

Almighty Allah his witness and says: 'Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of what is unseen - 116.' After this overture, he answers the main question.

The Answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā before His Lord

His answer was that he had taught his people precisely what he was commanded to teach, that is: *إِنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ* (Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord - 117). Then, after this teaching, as long as he lived among those people, he was a witness to what they said and did (upto that time, none of them said things like that about him). Then, after he was raised by his Lord towards Him, these people remained under His watch, and it is He who knew their words and deeds fully and truly.

The Mention of Special Blessings on Sayyidnā 'Īsā

Before these verses where questions asked and their answers given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā have been mentioned, special blessings which were bestowed upon him as his miracles have also been described (110). Thus, by bringing the bestowal of blessings and the scenario of answerability in juxtaposition, both groups of Banī Isrā'īl have been admonished, one of which insulted, accused and harrassed him while the other took him as God or son of God. By describing the blessings, the first group has been admonished while, by mentioning the questions and answers, it is the second group which has been warned. The detailed description of blessings which appears in many verses has one sentence which is worth special consideration, the sentence where it is said: *تَكَلَّمَ النَّاسُ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا* (You spoke to the people when in the cradle and while middle-aged). In other words, a special miracle given to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that he talked to people in a state when he is a child, and he also does that in a state when he is middle-aged.

As for the first spectacle, it is obvious that it is a miracle and certainly a special blessing of Allah. In the early post-birth stage, children cannot talk (meaningfully). If a child were to start talking in the cradle or on the laps of the mother, that would be a particular distinction of the child. As for talking 'while middle-aged,' it does not seem to be worth mentioning, for everyone talks at this age. But, for a moment, think of the conditions surrounding Sayyidnā 'Īsā and you will

realize that this too was a miracle - because Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised from the earth before reaching middle-age. Now that he would talk to people on the earth after reaching his middle-age can become possible only when he returns to this world - as is the collective belief of Muslims which stands proved on the basis of clear statements of the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is from here that we find out that in the manner it was a miracle of Sayyidnā 'Īsā that he talked when a child, so in the same manner, talking while middle-aged because of his return to this world is nothing but a miracle.

Verses 111 - 115

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ امْنُوا بِى وَبِرَسُولِىَ قَالُوا الْمَنَّا
 وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَعْيسَى ابْنُ
 مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ ط
 قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ
 مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا
 مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ
 عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا لِأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً
 مِنكَ وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّى مُنَزِّلُهَا
 عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بَعْدَ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنِّى أُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا لَّا أُعَذِّبُهُ
 أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

And when I enjoined upon the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My Messenger," they said, "We believed. And be witness that we are the submitting ones." [111]

When the disciples said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, can your Lord send down to us spread stands of 'Mā'idah' (a sheet generally spread on the floor to serve food; also used to mean food so served) from the heavens?" He said, "Fear Allah if you are believers." [112] They said, "We want that we eat from it, and our hearts be satisfied, and we may know for sure that you have told us

the truth, and we may become witnesses to it." [113] 'Īsā son of Maryam said, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us spread from heaven which may be a happy occasion for us for all our generations present and future, and a sign from you, and give us provisions. And You are the best Giver of provisions." [114]

Allah said, "I am going to send it down to you; but whoever from you disbelieves after that, I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds." [115]

Commentary

A True Believer Should Not Demand Miracles

When the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā asked him to make 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) come down from the heavens, he replied by saying: قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (Fear Allah if you are believers). This tells us that it does not behove a faith-bearing servant of Allah that he should test Him by making such requests. Rather than demand what is supernatural, he should seek things, like sustenance, through sources naturally appointed for him.

The Better the Blessing, the Worse the Curse of Ingratitude

From the words of the verse 115: فَإِنِّي أُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا لَا أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds), we learn that in situations when the blessing of Allah is extra-ordinary and unique, the emphasis on the gratitude for it should be far above the ordinary. As for the punishment of ingratitude, that too will be extra-ordinary and unique.

Whether or not the 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) came down from the heaven is something commentators differ in. The majority of them hold that it did. Accordingly, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Ammār ibn Yāsir as in a *Hadīth* of Tirmidhī, that 'Mā'idah' did come from the heavens which included bread and meat. It also appears in this *Hadīth* that some of those people committed a breach of trust, and put it off for the next day as well. As a result, they were transformed into monkeys and swines. (May Allah keep us protected from His wrath). This very *Hadīth* also tells us that they ate from it as they wanted to do as mentioned in the word, 'na'kulū' (we eat) - however, storing it for future use was prohibited. (Ṣayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 116 - 118

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي
وَأُمَّيَ الْهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ
أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ ۗ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ ۗ تَعْلَمُ
مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلٰمُ الْغُيُوبِ
﴿١١٦﴾ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اْعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي
وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ ۗ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي
كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَأَنْتَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ ۗ وَإِنْ تُغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

And when Allah said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?" He said, "Pure are You, it does not behove me to say what is not right for me. Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of all that is unseen. [116] I have not said to them anything but what You have ordered me to, that is, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' and I was a witness over them as long as I was with them. But when You picked me up You were the One watching over them. And You are a witness over everything. [117]

If You punish them, they are Your slaves. And if You forgive them, You are the Mighty, the Wise." [118]

Commentary

Important Notes

1. In the first verse (116), the question asked and the answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام establishes that Allah alone has the full knowledge of everything, therefore, He is not asking Sayyidnā 'Īsā because He does not know. In fact, the purpose is to admonish his people who call them Christians that the one they are taking to be god is him-

self confessing to his servitude quite contrary to the belief they hold - and that he is free of all their accusations. (Ibn Kathīr)

2. About the sentence: **فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ** (And when You picked me up You were the One watching over them) in verse 117, a detailed discussion of the subject of the 'death' or 'having been raised toward Allah' has appeared in the Commentary on Sūrah Āl-'Imrān under verse 3:55: **إِنِّي مُتَوَقِّتُكَ وَرَأَيْتُكَ** (I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me). It may be seen there [Ma'ariful-Qur'an, English Translation, Volume II, pages 76-81]. As for using the verse 117 (**فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي** : *falamma tawaffaitanī*) to reject his ascension to heavens and to establish his natural death is not a sound inference, because the time of this conversation shall be the day of *Qiyāmah* - and at that time, after he has descended down from the heaven, he would have had his natural and real death. Therefore, as reported by Ibn Kathīr on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, the prophets and their communities will be summoned. Then, Sayyidnā 'Īsā will be called. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will remind him of His blessings and drawing him closer, He will say, 'O 'Īsā son of Maryam: **أَذْكُرُ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَتِكَ** : Remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother.' Then, in the end, He would say: **يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَ الْهَيْبِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ** (O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?). Sayyidnā 'Īsā will deny it saying that he did not. Then, the question will be asked from the Christians. They will say, 'yes, this is what he had ordered us to do.' After that, they will be driven towards Hell.

3. As for the statement beginning with the words: **إِنْ تُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبَادُكَ** (If You punish them, they are Your slaves ...) appearing in the last verse (118), it means that Allah does not bring undue hardship on His servants, therefore, if punishment does come to them, it will only be just, right and wise. And should He forgive them, then, this forgiveness too will not be a matter of not being able to do otherwise - because He is Mighty, fully-capable and overpowering, from whose reach and control no wrong-doer can escape. And since He is Wise too, therefore, it is also not possible that He would let a wrong-doer walk away just for no reason. Thus, the Divine verdict in the case of wrong-doers will be absolutely wise and masterly. Since this saying of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه

السلام will take place in the *Maḥshar* (the day of Resurrection) - where no intercession on behalf of the disbelievers, or appeal of mercy for them, will be entertained - therefore, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not referred to the Divine attributes of *Ghafūrur-Raḥīm* (the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful) in place of "*Al-'Azīz Al-Ḥakīm*" (the Mighty, the Wise) of the text. This stands in contrast with what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had said to his Lord during his life in this world: رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ أَضَلُّنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ فَصْنُ بَعْضِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (That is, O my Lord, these [idols] have made many of the people go astray. Henceforth, whoever has followed me is one of mine. And whoever has disobeyed me, so then, You are the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful - 14:36). It means that the likelihood still exists that Allah may, in His mercy, give them the *Taufīq* later on to repent and return to the path of truth and thereby forgive their sins. (Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī - Notes)

Ibn Kathīr reports a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه that once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم spent a whole night reciting one single verse. And that verse was: *إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبَادُكَ* (If You punish them, then, they are Your slaves - 118). When morning came, I said: *Yā Rasūl Allah*, you kept reciting just this verse. You made your *Rukū'* with it and you made your *Sujūd* with it, right upto this break of dawn. He said: I prayed to my *Rabb* to bless me with the station of intercession (*Shafā'ah*), which He granted. *Inshallah*, it is going to be for one who has never associated anyone with Allah Ta'ālā.

According to another narration, after reciting the verse cited above, he raised his hands facing the heaven and said: *اللَّهُمَّ اُمَّتِي* (*Allahumma Ummatī*) that is, 'O Allah, mercy - mercy on my people.' And then he wept. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent angel *Jibra'īl* to ask why would he weep. He told the angel what he had said. Then, Allah Ta'ālā asked angel *Jibra'īl* to go back and tell Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم that He will please him soon in his concern for his people and will not let him be unhappy.

Verses 119 - 120

قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا

عَنْهُ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١٩﴾ لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
وَمَا فِيهِنَّ ۗ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them. For them are gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall be living for ever.

Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the great achievement. [119]

To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and of whatever lies therein. And He is powerful over everything. [120]

The Linkage of Verses

The first two sections (*Rukū'*) appearing earlier describe some of the happenings on the day of *Qiyāmah* such as the reckoning, the questions and their answers. Mentioned now is the outcome of the probe and reckoning of that fateful day.

Commentary

Notes

- Verse 119 opens with the words: قَالَ اللَّهُ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ (Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them). Generally, what is according to what has happened is called truth while that which is not according to what has happened is referred to as false or a lie. But, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, *ṣidq* (truth) and *kidhb* (lie) are general, that is, they refer to both words and deeds. As such, given here is a *Hadīth* in which counter-factual deed has been called *kidhb* (lie): مَنْ تَحَلَّى بِمَا لَمْ يُعْطَ كَانَ كَلَّاسٍ تَوْبِيْهُ زُوْرٌ [that is, whoever adorns himself (or herself) with what has not been given to him (or her) (that is, claims a quality or deed not in him or her) then, it is as if he has put on two garbs of a lie - Mishkāṭ].

There is another *Hadīth* in which one who makes Ṣalāh with care and concern, whether in public or in private, has been called a true servant of Allah:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا صَلَّى فِي الْعَلَانِيَةِ فَاحْسَنَ وَصَلَّى فِي الْبَيْتِ فَاحْسَنَ قَالَ اللَّهُ

تَعَالَى هَذَا عَبْدِي حَقًّا

A person who performs Ṣalāh openly, then, does it well; and when performs it in private, then, does it well, then, Allah Ta'ālā says: 'This is My servant - in truth.' - Mishkāṭ.

2. About the statement: رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه (Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - 119), it appears in *Ḥadīth* that, after having blessed true believers with *Jannah* (Paradise), Allah Ta'ālā will say: The real blessing is that I am pleased with you and now I shall never be displeased with you.
3. The words appearing after that are: ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (That is the great achievement). Indeed, so it is. When *Allah Jalla Sha'nuhu*, the Master, the Creator is pleased with you, what else could it be?

فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ أَوَّلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ

All praises are for Allah from the beginning to the end.

The Commentary

on

**Sūrah Al-Mā'idah
ends here.**

Sūrah Al-An‘ām

(The Cattle)

[Sūratul-An‘ām was revealed in Makkah and it has 165 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
 وَالنُّورَ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ
 مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ
 ﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ يُعَلِّمُ سِرَّكُمْ
 وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ
 رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا
 جَاءَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٥﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light, yet those who disbelieve equate (others) with their Lord. [1] He is the one who created you from clay, then destined a term. And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt. [2] He is Allah in the heavens and the earth. He knows what you conceal and what you reveal and He knows what you earn. [3] And there does not come to them a sign from the signs of their Lord, but they keep turning away from it. [4] So, they have belied the truth when it came to them. Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at. [5]

Commentary

Sayyidna 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that one of the distinctions of Sūrah Al-An'ām is that the whole of it, except some 'Āyāt, was revealed at one time in Makkah with the complement of seventy thousand angels following it with recitation of the name of Allah. Early *Tafsīr* authorities Mujāhid, al-Kalbi, Qatādah and others have said more or less the same thing.

Abū Ishāq Al-Asfrā'īnī has said that this Sūrah consists of all principles and subsidiaries of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). This Sūrah has been prefaced with: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (Al-Ḥamdulillah) whereby people have been told that all praises belong to Allah. The purpose is to educate and help people get the right perspective - that Allah needs no praise from anyone, whether or not anyone praises Him, He is, in terms of His own intrinsic perfection, by Himself, the Praised One. By bringing in the sentence which follows immediately, which mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth and the darkness and the light, given there is the very proof of His being the Praised One. Isn't it that the Being which holds such Power and Wisdom would have to be the One deserving of all praise?

In this verse, 'samāwāt' (heavens) has been mentioned in the plural while 'arḍ' (earth), in the singular - though, in another verse (65:12), earth has been identified as being seven like the heavens. Perhaps, it is indicative of the mutual distinction the seven heavens have in terms of their form and attributes while the seven earths are like each other, therefore, they were taken as one in number. (Mazharī)

Similarly, by mentioning 'zulumāt' (darkness, or layers of darkness) in the plural, and 'nūr' (light) in the singular, the indication given may be that *nūr* or light signifies the correct way and the straight path - and that is just one, while *zulumāt*, or many layers of darkness, signifies the path of error - and their number runs in thousands. (Mazharī & al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt)

Also noticeable here is that the origination of the heavens and the earth has been expressed through the word, 'khalāqa' (created) while that of darkness and light with the word, 'ja'ala' (made). The hint implied is that darkness and light are not independent and self-existent like the heavens and the earth, instead, they are contingents and at-

tributes. And *zulumāt* (darkness) has been given precedence over *nūr* (light) perhaps because *zulumāt* is basic to this world while *nūr* is associated with particulars - when they are there, there is light; and when they are not there, there is darkness.

By pointing out to the reality of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and its open proof in this verse the purpose is to warn all those peoples who do not simply believe in *Tauḥīd*, or have forsaken the reality of *Tauḥīd* despite professing it.

The Magians (*Majūs*) believe in two creators, *Yazdān* and *Ahriman* (or *Ahriman*). *Yazdān*, according to them, is the creator of good and *Ahriman*, the creator of evil. They also identify these as (the principles of) light and darkness.

The polytheists in India take an incredibly high number of gods as partners in the divinity of God. The Aryā Samājists, despite acknowledging *Tauḥīd*, take spirit and matter to be infinitely pre-existent, and independent of the power and creation of God, whereby they have moved way away from the reality of *Tauḥīd*. Similarly, the Christians who, despite professing the creed of *Tauḥīd*, started taking Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام and his blessed mother as partners in the divinity of God - and then, in order to prop their belief in one God, they had to rely on the irrational theory of Unity in Trinity. As for the disbelievers and polytheists of Arabia, they demonstrated such philanthropy in dishing out Godhood that, according to them, every piece of rock on a hill could be good enough to become an object of worship for the whole human-kind! Thus, the wonderful human being whom Allah had made to be the noblest of His creation, someone whom the whole universe was to serve, went so astray from the right path that he took - not just the moon, the sun, the stars, but the fire, water, trees and rocks too - even crawling insects as objects of prostration and worship, providers of needs and resolvers of problems.

By saying in this verse of the Holy Qur‘ān that Allah Ta‘ālā is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and He is the Maker of darkness and light, all such false notions have been refuted - when He is the sole Creator and Maker of everything, ascribing partners to His Divinity makes no sense.

In the first verse, by saying that all those great bodies of things in this big universe created by Allah Ta'ālā on Whom they depend, an open and correct lesson has been given to all human beings. After that, in other verses which follow, human beings have been told that their very own being is a small universe. If one were to make a start from this point, right from the beginning to the end - birth, living, death among a great mesh of internal dimensions and distances - it would show that the belief in the Oneness of Allah is a reality all too clear. It is about this that the verse said: هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا (He is the One who created you from clay, then destined a term). The verse is saying that Allah is the One who created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام with clay, and then, gave him life - and common human food comes from the moist substance of clay, and from food the sperm, and from the sperm comes the creation of the human being.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه says that he has heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Ta'ālā created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام from a particular blend of clay included wherein are essential ingredients of the whole earth. This is the reason why the children of Ādam are different in colour, shape, morals and habits with some black or white or red, and some hard or soft or good-natured or evil-tempered. (Maẓharī, from a narration of Ibn 'Adiyy, with good authority)

This was about the human origin. After that, mentioned here are the two stages at the end. One of these is the personal end of a human being which is called death. The other stage is the combined end of the entire humankind along with that of all cosmic servants waiting on them, which is known as the *Qiyāmah* (the day of Doom). The expression - 'the personal end of a human being' - is used here because Allah Ta'ālā says: ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا that is, after the birth of a human being, Allah Ta'ālā destined a term for his or her life (on the earth). Reaching the completion of this term is death - though human beings do not know it - but, the angels do. In fact, a human being too, in a way, knows death as incidents of the children of Ādam dying all around, everywhere, all the time, are common experience.

After that, comes the mention of the end of the whole world, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, in the following words: وَأَجَلٌ مُّتَّسِقٌ عَلَيْهَا, that is, there is yet another term which stands fixed and which is known to Allah

alone. The full knowledge of this 'term' has not been given to any angel, or human being.

Summing up in a sequence, we can say that, in the first verse, we have been told about the 'big universe', that is, the whole wide world, which has been created and made by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, in the second verse, very similarly, we have been told that the 'small universe', that is, the human beings, have also been created by Allah. Then, it is to shake human beings out of their negligence that they have been told that every human being has a particular age, after which death is certain. This is a constant fact of life observed by human beings all the time. The words: وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ مُنْقَرُونَ (And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt) carry the instruction that using the personal death of a human being as the proof of the general and collective death of the whole world system, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, is something very natural and logical. Therefore, there is absolutely no doubt about the coming of the *Qiyāmah* (the much publicized but least believed 'Apocalypse' of the West). Therefore, towards the end of the verse (2), the text wonders as to why would people keep doubting the coming of *Qiyāmah* which stands proved so clearly.

The third verse contains the consequential outcome of what was said in the first two verses. It declares that Allah is the only Being who is worthy of worship and obedience in all the heavens and the earth, and He is the One who knows everything human beings conceal or reveal and, particularly, everything they say or do.

The fourth verse carries a complaint against the anti-truth doggedness and obstinacy of the chronically heedless human race by saying: وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنَ آيَةٍ مِّنَ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ that is, despite the many clear proofs and open signs of the Oneness of Allah, the dissenters and rejectionists among human beings have taken to a way of their own, using which, they would turn their faces away from whatever sign is shown to them for their guidance, without ever paying the least attention to it.

In the fifth and the last verse here, further details of this heedlessness have been indicated through some events. It was said: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them). The word, '*Al-Haqq*' (the truth) here, could mean the Qur'an - and the

blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also.

The reason is that he lived his whole life among these Arab tribes. He grew up from a child into a young man and from his youth into his later years right before their eyes. They also knew fully well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had remained absolutely untaught by any human teacher, so much so that he could not write even his name by himself. The whole Arabia knew him by his appellation of *Ummiyy* (unlettered, unschooled). For forty years, this was him amongst them.

He never demonstrated any marked interest in poetry (a traditional distinction of the age) nor he had any aptitude for formal education and learning. Then, after having completed his forty years, there came a sudden change, an instant flowering of the unimaginable. His blessed tongue became such fountainhead of insights and realities, learning and arts that went on to disarm the best minds of the world. He challenged every eloquent and learned master of words in Arabia to match the Word brought by him. But his antagonists, who would have not hesitated to sacrifice anything they had - life, wealth, honour, children, family, anything, anytime - just to defeat him, did not have the courage to accept his challenge and, at the least, produce one 'Āyah (verse) like the 'Āyah of the Holy Qur‘ān.

Thus, the very presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the Glorious Qur‘ān, was a great sign of irrefutable legitimacy. In addition to that, there were thousands of miracles and open signs which came to pass at his blessed hands and which cannot be denied by any sane person. But, those people belied all such signs totally. Therefore, it was said in the verse: فَكَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them).

Now, pointed out at the conclusion of the verse is the sad end of their effort to falsify truth: فَسَوْفَ يُأْتِيهِمْ آتِنَا مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at). It means that right now these people who are heedless to their fate mock at the miracles and commandments of Allah brought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and at the all true message that there is a *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), but very soon will come the time when all these realities will be before their eyes. There will be a *Qiyāmah* in fact. There will be a Reckoning (*Hisāb*) when everyone will

have to account for one's faith and deed - and everyone shall get the reward or punishment for what he or she has done. But, believing and confessing at that time is not going to work for them because that will be no day of deeds - rather, that day will be the day of Retribution. The time to think is now. Allah Almighty has given the respite - a God-sent piece of luck, so to say. Act now, for it is by having faith alone that you will succeed in this world and in the lasting world to come.

Verses 6 - 11

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّكَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 مَا لَمْ يُمَكِّنْ لَكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا
 الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ
 بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ
 فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ
 ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْ لَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكَاً لَقُضِيَ
 الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكَاً لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا
 وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبَسُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَى بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ
 قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ
 ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
 الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them, whom We had given in the land a position We did not give to you, and We left the heaven pouring over them and made rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them because of their sins and raised up, after them, another generation. [6]

And if We had sent down to you something written on paper, and they had even touched it with their hands, still the disbelievers would have said, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And they say, “Why is it that an angel has not been sent down to him?” And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished, and thereafter they would have had no time. [8] And if We had made him an angel, We would have obviously made him a man, and would have caused them the same confusion they are causing now. [9]

Messengers have been mocked at before you. So, those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been making a mockery of. [10]

Say, “Go about the earth, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets).” [11]

Commentary

In previous verses, mention was made of grave consequences to be faced by those who avoid or oppose Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. In the present verses, the same deniers of the truth have been given an opportunity to learn and correct themselves by observing conditions around them as well as those prevailing in times before them. No doubt, events of the past are documents full of chastening lessons which, if seen to find wisdom, would prove to be more effective than a thousand sermons. So, still valid is the saying of the sage: The world is the best book and time, the best teacher. That is why wisdom-based historical anecdotes form a good part of the Holy Qur‘ān. But, speaking generally, people have not given world history any serious role in conducting lives properly. They have, rather than benefiting from it, made it into an intellectual pastime which would either help to sleep or to while away spare time.

Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Holy Qur‘ān has taken the essence of history as a server of warning and a dispenser of good counsel. But, this is unlike the customary historical fiction where the story or the event are an end in themselves. So, the Qur‘ān has not taken up historical events as ongoing events in their own right. Instead of doing something like that, it has chosen to place part of the narrative as relevant to the given subject and setting of the message in the text. Then, there would be another occasion, another place, when it would describe another part of the story as relevant there. This may be indicative of the reality that a report or story is not an end by itself, in-

stead, the purpose is to identify the outcome of the report and the practical implication of the event, therefore, one should be concerned with what is necessary for the objective in sight, move ahead and survey his circumstances in that light - that is, learn that vital lesson from what has gone before and thereby correct oneself.

In the first verse, it was said about the people of Makkah, the direct addressees of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: *أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ*: ‘Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them?’ Here, ‘seen’ means to ponder about, because these generations were not present before them at that time to see. It was after that, that the destruction of many generations (*‘qarn’*) was mentioned.

The word, *قَرْنٍ*: *qarn*, is used for a group of people collectively present at a given time and period. It is also used to denote a long period of time which could be, depending on different interpretations, between ten to one hundred years. But, some events and narrations do support the position that this word is used for one hundred years as it appears in a *Hadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Busr al-Mā‘zīniyy that he will live for one *Qarn*. Also when the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for a certain child that may he live for a whole *qarn*, he did live for a full one hundred years. The majority of ‘*Ulamā*’ take the famous *Hadīth*: *خَيْرُ الْعُرُونَ قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ* (still recited as part of the *Khuṭbah* of *Jumu‘ah* all over the world) to be meaning exactly this, that is, every *qarn* is one hundred years.

About past peoples of the world, first it was said that the kind of power and well-being given to them was not given to people later than them, but when these very people took to the ways of belying prophets and disobeying Divine injunctions, all that majesty of power and wealth was rendered futile against the punishment of Allah which annihilated them totally. So, this was a lesson for the addressees of today, the people of Makkah who did not have the power of the legendary people of ‘*Ād* and *Thamūd*, nor the affluence of the people of Syria and Yaman. For them, the need of the hour was to learn a lesson from what happened to the peoples of the past and turn towards an examination of their doings and think where they are going to end up by opposing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said: *وَإِنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ* (and raised up, after them, another generation). It means that the great power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* was not simply limited to seeing that nations of strength, authority and power lay destroyed in a flash, but it was right there on the ashes of their destruction that other peoples were made to rise and populate places, as if nothing had happened there and no one was missing from the scene. This spectacle of Divine power and wisdom is something observable in its own ways during every time and period when thousands die every day but there is no vacuum left anywhere. We never come to realize that people who belonged here are not here anymore.

Once, while on the plains of Arafāt with a million men and women spread around, came the thought that only a mere seventy or eighty years earlier, none among this whole assembly of people existed. Yet, on this same place of 'Arafāt, nearly that many other human beings were present, no trace of whom exists today. On this analogy, imagine about any assembly of human beings, any animated gathering of people, think about their past and future, and then figure out what you get - somebody telling you to wise up to the ultimate truth of things: *فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ* (Praised be Allah, the best of creators).

The second verse (7) was revealed in the background of a particular event when 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyah came up with a hostile demand before the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* by saying: 'I cannot believe in you until such time that I see you climbing all the way to the heavens and bringing a book from there before our eyes, in which it should be written in my name that I should attest to your prophethood.' And, on top of saying all this, he went on to even declare that he would still not be impressed enough by his accomplishing all that for he does not seem to be likely to convert to Islam anyway.

Strange are the ways of fate, for this very gentleman embraced Islam later on, and embraced it with such fervor and class that he became a winning warrior in the cause of Islam and received his *Shahādah* (martyrdom) in the Battle of Tā'if.

Such were the uncalled-for and hostile demands made and mocking and insulting dialogues inflicted on the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*, specially when he himself was more affectionate for his people, more

than their own parents could ever be to them. What effect these caustic bad manners would have made on his heart is something we cannot fathom. It can only be sensed by one who is consumed with the good of his people in the same manner as the blessed Prophet himself was.

Therefore, to comfort him, it was said that such demands from his antagonists were not being put forward for any useful purpose, nor did they want to follow it. They were a kind of people who would not stop at what they were demanding. Even if they were presented with far more clear proofs of their Prophet's veracity, they would still not believe. For example, if Allah were to send down, as they demanded, a written book from the heavens - and not only that they see it for themselves that there is no sleight of hand or sight or magic, they may even physically touch it with their hands to make sure that they were not day-dreaming and that it was a reality - still, after all that, they would say nothing but: *إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ* (This is nothing but sheer magic). This is because what they are saying comes from malice and hostility.

The third verse (8) was also revealed because of an event which concerns this very ‘Abdullah ibn Abī Umaiyyah who, accompanied by Nadr ibn al-Hārith and Nawfal ibn Khālid, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This time their demand was: ‘We shall believe in you only when you go and bring a book from the heavens and let four angels come along with it to testify that the book was from none but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.’

One answer Allah gave to them was that by making such demands, these heedless people were inviting their own destruction, because the Divine law is that, should a people ask their prophet to show a miracle of their choice, and as a result of their demand, such miracle is shown by the power and will of Allah, then, should they, even then, remain reluctant to believe and accept faith any longer, they are destroyed by a mass general punishment. These particular people of Makkah were really not making their demands as based on any good intentions, which may have at the least given some hope of their accepting the truth. Therefore, it was said: *لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ لَكُمْ لَا يُنظَرُونَ* (And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished). In other words, it means : ‘If We do send the miracle they demand, that is, send an angel, then, these people who are not the kind who would

accept truth will still act contrary and hostile even after having seen the miracle, then, the Divine command to have them destroyed would stand activated. Since they would be given no respite after that happens, therefore, they should understand that the fact of not showing the miracle demanded by them spells out real good for them, without which they would be nowhere.

The second answer to this problem with them was given in the fourth verse (9) in a different manner where it was said that people asking such questions were certainly strange people who were demanding that angels should come down to them. This is so because there are only two ways angels can come down. Firstly, an angel may come as he is, in his form and state of being. If so, no human being can stand before his real awe - in fact, he is more likely to die at the never-imagined sight. The second form in which the angel could come down is that the angel comes in human shape and form, as Sayyidnā Jibra‘īl al-Amīn has come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ several times in the shape of a human being. In this situation too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is told, this questioner will have the same objection against this ‘angel’ as he has against you - because he would take him to be nothing but human.

After having answered all these hostile questions, solace has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the fifth verse (10) by saying that this attitude of mockery and injury directed against him by his people is not something particular to him. Other prophets and messengers before him had to face similar heart-breaking experiences, but they did not lose hope. Finally, what happened was that those who used to mock were overtaken by the punishment which they mocked at.

In short, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been assured that his mission is to convey the commandments of Allah. Once he feels he has done that, let his heart be at rest. Whether someone is affected by the message or not, that is not for him to worry about - for it is not a part of his duty as a Messenger of Allah. So, let this concern bring no sorrow to his heart.

Verses 12 - 14

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط قُلْ لِلَّهِ ط كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ
 الرَّحْمَةَ ط لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ط الَّذِينَ
 خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَكَهَ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ
 وَالنَّهَارِ ط وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اتَّخَذُ وَلِيًّا
 فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ط قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ
 أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

Say, "To whom belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth?" Say, "To Allah." He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful. He will surely gather you towards a day of doom in which there is no doubt. Those who have brought loss to themselves are not going to believe. [12]

And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day. And He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [13]

Say, "Would I take as guardian someone other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds, and is not fed?" Say, "I have been asked to be the first to submit." And never be one of those who ascribe partners to Allah. [14]

Commentary

In the opening verse (12), قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ, the disbelievers have been asked as to who is the Master of the entire universe and all that it contains. Then, Allah Himself gives the answer through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah is the Master of all. The reason for answering the question, rather than waiting for the disbelievers to answer it, is that the answer given was an accepted fact with the disbelievers of Makkah as well, for they were, though involved with Shirk and idolatry, no deniers of the fact that Allah Almighty was the Master of the heavens and the earth and everything they contained.

The word, إِلَى, *ilā* (towards) in the next sentence: لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

(He will surely gather you towards a day of doom) has been used either in the sense of *tawaffā* meaning to take in full, bring to a finish, or gather, (as in the translation of the meaning given here), in which case, it would mean that Allah Ta‘ālā will gather everyone, from the beginning to the end, on the day of *Qiyāmah* - or, it could mean ‘to gather in the graves,’ in which case, it would mean that human beings will be kept being gathered into their resting places unto the day of *Qiyamah* when they will be raised back to life. (Qurtubī)

As for the sentence: كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ (He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful) appearing a little earlier in verse 12, a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta‘ālā made His creation, He made a promise to Himself in writing which is with Him, written in which are the words: إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي تَغْلِبُ عَلَى عَضَابِي that is, ‘My mercy shall remain dominant over My wrath.’ (Qurtubī)

The sentence which appears at the end of the verse : الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ (Those who have brought loss to themselves ...) indicates that the deprivation of the disbelievers from the universal mercy of Allah Almighty mentioned earlier was caused by their own deeds, for they did not take to the way which brings mercy - that is, the way of belief and faith. (Qurtubī)

The word, ‘*sukūn*’ appearing in verse 13: وَرَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ (And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day) could either mean the state of being still or at rest, in which case, the verse would mean that Allah is the Master of everything present in the night and the day. Or, it is also possible that the sense could be that of a combined state of stillness and movement (which would amount to saying - what tarries and what moves), but what was mentioned here is the state of *sukūn* or rest only - because, movement which stands in contrast to it can be understood as being obvious enough.

Verses 15- 21

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ
بَصُرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ ۗ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَإِنْ

يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ
 بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ
 وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۗ قُلِ اللَّهُ
 شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ
 وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَتَيْنَكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً أُخْرَىٰ ۗ قُلْ لَا
 أَشْهَدُ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩﴾
 الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ الَّذِينَ
 خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ
 عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Say, "If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a momentous day." [15] Whoever is spared from it (that day) is, indeed, blessed with His mercy. And that is success, open and clear. [16]

And if Allah causes you some harm, no one is there to remove it except He Himself; and if He causes you some good, then He is powerful over everything. [17] And He is Dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware. [18]

Say, "What can be the greatest in bearing witness?"
 Say, "Allah. He is the witness between me and you.
 And this Qur'an has been revealed to me so that I
 should thereby warn you, and whomsoever it may
 reach. Do you really bear witness that there are other
 gods along with Allah?" Say, "I bear no such witness."
 Say, "In fact, He is one God. And I have nothing to do
 with what you associate (with Him)." [19]

Those to whom We have given the Book recognize him
 (the Messenger) as they would recognize their sons.
 Those who have brought loss to themselves, they are
 not going to believe. [20] And who is more unjust than
 the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His
 signs? Beware, the unjust shall not prosper. [21]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the command given was to shun Shirk and believe in the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhu* mentioned therein. In the first of the present verses (15), the punishment for the contravention of this command has been mentioned in a particularly endearing manner, that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been ‘commanded’ that he should tell the people that should he too (God forbid) come to contravene the command of His Lord, then, he too has the fear of the punishment of the day of *Qiyāmah*. It is obvious that the noble Messenger of Allah is (Divinely) protected from every sin - so, the likelihood of disobedience coming from him simply does not exist. But, by mentioning this hypothetical situation, the purpose is to convey the message to the community that the contravention of the Divine command is so serious a matter that even the greatest prophet cannot stand excused from it - if not him, who else?

After that, it was said: مَنْ يُصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ (Whoever is spared from it that day is, indeed, blessed with His mercy). It means that the punishment of the day of Resurrection (*al-Mahshar*) is extremely horrendous and harsh. Whoever finds this removed from him or her should know that it was great mercy from Allah. This has been further strengthened by saying: وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ (And that is success, open and clear). The word, الْفَوْزُ: ‘*al-fawz*’ (success) means being admitted in *Jannah* (Paradise). This tells us that deliverance from punishment and admittance into the Paradise are inseparable from each other.

All Gain and Loss Comes from Allah: A Cardinal Muslim Belief

In the third verse (17), a basic article of faith in Islam has been described - that it is Allah, in reality, who is the Master-Dispenser of all gain and loss. No one can ‘really’ bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause the least harm. As for the outward manifestation of gain or loss, benefit or harm, seen coming from one person to the other, is no more than a matter of appearances. Seen in the full flash of reality, this does not hold out any more than a ready-to-vanish curtain. So succinctly the idea was put in a Persian couplet:

کار زلفِ تست مشک افشانی اَمَّا عاشقان
مصلحتِ راتہمتے برآ ہوئے چیں بستہ اند

Spraying Musk is the work of your tresses, but those who love you
Have found it expedient to ascribe the blame to the Chinese deer!

This belief too is one of the revolutionary beliefs of Islam, a belief which made Muslims shed the dependence on the created and rely on their Creator alone. It was this belief which put together a large group of unprecedented charmers of the soul on the map of the world, who were, despite their meager means and haunting hunger, weightier and worthier than a whole world - for they would not bow their heads before anyone.

The Holy Qur‘ān has taken up this subject at many places with different approaches, out of which, quoted here is a verse from Sūrah Faṭīr:

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

What Allah, out of His mercy, does make open to people, there is no one to withhold it; and what He does withhold, there is no one to release it after that - 35:2.

It appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say this in his prayers very often:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا اَعْطَيْتَ وَلَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْكَ الْجُدُّ

"O Allah, there is no withholders of what You have bestowed and there is no giver of what You have withheld and no status of a man of status can be of use to him against You.

Under his comments on this verse, Imām al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mounted a ride, he asked me to sit behind him. After having covered some distance, he turned towards me and said, ‘You young man.’ I said: ‘Here I am, *Yā Rasūl* Allah. Can I do something?’ He said: ‘You remember Allah. Allah will remember you. If you will remember Allah, you will find Him before you under all circumstances. You recognize Allah when you are in peace and comfort, Allah will recognize you when you are in trouble. When you have to

ask, only ask Allah. When you need help, seek help only from Allah. Whatever is going to happen in this world has already been written by the writer of destiny. If all those created were to combine and try to bring a benefit to you in which Allah has kept no share for you, they would never be able to do that. And if they all come together and try to inflict a harm on you which is not in your lot, they would never become capable of doing that. If you are sure of being able to act patiently, then, do just that, by all means. If you do not have the strength and ability to do so, observe patience - because there is great good and *barakah* in remaining patient against what does not go well with your temperament. And understand it very clearly that the help of Allah is with patience, and comfort with hardship, and prosperity with adversity.' (This *Hadīth* also appears in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Ahmad with sound chains of authority)

Alas, despite this clear declaration of the Qur'ān and the age long teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this *Ummah* has started going off course in this critical matter when they have handed out what lies in the exclusive domain of Allah to His created beings. Today, there is a very large number of Muslims who would, rather than call upon Allah and pray to Him in their hour of distress, cry for help in all sorts of names, but do not seem to remember the name of Allah. As for praying to Allah through the spiritual mediation of prophets and men of Allah, that is a different matter, and that is permissible. Evidences of which are available within the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. But, calling on or praying to a created being directly for the removal of one's need or solution of problem is an open rebellion against this Qur'ānic injunction. May Allah keep all Muslims on the straight path.

At the end of verse 18, it was said: **وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ** (And He is dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware). It means that the mastery of Allah Ta'ālā prevails over His servants in the absolute sense and that everyone remains under His power and control all the time. This is the reason why no human being, no matter how great, whether a prophet close to Allah, or the most powerful ruler of the world, none of them come out successful in everything they do, nor is every wish of theirs granted.

And then, He is Wise too, for everything He does is essential Wisdom. And then, He is All-Aware too, for He is the One who knows everything. Thus, by the word, *al-Qāhīr* (the Dominant) pointed to is the perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā and, by the word, *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise), His all-encompassing knowledge - and the two tell us that perfection in knowledge and power are the sole attributes of Almighty Allah and it is only Him that they belong to.

A particular event which is the cause of the revelation of this verse has been generally reported by commentators. It is said that once a deputation of the people of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They said: ‘You claim to be a Messenger of Allah. Who is your witness on this? We have yet to see a man who attests to its truth, although we have tried our best to confirm it from the Jews and Christians.’

Thereupon, the verse: *قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً* which means: You tell them whose witness could be greater than that of Allah, within whose power lies the gain and loss of everyone in the world? Then, you tell them that Allah is the witness between me and you. The witness of Allah refers to those miracles and signs which Allah Ta‘ālā made manifest to confirm the veracity of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, addressing the people of Makkah, it was said: *أَتَنْتَكُمُ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً* *أُنزِلِي* It means: Do you, even after the witness of Allah Ta‘ālā Himself, stand to witness against Him by saying that there are other gods too along with Allah? If that is so, you are responsible for your fate. As for me, I bear no such witness. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is asked to tell them: *قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ الْوَاحِدُ* that is, He is one God, the only one worthy of worship who has no partners, sharers or associates in His pristine Divinity.

And also said there was: *رَأَوْحِي إِلَيْ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِأُنذِرْكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ* that is, ‘and the Qur‘ān has been sent to me as the revealed Word of Allah so that I should warn you of His punishment and also warn all those people to whom this Qur‘ān will keep reaching until the day of *Qiyāmah*.

This proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur‘ān, the Last Book. It will continue to be recited and taught right through the day of *Qiyāmah*, and people will remain obliged to follow it.

Sayyidnā Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه said: To Whomever the Qur‘ān has reached, he has become like one who has visited Muḥammad ﷺ. And it appears in another *Ḥadīth*: To whomever the Qur‘ān has reached, I am his warner (*‘nadhīr’*).

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked his Companions emphatically : *بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَكُلُوا آيَةَ* : that is, convey my instructions and teachings to people, even if it be one ‘*Āyah*.

And Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: May Allah keep that person hale and hearty who heard a saying of mine, committed it to his memory and then conveyed it to my *Ummah*. This is important because it generally happens that a person may not himself appreciate the sense of what is said but which would be understood much better by a person of later times to whom the first person has conveyed it.

In verse 20, there is a refutation of the saying of those who had said that they had checked with the Jews and the Christians and none of them were ready to attest to his truth as a Messenger of Allah. About that it was said: *الَّذِينَ آمَنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ آبْنَاءَهُمْ* That is, as for the Jews and Christians, they recognize Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as they would recognize their sons.

The reason is that there is, in the Torah and Injīl, a full description of the physical features of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, of his home city and then his post-emigration place of residence, and of his habits and morals and achievements - all this in such details that it leaves no room for doubt in the recognition of his identity. In fact, this is not limited to the mention of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Torah and the Injīl carry even the detailed description of his noble *Ṣaḥābah* as well. Therefore, there was no possibility that anyone who recited the Torah and the Injīl and believed in them would be unable to recognize the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

At this point, the simile given in the text is that of children - ‘as they would recognize their sons.’ Not said here is: as children recognize their parents. The reason is that the recognition of children by parents is most detailed and certain. Children remain before parents day and night under all conditions. From infancy to younger years,

they are raised in the hands and laps of parents. So, the extent to which parents can recognize their children, their children cannot recognize them.

Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām رضى الله عنه belonged to the Jewish faith, then he became a Muslim. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā‘zam رضى الله عنه asked him: Allah Ta‘ālā says in the Qur‘ān that you recognize our Rasūl as you would recognize your sons. What is the reason for it? Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām said: Yes, we know the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his qualities and features revealed by Allah Almighty through the Torah. Therefore, this knowledge of ours is certain and absolute. This is contrary to our offspring about whom one could doubt whether or not they were their children.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Sa‘nah who first belonged to the people of the Book had recognized the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through the description of his qualities and features stated in the Torah and the Injīl. There was only one quality which could not be confirmed from earlier information. So, this he confirmed by testing. That quality was : ‘His forbearance will dominate his anger.’ Then, he went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, made his test and found him a true bearer of this quality. He instantly became a Muslim.

In the last verse (21), it was said that these people of the Book who, despite knowing the true identity of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, do not accept Islam were simply ruining themselves at their own hands: الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (Those, who have brought loss on themselves, they are not going to believe).

Verses 22 -26

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شِرْكَائِكُمْ
الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فَتَسْتَنَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا
وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَيَّ
أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن
يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي

إِذَانِهِمْ وَقَرَأُوا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
 جَاءَهُمْ مِجَادِلُوكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ
 الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْتَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا
 أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, “Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?” [22] Then, their fallacy will lead them to nothing but that they will say, “By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah.” [23] See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin. [24]

And there are those among them who listen to you, but We have put coverings on their hearts, so that they do not understand, and heaviness in their ears. And if they were to see all the signs, they will still not believe in them. So much so that, when they come to quarrel with you, the disbelievers say, “It is nothing but tales of the ancients.” [25]

And from it they prevent and from it they keep away, and they ruin none but themselves, and they do not realize. [26]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse (21) was that the unjust and the deniers of truth will not receive salvation. Details appear in the present verses. The first (22) and the second (23) verses talk about the great trial to be held on the day of Resurrection before the Lord of all. It was said: *وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا* (And [forget not] the Day We shall gather them together), that is, ‘gather all disbelievers and their self-made objects of worship together.’ After that, it is said: *ثُمَّ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شُرَكَائِكُمْ* (then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, “Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?”), that is, ‘ask them about the objects of worship they had taken to as partners of Allah, and resolvers of their problems, and why would they not come to help them in their hour of trial.’

The word, *ثُمَّ*: ‘*thumma*’ (then, after that), used here denotes delay, which tells us that the trial of answering fateful questions will not start soon after having been gathered on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, they shall keep standing in that state of wonder and perplexity for a long period of time. It will be a passage of time in between when the reckoning will commence.

In a *Hadīth*, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* has been reported to have said: What would happen to you when Allah Ta‘ālā will gather you on the plains of Resurrection as arrows are gathered in the quiver - and you shall be in that state for fifty thousand years. And it appears in another narration that everyone will tarry in the dark on that Day for one thousand years - not being able to even talk to each other.

(This narration has been reported by Hākim in Al-Mustadrak, and by Al-Baihaqī)

The difference of fifty thousand and ten thousand in this narration also appears in two verses of the Holy Qur‘ān as well. In Sūrah Al-Ma‘ārij, it is said: *كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ* [‘a Day] the measure whereof is [as] fifty thousand years - 70:4.’ In Sūrah Al-Ḥajj, it is said: *إِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ* ‘A Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning - 22:47.’ The reason for this difference is that this day will be long in the severity of pain and the levels of pain will be different. Therefore, this day will seem to be that of fifty thousand years for some and that of one thousand years for others.

In short, on this venue of the great trial, a long period of time will pass for the trial to begin, so much so, that these people will wish that reckoning comes so that they can be relieved from their state of uncertainty, no matter what happens in the end. It is to indicate this length of stay that, as indicated earlier, the word, *ثُمَّ* (then) was prefixed to *ثُمَّ نَقُولُ* (then We shall say). Similarly, the answer given by the disbelievers mentioned in the second verse (23) also appears with the word, *ثم* (then), which indicates that they too will come up with their answer after having deliberated over it for a long period of time, in which they will say: *وَاللَّهُ رَبُّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ* (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah). In this verse, their answer has been identified as: *فِتْنَةٌ*: ‘*fitnah*’ which could mean ‘trial’ or ‘infatuation.’ Both meanings can be taken here. In the first case, the answer given by the disbelievers becomes a trial by itself; while, in the second case, it would mean that these peo-

ple were infatuated with idols and other self-made objects of worship, even made sacrifices for them, but all that infatuation was gone on this day when they had no choice but to declare their total disassociation from them.

There is something very astonishing in their answer. That was a nerve-shattering time with the day being the Day of Retribution with the awesome manifestations of the power and authority of their Lord all there, yet they had the courage to lie before their very Lord, and that too, with such shamelessness that they are swearing by His great name and saying that they were no disbelievers!

Most commentators explain this answer given by the disbelievers as something not based on foresight or hindsight. In fact, it was caused by the heat of surrounding awe and the loss of personal nerves, a condition in which one utters what is not intended. But, by giving some thought to the general happenings and conditions of the Day of Resurrection, it could be said that Allah Ta‘ālā had given them the freedom to say things as they used to say in their life of the mortal world so that everyone present on the Day of Resurrection could see their full profile and get to know that these people did not stop at disbelief and polytheism, but that they were also unmatched as liars, for they would not desist from lying at least on an occasion so horrifying. Another verse of the Qur‘ān (Sūrah Al-Mujādalah): *فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ* (then they will swear to Him as they swear to you - 58:18) gives a hint in this direction which means that very much in the manner they swear falsely before Muslims, they would not hesitate in swearing as falsely before the Lord of all the worlds Himself.

When these people have become sworn deniers of their *Shirk* and *Kufr* (attribution of partners to Allah and disbelief) on the day of Resurrection, that will be the time when Allah, in His absolute power, will have their mouths sealed with silence. His command will then go to the limbs of their bodies - ‘now, you speak as witnesses to everything they did’ - then, will come the proof that their own hands and feet and eyes and ears were all some kind of secret service agents who had been with them all along. They will tell, and tell everything they did. About that, it has been said in Sūrah Ya-Sīn: *الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَنَشْهَدُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ* (That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But

their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did - 36:65). After having witnessed this demonstration of unimaginable power, no one will, then, dare conceal anything or lie about it.

At another place in the Holy Qur‘ān, it is said: وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 4:42). Explaining its meaning, this is what Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās had said: That is, they would first lie as much as they could, even swear falsely, but once their own hands and feet shall testify against them, they will not have the courage to say anything wrong after that.

So, we see that a wrong-doer shall be given full freedom to put his statement on record in the court of the Judge of judges. If he chooses to lie, as he did in his mortal life, his right to do that will not be snatched away from him - because Allah will Himself, in His absolute power, demolish the facade of his lie through the testimony of his own body parts.

This is why telling lies after death will not work. Think of an entrance examination or an admission test. After death, man’s first test will be given by angels, *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. Says the *Hadīth*: When *Munkar* and *Nakīr* will ask a *Kāfir* (disbeliever): مَنْ رَبُّكَ وَمَا دِينُكَ (Who is your Lord and what is your religion?), the *Kāfir* will say: مَا هَا، لَا أَدْرِي (Oh O, I do not know). In contrast a true Muslim will answer by saying: رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَدِينِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ (Allah is my Lord and Islam is my religion). It appears no one will have the courage to lie in this test, otherwise a *Kāfir* could have given the same answer as was given by a Muslim. The reason is that the test will be taken by angels who do not have the knowledge of the unseen, nor are they capable of making hands and feet give witness. If man had the choice of lying there, the angels would have simply acted in accordance with the answer given, but this would have disturbed the system. This is contrary to the test of the day of Resurrection where questions will be asked and answers given before Almighty Allah which means that no lie will work there even if resorted to.

Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Mazḥarī report from some elders that the people denying their Shirk on oaths will be those who did not openly declare a created being to be God or His deputy, but as for their deed, they had assigned all powers of Godhood to His created beings,

and from them sought answers to their needs, in their name they would make offerings, and from them they would ask sustenance, health, children and everything they wished to have. These people did not consider themselves as *Mushriks*. Therefore, on the day of Resurrection they would swear to it that they were not *Mushriks*. Ultimately, Allah Almighty will expose their disgrace.

Another question which arises in this verse is about what has been said in some verses of the Qur‘ān - that Allah Almighty will not speak to the disbelievers and sinners - while, the present verse seems to be indicating clearly that such address will come to pass.

The answer is that such address or speech will not be in the form of honouring them or accepting their prayers. As for the negation of an address based on admonition, that is not intended in this verse. It could also be said that the address mentioned in this verse may be through the angels. As for the verse where Divine speech or address has been negated, it refers to an indirect address.

In verse 24, it was said: *انظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ* (See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who has been asked to see how these people have lied against their own selves, and whatever they used to forge and fabricate against Allah (their idols and so-called partners to Allah) is lost to them. The expression translated as ‘lied about themselves’ means that the curse of this lie is going to fall on their own selves while the word, *افتراء* translated as ‘used to coin’ may also mean that ascribing partners to Allah was a fabrication in the mortal world the reality of which was exposed on the day of Resurrection. And it is also possible that *‘iftirā* or fabrication could be referring to the false oath taken on the day of Resurrection following which the witness of the limbs of the body exposed their lie.

Some commentators say that *‘iftirā* or fabrication refers to interpretations they used to put on their false objects of worship in the mortal world, for example: *مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وُقُفَى* which means that ‘We do not worship them taking them to be God but only do it so that they would intercede on our behalf with Allah and bring us closer to Him - 39:3.’ This fabrication of theirs got exposed on the day of Resurrection

when no one interceded on their behalf in their hour of trial, nor any one did anything to bring about a reduction in their punishment.

This brings us to a question, for the verse seems to indicate that at the time of trial featuring these questions and answers, all false objects of worship will not be present there, but a verse of the Qur‘ān says: *أَحْضِرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمْتُمْ وَأَرْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ* (gather up those who have been unjust, and their partners, and what they used to worship - 37:22). This seems to indicate that the false objects of worship will also be present on the day of Resurrection.

The answer is that the sense of their being absent from the plains of Resurrection, as it emerges from this verse, is limited to their being unavailable as partners, sharers or intercessors. Thus, though they would be unable to help their clients in any way but, they would be present there. So, there remains no contradiction between the two verses. Then, it is also possible that all of them could be gathered together at one time and place, then be separated and the question is asked after the separation.

In these two verses, it should be particularly borne in mind that the choice of free speech given to disbelievers on the day of Resurrection which they utilized by denying on false oath that they had anything to do with Shirk, is not without its implications. Perhaps, it carries a hint that the habit of telling lies is an evil habit which is never easy to shake off. So much so that these people, who used to swear falsely before Muslims during their life in the mortal world, were unable to stop lying even on the fateful day of Resurrection which put them to disgrace before the entire creation of Allah. Therefore, lying has been strongly condemned in the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth which give serious warning to those who tell lies. At many places in the Qur‘ān liars have been cursed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Stay away from lying because a lie is the accomplice of sins, and a lie and a sin will both go to *Jahannam*. (Ibn Ḥibban in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked what deed could take one to Hell. He said: A lie [the Musnad of Aḥmad]. And on the night of the *Mi‘rāj* (the Ascent to Heaven), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw a man having the corners of his mouth being slit apart which then fall back into their place and become as they were, and again they are slit.

apart ... something to keep happening to him throughout the day of *Qiyāmah*. He asked the angel, Jibra‘īl al-Amīn: “Who is he?” Angel Jibra‘īl said: “He is a liar.”

And it appears in a narration from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One cannot become a complete Muslim unless he gives up lying altogether, to the extent that he would not lie even by way of joke or fun.

In addition to that, it appears in Al-Baihaqī and others, all on sound authority, that the character of a Muslim may have other bad traits - but, not breach of trust and lying. Yet another *Hadīth* says that lying decreases one’s *Rizq* (sustenance).

The verse: *وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ* (And from it they prevent - 26), according to early commentators Daḥḥāk, Qatādah and Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyah, was revealed about the common disbelievers of Makkah who prevented people from listening to the Qur‘ān and following it - and saw to it that they themselves stayed away from it. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that this verse concerns the Holy Prophet’s ﷺ respected uncle, Abū Ṭālib, as well as other uncles who stopped people from causing pain to him, even supported him, but would not believe in the Qur‘ān nor follow it. If so, the pronoun in *يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ* will revert to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and not to the Qur‘ān. (Mazharī with narration by Ibn Abī al-Ḥātim from Sa‘īd ibn Abī Hilāl)

Verses 27 - 32

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذُ وَقَفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَيْتَنَا مُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبُ
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَأ لَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا
يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَآنَهُمْ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ
﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ
﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذُ وَقَفُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ
﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ

السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَحْسِرُنَا عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا وَهُمْ
يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِمْ^ط إِلَّا سَاءَ مَا يَزُرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾
وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَ لَهُمْ^ط وَلِلدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ
يَتَّقُونَ^ط أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And if you were to see when they would be made to stand at the Fire and they will say, “Would that we were sent back, then we would not belie the signs of our Lord, and would join the believers.” [27] In fact, what they were concealing before would become clear to them. And if they were sent back, they would again go for what they were forbidden from, as they are nothing but liars. [28]

And they say, “What does exist is nothing but this worldly life of ours, and we are not going to be raised again.” [29]

And if you were to see when they will be made to stay before their Lord! He will say, “Is this not true?” They will say, “Of course, by our Lord, it is.” He will say, “Then, taste the punishment, for you used to disbelieve.” [30]

Losers indeed are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, yet when the Hour will come upon them suddenly, they will say, “Alas! we have been negligent about it.” And they shall be carrying their burdens on their backs. Beware, evil is the burden they carry! [31]

And the worldly life is nothing but a game and play. And the last abode is surely good for those who fear Allah. Would you still not understand? [32]

Commentary

There are three basic principles of Islam: *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah), *Risalah* (Prophethood) and *'Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter). All other articles of faith fall under these three. These are principles which tell human beings who they are and what is the purpose of their life. This understanding brings a revolution in their lives by showing them the straight path. Out of these, the Belief in the *'Ākhirah*, the be-

lief that there is a reckoning of deeds to come when good shall be rewarded and evil punished, has pragmatically the most revolutionary effects, as it channels every human deed into a particular direction. This is the reason why all subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān revolve around these three. In the verses appearing here, special emphasis has been laid on the reckoning of the 'Ākhirah, its rewards and punishments, and the true nature of the mortal world.

In the first verse, portrayed is the condition of wrong-doers and deniers of truth who, when made to stand by the edges of the Hell, and to observe the horrifying punishment far beyond their imagination, would wish that they were sent back into the world where now they would never falsify the signs and commands of their Lord, would believe in them and would be the true believers.

In the second verse (28), Almighty Allah, who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, exposes the reality of their wish, which would be nothing but the compulsion of circumstances, by making it clear that these people have always been addicted to lying and that they were liars even in their present wish under trial. The root of the problem with them was that they did not relish the realities brought before them by the prophets of Allah. They knew that the prophets were true, yet they raised dust to keep such realities unmanifested either because of their chronic obstinacy or worldly greed. But, in the Hereafter, everything came out in the open. They saw the power of Allah with their own eyes. They realized that the prophets had told the truth. Even, the life after death, something they had denied all along was before them, really and physically. Then, they became direct witnesses to reward and punishment and Hell. After that, they were left with no argument to continue their attitude of denial and opposition. So, when they wished to be returned to the mortal world, that was mere absence of choice.

Then, their All-Knowing, All-Aware Master said that this was what they were saying for now, but if they were to be sent back into the mortal world once again, they would simply forget all about their promises and resolutions and will revert to doing what they have been doing before, and would start getting involved once again with the unlawful from which they were stopped. Therefore, what they were say-

ing now was also a lie and a ploy for deception.

That their present statement has been called a lie could also be based on their ultimate deed, that is, their promising not to lie if returned to the world was not true, for this would never happen because they would still do nothing but keep lying when they go there. This lie could also mean that whatever they were saying at that time was not prompted by true intention. They were doing so simply to buy time and avoid punishment while in the heart of their hearts, they still have no intention of doing it.

As for the statement in the third verse (29): وَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا هِيَ إِلا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا (And they say, "There is nothing real but this worldly life of ours"), it reverts back to the word, عَادُوا ('ādū : would again go for) in verse 28. Thus, it means that should they be returned to the world, then, once they reach there, they will still say that they do not accept any life other than the life of this world. Life here is the life and they were not going to be raised again.

A question arises here: When they have seen their return to life on the day of *Qiyāmah* - and reckoning and accounting and reward and punishment - how can it be possible that they would deny it once they have been sent back into the world?

The answer is that denial does not make it necessary that, in reality, they remain uncertain about these events and facts. Instead, it would be very much like our contemporary disbelievers and wrongdoers who, despite their knowledge of Islamic realities, keep sticking to their denial and falsification simply because of their hostility, that these people, once they are returned to the world, and despite having personal certainty of the realities of the day of *Qiyāmah*, of rising to life back again, and of what would happen in the Hereafter, they would still resort to their old habit of belying and falsification simply because of their wickedness or hostility. This is what the Qur'an has said about some disbelievers within this present life:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا

They are striving hard to deny Our signs - while in themselves being certain of their truth - (only) unjustly, and out of pride - 27:14.

This is also similar to what was said about the Jews that they recognized the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as they would recognize their sons, yet they remained all bent on opposing him.

To sum up, it can be said that the Creator knows, in His eternal knowledge, that the claim of these people that once they have been sent back to the world, they would become ideal Muslims, is a lie and a deception. If they were, as they wished, to be released into the world put together after its destruction, then, once again, they would do exactly the same things they used to do in their earlier lives.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: At the time of reckoning, Allah Ta‘ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to stand near the Scale of Justice and will ask him that he should look at the deeds of his progeny and allow anyone whose good deeds outweigh his sins to go to Paradise. And then He would say: The one I shall admit to the punishment of Hell will be the one about whom I know that he, if sent to the world again, would do the same thing he had been doing earlier.

About the sentence: *وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ* (And they shall be carrying their burdens) in verse 31, it appears in *Hadīth* narrations that, on the day of *Qiyamah*, the deeds of good people will become their ride while the evil deeds of evil people will be placed like a burden on their heads.

Noteworthy here is that disbelievers and sinners will do everything possible to save their skins on the fateful day of Resurrection. They will be nervous and confused. Sometimes they would hide behind false swearing. At others, they would wish to be returned to the world of their earlier experience. But, none of them will say: Now, we have believed and now we shall be doing nothing but what is good - because they would have seen reality and seen it very clearly - that the phase of *Ākhirah*, the Hereafter, is not the Venue of Deeds (*Dār al-‘Amal*), and that the soundness of *‘Imān* (faith) depends on its being *‘bil-ghayb*, that is, without having the need to see what is Unseen. Confirming what has been seen is simply acting in line with what has been personally seen. It is not what the attestation to the truth of Allah and His Messenger is. So, let us be very clear that working for the pleasure of Allah Ta‘ālā, earning its fruits in the form of the promised state of everlasting bliss, hoping to be blessed with Paradise in the Here-

after, and having a good life of peace and tranquility right here are things which can be achieved only (repeat, only) through the life of the present world, neither before, nor after - for it is not possible to achieve these in the universe of spirits (*arwāh*) before it, nor is it possible to achieve it in the domain of the Hereafter, after the world of our experience is no more there.

The Present Life is a Great Blessing: Invest Wisely, and Prosper

Now we can see that the life of this world is a great blessing, and certainly an asset of unmatched value. (To borrow the terminology of modern investors, 'with such chips in one's hands, who would not go for such a deal of deals?' - Tr.). So, this life is an opportunity which must be taken seriously. That is why suicide is forbidden as *Harām* in Islam, and equally prohibited is praying for death, even the making of a wish to die. This is so because it shows ingratitude for a great blessing of Allah Ta‘ālā.

Also clarified here is the basis on which worldly life has been characterized as game and fun in the last verse (32) here, as well as in several other verses of the Qur‘ān, or in many *Aḥādīth* which condemn worldly life. There, by worldly life what is censured is the time of life which is spent being heedless to the thought and concern of Allah Ta‘ālā. Otherwise, no wealth of the world is equal in worth to the time one spends in remembering Allah and doing what He has commanded us to do. This is also confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* which says:

الدُّنْيَا مَلْعُونٌ وَمَلْعُونٌ مَا فِيهَا، إِلَّا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَوْ عَالِمٌ أَوْ مَتَعَلِّمٌ

Dunyā is cursed and cursed is what is in it, except the Dhikr of Allah, or ‘*Ālim* (a knowledgeable person) or a student.

If seen closely, a teacher (of religion) and a student (of religion) are included under the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah because ‘*Ilm*’ means the knowledge which becomes the cause of the pleasure of Allah. So, the learning and teaching of such an ‘*Ilm*’ are both included under *Dhirkrullāh*. In fact, according to the clarification of Imām al-Jazrī, everything done in this world which is done in conformity with obedience to Allah, that is, in accordance with the injunctions of the Sha-rī‘ah, is all included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. This tells us that every-

thing necessary that must be done in this life of the world, all permissible ways of earning one's livelihood, and the fulfillment of other needs which are not beyond the limits set by the Shari'ah, shall all be considered as being included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. In fact, the fulfillment of the rights of family, relatives and friends, neighbours and guests and others has been identified as an act of *Ṣadaqah* (charity) and *'Ibādah* (worship of Allah).

To recapitulate, it can be said that, there is nothing in this world more worthy of Allah's favour than *'Itā'ah* (obedience to Him) and *Dhikr* (remembrance of Him). Then, the dearest and the worthiest possession man has is his time of life in this world. And we know that this time is limited. And no one knows exactly how long his or her life is, seventy years or seventy hours, or no more than the span of a breath. On the other hand, we know that the pleasure of Allah which is the only guarantee of a good life, here and there, can be acquired only within the limits of our life in this world. Now, every human being, whom Allah has blessed with sense and vision, can decide it for himself how he is going to spend these limited moments and hours of his life, and in what. No doubt, common sense would demand that this precious time should mostly be spent in what would meet the pleasure of Allah. As for chores which are necessary to hold this life together, they should be taken to as needed.

In a *Hadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

الْكَيْسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَرَضِيَ بِالْكَفَافِ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

Wise is he who controls his self, and stays pleased with minimal resources, and devotes his deeds for what is after death.

Verses 33 - 41

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كَذَّبُوا وَآوَدُوا حَتَّى آتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا وَلَا مَبْدَلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِنْ نَبَاِ الْمُؤْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا

فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سَلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْيَةٌ وَكُلُّ شَاءِ اللَّهِ
 لَجْمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَى فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ إِنَّمَا
 يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ
 يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا
 مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ
 أَمْثَلَكُمْ مَا فَرَقْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ
 يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا صُمُّ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ
 مَنْ يَشَأِ اللَّهُ يُضِلَّهُ وَمَنْ يَشَأِ يُجْعَلْهُ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
 ﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ
 أَغَيْرِ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ آيَاتُهُ تَدْعُونَ
 فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

We do know the fact that what they say does grieve you, because it is not you that they are belying, but the transgressors are actually denying the signs of Allah.

[33]

And, indeed, messengers have been belied before you, but they stood patient against their being belied, and they were tortured until Our help came to them. And no one can change the words of Allah, and of course, there have come to you some accounts of the messengers. [34]

And if their aversion is too hard on you, then seek, if you can, a tunnel into the earth or a ladder onto the sky in order to bring them a sign. And had Allah willed, He would have brought them all to the right path. So, never be one of the ignorant. [35]

Only those respond who listen. As for the dead, Allah shall raise them after which they shall be returned to-

wards Him. [36]

And they say, “Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?” Say, “Allah is surely powerful enough to send down a sign, but most of them do not know.” [37]

There is no creature moving on the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they all are communities like you. We have not missed anything in the Book. Then, to their Lord they shall be gathered together.[38]

And those who have belied Our signs are deaf and dumb, in layers of darkness. Whom Allah wills, He lets him go astray, and whom Allah wills, He brings him on the straight path. [39]

Say, “Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes to you or the Hour befalls you, would you call someone other than Allah, if you are truthful?” [40] Rather, Him alone you will call and He, if He wills, shall remove what you call Him for and you will forget those you associate with Him. [41]

Commentary

About the statement: **فَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ لَئِيكْفُرُوا بِكَ** (it is not you they are belying, rather, it is the signs of Allah they are denying) in the first verse (33), there is a related event, reported in Tafsīr Mazharī on the authority of a narration by As-Suddiy, according to which, once Akhnas ibn Shuraiq and Abū Jahl, two chiefs of the Quraysh tribe met together. Akhnas asked Abū Jahl: O Abul-Ḥikam, (In Arabia, Abū Jahl was called Abul-Ḥikam - 'man of wisdom' - but because of his hostility to Islam, he became known as Abū-Jahl - 'man of ignorance'), you and me are alone here. There is no third person listening to us. Tell me about Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh **صلى الله عليه وسلم**. Tell me what you really think about him. Is he telling the truth or is he not?

Swearing by Allah, Abū Jahl said: No doubt, Muḥammad **ﷺ** is true. He has never lied all his life. But, the problem is that the thought, that only a single branch of the tribe of Quraysh, the Banū Quṣayy, is going to become the repository of all sorts of virtues and perfections while the rest of the tribe remains totally deprived, is something that we cannot take. It is too much. They have the flag in

their hands. They have the important duty of providing water for the Hajj pilgrims in their hands. They are the custodians of the Ka'bah; its keys are in their hands. Now, if we are to accept that the station of prophethood also belongs to them, what the rest of the Quraysh will be left with?

According to another narration reported from Nā'ijyah ibn Ka'b, once Abū Jahl himself told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: We do not suspect you of lying nor do we belie you, but we do belie the Book or Religion which you have come up with. (Mazhari)

Based on these narrations of *Hadīth*, the verse can be taken in its real sense, that is, 'these disbelievers do not belie you, rather, they belie the signs of Allah.' And this verse could also be taken in the sense that these disbelievers, though belie you obviously but, in reality, the outcome of belying you is itself the belying of Allah and His signs - as it appears in *Hadīth*, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whoever causes pain to me is liable to be judged as causing pain to Allah.

The sixth verse (38): وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ (there is no creature moving ...) tells us that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, animals will also be given life along with human beings. Following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, it has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Baihaqī that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, all animals, beasts and birds will also be given life once again. Such will be the measure of Divine justice that a horned animal which had hit the hornless one shall be subjected to retaliation, as would be the case with others too. And when all injustices have been vindicated, all of them would be commanded to become dust - and then, dust they shall become. This would be the time when the disbeliever will say: يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا [78:40] that is, 'would that I too were to become dust, and thus saved from the punishment of Hell!'

In another narration, again from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, Imām Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, rights of all holders of rights shall be vindicated, to the limit that a hornless goat shall be vindicated against the horned one.

Maximum Regard for the Rights of Allah's Creation

Everyone knows that animals have not been obligated to observe

the percepts of any Shari‘ah or code of laws. Only human beings and Jinns have been so obligated. And it is obvious that the jurisdiction of reward and punishment does not apply to the non-obligated. Therefore, ‘Ulamā have said that the retaliation against the behaviour of animals on the day of Resurrection will not be because of their being obligated, but it will be because of the Lord’s utmost regard for equity and justice - based on which the cruelty of one living creature against the other living creature will be recompensed, with no reward or punishment to follow for the rest of their behaviour. This tells us that the matter of mutual rights, and their infringements, pertaining to the creation of Allah is so serious that even non-obligated animals have not been left as exempted from it. But, it is regrettable that there are even many religiously-observing people who would act negligently about it.

Verses 42 - 45

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ
 وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ
 بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ
 مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
 أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاذًا
 هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقَطَّعَ دَابِرَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَالْحَمْدُ
 لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And We did send messengers to communities before you and put them to hardships and sufferings, so that they may supplicate in humility. [42] Why then, did they not supplicate in humility when Our punishment came upon them? Instead, their hearts were hardened and the Satan adorned for them what they were doing. [43]

Thereafter, when they forgot the advice they were given, We opened for them doors of everything until when they became proud of what they were given, We seized them suddenly and they were left in despair. [44] Thus,

the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man, and praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [45]

Commentary

The verses cited above, if seen in the context of verses appearing immediately previous to them, will show the particular mode in which *Shirk* and *Kufr* have been refuted and *Tauḥīd*, affirmed. First, the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked: If you are hit by a calamity now, for example, the punishment of Allah descends on you right here in this world or comes death or the very Day of Doom breaks loose, then think and answer who it will be you would call for help to keep this calamity away from you or who it would be you will hope to deliver you from this terrible punishment? Do you think these self-sculpted idols in stone or any others from among the creation of Allah you have given His status would come out to help you in your hour of trial? And then, would you still address your cry of distress to them, or would you rather appeal to none but Allah, the One, the All-Powerful?

There can be no better answer from any sensible human being which was given by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on behalf of them - that, at a time of such mass calamity, even the greatest *Mushrik* will forget all about his idols and self-appointed objects of worship and would call none but Allah. If so, the outcome is obvious. These idols of yours, and the objects of worship whom you have given the status of Allah Ta'ālā and whom alone you regard as your problem solvers and granters of wishes, in fact, did not come to help you in your distress, nor could you muster the courage to call them up to help you out. Now then, when would it be that your devotion to them as objects of worship and their role of problems solvers assigned to them by you will start working for you?

What has been said here is a gist of immediately previous verses. Stated here as a matter of supposition is that punishment could befall them within the life of this world as an outcome of their disbelief and disobedience. And, again as a matter of supposition, if the punishment does not visit them in the present life, then, the coming of the *Qiyāmah* is certain after all when account will be taken from all human beings of their deeds and put in effect shall be the law of reward and punishment against these.

‘*Qiyāmah*’ here could mean the commonly acknowledged *Qiyāmah* or the Day of Doom. It is also possible that, by the particular use of the word, ‘As-Sā‘ah’ (The Hour) -[41], the sense could be that of ‘The Smaller Doom’ (*al-Qiyāmatuṣ-Ṣuḡhrā*) which stands activated for every human being immediately after his or her death - as the saying is: **مَنْ مَاتَ فَمُنَّ** **فَقَدْ نَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ** (For one who dies, his or her ‘*Qiyāmah*’ (Doom) stands established right then) because a preliminary sampling of the ultimate reckoning of the *Qiyāmah* will come before the deceased in his or her ‘*Qabr*’ (burial place) and in the state of *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-*Qiyāmah* state) and the sampling of the ultimate reward and punishment due ‘there’ would start showing up right from ‘here.’ (Not too difficult to visualize for those familiar with ‘testers’ and ‘samples’ provided on perfume counters in alcoves of major mega stores which are meant to tell the visitor: ‘WYSIWYG!’ That is, ‘what you see is what you get.’ - Tr.)

But, despite warnings given in these verses to disobedient people against their attitude of complacency - lest there comes upon them some sudden Divine punishment as has come on past communities, or death, or ultimately the very reckoning after *Qiyāmah* about which there is no doubt - such people have a mind of their own. They tend to take the whole world on the analogy of their limited experience in the already limited time of their life which makes them compulsive excuse seekers in such matters. Present before them the warnings and intimations given by blessed prophets and they will bypass them as ambiguous thinking, specially at times, and which reappear in all ages, when there are people around who, in spite of their open disobedience to Allah and His Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم**, keep prospering in wealth, property, influence, recognition and power, almost everything. So, on the one hand, here is what they witness with their own eyes, while, on the other hand, is the word of the blessed messenger of Allah who tells them that punishments do come upon the disobedient as it is the customary practice of the One they disobey. Now, as they look at the two sides of the argument simultaneously, then, their own excuse seeking disposition and, of course, the Satan hoodwinks them into believing that the word of the prophet is a deception or delusion.

Now, for an answer, we can turn to the present verses where Almighty Allah has pointed out to the law which applies to what hap-

pened to past communities. It was said: **وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَاسِ ۗ وَالصَّرَآءُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ** It means that Allah did send, before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, His prophets to other communities which were tested in two ways. Firstly, they were tested with hardships and sufferings to see if these would become the cause of their turning to Allah. But, when they failed in this test and, rather than turn to Allah and abandon disobedience, became all the more engrossed in it, then, they were subjected to a different kind of test. The doors of worldly comforts were opened to them. They had everything they could wish for in the material world so that through these blessings they could recognize their Benefactor and remember Him. But they, rather than be grateful to Him, were so lost in the labyrinth of luxury that they forgot all about the messages and teachings of Allah and His Messenger. Thus, having traded their souls for the glitter of fleeting comforts, they failed in both tests, and their case before Allah became conclusively established against them. So, they were seized by the punishment of Allah suddenly which destroyed them to the last man. This punishment had come upon earlier communities too, down from the heavens and up from beneath the earth, and such mass punishments have come in other ways too which had reduced whole peoples and nations to ashes. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were deluged in the great flood which did not spare even mountain peaks. The people of ‘Ād were hit by an eight-day long wind storm which left not one survivor. The people of Thamūd were destroyed through a terrifying sound. The entire habitation of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned, the remnants of which still exist in the west of Jordan in the form of a low lying water level which is not conducive to the survival of any sea life. Therefore, it is called The Dead Sea, and also the Sea of Lūṭ.

In short, these were some forms in which Divine punishment befell past communities as a result of their disobedience destroying whole nations and peoples in one stroke. However, it has also happened that such people died away naturally leaving no one behind to remember them.

Also clarified in these verses is that Almighty Allah does not send down His punishment upon any people all of a sudden. Instead, punishments come at the level of admonitions the purpose of which is to make it possible for people to shed their heedlessness and take to the

correct path. We also know from here that the hardship or distress which is sent to people on the earth as punishment for them, though outwardly looks like punishment but, in reality, it is not. Instead of that, it serves the purpose of a wake-up call designed to shake people out of their heedlessness. As such, it is nothing but mercy. Says another verse of the Qur'an: *وَلَنذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ*, that is, We will make them taste a lesser punishment, leaving the greatest punishment aside, so that they may return - 32:21.

Removed from these very verses is the doubt about this world which is no place for rewards (*Dārul-Jazā'*), but a place where one must do what one should (*Dārul-'Amal*). What then is the sense of being punished in this world where good and bad seem to be weighed on the same scale and where, in fact, the evil ones fare better than the good? The answer is clear. The real reward and punishment will come on that one day of *Qiyāmah*, which is known as the very Day of Judgement (*Yowmud-Dīn*) or the Day of Retribution (*Yowm al-Jazā'*).. But, some hardships are sent in this world as a sample of punishment (*'Adhāb*) and some comforts as a sample of reward (*Thawāb*) which are a token of mercy from Allah. Some spiritual masters have even said that all comforts of the world are indicators of the comforts of Paradise so that one learns to long for them. As for all those hardships and sorrows that afflict man in this world, they too are indicators of the punishment of the Hereafter so that man prepares to stay safe against them. Unless there is a sample or model in sight, no one can be persuaded towards anything, nor can anyone be detracted from any impending danger or evil.

So, the comforts and discomforts of this mortal life are not rewards and punishments as such. They are, rather, samples or tokens of rewards and punishments. We may say that this whole world is a show room of *Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) where the trader displays the demonstration pieces of his merchandise in front of his store or shop so that they could attract the buyer. Thus, we can see that worldly prosperity or poverty, happiness or sorrow are not reward and punishment in the real sense. Actually, they are a method of bringing the creation of Allah alienated from its Creator back to His fold.

At the end of verse 42 itself, this element of wisdom finds expres-

sion through the words: **لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ** (so that they may supplicate in humility). It means that the hardship inflicted on them during their life in the present world was really not aimed at punishing them. Since everyone turns to Allah naturally when in distress, the purpose was to make people turn to Allah through a little hardship. This tells us that the hardship or pain which visits a person or group as punishment is, in a sense, the working of Divine mercy.

As for the statement: **فَتَفْتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ** (We opened for them doors of everything) appearing in the third verse (44), it warns human beings at large that no one should be deceived by seeing the affluence of persons or groups and hasten to the conclusion that these were the people on the correct path and that their life was a model of success. One should never forget that among them there could be some of those disobedient ones who have been picked out to be seized with sudden and grave punishment.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** said: When you see blessings and wealth raining upon someone - though he is deep in sin and disobedience - then, know that he is being lured into destruction (*Istidrāj*), that is, his affluence is an indicator of his being seized in punishment. (Narrated by Aḥmad from ‘Āqabah ibn ‘Amir as in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Following a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah ibn Al-Ṣāmit, leading commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported that the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** said:

When Allah Ta‘ālā wills to have a nation survive and grow, He creates in them two qualities: (1) moderation in everything they do, and (2) modesty and chastity, that is, abstinence from indulging in what is not right. And when Allah Ta‘ālā wills to destroy a nation, He opens for them the doors of breach of faith (*Khiyānah*), that is, they appear to be successful in the world despite their breaches of faith and wrong doings.

In the last verse (45), it was said that, when the mass punishment of Allah Ta‘ālā came, the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man. Said immediately after was: **وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ** (And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds) where the hint given is: Whenever the wrongdoers and the unjust are visited by some punishment or calamity, that is a blessing for the whole world for which people should be grateful

Verses 46 - 49

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مِّنْ آلِهٍ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ ۗ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْذَقُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۚ فَمَنْ أَمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say, "Tell me, if Allah takes away your hearing and your sights and sets a seal on your hearts, which god other than Allah can bring it back to you?" See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, still they turn away. [46]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes upon you abruptly or manifestly, shall any people be destroyed except the unjust?" [47]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warners. So, whoever believes and comes to correct himself, then, there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.[48] And those who have belied Our signs, punishment shall visit them, since they used to commit sins. [49]

Verses 50 - 51

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنْ أَتَّبِعْ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالبَصِيرُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ وَاٰلِٓٔٓهِٖٓ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures

of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow but that which is revealed to me.” Say, “Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal? Do you, then, not reflect?”

[50]

And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord, with no one, other than Him, to support or to intercede. May be they abstain.

[51]

Commentary

The Demand of Miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Many miracles and signs of Allah had already appeared before the disbelievers (*Kuffār*) of Makkah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this world as an orphan. Unschooled and untutored, he lived his whole life as a total *Ummiyy* (unlettered). He was born in a land with no scholar or institution of learning, near or far. For a full forty years of his blessed age, he lived before the eyes of the entire people of Makkah in this state of chaste tutorlessness. Then, after forty long years, it was all of a sudden that there gushed forth from his blessed speech such mind-boggling stream of words the eloquence of which challenged and silenced the masters and authorities of Arab diction for ever. Besides being wisdom and meaning at their sublimest, its far reaching insight covered pragmatic human needs too right unto the day of *Qiyāmah*. Along with these, he gifted to the world a practical system for the nurture and flowering of the perfect universal man. No human ingenuity or effort can ever achieve something like this. And the system he brought was no exercise in pure theory for others to build upon, for he himself demonstrated it practically and succeeded in proving that it worked. Thus, the human multitude of his time which had taken to eating, drinking, sleeping and waking as the purpose of their lives likes bulls, goats, horses and donkeys, to them he gave their essential lesson in humanity. He changed their orientation. He made them look up to the high purpose for which they were created. Thus, every period in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the great events which took place during it, were all a miracle in their place, and very certainly, a sign of Allah. In such a background, there was no room left for anyone just and reasonable to demand any sign or

miracle.

But, the disbelievers from among the Quraysh, despite this, demanded that miracles of a different kind be shown to them according to their own wishes. Of the miracles demanded by them, there were some Allah Almighty showed to them clearly. They had demanded that they would like to see the moon parted in two. The well-known miracle of *Shaqqul-Qamar* (the parting of the moon) was witnessed, not only by the Quraysh, but by a great number of people living in the world of that time.

But, they kept sticking to their disbelief, obstinacy and hostility despite the manifestation of such a miracle at their own request and ignored the sign of Allah by saying: *إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ* (this is nothing but a continuous magic), that is, it was a magic which has been there for ever. They saw, they understood, yet they kept on asking for ever-new miracles as mentioned earlier (verse 37): *لَوْ لَا نَزَّلَ عَلَيْنَا آيَةً مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَئِنْ أَكْثَرْتُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* that is, they ask if Muḥammad ﷺ is really the Messenger of Allah, why is it that no miracle has been shown through him? In answer, the Qur‘ān asks the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them that Allah does have everything within his power. He has Himself manifested many miracles and signs without their asking for them. Similarly, He is quite capable of manifesting miracles they demanded. But, they have to know that there is a customary practice of Allah in this matter. When a people are shown the miracle they have demanded, and then, when they do not come to believe in it, they are seized by a sudden punishment. Therefore, it was in the very interest of those people that the miracles demanded by them should not be manifested. But, there are many people who still do not understand the wisdom of this action and keep insisting that they be shown miracles of their choosing.

In the present verses, the questions asked and demands made by these people have been dealt with in a particular manner.

The disbelievers of Makkah had presented three demands before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on different occasions: (1) If you are really a Messenger of Allah, bring to us the treasures of the whole world through the power of miracle; (2) If your are really a Messenger of Allah, tell us about everything good and bad going to happen to us

in the future, so that we can arrange to acquire what is good and abstain from what is bad beforehand; and (3) Explain to us for we cannot understand how can someone who is a human being like us, is from us, was born from a mother and father like us, and does things like eating, drinking, and walking around in streets and bazaars as we do, all of a sudden become a Messenger of Allah. Had this been an angel, whose creation and attributes would have been more distinguished than ours, we would have accepted him as a Messenger of Allah, and our leader.

In answer to these questions, it was said:

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ
 إِنِ اتَّبَعُوا إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ .

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am angel. But, I follow that which is revealed to me."

In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is saying that he can only be asked to prove what he claims, that is, he is a Messenger of Allah. He conveys the guidance given by Him to human beings, and follows it personally and asks others as well to do so. There is no dearth of proofs in this matter for they are many.

So, to prove his prophethood, it is not necessary that the messenger of Allah should become the owner of all the treasures of Allah, nor is it necessary that he should possess the knowledge of everything, big or small, which lies in the domain of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), nor is it necessary that he be an angel having attributes other than human. Instead of all that, the mission and office of a messenger of Allah is simply to follow the Wahy (revelation) sent from Allah Ta‘ālā - which includes his own acting in accordance with it as well as inviting others to follow it.

These are precise rules of Guidance. They not only clarify the reality of the office of a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) but also help erase the false notions about a Messenger entertained by the disbelieving people. And as implied here indirectly, Muslims too have been instructed that they should not take their Messenger to be God as the Christians do, nor assign proprietary rights in Godhood to him. The realization of