settled there, while Syria itself had come under the domination of a people called the 'Amāliqah (Amaleks). When the Pharaoh had been drowned and the Israelites could live in peace, Allah commanded them to go to war against the 'Amāliqah, and to free their homeland. The Israelites started on the expedition, but, on approaching Syria, when they came to learn about the military strength of the foe, their courage failed them, and they

refused to engage themselves in the *Jihād*. Allah punished them for their disobedience, so that for full forty years they kept wandering about in a wilderness, and could not even go back to Egypt. The wilderness was not very vast, but only a stretch of some ten miles, lying between Egypt and Syria. They would make a day-long march in the direction of Egypt, and stop somewhere for the night. But, on getting up the next morning, they would always find themselves just where they had started from. Thus, they spent forty years wandering about in the wilderness in futile rage and exasperation. That is why the wilderness is called *Tih*, which signifies 'having lost one's way'.

The wilderness was just a barren space without a tree or a building which could offer protection against heat or cold. There was no food to eat, and no clothes to wear. But in answer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, Allah made a miraculous provision for all their needs. When they could not bear the scorching sun, Allah sent them the shade of a thin, white cloud. When they began to starve, Allah blessed them with *Mann* (manna) and *Salwā*. That is to say, Allah produced honeydew in abundance which they could easily gather. Hence it has been designated as *mann* which signifies "a gift or favour". Then, quails would not flee but come around them, so that they could catch the birds with little effort. The two things being unusual, the Holy Qur'ān says that Allah made them "descend" for the benefit of the Israelites. Similarly, when they were thirsty, Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike a rock with his staff, which made twelve streams gush forth, as the Holy Qur'ān narrates in another place. When they complained of the thick darkness of the night, Allah produced for them a constant pillar of light. When their clothes began to wear out, Allah showed another miracle - their clothes would neither go dirty nor wear out, while the clothes of the children grew with their growth. (Qurtubī)

Allah had commanded the Israelites to take as much of the miraculous food as they really needed, and not to store it for future use. But when they disobeyed this commandment, the meat began to rot. This is how they harmed, not Allah, but themselves.

Verse 58

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا
وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ تَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتِكُمْ مَوْسِرِينَ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝

And when We said, "Enter this town, and eat there to your heart's content wherever you will. And enter the gate prostrating and say: *Ḥiṭṭah* (we seek forgiveness) - so that We forgive your errors. And We shall give much more to those who are good in deeds." (Verse 58)

There are two views as to when this incident took place. According to Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir, when the Israelites grew weary of eating the same *Mann* and *Salwā* everyday and prayed for being granted the kind of food they were used to (2:61), they were commanded to go to a certain city where they could get what they wished for. So, the commandment in the present verse pertains to the mode of entering this city, and lays down the spiritual etiquette for action and speech on this occasion. On the other hand is the view that the commandment pertains to the city against which the Israelites had been ordered to engage themselves in a *Jihād*. They obeyed it only after their long wanderings in the wilderness, and conquered the city. The commandment reported in Verse 58 was sent to them through Sayyidnā Yūsha' (Joshua عليه السلام) who was the prophet among them at the time.

The discrepancy between the two views, which raises a question about the chronological sequence of the events, should not confuse us as to the nature of the stories narrated in the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Qur'ān does not tell the stories for the sake of telling stories, the usual purpose of which is to provide entertainment. The real intention here is to draw certain conclusions from the stories, and to illustrate or point out certain spiritual principles. Now, the various episodes of a story help to bring out various principles. So, in view of a particular effect sought in a particular context, the chronological sequence of the episodes may be invented and the incidents re-arranged to serve the interest of the pattern of meaning that is intended. This is just what the Holy Qur'ān does; in fact, this is a quite usual literary method, and

the disturbance of the chronological order in the stories narrated by the Holy Qur'ān should not raise irrelevant questions in the mind of the reader - after all, in any and every piece of writing, or even speech, it is the intention which governs the ordering of the material.

The Verse holds out the promise that if the Israelites obeyed the commandment, their errors would be forgiven. On the basis of the first of the two views we have referred to, one must include among the errors their rejection of the *Mann* and the *Salwā* and their request for the normal kind of food. The demand was really insolent, but Allah promised that if they showed their obedience by following the new commandment, He would forgive this error too. Anyhow, the promise of pardon was general, and extended to everyone who was ready to obey the new commandment, while a special reward was promised to those who devoted themselves to good deeds sincerely and wholeheartedly.

The meaning of *Ihsan*

"We may add that 'sincerity' and 'wholeheartedness' are a very weak rendering in English of the essential quality of the text's *Muhsinūn* (rendered here as "those who are good in deeds"). This word comes from *Ihsan* which signifies "doing a thing beautifully - that is, in the manner that is proper to it." Beside this lexical meaning, *Ihsan* has a technical meaning which has been defined in a famous *Hadīth*: أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُن تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ : "Offer your prayers as if you can see Him, and if you do not see Him, He is seeing you (in any case)." (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 59

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ٥

But those who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was set for them. So, We sent down upon those who were unjust a scourge from heaven, because they have been acting sinfully. (Verse 59)

This verse is a continuation of the preceding verse. Allah had

commanded the Israelites to keep, while entering the city, repeating the word *Hittatun* (which indicates repentance for one's sin and the request for pardon). But they replaced this word with another phrase by way of mockery, and started saying, *Ḥabbatun fī sha'īrah* (grain in the midst of barley), or *Hintatun* (wheat).

The punishment which descended on them was plague that wiped out seventy thousand men (Qurtubī). In passing, we may recall a *hadith* which says that plague is a punishment for the disobedient, and a blessing for the obedient.

Injunctions and related considerations

The Israelites were punished for having changed a word ordained by Allah, and substituted a phrase of their own invention, thus distorting the meaning itself. According to the consensus of the *Fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), a change in the words of the Holy Qur'ān, or of a *Ḥadīth*, or of a divine commandment which invents or distorts the actual meaning is impermissible.

This should be obvious enough. But there is another question -- is it permissible to change the words in such a way that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact? In his commentary, Imam al-Qurtubī says that in certain texts and in certain kinds of speech the words are as much a part of the intention as the meanings and equally necessary for conveying an idea, and that in such a case it is not permissible to change the words. For example, in the *Adhān* (the call for prayers) it is not permissible to employ words other than those which have been laid down for the purpose by the *ḥadīth*. Similar is the case of the *Salāh*: the different things to be recited in them (like *Subḥanaka Allāhumma*, *At-Taḥiyyāt*, *Qunūt*) or the glorification of Allah during the *Rukū'* (bowing down) and the *Sajdah* (prostration) -- all these must be said exactly in the words which have been reported in the *ḥadīth*; substituting other words is not allowed, even if the meaning does not undergo a change.

This rule applies to each and every word of the Holy Qur'ān. All the Injunctions with regard to the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān strictly pertain to those words alone which Allah has revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to the *ḥadīth*, the merit of reciting the

Holy Qur'ān is so great that for every letter that one reads or recites one gets the reward which one would get for performing ten good deeds. But if one reads a very accurate translation of the Holy Qur'ān or even an Arabic version in which the original words have been replaced by certain other words without injuring the sense, the *Shari'ah* shall not accept it as a recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and one will not get any reward of recitation for it. For, it is not the meanings alone which constitute the Holy Qur'ān; "Qur'ān" is the name of meanings inherent in the words revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ so that the two are inseparable from each other.

It appears from the present verse that Allah had commanded the Israelites to say this particular word, *Hittatun*, while offering their *Taubah* (repentance), and hence changing the ordained word was in itself a sin. They went so far as to distort even the meaning, and drew upon themselves the divine punishment.

Now, as for other kinds of speech in which it is the meanings that are really intended and not the words, the masters of the science of *Hadith* and the jurists in general believe that in such places words can be changed provided that the meaning does not suffer but remains intact. Al-Qurṭubī has cited Imām Abū Hanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shafī'ī; as holding the view that it is quite permissible to report a *ḥadīth* with regard to its meaning alone provided that the man who reports it should have a perfect knowledge of the Arabic language and also be familiar with the situation to which this particular *ḥadīth* pertains, so that he should not misinterpret the text or distort the sense.

On the other hand, certain masters of the science of *Hadith* do not allow the slightest change in the words of a *ḥadīth*, and insist that it should be reported exactly in the words in which one has received it. This, for example, is the view of Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Qāsim ibn Muḥammad etc. Some of them even insist that if in reporting a *ḥadīth* a reporter has made a lexical mistake, the man who has heard the *ḥadīth* from him must, in his own turn, report it in exactly the same words including the mistake, only indicating what the correct word is likely to be. Such scholars cite a *ḥadīth* in support of their view. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised a man to say this

prayer before going to sleep at night: *أَمِنْتُ بِكِتَابِكَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْتَ وَرَبِّكَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْتَ* : "I have faith in Your Book which You have made to descend, and in Your Prophet whom You have sent." The prescribed prayer had the word *Nabiyy* (Prophet), but the man changed it for *Rasūl* (Messenger). The Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed him not to make a change, but to say the prescribed word *Nabiyy*. This shows that it is not permissible to change a single word in reporting a *ḥadīth*. Similarly, another *ḥadīth* says: *نَضَّرَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِي فَبَلَّغَهَا كَمَا سَمِعَهَا* : "May Allah make the man flourish who heard my speech, and then conveyed it exactly as he had heard." This also indicates that it is necessary to report the exact words of a *ḥadīth* as one has received them.

Most of the jurists and the masters of the science of *Ḥadīth*, however, believe that although it is better to report a *ḥadīth* as far as possible in exactly the same words as one has heard without making any change intentionally, yet if one cannot recall the exact words, it is also permissible to report the meaning in one's own words, and that the words of the *ḥadīth* quoted above - "... conveyed it exactly as he had heard" - might also mean that one should report the meaning of a *ḥadīth* exactly and without any alteration. Obviously, changing the words does not necessarily go against this provision. Imām al-Qurṭubī has, in support of his view, pointed out that this very *ḥadīth* goes to prove that changing words, when necessary, is permissible, for this *ḥadīth* itself has come down to us in different words in different versions. As for the other *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has insisted that the word *Nabiyy* should be recited and not the word *Rasūl*, one might explain it in this way. The word *Nabiyy* (prophet) carries the sense of sublimity much more than does the word *Rasūl*, for the latter is employed for any messenger whatsoever, while the former is reserved only for those who are specially chosen by Allah for being directly addressed through revelation (*Waḥy*), and who thus occupy a rank higher than all other men. There is another explanation too. As far as prayers are concerned, the words appointed for the purpose by Allah or by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have a much greater efficacy than any other words can have. (Qurṭubī) That is why those who prepare *ta'wīdh* (translated as 'charms' in absence of an exact counterpart) or *'awdhah*, or suggest words to pray are very careful in

keeping to the authentically reported words without the slightest change. So, one may say that the prayers which are considered to be very efficacious, should be included in the first category of speech in which not only the meanings but the words also must be carefully safeguarded, for both are equally intended.

Verse 60

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ
فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ
كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۝

And when Musa sought water for his people! We said, "Strike the rock with your staff." So, gushed forth twelve springs from it. Each group of people came to know their drinking place. "Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder." (Verse 60)

This incident too belongs to the story of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Parched with thirst, they requested Sayyidnā Musā عليه السلام to pray to Allah for water. Allah commanded him to strike a certain rock with his staff. As he did so, twelve streams gushed forth out of the rock, one for each of the twelve tribes. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb (Jacob) عليه السلام had twelve sons, and each had a large family of his own. So, the families were considered as tribes, each with its own administrative organisation and its own head. Hence, the number twelve. What they have been asked to eat is the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails), and the water is, of course, the one which had come out of the rock.

The Israelites have, in this verse, been asked not to spread disorder which in this context signifies disobedience to Allah and transgression of His Commandments.

The great Commentator al-Qaḍī al-Bayḍāwī points out that it is a great error²² to deny miracles. When Allah has given a certain stone the unusual property of drawing iron to itself, it cannot be, logically

22. Even a great error in logic.

and rationally speaking, impossible that He should also give another stone the property of absorbing water from the earth and of releasing it again. Even this explanation is meant for those who take a superficial view of things. Otherwise, it is in no way impossible that Allah should produce water within a stone itself. Those who call it impossible do not actually understand the technical meaning of the term "impossible."

An answer to a doubt about the Israelites

It has been asked whether it is necessary, in times of drought, to offer formal prayers in order to beseech Allah for rains. The present verse tells us that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just prayed for water, and Allah made a miraculous provision. It shows that the essential thing in beseeching Allah for rains is just a prayer. In the *Shari'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, a mere prayer was considered to be sufficient for the purpose. According to Imām Abū Hanīfah, this principle holds good for the Islamic *Shari'ah* too. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has, in this respect, acted differently on different occasions. An authentic *ḥadīth* reports that once he went outside the city to the open space where the congregational prayers were held on the day of the *Īd*, offered formal prayers, delivered a *Khuṭbah* (address), and then prayed to Allah for rains. According to another *ḥadīth* reported by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion Anas, once the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for rains while delivering the *Khuṭbah* on Friday, and Allah sent down rains.

No matter what form the prayer takes, all the scholars agree that it cannot be effective unless it is accompanied by a repentance for one's sins, a confession of one's powerlessness, a sincere expression of humility and an affirmation of servitude to Allah. So long as one persists in sin and transgression, one has no right to hope that the prayer would be answered. But if Allah may, in His mercy and benevolence, grant the prayer without this condition being fulfilled, it is His will, and He is All-Powerful.

Verse 61

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ

يُخْرِجُ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا
وَعَدْسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى بِالَّذِي
هُوَ خَيْرٌ اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءَؤُا وَبَغَضِبَ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا
يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ 0

And when you said, "Mūsā we will no longer stay on a single food: So, pray for us to your Lord that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces -- its wheat, its lentils and its onions." He said, "Do you want to take the inferior in exchange of what is better? Go down to a town, and you will have what you have asked for." And disgrace and misery were stamped over them and they returned with wrath from Allah. That was because they used to deny the signs of Allah, and would slay the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and would go beyond the limits. (Verse 61)

This episode has been indirectly referred to in verse 58, and it also occurred in the wilderness of *Tih*. The Israelites grew weary of eating the *Mann* and the *Salwā* (manna and quails) everyday, and wished to have ordinary vegetables and grain. Allah commanded them through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to go to a certain town which lay somewhere in the wilderness, to till the land there, to eat whatever they liked.

The Israelites were thus being ungrateful and impertinent. Even otherwise, it was so usual with them not only to transgress divine commandments but also to deny them outright. They had also been slaying a number of prophets at different times - they knew they were committing a misdeed, but their hostility to the truth and their stubbornness in disobedience made them blind to the nature of their conduct and its consequences. Through such persistent and wilful misdemeanour they drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah. Disgrace and degradation settled upon them for ever. That is to say,

they no longer had any respect in the eyes of others, nor magnanimity in themselves.

One form of this disgrace is that temporal power has been taken away from them for ever. For only forty days, however, - and that too when the Day of Judgment will have come close - the *Dajjal* (Anti-Christ) belonging to the Jewish race, will have an irregular dominion like that of a robber. This cannot be described as having temporal power, in the proper sense of the term. Allah had made it quite clear to the Jews through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) that if they continued to be disobedient, they would always have to live under the domination of other nations. Says the Holy Qur'an: وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ "And when your Lord proclaimed He would send forth against them, unto the Day of Resurrection, those who should visit them with evil chastisement." (7:167)

As to how the Companions, their successors and the great commentators have interpreted the disgrace and degradation which has settled on the Jews, let us present a summary in the words of Ibn Kathir: "No matter how wealthy they grow, they will always be despised by other people; whoever gets hold of them will humiliate them, and attach to them the emblems of servitude." The commentator Dahhāk Ibn Muzāhim reports from the blessed Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās that the Jews will always remain under the domination of others, will be paying taxes and tributes to them - that is to say, they will themselves never have power and authority in the real sense of the term.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'an also speaks of the disgrace of the Jews, but with some addition:

صُرِّبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أَيَّمَا ذُلِّهَا إِلَّا بَحْبِلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ

And disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a rope from Allah and through a rope from men." (3:112)

Now, the 'rope' or means from Allah refers to the case of those whom Allah Himself has, through His own commandment, saved from this disgrace - for example, children, women, or those who are totally devoted to prayer and worship and never go to war against Muslims.

The 'rope' or means from men refers to a treaty of peace with the Muslims, or a permission to live in a Muslim country on payment of the *Jizyah* (the tax levied on non-Muslims living in a Muslim country, which exonerates them from military service etc.) Since the Holy Qur'an uses the expression "from men" and not "from Muslims", a third situation is also possible - the Jews may make political arrangements with other non-Muslims, live under their backing and protection, and thus be in 'peace'.

There is another aspect to the question - we must look into the nature of the exception that has been made in the verse which we have just cited. Now, when an exception is added to a statement, the exception may fall into either of these two categories: (1) What has been excepted formed, or still forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example, take this statement: "The tribe came except Zayd." Zayd was and still is a member of the tribe, but he has been excepted from it in so far as the act of coming is concerned. (2) What has been excepted did not form, or no longer forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example: "The tribe came except the donkey." The donkey, of course, never formed a part of the tribe, and he has been excepted from the act of coming in so far as the act pertains to the tribe. If the exception made in the present verse is of the first kind, then the statement would mean that all the Jews always and everywhere live in disgrace with the exception of two situations - protection provided to women and children etc. by the commandment of Allah Himself, or by a treaty of peace with the Muslims or with some non-Muslim nations. On the other hand, if the exception is of the second kind, the verse would mean that the Jews as a group would essentially and always remain in disgrace with the exception of some who may find protection under the commandment of Allah, or of some others who may receive support from other nations and thus disguise their own disgrace.

Thus, Verse 3:112 helps to elucidate Verse 2:61, and also dispels the doubt which sometimes arises in the minds of the Muslims at the sight of the so-called "Israeli state" imposed on Palestine. For, they find it difficult to reconcile the two things - the Holy Qur'an seems to indicate that the Jews will never have a sovereign state, while they

have actually usurped Palestine and set up a state of their own. But if we go beyond the appearances, we can easily see that "Israel" is not an independent sovereign state, but only a stronghold of the Western powers which they have established in the midst of Muslim countries in order to protect their own interests; without the backing of these super-powers the Jewish "state" cannot survive for a month, and the Western powers themselves look upon the Israelis as their henchmen. The "Israeli state" has been living, as the Holy Qur'ān says, "through a rope from men," and, even at that, living as a parasite on the Western powers. So, there is no real occasion to have a misgiving about what the Holy Qur'ān has said on the subject.

Moreover, the half of Palestine which the Jews have usurped and the parasite state they have set up there is no more than a spot on the map of the world. As against this, we have vast expanses of the globe covered by Christian states, by Muslim states, and even by the states of people who do not believe in Allah at all. Can this tiny blot on the map and that too under the American-British umbrella, negate the disgrace which Allah has made to settle upon the Jews?

Verse 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ
 بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا
 خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who became Jewish, and Christians, and the Sabeans -- whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds -- for them, with their Lord, is their reward, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (Verse 62)

The previous verse spoke of how the Israelites drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah through their habitual insolence and disobedience. Now, this account may lead the listeners, or the Jews themselves, to suppose that, in view of such transgression, their *Taubah* (repentance), if they agree to offer it, would not be acceptable to Allah. In order to dispel such a misgiving, the present verse lays

down a general principle: no matter how a man has been behaving earlier, so long as he submits himself fully to the commandments of Allah in his beliefs and in his deeds both, he is acceptable to Allah, and will get his reward. It is obvious enough that after the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, which is the last message of Allah, perfect obedience to Allah can only mean accepting Islam and following the Last Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.²³ The verse, in effect, assures everyone that once a man has accepted Islām, all his former transgressions, whether in the matter of beliefs or in that of deeds, will be forgiven, and he will become worthy of receiving the rewards of the other world.

Let us note, in passing, that nothing is definitely known as to the beliefs and the practices of the Sabeans, and different opinions have been expressed on the subject. (Most probably they used to worship the stars).

One might also ask why the verse mentions the Muslims, for if it is an invitation to Islam, there is no need to extend the invitation to those who have already accepted Islam. But if we keep in mind the richly concentrated style of the Holy Qur'ān, and try to look beyond the literal sense of the words into the implications and suggestions contained in the verse, we would find that the inclusion of the Muslim factor has added a new dimension to the meaning. It is as if a king should, in a similar situation, say that his laws are impartially applicable to all his subjects, and that whosoever obeys them shall receive his reward for obedience irrespective of whether he has earlier been a friend or a foe. Obviously, the friend has always been loyal and obedient, and the warning and the promise have really been addressed

23. Contrary to the flaccid fancies of some "modernizers" who are very happy with themselves over their "liberalism" and "tolerance", the present verse does not open the way to salvation for each and every "man of good will" irrespective of the creed he follows. If one reads the verse in its proper context and along with other relevant verses of the Holy Qur'ān, one will easily see that the verse, in fact, promises salvation in the other world only to those who accept Islām. It is an invitation to Islām extended to the Jews, the Christians, the Sabeans and, as a matter of fact, to the followers of all possible religions, and even to non-believers -- specific names only serve as examples.

to the foe. But the suggestion contained in such a formulation is that the favours of the king do not proceed from any personal attachment to the friends, but depend on the quality of obedience and loyalty, and hence the foes too will become worthy of his favours if they acquire the necessary quality. This is the *raison d'être* of mentioning the Muslims along with the non-Muslims in this verse, which should never be taken to imply that salvation can be attained without accepting Islām.

We had better dispel another misunderstanding which is likely to arise from the wordings of the present verse -- and, which is actually being promoted by certain 'modernizers'. The verse mentions only two articles of faith of the Islamic creed -- faith in Allah and faith in the Day of Judgment. This should not be taken to mean that in order to attain salvation it is enough to have faith only in Allah and in the Day of Judgment. For, the Holy Qur'ān repeatedly declares that he who does not believe in the prophets, in angels and in the Books of Allah is not a Muslim. Faith in Allah is the first article in the Islamic creed, while faith in the Day of Judgment is the last. By mentioning only these two, the verse intends to say in a succinct manner that it is necessary to have faith in all the articles of the creed, from the first to the last. Moreover, it is through the prophets and the Books of Allah alone that man can acquire any knowledge of the essence and the attributes of Allah and of what is to happen on the Day of Judgment, while the Books of Allah are revealed to the prophets through an angel. So, it is not possible to have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment until and unless one has faith in the angels, in the Books of Allah and in the prophets.

Verse 63

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ
وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high above you the (Mount of) *Tūr*: "Hold fast to what We have given to you, and remember what is there in it, so that you may become God-fearing." (Verse 63)

Having received the Torah from Allah, Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) returned from Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) and recited it to the

Israelites. The injunctions contained in the Book were rather rigorous, but their conduct and habits of mind really called for such strict discipline. To begin with, they replied that they would not obey the injunctions until and unless Allah Himself told them that it was His book. Seventy men, as we have related above, were selected to go to Mount *Tūr* and to hear Allah attest the authenticity of the Torah. On their return, they bore witness to the Torah being a Book of Allah, but added something on their own to what Allah had actually said. For, they told the Israelites that Allah had allowed them to act upon the injunctions only as much as they could, and had promised to forgive them for what they could not accomplish. They had always and instinctively been prone to rebellion against Allah, then, the injunctions were, no doubt, stern, and now they got a new pretext for being negligent. So, the Israelites flatly refused to obey the injunctions, insisting that it was beyond their endurance to act upon such harsh regulations. In reply to this insolence, Allah commanded the angels to raise Mount *Tūr* and let it hang in the air above their heads as a threat that if they did not fulfil their covenant with Allah, it would fall on them and crush them. The Israelites, then, had no choice but to submit.

A doubt is quite likely to arise here. The Holy Qur'ān says in another place that force should not be used to make a man change his religion, while in the present instance it appears that force is being used. But, in fact, force is not being used to make the Israelites change their religion, for they had already accepted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah, and willingly made a covenant with Allah that they would act upon the Book of Allah, if one was given to them. So, they now stand as rebels, and are being threatened with dire punishment for persisting in their rebellion. This is exactly how even a secular state deals with rebels, and how it adopts towards them an attitude quite different from that towards aliens or enemies, for it leaves only two ways open to the rebel -- either to submit himself, or to lose his life. That is why it is only an apostate (*Murtadd*) who is, according to the Islamic *Shari'ah*, condemned to capital punishment, and not an outright disbeliever. Moreover, the Israelites were being threatened with death as criminals and offenders against the law which they acknowledged to be the divine law, but which they refused to obey.

Verse 64

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ
لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ۝

Then even after that, you did turn away. So, had it not been for the grace of Allah upon you, and His mercy, you surely would have been among the losers.

(Verse 64)

The Israelites went against the Covenant they had made with Allah. The sin was so grave that one could have expected utter destruction and ruin to descend on them as a punishment. But Allah, in His mercy, spared them in so far as physical life is concerned, although they will have to pay for their treason in the other world. Allah's mercy is of two kinds. One is general and extends to believers and disbelievers alike -- its action is to be seen in the shape of worldly well-being and prosperity. The other is special, and pertains to believers alone -- it will manifest itself particularly in the other world in the shape of salvation and closeness to Allah.

It appears that the last phrase of the present verse has been addressed to the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Since having faith in him is also a part of the Covenant, these Jews too have been included among those who had been guilty of infringement. In this verse, Allah asks them to realize that it is in His mercy alone that he has not, in spite of their treason, sent down on them the kind of catastrophic punishment in this world as used to descend on the other infidels and traitors who have gone before.

Since a number of authentic *aḥādīth* declare that it is the *barakah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that catastrophic punishments no longer descend on any people, some commentators have identified this particular mercy and grace of Allah with the sending down of Muḥammad ﷺ as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah.

In order to emphasize what the present verse has said, the next verse tells the story of another group of earlier transgressors and of the dreadful punishment which overtook them all of a sudden.

Verses 65 - 66

وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ
 كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ۝ فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا
 خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

And certainly you have known those among you who transgressed in (the matter of) the Sabbath. So, We said to them, "Become apes, living in disgrace." Thus, We made it a deterrent for those around and after them -- and a lesson for the God-fearing. (Verses 65 - 66)

This episode belongs to the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd (David عليه السلام). Allah had appointed Saturday as the Sabbath, or the sacred day, for the Israelites; it was specially set apart for prayers and worship, and hence fishing was prohibited on this day. But these people lived on the sea-shore, and were very fond of fish. Al-Qurtubī says that the Israelites, at first, invented all sorts of clever pretences for catching fish on Saturday, and gradually started doing so openly. There now grew a division amongst them on this point. On the one hand were these transgressors, and, on the other, some scholars and pious men who tried to dissuade them from such disobedience. When the former paid no heed to them, the latter broke away altogether from the sinners, and began to live in a separate part of the town. One day they felt no sound was coming from the other part of the town. Growing curious, they went there and found that all the transgressors had been changed into apes. Qatādah says that the young ones had become apes, and the old ones swine. The apes could recognize their relatives and friends, and would approach them weeping out of remorse, and seeking their sympathy and help. Then all of them died after three days.

As to the question whether the apes and the swine we see today bear any kinship to these Israelites who had been metamorphosed, the correct position is that people who have been metamorphosed into beasts by Allah as a punishment cease to breed, and leave no progeny behind. According to a *ḥadīth* reported by Imām Muslim from the blessed Companion ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه, some people asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether the apes and the swine were the descen-

dants of the metamorphosed Jews. The Holy Prophet ﷺ reminded them that apes and swine existed in the world even before, and said that when Allah sends down this particular kind of punishment on a people, the race comes to an end with this, and there is no further breeding.²⁴

Let us now go back to the verse under discussion. The people who witnessed the event, or heard of it, were of two kinds - the disobedient and the obedient. For the disobedient, it served as a 'deterrent', an example and a warning, which persuaded them to repent of their disobedience. For the obedient, it was a lesson and a reminder that they should be steadfast in their obedience. It serves these two purposes even now.

Injunctions and related considerations

We have been saying that the Jews who were changed into apes had used certain ruses or pretences to justify their sin in their own eyes. This brings us to a rather delicate question of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Certain 'modernists' have quite shamelessly been busy maligning the master-jurists of Islam by suggesting that these mas-

24. Some 'modernizing' Muslims have tried to explain away this metamorphosis by suggesting that these disobedient Jews did not actually and physically turn into beasts, but that the change was only psychological in so far as they acquired the evil characteristics of apes and swine. To say such a thing is to deny an explicit statement of the Holy Qur'ān, which no Muslim can do, if he wishes to remain a Muslim. Moreover, in denying the possibility of physical change, the 'modernizers' are also denying the power of Allah, and putting limitations on it. Even as a piece of literary exegesis, the 'modernist' interpretation is flimsy. For, even before the punishment fell on them, these Jews had been displaying the moral and psychological traits of beasts: the greed of swine and the craftiness of apes. Where was, then, the change which the Holy Qur'ān declares to be a punishment for the offenders and a warning for others? Our 'modernists' are, in fact, all too ready to swallow without batting an eye-lid the most preposterous and unfounded notions, only if they come from the West. So, they have complete certitude with regard to Darwin's speculation, that the apes evolved into man, although no verifiable data has yet been gathered to support the contention; but when it comes to the statement in the Holy Qur'ān that men were changed into apes, they look askance at it, although this kind of change is rationally and logically as possible as the other.

ters have invented very intricate "stratagems" (*Hiyal*, plural of *Hīlah*) for helping the rich and powerful to infringe the laws of the *Shari'ah* and get away with it. This is a petty calumny, and should not have been worthy of consideration except for the fact that such 'modernists' have had some success with the gullible and the ignorant by playing upon the Arabic word *Hīlah*. As everyone knows, the lexical meaning of a word is one thing, and its technical signification, when it is used as a term in some science, is another. In its literal sense, the word *Hīlah* no doubt means "a trick, a stratagem", but as a technical term in *Fiqh* it signifies a device for and a means of giving legitimacy to an action in a contingency by making certain necessary modifications in it in consonance with the *Shari'ah*. Thus, it is not a way of by-passing the *Shari'ah*, but of helping people to conform to it even in a situation where necessity or human weakness would compel them to go against it.

The present verse has a particular relevance to the question, and would help to clarify it a great deal. The transgression on the part of the Jews which the verse speaks of, and which drew upon them such dreadful punishment, was not a clear and explicit infringement of divine law, but the use of certain "tricks" which necessarily involved the negation of the divine commandment. For example, on Saturday they would tie one end of a cord to the tail of a fish and the other end to something on the shore, and leave the fish in the water; on Sunday, they would take it out and eat it. Such a ruse not only negates an injunction of the *Shari'ah*, but is actually a mockery. That is why those who practised such "stratagems" were considered to be disobedient and rebellious, and subjected to dire punishment.

But this particular instance does in no way go to prove that the *Hiyal* are impermissible. We have explained the nature and purpose of such "devices" alone. Not only do they form an integral part of *Fiqh*, but some of them have actually been suggested by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. For example, bartering a kilo of good dates for two kilos of bad dates is, according to the *Shari'ah*, a kind of usury. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has suggested a "device" (*Hīlah*) for avoiding the infringement of this regulation in a situation where such a transaction becomes necessary - that is, instead of bartering one commodity for