

example, in Sūrah An-Nisā,’ it was said:

وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ

(‘O those who believe, be upholder of justice - witnesses for Allah) ‘even though against yourselves or the parents and the relatives.’ - 4:135.

In the same vein, there is another command given in Sūrah al-Ma‘idah which says:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا

(O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). ‘And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice’ - 5:8.

It means that enmity with a people should not make you willing to witness or to judge against the dictate of justice. Finally, as for upholding truth and justice in matters other than witness and judgement, such as, mutual conversations referred to earlier, the best policy is not to lie, not to speak ill of anyone behind his back, not to say anything which would hurt others, or cause physical or financial loss to anyone.

The Ninth Command: To Fulfill the Covenant of Allah - i.e., Breach of Pledge is Ḥarām

The ninth command given in this verse is to fulfill the covenant of Allah and avoid breaking the solemn pledge given. It was said: **وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ** (and fulfill the covenant of Allah). The ‘covenant of Allah’ could mean the pledge that was taken from every human being at the beginning of life when all human beings were asked: **أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ** (‘Am I not your *Rabb*, your Lord?’). All of them said: **بلى** (‘*Bala*’:yes), that is, ‘there is no doubt that You are our *Rabb*, our Lord.’ This pledge demands but that we do not disobey any command given by our Lord, our creator, cherisher, nurturer and caretaker. Consider everything He has asked to do at the level of the highest possible priority and take it to be the most important of all that we do. And as for things He has asked us not to do, we should not go even near them - even stay away from falling in doubts about them. Thus, the essence of this covenant is that we should obey Allah Ta‘ālā totally and perfectly.

It is also possible that ‘covenant’ here means the particular pledges

mentioned in the Qur‘ān on different occasions - out of which are these verses the Tafsīr of which is before you (and in which ten injunctions have been described emphatically).

‘*Ulama* say that, in this pledge, included there is the fulfilling of vows (*nadhr* or *mannat*), a way through which one gives a pledge to Allah Ta‘ālā that he or she would do something. In another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān, this has also been mentioned more explicitly by saying: **يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ** that is, ‘the righteous servants of Allah fulfill their *nadhr* (vow).’

In short, it can be said that this command is, though ninth in the series, but in terms of its reality, it encompasses all imperatives and prohibitions of Islamic legal injunctions.

It will be noticed that, at the end of this second verse (152) too, there appears a sentence of persuasion, that is: **ذِكْرِكُمْ وَضَعِكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ** (This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice).

Then comes the third verse (153) where the tenth injunction has been described as follows: **وَإِنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السَّبِيلَ فَتَفْرَقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِي** (And: This is My path [headed] straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way).

In this verse, the word: **هَذَا** (*hādha*:this) denotes the religion of Islam, or the Qur‘ān. Also possible is that the reference may be to Sūrah Al-An‘ām itself because, here too, the full range of the fundamentals of Islam - *Tauhīd*, *Risālah* and principles governing injunctions of the Shari‘ah - find mention. As for the word: **مُسْتَقِيمًا** (*mustaqīm*), it is a distinctive adjunct of this path of the religion of Islam and which has been used as an adverb in the syntactical arrangement to indicate that being ‘*mustaqīm*’ (straight) is an integral attribute of Islam as a religion. After that, it was said: **فَاتَّبِعُوهُ** (So, follow it). It means: ‘When you have come to know that the religion of Islam is My path, and that alone is the straight path, you have before you the only path headed towards the desired destination, therefore, this is the path you shall follow.’

After that, it was said: **وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السَّبِيلَ فَتَفْرَقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِي** (and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way). The

word: سُبُل (*subul*) is the plural form of *sabīl* which also means ‘way.’ The sense of the statement is that the real and true way of reaching Allah Ta‘ālā, and achieving His pleasure (*riḍā*) is just one. But, people in this world have carved out different ways on their own depending on what they think it is, or should be. The advice being given is: You do not follow any of these ways because these ways are really not the ways to reach Allah and therefore, whoever walks these ways shall go astray far away from the path of Allah.

It is said in Tafsīr Mazḥarī that the purpose of sending the Qur‘ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم is to make people subordinate their ideas, intentions and proposals to the Qur‘ān and Sunnah and cast their lives into the blessed model offered by them. But, what is happening is that people are bent on moulding the Qur‘ān and Sunnah into the frame of their ideas and proposals. As a result, an *Āyah* of the Qur‘ān, or a *Hadīth* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which does not meet their fancy, or is found to be contrary to what they would like it to be, would become the target of their so-called enterpretation until it fits into the mold of their desires. This is the starting point from where emerge other ways which lead people astray - ways which throw them in doubts and innovations in established religion (*shubḥāt* and *bid‘āt*). These are the ways from which people have been instructed to stay away in this verse.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a report in Musnad of Dārimī which says: ‘Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ drew a vertical line and said: “This is the path of Allah.” Then, he drew other lines on its right and left and said: “These are *subul*” (that is, the ways following which has been prohibited in this verse) and, then, he said: “Set upon every one of these ways there is a Shayṭān who, after enticing people away from the straight path, welcomes them to this” (the ways under the charge of Shayṭān, as shown in the drawing). After that, as proof, he recited this verse (153).’

Then, once again towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذُرِّيَّتِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِكُمْ وَتَتَّقُونَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing).

This completes the Tafsīr of these three verses and the ten prohibitions delineated therein. Finally, have a look at the significant style

the Holy Qur'an employs when described at this place were ten injunctions. They do not appear here as ten Articles of Law, something modern law books would love to do. Instead of doing something like that, first it describes five injunctions, then says: **ذِكْرُكُمْ وَرِضَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ** (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand). Then, after having described four more injunctions, it repeats the same sentence with the difference that it says: **تَذَكَّرُونَ** (observe the advice) in place of: **تَعْقِلُونَ** (understand) at the end. And after that, described there is the last injunction in a separate *Āyah* (verse), and once again, repeated there is the same core sentence with the difference that said here is: **تَتَّقُونَ** (be God-fearing) in place of: **تَذَكَّرُونَ** (observe the advice) at the end.

There are many elements of wisdom in this subtle style of the Holy Qur'an:

First of all, the Holy Qur'an is not simply a coercive law like the usual laws of this world. In fact, it is a law which is genuinely generous and patronizing in the essential sense. That is why, with every law, suggestions are given which would make them come easy. Then, knowing Allah Ta'ālā and having the concern for 'Ākhirah are the most effective enforcers of law, in public or in private, and are the only solution human beings have in their problems with law. Therefore, at the end of all the three verses, introduced there are words which would steer human orientation away from the material world and fix it towards Allah Ta'ālā and the 'Ākhirah.

There are five injunctions described in the first verse (151), that is: (1) To avoid Shirk, (2) to avoid being disobedient to parents, (3) To avoid killing children, (4) To avoid shameful acts, and (5) to avoid killing unjustly. What is used at their end is the word: **تَعْقِلُونَ** (understand) because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* just did not think that there was anything wrong with them. Therefore, it was suggested that they would do well by forsaking their blind following of ancestral customs and their own whims, if they used a little reason.

The second verse (152) describes four injunctions, that is: (1) Not to eat up the property of the orphan by false means, (2) not to weigh or measure short, (3) to be true and just in speech, and (4) to fulfill the covenant of Allah.

These are things, even these ignorant ones knew to be necessary - some of them would even act likewise. But, mostly these were not heeded to. The only remedy of heedlessness is what is called: تَذَكُّرٌ (tazkirah:remembrance) that is, the remembrance of Allah and 'Ākhirah. Therefore, at the end of this verse, the word used was: تَذَكَّرُوا (observe the advice).

The third verse (153) contains the instruction to follow the straight path and to avoid doing the contrary by following other ways. Since, there is nothing more authentic but the fear of Allah which would tear a human being away from the clutches of his misguiding thoughts and desires, therefore, at the end of it, said there was: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (so that you may be God-fearing).

Finally, at all these three places, the word used was: وَصِيَّةٌ (waṣīyyah) which is an order to do something. Therefore, as cited earlier, some noble *Sahābah* رضى الله عنهم اجمعين said: Whoever wishes to see the sealed will and testament of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him recite these three verses.

Verses 154 - 157

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا
 لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾
 وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ
 ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ عَلَي طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا
 وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَفْلِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْ
 عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابَ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ
 وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا
 سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا
 يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Then We gave Musa the Book, complete for the one who does good, and explaining everything in detail, and a

guidance and a mercy, so that they may believe in meeting their Lord. [154]

And this is a blessed Book We have sent down. So follow it and fear Allah, so that you may be favoured with mercy, [155] lest you should say, “The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied.” [156] Or you should say, “If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the right path than they.” Now there has come to you a clear sign from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy. So, who is more unjust than the one who belies the verses of Allah and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our verses with an evil punishment, because of their turning away. [157]

Commentary

The reason of being ‘ignorant of (or heedless to) what they studied - 156’ was not that the Torah and the Injīl were non-existent in the Arabic language because it is possible to become informed of the contents through a translation, in fact, this happens. Instead, this is because the people of the Book never took steps to educate and inform the people of Arabia in the mores of monotheism. That something falls within hearing distance casually is customarily ineffective as a meaningful warning - though, this much note of warning makes search and consideration obligatory, and on this basis, the coming of Divine punishment against the abandonment of *Tauhīd* (the belief in the Oneness of Allah) was possible. However, this raises no doubts about the universal nature of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā ‘Isā عليهما السلام, because the particularization of this universality of message is with our master, may the blessing of Allah be upon him, and peace - and this particularization is in terms of the totality of fundamentals and subsidiaries, otherwise, in fundamentals, following all prophets is obligatory on all peoples. So, the punishment would have been proper on this basis. But, this would have been an excuse advanced initially. Now that too is no more valid. The argument of Allah is already established.

As for their second saying: *لَوْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لَكُنَّا أَهْلَىٰ مِنْهُمْ* (‘If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the

right path than they’), a question and its answer has already appeared under the commentary on verse 19 of Sūrah A-Mā‘idah earlier in this volume. This concerns the hope of salvation during the period of *Fa-trah* or gap between prophets.

Verse 158

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ
بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ ط يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا
إِيمَانُهَا كَمْ تَكُنْ أَمِنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ط
قُلْ أَنْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord. The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith. Say, “Wait, of course, we are waiting.” [158]

Commentary

The major portion of Sūrah Al-An‘ām has been revealed to correct the beliefs and deeds of the people of Makkah and the disbelievers of Arabia and to remove their doubts and to answer questions raised by them.

All through the Sūrah, specially in the previous verses, the people of Makkah and the rest of Arabia were given to understand that they had seen open signs and miracles at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had heard about the prophecies of past books and prophets about him. Then, they had themselves listened to the recitation of the Qur‘ān from one totally unlettered (*Ummiyy*) - a standing miracle on its own. Now the avenues of truth lay open before them. The argument of Allah Ta‘ālā stood conclusively established against them. Believing was all they needed to do. What else could it be they were waiting for before they would do that?

This subject was eloquently put in the cited verse by saying:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ

(They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord).

In other words, it means: 'Are these people waiting to believe only when the angels of death reach them, or are they waiting to be on the plains of Resurrection when Allah Ta'ālā will come to decide destinies, or are they waiting to see some last signs of the coming of the fateful Day of Doom. That the most exalted *Rabb* of all shall appear on the Judgement Day has been mentioned in several verses of the Holy Qur'an. Speaking in the same terms, a verse from Sūrah Al-Baqarah says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ

They are looking forward to nothing but that Allah comes upon them in canopies of clouds with the angels and the matter is closed - 2:210.

The state in which Allah Ta'ālā shall appear on the Judgement Day cannot be conceived by human imagination. Therefore, in the case of such verses, the standard creed of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* and righteous elders of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one should believe in what has been mentioned in the Qur'an, have faith in it, then resign the matter of how it shall come to pass to Divine knowledge. For instance, in the case of the verse quoted above, one should be certain that Allah Ta'ālā will be present on the Day of Judgement - without having to worry about the state and orientation in which this would happen.

Next in the verse, it was said:

يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا حَيْرَاتٌ

(The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person will be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith).

The warning given here is that, as soon as some of these signs of Allah appear, the doors of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed. Anyone who had not come to believe before this happens will find his or her declaration of faith after that as unacceptable. As for a person who had be-

lied before but had done nothing by way of good deeds will find that his or her act of *Taubah* and the resolve to be good in future deeds - after these signs - are not acceptable. In short, that will be ominous time when the *Taubah* of a disbeliever from his disbelief and the *Taubah* of a sinner from his sin and disobedience, even if offered, will not be accepted.

The reason is that *’Imān* (faith) and *Taubah* (repentance) can be accepted only upto the time it remains within the choice of a person. Once Divine punishment and the reality of the-life-to-come become open to perception, every human being stands compelled to believe and abstain from sin. A faith under duress and a repentance under threat are not acceptable.

There are many verses of the Qur‘ān which mention how the people condemned to Hell will start wailing on arrival there. They will make big promises that should they be returned back to the mortal world, they would do nothing but believe and be good in deeds. But, the answer given to them will be: The time for belief and deed is over. What you are saying now is because you have no other choice. This is not valid.

Explaining this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said : When comes the last among the signs of the *Qiyāmah* and the sun will rise from the West instead of the East seeing which the disbelievers of the whole world will start saying that they now believe. All those who had been disobedient will turn into the obedient ones. But, at that time, no believing and no repenting will remain worth accepting. (Al-Baghawī on authority from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah)

However, what we do know from the Qur‘ānic explanation is the fact that there will be the manifestation of some signs following which the door of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed - no *Taubah* from a disbeliever or sinner will be accepted after that. But, the Qur‘ān itself has not made it clear as to what that sign is.

In the Tafsīr of this verse, there is a *Hadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

‘*Qiyāmah* will not stand established until passes the event

that the sun rises from the West. When people see this sign, they will all believe. This will be the time about which the Qur‘ān says - believing then will not benefit anyone.’

The following details about it have been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudayfah ibn Usayd رضى الله عنه: Once the *Ṣaḥābah* were talking among themselves about the signs of *Qiyāmah* when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came in. At that time, he said: *Qiyāmah* will not come in fact until you have seen ten signs: (1) The sun rising from the West, (2) a particular kind of smoke, (3) the animal of the earth, (4) the coming out of Gog and Magog, (5) the coming of ‘Īsā عليه السلام, (6) the coming of Anti-Christ (Dajjāl), (7) the sinking of land at three places - in the East ..., (8) in the West, and ... (9) in the Arabian Peninsula, and (10) a fire which will emerge from an abyss in Eden and will move driving people ahead of it.

And in the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Out of these signs, the first to come will be the rising of the sun from the West, and the appearance of the animal of the earth.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī, in his *Tazkirah*, and Ḥaḍīf ibn Ḥajar, in *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, while citing a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه, have also reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: After this event, that is, after the rising of the sun from the West, the world will keep surviving for one hundred and twenty years. (Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī)

After these details, there is a question. According to authentic religious reports, when Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام will return to the world, he will invite people to believe. People would believe. Islam will become the religion of the world. It is obvious that, should believing at that time remain unacceptable, this call and the entry of people in the fold of Islam would become meaningless.

In *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, commentator Ālūsī answers this by saying that the event of the sun rising from the West will take place after the passage of a long time since the appearance of Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام - and that would be the time when the door of *Taubah* will close.

‘Allāmah Balqīnī and others say that it is not improbable that this

prohibition of faith and repentance being unacceptable, as tied with the rising of the sun from the West, may not remain operative through the last period. It could be that this restriction changes after the passage of some time, and faith and repentance start being acceptable again. (Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī) (Allah knows best)

To sum up, it can be said that: Though, the sign after the appearance of which *Taubah* will not be acceptable has not been clarified in the present verse, but, from the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has become evident that it means the rising of the sun from the West.

Then, remains the question: Why has the Qur‘ān itself left it unclarified? According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt, the very ambiguity of the Qur‘ān at this place is more suited to the task of putting heedless human beings on alert so that they could draw their essential lesson from all forthcoming events of ominous nature and hasten to repent and correct their course of life.

In addition to that, in this ambiguity and brevity, there is the advantage that everyone will be alerted to the danger that the way the door of repentance shall be closed when the sun rises from the West for all human beings, the same way it happens in a miniaturized form when, for everyone personally and individually, the door of *Taubah* is shut close for one at the time of death. This phenomena has been described in another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān clearly as well:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْفَنَّا

And *Taubah* is not accepted from those who keep committing sins until death visits one of them and they say, ‘now I repent - 4-18.’

Explaining this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ تُقْبَلُ مَا لَمْ يُعْرِغْ

The *Taubah* of a servant of Allah continues being accepted until comes the agony of death (when Rūḥ comes into the throat and creates a recognizable, parting, hurtling, sound).

This tells us that at the time when man is taking his last breath

and the soul is about to depart from the body - since angels of death come in sight - even then, repentance is not accepted. It is obvious enough that this state of affairs too is a significant sign from Allah. Therefore, included under this verse is this time of death as well - as it is also in the saying of some ‘*Ulamā*’ and other pious elders reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ: مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ كَامَتْ يَمَامُهُ that is, ‘whoever dies, his Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*) has dawned at that very instant.’ This is so because the place and time of deeds is all over. What one expects in return for his deeds in his mortal life, he would start seeing a sample from it right from the time he has been lowered into his grave. The Persian poet, Ṣā‘ib has put it pithily in poetry:

توبه بارا نفس باز پسین دست زدست بیخبر دیر رسیدی درمحمل بستند

Your repentance after the last breath stands rejected

Unaware man, you are late, the door of the beloved is closed.

Worth noting here is the nuance of the Arabic language in that it was first said in the verse: أَوْ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ (or come some signs of your Lord) and then, by repeating the same sentence, it was said: يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا (The day come some signs of your Lord, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him). It will be noticed that no pronoun has been used here to make the statement brief. This seems to suggest that: ‘بَعْضُ آيَاتِ’ (*Ba‘du Āyāt*: some signs) mentioned first are not the same as those mentioned in: ‘بَعْضُ آيَاتِ’ (*Ba‘du Āyāt*: some signs) of the second sentence, that is, they are different from each other. This may be a hint towards the substance of the narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Usayd رضى الله عنه you have read a little earlier in which he has enumerated ten important signs of the coming of *Qiyāmah*, the last of them being the rising of the sun from the West which is symbolic of the discontinuation of the acceptance of *Taubah*.

At the end of the verse, it was said: قُلْ إِنظِرُونَا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ (Say, “Wait, of course, we are waiting”). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people that they, despite the arguments of Allah conclusively established against them, still wish to wait for death or the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), then, they are welcome to it. They can wait if they must. As for us, we too shall be waiting to see what their *Rabb* decides to do with them.

Verses 159 - 160

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ
 إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ
 جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرٌ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا
 يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing. [159]

Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged. [160]

Commentary

As pointed out earlier, a major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām is devoted to addressing the disbelievers of Makkah and answering questions asked by them. They were told that the straight path to Allah was following the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Before him, during the time of past prophets, salvation depended on following their books and code of laws. The same thing is true today. Today, salvation lies in following nothing but the Shari'ah brought by him. So, they were asked to become reasonable, take the straight path and avoid exchanging it with paths of error right and left. If they did that, they were warned, these ways of error will throw them far away from the way of Allah.

The first (159) of the two verses carries a general address included wherein are the disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and Christians and Muslims, all of them. Addressing them, stated there is the sad end of those who turn away from the straight path of Allah - and the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should have nothing to do with those who take to the ways of error. Then, out of these, there are those ways of error which take one in a direction totally opposite to what the straight path is, such as the ways of the disbe-

lievers, polytheists and the people of the Book. Then, there are other ways too, which do not, though, take one all the way in the opposite direction, but misguide them any way by pulling them away from the straight path and putting them on ways to the right and left. These are ways of 'doubts' and 'innovations' in the true and settled faith (*Shubhāt* and *Bid‘āt*). They too lead one astray.

So, it was said: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَسْتُ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِأَنَّ كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing).

In this verse, made clear first was that the Messenger of Allah was free of any responsibility concerning those who land themselves into the ways of error. The noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah, and peace be upon him, had nothing to do with them. Then, they were given the notice of warning that their case was, sufficient to say, in the hands of Allah Ta‘ālā, and it was He who would punish them on the day of *Qiyāmah*.

As for 'having made divisions in religion and turning into factions' mentioned in the verse is concerned, it refers to the practice of not following the basic principles of established religion, rather electing to follow personal whims and desires, or become willing victims of Satanic instigations and deceptions, as an outcome of which, one would add something new to it, or leave some of that which is already there.

Stern Warnings against Making Additions in Established Religion

According to *Tafsīr Mazharī*, included here are the peoples of the past communities as well, those who had abandoned their basic religion and had added to it things on their own - and with them, there are the deviators and innovators (the partisans of *Bid‘ah*) of this *Ummah* too, who keep adding baseless things, on their own, into the *Dīn* of Islam. About this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

‘My *Ummah* will face the same conditions faced by the Banī Isrā‘īl. The kind of evil practices in which they got involved will also affect the people of my *Ummah*. The Banī Isrā‘īl had split into seventy two sects. My *Ummah* will break up into

seventy three sects - all of them will go to Hell, except one. The *Ṣaḥābah* asked about the group which would be so blessed with salvation. He said: 'مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي' (*mā anā ‘alaihi wa aṣḥābī*: That on which am I and my Companions) - that is, the collective body of people which follows my way and the way of my *Ṣaḥābah* will be blessed with salvation. (This narration from Sayyidnā ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه has been reported by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd)

Al-Ṭabarānī has reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-‘Azam رضى الله عنه that he told Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها that the sects mentioned in this verse are the people of Bid‘ah (innovators in established religion) who, following their whims and desires, invent new ways in religion. The same view has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه with sound authority. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically prohibited the invention and introduction of new methods in religion on one’s own.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Al-‘Irbād ibn Sāriyah, Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and others have reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

‘Those who live after me will see many differences. Therefore, (I order you that) you should, abiding by my *Sunnah* (way) and the *Sunnah* of my rightly-guided successors (*Khulafā’ ar-Rāshidīn*) strictly, keep doing what you do while adhering to nothing but these, avoid the temptation of falling for new methods because everything introduced anew into the religion is *Bid‘ah*, and every *Bid‘ah* is error and straying.’

In another *Ḥadīth*, he said: ‘One who stood separated from the *Jamā‘ah*, even to the measure of a span between the extended thumb and the little finger, he has taken out the band of allegiance to Islam from around his neck. (Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad)

According to *Tafsīr Maḥzarī*, ‘*Jamā‘ah*’ in this *Ḥadīth* means ‘the *Jamā‘ah* of *Ṣaḥābah*,’ that is, the collective body or group of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The reason is that Allah Ta‘ālā sent our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلى الله عليه وسلم as His *Rasūl*, and gave him the *Qur‘ān*, and blessed him with another (kind of) *Waḥy* (revelation) - which is called the *Ḥadīth* or *Sunnah*. Then, there

are many difficult or brief or ambiguous verses in the Qur‘ān. For their Tafsīr or explanation, Allah Ta‘ālā promised that He shall have these clarified through His *Rasūl*. The statement: *ثُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا نَسَبَ* (After that, to make it clear to you is on Us - 75:19) means exactly this.

So, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* explained the difficulties and ambiguities of the Qur‘ān and groomed his direct disciples, that is, the *Ṣaḥābah* into the many modes of his *Sunnah* through his word and deed. Therefore, the conduct of the *Ṣaḥābah* as a major collective entity (placed by Divine design into a trail-blazing role as mirrors of their blessed master) is in itself the statement and the explanation of the Divinely-ordained Shari‘ah of Islam.

Therefore, it is the good fortune of a Muslim that he or she should follow the *Kitāb* of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the *Rasūl* of Allah - and whenever one faces a doubt in the meaning of an ‘*Āyah* of the Qur‘ān or the sense of a *Ḥadīth*, one should go by the meaning and sense preferred by the noble *Ṣaḥābah*.

Unfortunately, as a result of people ignoring this sacrosanct rule of conduct, Islam had to see the emergence of different sects which would set aside the proven conduct and explanations of the *Ṣaḥābah* and take the liberty of saying what they wished and declare it to be the very meaning of the Qur‘ān and *Sunnah*. These are the ways of error the Holy Qur‘ān has repeatedly warned against and the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* has emphatically prohibited it throughout his blessed life, at times, even castigated those acting against this rule with *la‘nah*.

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah Aṣ-Ṣiddīqah *رضي الله عنها* reports that the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* said that on six persons he casts his *la‘nah*, and may the *la‘nah* of Allah be upon them: (1) The person who has added something to the Book of Allah from his side (that is, whether added some words, or carried the meaning to such excessive limits as is contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥābah*), (2) the person who has denied the Divinely-ordained destiny, (3) the person who hoists himself into a position of authority over the Muslim *Ummah* by force (or deceit) so that he would honour the person disgraced by Allah, and disgrace the person given honour by Allah, (4) the person who took as Ḥalāl what Allah had made Ḥarām, that is, indulged in killing at the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām in Makkah, or, hunted there, (5) the person who

dishonoured my family and children, and (6) the person who abandoned my *Sunnah*.

Said in the second (160) verse is: *مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا بِمِثْلِهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ* (Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged).

Stated in the previous verse (159) was that the punishment for the evil deeds of those who turn away from the straight path rested with Allah alone.

In the present verse, the generous procedure of reward and punishment in the Hereafter has been described by saying that a person who does one good deed will get ten times more in return - and a person who commits one sin, the return for him will be equal to that of one sin.

As reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in *Nasā’ī* and the *Musnad* of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* said: Most Exalted and Very Merciful is your *Rabb*. A person who intends to do a good deed has one good recorded in his Book of Deeds - even if he does not get around to do it. Following that, when he gets to do that good deed, ten good deeds are recorded in his Book of Deeds. And if a person intends to do a sin, then stays back and does not do it, still a good is recorded for him - and if he were to actually commit a sin, still what he gets registered in his name is one sin, or that too is erased. With this showering of grace and mercy in the presence of Allah, who can apprehend total destruction? Unless, of course, there be that rare person who is determined to be destroyed. (Ibn Kathīr)

In a *Ḥadīth Qudsī* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr *رضى الله عنه*, it is said:

‘A person who does one good deed gets the reward of ten, even more - and a person who commits one sin will get its punishment equal to one sin only, or I shall forgive even that. And a person who comes to Me with sins which would fill the whole earth, and still seeks forgiveness, I shall treat him with matching forgiveness. And a person who comes closer towards

Me to the measure of one hand finger-span, I step one hand-span towards him. And a person who steps one hand-span toward Me, I come towards him by the measure of one Bā’ (the stretch of both hands). And the person who comes walking towards Me, towards him I come running.’

From these *Ḥadīth* narrations, we can see that the increase of ten times for one good deed as mentioned in this verse is actually a description of its base limit - and Allah Ta‘ālā, in His mercy and generosity, may give even more than that, and shall give, as proved by other narrations which place it upto the level of seventy times or seven hundred times.

In the words of the verse, it is noteworthy that the expression used is: *جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ* ('comes with a good deed') and not: *عَمِلَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ* (does a good deed). According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, this indicates that such reward or punishment will not be awarded just on having done something good or bad. Instead of that, the condition is that to deserve reward or punishment, a good or bad deed must survive as such until the time of death. The outcome is that a person who has done a good deed, but it gets destroyed because of the misfortune of some sin, then, he no longer remains deserving of reward against this deed. An example of it is, God forbid, that of *Shirk* and *Kufr* which, in fact, destroy all good deeds. In addition to that there are many other sins which make some good deeds turn false and ineffectual - as it appears in the Holy Qur‘ān: *لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى* (do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing -2:264).

This tells us that the good deed of charity (*ṣadaqah*) gets nullified and wasted by boasting about the favour done or by causing hurt through teasing and underrating the recipient. Similarly, it appears in *Ḥadīth* that sitting in the *Masjid* and talking about worldly things eats up good deeds as fire eats up the wood. This tells us that good deeds, such as, *Nafl*, *Tasbīḥ* and *Dhikr*, go to waste by indulging in mundane conversation.

Similar is the case of evil deeds which, if repented from, become the cause of the sin being erased from the Book of Deeds - it does not keep sticking to a person until the time of death. Therefore, not said in the verse was something like: 'does any deed, good or bad, for which

there will be punishment or reward.’ Instead, what was said, in effect, was: Whoever brings to Us a good deed will get a reward ten times as much and whoever brings to Us an evil deed, then, it will be only one deed he will be punished for. The point is that this act of bringing to Allah Ta‘ālā can become possible only when this deed remains intact and unharmed right through the end. The crucial thing is that it survives, that nothing happens in between which will cause the good deed to be spoiled or wasted - and of course, the method is to keep repenting and seeking the forgiveness of Allah Ta‘ālā from falling into any evil deed.

At the end of the verse, it was said: *وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ* (and they shall not be wronged). It means that this is no human court. This is the Highest of the high. No probability of any injustice to anyone exists there, nor can there be a decrease in the return for someone’s good deed, nor is there any possibility of an increase in the punishment for someone’s evil deed.

Verses 161 - 165

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتُنِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۖ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّمَّا
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي
 وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ
 لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ
 أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا
 عَلَيْهَا ۗ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ
 فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ
 خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي
 مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۗ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

Say, “As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path: the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah. [161]

Say, “My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [162] For Him there is no partner. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first one to submit.” [163]

Say, “Should I seek a lord other than Allah when He is the Lord of everything? And nobody does anything but to his own account, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another, then to your Lord is your return. Then He will tell you about what you were disputing in. [164]

And it is He who made you the viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over others, so that He may test you in what He has given you. Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing and - surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [165]

Commentary

These are the last five verses of Sūrah Al-An‘ām. It will be recalled from previous verses how people had altered the true religion through a process of excess and deficiency, making many more out of it, and had themselves split into factions and groups. In contrast, the first three of the present verses present an authentic profile of the true religion describing its fundamental principles, and some important subsidiaries and details. The first two verses carry the principle while the third mentions their subsidiaries - and in both, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he has been asked to convey the message to these people.

In the first verse it has been said: *قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتَنِي رَبِّيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ* (As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path). The hint given here is that he has not taken this path prompted like them by their own ideas or under the weight of ancestral customs. Instead of that, this is a way to which he has been directed by his Lord. Then, by using the word: *رب* (*Rabb*, the essential nurturer, benefactor and carer under all conditions, unfortunately not expressed through any equivalent in English), it was indicated that it is the very dictate of His beneficence that He guides to the right path. Those who look for guidance will have guidance from Him.

In the second verse (162), it was said: *دِينًا قِيمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ*

(the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah). Here, the word: قِيَامٌ (*qiyām*) is a verbal noun in the sense of: قِيَامٌ (*qiyām*) meaning what stands established on strong and secure foundation. In other words, this religion is fortified. It stands on God-sent basics. This is no compedium of someone's personal ideas. Then, it is not some strange new religion either lending itself to doubting eyebrows. This has been the religion of all past prophets, may peace be upon them all. That the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been particularly mentioned here is because all religions in the world admit his greatness and religious patriarchy. Among the groups of the time, the Jews, the Christians and the disbelievers of Arabia - no matter how different from each other they may be - they were still unanimous in paying homage to the great spiritual station of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And this spiritual station of leadership has been given to him by Allah Ta‘ālā as a special reward: إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا (I am going to make you an Imām for the people - 2:124).

Then, every sect from them tried to prove that they were staunch adherents of the religion of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and were part of his Community. To remove their misgiving, it was said that Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had the distinction of always abstaining from bowing before anyone other than Allah and he had a distaste for all kinds of *Shirk* which led people to associate partners in His pristine Divinity. This conduct was the greatest achievement of his life. In sharp contrast to him, here you are all soaked in *Shirk*. Everyone took someone as partners with Allah - the Jews did that with Sayyidnā ‘Uzayr رضى الله عنه, the Christians with Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام and the disbelievers of Arabia were so liberal that they took thousands of rocks to be partners in the Divinity of Allah. In this state of affairs, no one had the right to claim that they were adhering to the ideal of the spiritual community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - except Muslims. They shun *Shirk* and *Kufr*.

In the third verse (163), it was said: قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Say, “My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds). The word: نُسُكٌ (*nusuk*) in this verse means sacrifice. Everything one does in Ḥajj is also called: *Nusuk*. So, the rites of Ḥajj are known as *Manāsik*, the plural of *Nusuk*. Then, this word is also used for ‘*Ibadah* or worship of Allah in the absolute sense.

Therefore, *Nāsik* is used in the sense of 'Ābid (one who worships Allah). At this place, any of the meanings given above can be applied. *Tafsīrs* to that effect have been reported from commentators among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'in*. But, 'Ibādah or offering of acts of worship devoted to Allah, taken in the absolute sense, appears to be the more appropriate meaning at this place. In that case, the meaning of the verse would be: 'My prayer, my offerings in 'Ibādah, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Out of the subsidiaries of deeds, the first to be mentioned here was *Ṣalāh* because that is the moving spirit of all good deeds and is, of course, the pillar of the religion. Mentioned briefly after that were all deeds and acts of worship. Then, rising to a wider level, everything done or faced in a lifetime was pointed to. The last to be mentioned was death. After having identified all these, it was admitted that they are only for Allah who is the Lord of all the worlds and who has no associate or partner in His Divinity. And this is the outcome of perfect faith and perfect sincerity. This leads one to think, care and keep in sight, in all states of life and in everything one does, that: 'my *Rabb*, and the *Rabb* of the whole wide world is One *Rabb*. I am His servant. I am in His sight - all the time. Let not my heart, my mind, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, and hands, and feet, nor my pen or step, move in any direction against His pleasure.' This is a simple meditation (*Murāqabah*) of the highest order, something which, if one trains himself to keep present in one's heart and mind, then, there is no doubt that he or she will become a human being in the real sense. Things like sin and disobedience and crimes will be scared to come anywhere even close to a person that strong.

In *Tafsīr Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr*, under the commentary on this verse, it has been reported that the well-known *Ṣaḥābi*, Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه used to say: "I honestly wish that every Muslim would keep reciting this verse time and again, almost making it the constant formula of his or her life."

In this verse, the statement - that the prayers and the rest of acts of worship are for Allah - very obviously means that these should be free from any *Shirk* or hypocrisy or any other worldly interest. As for life and death being for Allah, it could also mean : 'When my very life

and death are in His control, then, what I do in my physical and spiritual life (*a‘mal and ‘ibādāt*), has to be for Him alone.’ And it could also mean: ‘Whatever deeds are tied with life are for Allah alone - such as, *Ṣalāh, Ṣawm*, rights and duties involved in dealings with people etc. Then, deeds which relate to death - such as, a will (*waṣiyyah*) and the concept of an ideal life one longs for - then, they too are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and subordinate to what He has commanded.’

After that it was said: *وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ* (And this I have been commanded and I am the first one to submit). It means that ‘in this *Ummah*, I am the first Muslim’ - because the first Muslim (one who submits) in every *Ummah* is the *Nabiyy* (prophet) or *Rasūl* (Messenger) himself to whom the *Shari‘ah* (religious code of guidance) is revealed through *Waḥy* (revelation).

There could be a hint in the expression ‘first Muslim,’ towards the saying that the first to be created was the blessed *Nūr* (light) of the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*, after which the heavens and the earth and the rest of creation came into existence - as it appears in a *Hadīth* with the words: *أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى نُورِي* (*Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*).

One’s Burden of Sin Cannot Be Borne By Another

The disbelievers of Makkah, with *Walīd ibn Mughīrah* among them, used to say to the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* and to the Muslims in general that they should return to their faith and they will bear the burden of all their sins. This has been answered in the fourth verse (164). It was said: *قُلْ أَغْتَبِرُ اللَّهَ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ* Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*. He is being asked to tell them: ‘Do you want me that I too, like yourself, seek and find some other *Rabb*, other than Allah, when He is the Lord of everything?. This is error and straying which you should not expect me to accept. As for your saying that you will bear the burden of our sins, this is absurd in itself. A sin committed by a person will be written in that person’s record of deeds, and it will be he or she who will deserve its punishment. How can that sin be transferred to your account just by your saying so? And if the idea is that the sins will go in our account and in our Book of Deeds, but the punishment to be given against these will be borne by you, then, that idea is not valid either.’ The next sentence in the verse rejects it. It was said: *وَلَا تَنْزِرُوا وِزْرَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَحْمِلُوا وِزْرَتَهُمْ وَإِذْ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ* that is, (on the day of *Qiyāmah*) no

bearer of burden (of sin) shall bear the burden of another).

As for the disbelievers, this verse does answer their absurd saying in its own way. But, it also tells Muslims at large about the rule that they too should not take the matters of *Qiyāmah* on the analogy of their ways in the mortal world where one person commits a crime and succeeds in putting it on someone else - specially when the other person is willing to accept it. But, in the great Court of Allah, there is no room for it. There, the other person can never be caught for the sin committed by someone else. It is based on the authority of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that the child born out of wedlock will not be affected by the sin of his or her parents. (This *Hadīth* has been reported by Ḥakīm from Sayyidah ‘A’ishah رضى الله عنها, based on sound authority)

When Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه saw someone crying at the *Janāzah* of a deceased person, he said that the crying of the living causes punishment to the deceased. Ibn Abī Mulaykah says that, when he reported this saying to Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها, she said: You are reporting the saying of a person who never lies, nor can there be any doubt in his integrity. But, there are occasions when one does not hear right. In this matter, the decisive verdict of the Qur‘ān is sufficient for you: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى, that is, the sin of one person cannot be applied to another. So, how can the crying of a living person cause punishment to descend on a dead person just for no reason? (Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr)

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said that, finally they have to go to their Lord after all where they will find out the ultimate verdict on all their differences - which means that they would be better off keeping their verbal confrontation in check and devoting more to the end of things.

In the fifth (164) verse, Sūrah Al-An‘ām reaches its end at a comprehensive note of advice. It brings the past history of peoples and their times into focus and invites attention to a projection towards the future by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ (And it is He who made you viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over some others). Here, the word: خَلَائِفَ (*khalā’if*) is the plural form of *khalīfah* which means viceregent or deputy. The sense of the verse is:

It is Allah Ta‘ālā who has let you inhabit places occupied by peoples before you. There is no home, no land which you call your private property today, and believe to be so, which was not, only yesterday, under the ownership of other human beings like you. Allah Ta‘ālā has, by removing them, made you sit in their place. Then, worth keeping in mind all the time is the fact of life that everyone among you too is not alike. One is poor, the other is rich. One is low, the other is high. And equally obvious is the fact that, had being rich or being low been within one’s control, who would have chosen to remain poor and low? This distance among steps and this difference in ranks is knocking at your doors to tell you that this power, control and choice is in the hands of some other Being who can make anyone poor, if He so wills; make anyone rich, if He so wills; give honour to whom He wills and let whoever He wills be low.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: **لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ** (so that He may test you in what He has given you). It means: By making you take the place of others, and by making you owners of their wealth and property, and then, by keeping you at different steps in terms of honour and wealth, the very aim is to make you open your eyes to this framework of trial which seeks to determine your reaction to this phenomena that blessings which once belonged to past peoples have now been entrusted in your hands. To be seen is what it would be - that of gratitude and obedience, or that of ingratitude and disobedience?

At the conclusion of the fifth and the last (165) verse, the end of both these stances was made clear by saying: **إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ** (Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing - and surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful). In other words, it means: Your Lord is going to send His punishment on the disobedient soon - and for the obedient, He is Forgiving and Merciful.

Sūrah Al-An‘ām began with *Hamd* (the praise of Allah) and concluded on *Maghfirah* (the seeking of forgiveness from Allah). May Allah Ta‘ālā bless all of us with the *Taufiq* (ability bestowed by Allah) of *Hamd*, and honour us with *Maghfirah* from Him.

It appears in *Hadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Sūrah Al-An‘ām, the whole of it, was revealed at one time. Such was the majesty of its revelation that seventy thousand angels followed behind it

reciting *Tasbīh* (glorifying Allah). Therefore, Sayyidna Fārūq al-Ā‘zam said: Sūrah Al-An‘ām is one of the highly merited Sūrahs of the Holy Qur’an.

In some narrations, it has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه that Allah Ta‘ālā would become the healer of the sick person over whom this Sūrah is recited.

وَأٰخِرُ دَعْوَانَا اِنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-An‘ām
ends here

Sūrah Al-A'raf

[The Heights]

[Sūratul-A'raf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 7

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْمَصَّ ﴿١﴾ كُنْتُ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِنْهُ
 لَتُنذِرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّنْ
 رَبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾
 وَكُم مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَبَاءَهَا بَأْسَنَا بَيَاتًا أَوْهُمْ قَائِلُونَ
 ﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا
 ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٥﴾ فَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 ﴿٦﴾ فَلَنَقْصِنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا غَائِبِينَ ﴿٧﴾

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

Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad. [1] (This is) A Book sent down to you - so, let there be no constraint on your heart because of it - that you may warn through it, and (it is) an advice for the believers. [2]

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any friends other than Him. Little you are receptive to advice! [3]

How many a town We have destroyed, and Our punishment came upon them at night or while they were having midday nap. [4] So, their cry, when Our punishment came upon them, was not but that they said, "we were wrongdoers indeed." [5]

So, We shall ask those to whom the messengers were sent and We shall ask the messengers. [6] Then We shall tell them the whole story, with knowledge, and We were never absent. [7]

Commentary

An overview of the Sūrah shows that most of the subjects it deals with are related to *Ma'ād* (Return to the Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). The former appear from the beginning of the Sūrah upto approximately the end of the sixth section. Then, from the eighth to the twenty first section, there is a detailed description of past prophets, events about their communities, their reward and punishment and the punishment which overtook them.

In the statement: *فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ* appearing in the first verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* and he has been told: This Qur'an is the Book of Allah sent down to you. This should not cause any constraint on your heart. The word: *حَرَجٌ* (*ḥaraj*) translated here as 'constraint' means that 'you should have no anguish or apprehension in conveying the Qur'an and its injunctions lest people belie it and hurt you.' (As reported from Abū Al-'Āliyah - Mazharī)

The hint given here is that Allah who has sent down this Book on you has also made arrangements that you shall remain protected and that takes care of any anguish on your part. Some commentators have said that '*ḥaraj*' or 'constraint on the heart' refers to the constraint experienced by the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* who, because of his affectionate concern for people, felt pain when they would not believe despite having heard the Qur'an and its injunctions. To offset this constraint, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* has been told that the duty with which he has been obligated is simply to make the call and convey the message. Once this is done, it is not his responsibility to see who becomes a Muslim and who does not. Therefore, there was no reason for him to be anxious.

The statement: *فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسِلِينَ* in verse 6 refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* when people will be asked by Allah how did they receive the messengers and Books sent to them by Him - and the messengers will be asked if they did convey to their communities the message and injunctions Allah had sent them with. (Narrated by Baihaqī from

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه - Mazḥarī)

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked people during the address of his Last Ḥajj: When, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, you will be asked about me - whether or not I have conveyed the message of Allah to you - what will you, then, say in reply? (فَمَا أَنْتُمْ قَائِلُونَ). All Ṣaḥabah present there said: We will say that you have conveyed the message of Allah to us and you have fulfilled the trust of Allah at its best and you have wished and done what was most beneficial for the community. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: اللَّهُمَّ أَشْهَدُ (O Allah, You be witness).

According to a narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask me if I have conveyed His message to His servants and I shall say in response: Yes, I have. Therefore, all of you should make sure that those who are present do convey my message to those absent. (Mazḥarī)

'Those absent' refers to people who were present during that time but were not present at that particular occasion - as well as generations which would come later on. To convey to them the message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم means that people of every time should continue the chain of conveying this message to the generations coming next, so that all children of Adam to be born right through the day of *Qiyāmah* will have received this message.

Verses 8 - 10

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
 ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا
 كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا
 لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

And the Weighing on that day is definite. So, those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. [8] And those whose scales are light, they are those who have

brought loss to themselves, as they used to be unjust to
Our verses. [9]

And We gave you a place on earth, and made for you
therein the means of living. Little you are grateful. [10]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: *وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِالْحَقِّ* (And the Weighing on that day is definite). It means that the weighing of good and bad deeds on the day of Judgement is due and true. There is no room for doubt in it. Here, the hint given is that let no one be deceived by the idea that things which usually get to be weighed or measured are things having some weight or heaviness. Human deeds, good or bad, have no body or mass which could be weighed. How, then, would deeds be weighed? First of all, the reason is that the authority of Allah is absolute. He is powerful over everything. Why then, would it be necessary that something we cannot weigh could not be weighed by Allah Almighty as well? Then, other than that, we have before us, in our time, countless new instruments which claim to weigh or measure anything in the world. They no more need the traditional balance or scales or rod or tip. Modern instruments can weigh what nobody ever thought could be weighed, air, electric current, heat, cold, and so many other things. A meter is all you need. Now, if Allah Almighty, the Maker of makers, in His perfect power, could weigh or measure human deeds - with or without a device - what is there in it which would make it to be something far out to believe? Leaving this aside for a moment, the Creator of the Universe does have the power to transform our deeds at some time into a material presence, even give it some shape or form (interesting that people would believe something like this happening in a Spielberg movie, yet squirm at the religious view of things as would come to pass). There are many *Āḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet *صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم* which confirm that human deeds will appear in particular shapes and forms during *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) and *Maḥshar* (Resurrection). Good deeds of a person will, in forms beautified, become the companions of the grave - and evil deeds would crawl all over in the form of snakes and scorpions. A *Ḥadīth* says that a person who has not paid the *Zakah* due against his wealth, that wealth will reach his grave in the shape of a poisonous snake to bite him and say: I am your wealth, I am your treasure.

It is said in a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that Al-Baqarah and 'Āl-'Imrān, the two Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān will come on the plains of Resurrection in the form of two dense clouds and cast their shade over those who used to recite these Sūrahs.

Similarly, there are countless narrations from Ḥadīth, all authentic and reported reliably, which indicate that once these good and bad deeds of ours pass away from this mortal world, they will transform into particular shapes and forms and be there on the plains of Resurrection in a material presence.

There are even verses of the Qur'ān which confirm it. It is said: *وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا*, that is, 'what people had done in the world, they would find that present there - 18:49.' In a verse of Sūrah Az-Zalzalah, it is said: *مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ*, that is, 'whoever does good even the weight of a particle shall see it on the day of *Qiyāmah*, and whoever does evil even the weight of a particle shall see that too in *Qiyāmah*.' Things as described here obviously lend to the possibility that human deeds will come in some nuclear form of existence. This is something which needs no further interpretations as what is crucial is the compensation of deeds which will exist and be perceptible.

Under these circumstances, weighing deeds does not remain something difficult or far out. But, human beings are what they are. Given their limited framework of reasoning, they take everything on the analogy of their own present state of being and this is the criterion they have to judge things around them. So used to it they are that they just cannot act otherwise. It is this state of being of theirs which the Qur'ān has put in words which appear in Sūrah Ar-Rūm: *يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِمَّنْ يَعْلَمُونَ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُونَ*. It means that 'these people know an obvious aspect of mortal life (and that too, not the whole of it) and about the Hereafter they are totally heedless - 30:7.' In their onslaught on the obvious and the perceptible, they will shake the earth and the space to find out the unfound, but the great field of the reality of things the unfolding of which has to take place in the 'Ākhirah is something they are totally unaware of.

Therefore, in this verse, special care has been taken while saying: *وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِالْحَقِّ* (And the Weighing on that day is definite) so that man, all infatuated with the obvious, may not be able to deny the weighing of

deeds in the Hereafter - which stands proved from the Holy Qur'an and is the collective belief of the Muslim Ummah.

That there will be the weighing of deeds on the day of *Qiyāmah* is a subject dealt with in many verses of the Holy Qur'an from various angles, and in Ḥadīth, its details abound.

The Weighing of Deeds : A Doubt and its Answer

Out of the details on the weighing of deeds appearing in the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the first to ponder about is the oft-narrated statement that, on the day of Resurrection, the heaviest in weight shall be the Kalimah: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). The scalepan which holds this Kalimah shall outweigh the rest.

Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Baihaqī and Ḥākim have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A man of my Ummah will be brought before the entire creation on the plain of Resurrection. Then, ninety nine of his Books of Deeds will be brought in. Each scroll of his Book of Deeds will be as long as far he could see - and all these Books of Deeds shall be full of sins and evils. This person will be asked if everything written in these Books of Deeds was correct, or had the angels done any injustice to him, or had they written anything there which was not as it happened. He will admit: O my Lord, whatever is written there is correct. But, in his heart, he will be nervous while worrying about how would he find his deliverance from this situation. That will be the time Allah Ta'ālā will say: Today, there is no injustice for anyone. Against all your sins, We have a testimonial of your being good, with Us, written where, is your Kalimah: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and His Messenger). That person will say: O my Lord, what weight this little note will carry against such a big black Book of Deeds? Then, it would be said: No injustice will be done to you. Then, all those Books of Deeds full of sins will be placed in one scalepan and in the other, this note with the Kalimah of 'Imān on it. The scalepan with the Kalimah on it shall weigh heavier and the scalepan with all those sins on it shall turn to be lighter. After having related this event, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nothing can weigh more than the

name of Allah. (Mazharī)

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه in Musnad al-Bazzār and Mustadrak Ḥākim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: At the time of his death, Nuḥ عليه السلام assembled his sons around him and said: I order you to abide by the Kalimah: لا اله الا الله (*Lā Ilāha Illallāh*) because, should the heavens and the earth be placed in one pan of the scale and the Kalimah: *Lā Ilāha Illallāh* in the other, the pan containing the Kalimah shall invariably remain heavier. Other narrations on the same subject have been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Abū-ad-Dardā' رضى الله عنه supported by reliable transmitting authorities and are spread over in various Ḥadīth collections. (Mazharī)

According to these narrations, a believing Muslim who recites the Kalimah shall always find the scale heavier in his favour, no matter how many sins he carries on him. But, many other verses of the Qur'ān and narrations of Ḥadīth prove that the good and bad deeds of a Muslim shall be weighed. For some, the scalepan with good deeds will be heavier, for some others, that of sins. The one whose scalepan with good deeds is heavier will have his salvation while the one whose scalepan with sins and evils is heavier will have his punishment. For example, in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' it is said:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ
مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَىٰ بِنَا حَسِيبِينَ ،

And We shall set up Scales of Justice on the day of Judgment. Then, not the least injustice will be done to anyone. And if there be (good or bad) the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it (to account on the scale for deeds) and We are sufficient to take account - 21:47.

And in Sūrah Al-Qāri'ah, it is said:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاٰصِيَةٍ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُمُّهُ
هَٰوِيَةٌ

Whoever has his scale of good deeds heavy will be in life blissful and whoever has his scale of good deeds lighter, his place will be Hell -101:6-9.

Explaining these verses, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: The believer whose good deeds on the scale are heavier will go to *Jannah* with his deeds - and the one whose evil deeds on the scale are heavier will be sent to *Jahannam* with his deeds. (Reported by Al-Baihaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān* - Mazharī)

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in Abū Dāwūd: If a shortage is found in the *Farā'id* of a servant, Allah Ta'ālā will ask if that servant has some *Nawāfil* to his credit. If they are there, the shortage of the obligatory will be compensated by the voluntary. (Mazharī)

The outcome of all these verses and Ḥadīth narrations is that the scale will some times be heavier in favour of a believer and lighter at some others. Therefore, scholars of Tafsīr say that this shows that weighing in *Maḥshar* (Resurrection) will be twice. First to be weighed will be belief and disbelief through which distinction will be made between a believer and a disbeliever. In this weighing whoever has even just the declaration of faith (Kalimah) in the Book of Deeds, his or her scale will become heavier and he or she will be separated from the group of disbelievers. Then, there will be a second weighing of good and bad deeds. In this, the good deeds of one believer will be heavy on the scale while the other will find the scale heavy with evil deeds - and everyone will have his or her punishment or reward in accordance with that. Thus, the subject as dealt with in all these verses and narrations of Ḥadīth becomes synchronized. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

How Would Deeds Be Weighed?

According to a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه which appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, there will come some heavy people whose weight, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of even a mosquito - and, in support, he recited the verse of the Qur'an: **لَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا** that is, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, We will not give them any weight - 18:105 (Mazharī).

And featuring the virtues (*manāqib*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: His legs look so thin but, by Him in whose hands lies my life, on the balance of justice for the day of *Qiyāmah*,

their weight shall be more than the weight of the mountain of Uḥud.

Then, there is the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه with which Imām al-Bukhārī has concluded his book, the Ṣaḥīḥ. In it, it is said that there are two words very light when said but very heavy when weighed on the Scale of Deeds, and with Allah, they are dear, and they are: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ* (*Subḥānallāhi wa bi-ḥamdihī* : Pure is Allah and Praised is He) *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ* (*Subḥanallahil-'Aẓīm* : Pure is Allah the Great).

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say that saying: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ* (*Subḥān Allah*) fills half of the pan on the scale of deeds while saying: *أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ* (*Alḥamdulillah*) fills the other half.

Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Ḥibbān report with sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No deed will be heavier than good morals on the scale of deeds.

And to Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I tell you about two things doing which is not hard for anyone - but, on the scale of deeds, they shall be the heaviest -(1) good morals, and (2) usually observing silence, that is, not talking unless necessary.

In his Kitāb al-Zuhd, Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Ḥāzīm رضى الله عنه that angel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while someone there was weeping in fear of Allah. Angel Jibra'īl said: All human deeds will be weighed, but human tears flowing from the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah is a deed which would not be weighed. Rather, one such tear would put off the wildest fire of Jahan-nam. (Maẓharī)

A Ḥadīth says about a person present on the plain of Resurrection. When he will look at his Book of Deeds, he will notice very few good deeds there. He will be nervous. All of a sudden, something will rise like a cloud and fall right into the scalepan of his good deeds. He will be told that this was in return for his teaching of the faith which multiplied onwards when people acted in accordance with it, and there was a share kept aside for him with each single follower of his

teaching. (Mazharī, from Sayyidnā Ibn al-Mubārak)

Tabarānī reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A person who goes to the graveyard with the Janāzah, two karats will be placed on his scale of deeds. Other narrations say that the weight of this karat will be equal to the mountain of Uḥud.

He has also reported from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One's first deed to be placed on the scale of deeds will be the good deed of spending on one's family and taking care of their needs.

Imām al-Dhahabī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn عليه السلام that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, when the ink used by the 'Ulamā to write about the religion and its rules will be weighed against the blood of *shuhadā'* (martyrs), the weight of the ink used by 'Ulama will turn out to be more than the weight of the blood of martyrs.

There are many more Aḥādīth relating to the weighing of deeds as in *Qiyāmah*. Some of them have been mentioned here as they shed light on the merit and worth of particular deeds.

The mode of weighing deeds as mentioned in these narrations of Ḥadīth seems to be different. Some indicate that the doers of deeds will be the ones weighed and it will be they who would be heavy or light according to their deeds. Some others show that their Books of Deeds will be weighed. Still others prove that deeds themselves would become personified and they will be measured. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, after having reported all these narrations, has said that it is possible that the weighing is repeated several times in different ways and, it is obvious, the full reality of these matters is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone - and for doing what one does in real life, it is, for all practical purposes, not necessary to know this reality. Quite sufficient for us is to know that our deeds shall be weighed. If our deeds turn out to be lighter on the scale of deeds, we shall deserve punishment. Then, it is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, by Himself, or by the intercession of a Nabiyy or Waliyy, forgives us our sins and we stand delivered from punishment.

As for the likelihood that some people will have their salvation on the sole virtue of their having said and believed in the Kalimah of 'Īmān (*Lā Illāha Illallāh*) and all sins accruing to them will be forgiven because of that - as narrated in some of these narrations - that belongs to the exception mentioned above and which is beyond the general regulation and is a special manifestation of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

In the two verses the Tafsīr of which you have just read through, sinners were warned against the disgrace on the plain of Resurrection and the Divine punishment that would come in its wake. Then comes the third verse which mentions the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and persuades people to accept truth and act accordingly by suggesting that Allah has bestowed on them full ownership and control on the earth and has opened thousands of avenues of comfort for them. It is as if the Master of the Universe has made this whole earth and what it contains a giant warehouse of human needs and comforts, a most comprehensive inventory of that inside it. Now, what is left for human beings to do is to learn to go in there, take out what they need and use it how they will. Science and technology are essentially no more than a trained method of taking out things created by the Master of the Universe and stored in this warehouse, properly and nicely, and use it soundly and beneficially. One who is short on sense and manners and does not know how to take things out from this warehouse, or does not understand how to use what he has taken out, he remains deprived of their benefits. An intelligent person benefits from both.

In short, Allah Ta'ālā has placed all that human beings need on and in this earth which demands that they should be grateful to Him all the time under all conditions. But, human beings are prone to heedlessness. They would not take much time to forget the favours of their Creator and Master - only to return to the same world of things. So, at the end of the verse, it is in a mode of complaint that it was said: *قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ* (Little you are receptive to advice).

Verses 11- 18

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ
 مَا مَنَعَكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ۖ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ
 نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ
 أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّغِيرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي
 إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَا
 أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُنَّهُمْ
 فِي عَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۖ
 وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا
 مَّدْحُورًا لِمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We created you, then fashioned you, then We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they all prostrated, except Iblīs. He did not join the prostrate. [11] Allah said, "What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you?" He said, "I am better than him. You have created me of fire, and created him of clay." [12] He said, "Then, go down from here, it is not for you to be arrogant here. So, go. You are of the low." [13]

He said, "Then give me respite until a day when all will be resurrected." [14] He (Allah) said, "Respite is given to you." [15] He said, "Then as You have made me go astray, I swear that I will sit for them (in ambush) on Your straight path. [16] Then I will come upon them from in front of them and from behind them and from their right and from their left. And you will not find most of them grateful. [17]

He (Allah) said, "Get out of here, condemned, rejected. Indeed, those of them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all together. [18]

Commentary

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the Shayṭān has appeared earlier in Section four of Sūrah Al-Baqarah (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English Translation, volume I, page 170, under verse 34). Some

aspects of the subject have been covered in comments given there. Answers to some others are being given here.

How Long was the Respite given to Iblīs?

It was exactly at the time Iblīs was under the wrath of Allah, he made a prayer, a strange prayer indeed. He asked for a lease of life until the day of Resurrection. The words in which Allah Ta'ālā answered the prayer, as they appear in this verse, are no more than: **إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ** (Respite is given to you). From these words, given the nature of the question and the answer, it can be understood that this respite was given until the Resurrection as asked by him. But, what is not stated in this verse clearly is whether the giving of respite mentioned here is until the Resurrection as asked by Iblīs, or is for some other duration. But, in another verse, the words: **إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ** (Till the day of the appointed time - 15:38) appear at this place which, on the surface, seem to suggest that the respite till the day of *Qiyāmah* as asked by Iblīs was not given. Instead, given to him was a respite till a particular time which is preserved in Divine knowledge. The outcome is that the prayer of Iblīs was answered - though not completely. He was given respite till a particular time and not till the day of Resurrection or *Qiyāmah*.

Reported in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr is a narration from Suddiy which supports this view. The exact words of the report are:

فلم ينظره الى يوم البعث و لكن انظره الى يوم الوقت المعلوم وهو يوم ينفخ في الصور النفخة الاولى فصعق من في السموت ومن في الارض فمات،

Allah Ta'ālā did not give respite to Iblīs till the day of Resurrection, instead, He has given him respite till a day the time of which is appointed and that is the day when the Horn will be blown the first time and whoever there is in the heavens or the earth shall be stunned, and dead.

In summation, we can say that the Shayṭān had actually asked for a respite in his prayer till the time when the second Horn will be blown and all the dead will be resurrected. This is what is called: **يوم البعث** (Yowm al-Ba'ṭh). If this prayer was answered as asked, it would have meant that Iblīs was to be alive as based on his prayer while the facts on the ground would have been different: That would be a time

when nothing will be alive except the One Being of the Eternally-Alive and the Self-Sustaining *Ḥayy* and *Qaiyyūm* and that would be the time when the great promise of: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (All that is on it will perish and to remain there shall be the Face of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honour - 55:26-27) will stand immensely manifested. On that basis, Iblīs was not to live to see that time. Therefore, his one prayer for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th was not granted, instead of which, the time of the respite was changed to *Yowma yunfakhu fi as-ṣur*, till the day blown is the Horn, and granted at that. The effect would be that death shall be the order of the day for the whole creation. Iblīs will have his death as well. When all others are resurrected, he too shall stand resurrected.

These details remove the possible doubt that could arise from the verse: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (All that is on it will perish -55:26) referred immediately above specially in relation with this prayer. The apparent contradiction between the two thus stands resolved.

The substance of this investigation is that Yowm al-Ba'th and Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum are two separate days. Iblīs had asked for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th. This was not granted wholly. Instead of that, a change was made and respite was given till the Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum. Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī, in *Bayan al-Qur'ān*, has preferred the view that these two are really two separate days. In fact, from the time of the blowing of the first Horn upto the entry into Paradise or Hell, it will be a long day with different things happening at different times in it. Based on these different happenings, that day could be attributed to every event which takes place therein. For instance, it could be called the day of the blowing of the Horn (صُور) and the day of perishing (نَبَا), as well as, the day of Resurrection (بُعْث) and the day of Recompense (جَزَا). This helps resolves all doubts and difficulties, فُلِّلَهُ الْحَدُودُ .

Can the Prayer of a Disbeliever be Acceptable?

The question comes from the verse: وَمَا دُعَاؤُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِى ضَلٰلٍ (And the prayer of disbelievers is but in vain - 13:14), it is usually taken that the prayer made by a disbeliever is not answered. But, from this event concerning Iblīs and the statement in the verse, this difficulty becomes obvious. The answer is that, in this mortal world, even the prayer of a

disbeliever can be answered - so much so, that even the prayer of the foremost disbeliever, Iblīs, was answered. But, in the Hereafter, the prayer of a disbeliever will not be answered. The verse quoted above relates to the Hereafter (Ākhirah). It has nothing to do with this mortal world.

The Event of 'Ādam and Iblīs : The Rationale of Different Words

This story appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places. The words used in relevant questions and answers differ everywhere, though the event is the same. The reason is that the subject remains the same when the main event is described. That the words remain exactly the same everywhere is not necessary. A narration could be based on meaning too. If the unity of subject and sense exists, variations in words do not deserve consideration.

What made Iblīs speak the way he did before Allah?

The place where Iblīs dared to speak was in the Most August conceivable Presence of the Master of all Honour where the awe and majesty of the occasion would not allow even angels and prophets and messengers to breathe. How did he do that? 'Ulamā say that this was a sombre and highly cutting manifestation of the Divine wrath that, because of the rejection of Iblīs, his view was so obstructed (*ḥijāb*) that he became blind to the grandeur and awe of Allah Ta'ālā and irreverence came down to settle on him all over. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Assault of Shayṭān is Multi-Dimensional, not simply Four-Sided

In the present verse (17), Iblīs is said to have identified four sides from which he planned to mislead the children of 'Ādam, that is, the front, the rear and the right and the left. But, the purpose here is not to set up any limits. Instead, the sense is that this will be from all sides and directions. Therefore, the probability of his leading people astray from above and beneath the feet does not contradict it. Similarly, the saying of the Ḥadīth that - Shayṭān can enter the human body and move through the arteries and veins of blood and take command of the whole body - is also not contradictory to this.

In the cited verses (13 & 18), the Shayṭān has been commanded to leave the heavens twice. First, when it was said: *فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصُّفْرَيْنِ* (So, go. You are of the low.) and then, when it was said: *قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْمُومًا* (Get

out of here, condemned ...). Here, the first saying is perhaps a proposal while the other is its implementation. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 19 - 25

وَيَا دَادُ اسْكُنْ أُنْتِ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا
تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسَّوَسَ
لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْآتِهِمَا
وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا
مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا
لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ
بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفُنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ
الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلُّ
لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا
أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ
﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا
تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And O 'Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat from wherever you like, but do not go near this tree, otherwise you shall join the transgressors." [19]

Then Satan whispered to them, so that he may uncover to them what was covered of their shame; and said, "Your Lord has not prohibited this tree for you, but to avoid your becoming angels or your becoming eternal."

[20] And he swore on oaths, "I am one of your well-wishers." [21] So he cast them down by deception. So, when they tasted (the fruit of) the tree, their shame became apparent to them, and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise, and

their Lord called them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not tell you that the Satan is an open enemy for you?" [22]

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not bless us with mercy, we shall, indeed, be among the losers." [23]

He said, "Go down, some of you enemies of some; and for you on the earth there will be a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." [24] (Further) He said, "There you shall live and there you shall die and from there you shall be taken out." [25]

Commentary

The story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Iblīs mentioned in the present verses has appeared in the fourth section of Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Detailed comments have been given in the Tafsīr of that Sūrah. If needed, please see Ma'āriful-Qurān, English Translation, Volume I, Pages 170-187.

Verses 26 - 27

يَبْنِيْ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِشًا
وَلِبَاسٍ التَّقْوٰى ۗ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيَةِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ
﴿٢٦﴾ يَبْنِيْ اٰدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَا اَخْرَجَ اَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ
الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا ۗ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰكُمْ
هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۗ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيْطٰنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ
لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

O children of 'Ādam, We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa! that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice. [26]

O children of 'Ādam, "Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them.

Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe. [27]

Commentary

Mentioned in almost a section preceding the verses cited above was the event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Satan, the accursed. The first outcome of the satanic instigation was that the heavenly apparel of 'Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهم السلام came off leaving them coverless as a result of which they began hiding their coverable body with leaves.

In the first of the present verses (26), Allah Ta'ālā has addressed all children of 'Ādam and told them that the dress they wear is a great blessing the worth and value of which must be recognized by them. The address here is not to Muslims alone. It is to all children of Adam. This is a sharp pointer to the fact that the act of covering the coverable parts of the body and the wearing of dress is both a human need and a natural desire. Everyone abides by it without any distinction of religion or community. Then, giving its details, three kinds of clothings were mentioned.

First of all, it was said: لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ (clothing that covers your shame). Here, the word: يُؤَارِي (yuwārī) is a derivation from: مُؤَارَاتٍ (muwārāt) which means to cover, hide or conceal. And the word: سَوْآتٍ (sau'āt) is the plural form of: سَوْأَةٌ (sau'ah). This is applied to body parts the uncovering of which is taken, by nature, as bad and shameful by all human beings. The sense of the statement is that Allah has sent down for people dress with which they could cover their body parts the exposing of which is a matter of shame.

After that, it was said: وَرِشًا (wa rishā). The dress one uses for adornment and decency is called: رِشٌ (Rish). The meaning is that just to cover up the cover-worthy body parts, even a simple set of clothing is enough. But, Allah has provided for you much more than simply clothing, He blessed you with dresses which make you look handsome, or decent, neat and civilized.

At this place, the word used by the Holy Qur'an is: أَنْزَلْنَا (anzalnā: We have sent down). It means to bestow or bless with. It is not necessary that it be sent down from the heavens ready to wear. This is like another expression: أَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ (57:25). It means: 'We sent down the iron,'

which is dug out of the earth as everyone can see. However, at both these places, by saying: **أَنْزَلْنَا** (*anzalnā* : We have sent down), it was indicated that the way no human planning or artifice operates as active agent in what 'descends from the heavens,' so it is with the essential mother element of dress, cotton or wool etc., where human ingenuity has no role to play. That is simply a gift from the great creative power of Allah Ta'ālā. But, human artifice does work in efforts to make out of these materials dresses to individual taste, temperament, and the need to stay safe against heat or chill. Even the way to that artifice is shown by Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, eyes that see reality see all this as nothing but Divine gift sent from the heavens.

Two Uses of Dress

Identified here are two uses of dress: (1) To cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr*), and (2) protection from hot and cold weather, and decor of the body. The first use has been placed first which indicates that the real purpose of human dress is to be able to cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr al-'awrah*). This also happens to be its line of demarcation from animals. The dress given to animals has been naturally made a part of their body. The purpose it serves is either to protect from hot and cold weather, or beautify them. No elaborate arrangements have been made to cover up their *satr*. Nevertheless, formations of particular body parts in their bodies have been so placed that they do not remain totally exposed. Some would have a screen of a tail and many others would have other obstructers of view.

After having related the event concerning 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' ('Ādam and Eve) and how the Satan had instigated them, this mention of dress indicates that for human beings to be naked, or the exposure of their shame before others is a sign of abject disgrace and indecency at its worst. Moreover, it is an antecedent to all sorts of evils and disorders.

The Modern Obsession for Nudity: The Tempter of 'Ādam and Eve still Stalks

So, the first attack of Satan came from this opening against human beings when their dress dropped off from where it belonged. Even today, when Satan wishes to confuse and waylay human beings through his accomplices, it always picks up a chic front like being trendy, hip,

hot or cool and ends up pulling people out from homes into streets and alleys naked or just about. It would seem that what Satan has classified as modern advancement does not happen unless women are deprived of their sense of shame and modesty and made to parade around in the near-nude.

After 'Īmān, the First Duty is to Cover your Body Properly

When Shayṭān, sensing this weakness in human beings, made the first assault on their body cover, the Shari'ah of Islam acted smartly as it is responsible for the inculcation, protection and flowering of every good in its people that it took the issue so seriously that it enjoined the covering of human body as the first duty after 'Īmān or faith. The Ṣalāh, the Ṣawm, and duties like those come after that.

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'zam رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When someone wears a new dress, he should recite the following Du'ā while wearing it:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي كَسَانِي مَا أُوَارِي بِهِ عَوْرَتِي وَأَتَجَمَّلُ بِهِ فِي حَيَاتِي

Praise be to Allah who gave me clothes with which I am to cover the cover-worthy parts of my body and look handsome with it in my life.

The Great Reward of Giving the Old Dress as Ṣadaqah after Wearing the New One

He also said: If a person who wears a new dress and gives away the old one as Ṣadaqah (charity) to anyone poor and needy, he comes under the protection and patronage of Allah Ta'ālā in all states of his life and death. (Ibn Kathīr from the Musnad of Aḥmad)

In this Ḥadīth too, one is reminded of the two considerations in wearing a dress which is why Allah Ta'ālā has created the human dress.

Covering of Body is Natural and the Theory of Evolution is False

The event of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and the statement of the Qur'an make it clear that covering the body and using a dress is a natural desire and an inborn necessity of human beings which has been with them since the very beginning. Those who profess that the first man

went around naked and it was only after having passed through stages of evolution that he invented the dress, they are patently false.

The Ultimate Dress

After having identified the dress of two kinds, that which covers the body properly and that which gives comfort and beauty, a third kind of dress was mentioned by saying: **وَلِبَاسٍ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ** (And the dress of Taqwā [fear of Allah]! that is the best). In some readings (*Qira'at*) of the Qur'an, the word: لباس (*libās*: dress) has been rendered with a *fathah* on the letter: سين (*sīn*) as: **رِبَاسٍ التَّقْوَىٰ** Thus, read with: **أَنْزَلْنَا** (*anzalnā*), it will mean: We have sent down a third dress of Taqwā. But, in accordance with the well-known reading of it, it means that everyone knows the two dresses mentioned, however, there is a third kind of dress, that of Taqwā - and that is the best of all dresses. The dress of Taqwā, as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, means right conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. (*Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*)

The sense is that the way the visible physical dress of human beings serves the purpose of covering the cover-worthy parts of the body, protecting from hot and cold weather and giving beauty and embellishment - very similarly, there is a spiritual dress, that of right and becoming conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. This *libās* or dress of Taqwā conceals human weaknesses and moral shortcomings. It delivers one from immediate hardships and ultimate losses. Therefore, it is the best of dresses one can wear.

Present here is the hint that an evil-doing person who has no fear of Allah and does not care for acting right, must be disgraced ultimately, no matter how he covers up - as reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: By Allah in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, whatever a person does in secret, Allah Ta'ālā wraps his deed like a sheet around him and announces it - the good of it, if the deed is good, and the evil of it, if the deed is evil. Wrapping like a sheet on the body means that it is visible to everyone. No matter how secretly one may do something, Allah Ta'ālā makes its effects become evident on the face and the body. Then, to authenticate his statement, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: **وَرِيثًا، وَلِبَاسٍ التَّقْوَىٰ، ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَيْتِ اللَّهِ** (... and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwā, that is the best.

That is one of the signs of Allah).

The Real Purpose of Physical Dress Too is to Achieve Taqwā

The expression, 'Dress of Taqwā,' indicates that the purpose of physical dress which fulfills the function of covering the body properly, and helps beautify it as well, is really a way of achieving the ability to fear Allah, or Taqwā as in the Qur'ān. This ability should manifest itself in the way one dresses. The parts of the body which must be covered should be fully covered. It should be ensured that one's modesty stays concealed. Neither should it be allowed to remain naked, nor should the dress on the body be so tight-fitting through which body parts look like being naked. Then, this dress should not have the flair of pride and arrogance, instead, it should reflect modesty and humility. Then, it should not be extravagant either. The cloth material used should be tailored to need. And neither should the dress for women be masculine, nor the dress for men be feminine, which is odious and repugnant in the sight of Allah. Also, there should be no imitation in wearing a dress like others which is a sign of deviation from the established norms of one's community.

Along with it, there is the crucial need to correct one's morals and deeds which is the real purpose of dress. At the end of the verse comes the invitation to understand: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ (That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice).

In the second verse (27), the address reverts to all children of Adam and the admonition given is that they should keep guarding against the deception of Shayṭān in everything they do under whatever circumstance they are - lest, Shayṭān puts them on another trial as he did with their parents, 'Ādam and Eve. He made them leave Paradise, caused them to shed their dress and render their essential cover to be uncovered. He was their eternal enemy. His enmity was something, they were never to lose sight of.

At the end of the verse, it was said:

اِنَّهٗ يَرٰكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلَهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيْطٰنِ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ
لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for

those who do not believe - (27).

Here, the word: قَبِيلٌ (*qabīl*) means company or group. A joined family group is called: Qabīlah or tribe. Common groups are known as *qabīl*. The sense of the verse is: For you the Satan is a kind of enemy that he and his accomplices do see you but you do not see them. Therefore, the chances that you would fall a victim to their deception are fairly strong.

But, in other verses, it has also been clarified that people who keep turning to Allah Ta'ālā and maintain their guard against the deception of Shayṭān, for them, the wily web of Shayṭān is much too weak.

Then, what has been said at the end of this verse - that 'We have made the satans friends and guardians of those who do not believe' - also indicates that those who believe should not find staying away from their web of deception at all difficult.

Some righteous elders have said that the defence against the enemy who sees us but we cannot see him is simple. Let us come under the protection of Allah Ta'ālā. He sees these satans, watches how they move and act - but they cannot see Him.

And the statement, that human beings cannot see Shayṭān, is in terms of general conditions and habit. If a human being were to see them contra-habitually, that would not be considered contrary to it - as is the case of Jinns coming to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who asked questions and embraced Islam, which appears in authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 28 - 31

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا
بِهَٰذَا قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحِشَاءِ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ
تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ إِنَّهُمْ
اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ

مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ يَبْنِي اِذْمَ خَدُّوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَكُلُوْا وَاَشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

And when they do something shameful, they say, "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah has bidden us to do so." Say, "Allah never bids anything shameful. Do you say about Allah what you do not know?" [28]

Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice." And yourselves be aright at each occasion of prostration, and pray to Him with pure faith in Him. As He originated you, so you will return. [29] Some He led to guidance, and others had misguidance as their destiny. Indeed, they have taken the satans as their friends, instead of Allah, and they think that they are on the right path. [30]

O children of 'Adam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant. [31]

Commentary

Before Islam, one of the many shameful and absurd customs Shay-tān had made the people of 'Arab Jāhiliyyah follow was that no one, other than the Quraysh, could make the Ṭawāf of Ka'bah in one's own clothes. Instead of that, the requirement was to borrow a dress from a Qurayshi, otherwise, make the Ṭawāf naked.

As obvious, the Quraysh could not provide clothes to the whole people of Arabia, therefore, the consequence was that these people would make Ṭawāf mostly naked, men and women, both, with women usually doing their Ṭawāf in the darkness of the night. Then, they would explain the satanic expediency of this act by saying: "The clothes wearing which we have committed sins are clothes in which making the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah is contrary to etiquette (so devoid of commonsense they were that it did not occur to them that making their Ṭawāf naked was far more contrary to etiquette, and still more so, contrary to human dignity itself) and the only exception to this rule was the tribe of Quraysh which, because they were the servants of the sacred Ḥaram, was not bound to follow this law of nudity.'

The first verse among those cited above has been revealed to identify and eliminate this absurd custom. It was said in the verse that on occasions when they did something shameful and people told them not to do so, their answer to them would be that their forefathers and elders have been doing so all along, and now for them, to forsake their practice was a matter of shame. Then, they also said that this was what Allah had told them to do. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this verse, '*al-faḥshā*,' according to most commentators means this very naked Ṭawāf. In fact, *fuḥsh*, *faḥshā* and *fāḥishah* refer to every evil act the evil of which reaches the farthest limits and is all too loud and clear in terms of commonsense and sound taste (Maḏhari). Then, that its good and bad becomes quite rational too, is something which stands established universally. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Then, come the two arguments they advanced in support of the continuance of this absurd custom. One of these was the need to follow ancestral customs, that is, maintaining these was good in itself. The answer to this proposition was fairly clear as the blind following of ancestral customs was not something reasonable. Even a person of average commonsense can understand that a method cannot be justified on the basis that one's forefathers used to do so. If the methods used by forefathers were to be taken to be sufficient to justify the legitimacy of an action, then, the fact is that forefathers of different peoples of the world used to act differently, even contradictorily. This argument will, then, render all erroneous methods of the whole world to be correct and permissible. In short, this argument advanced by these ignorant people did not deserve attention. Therefore, the Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to answer this question here. Though, in some Ḥadīth narrations, it has been answered by saying that an act of ignorance which may have been committed by one's forefathers could hardly be worth following by any stretch of imagination.

The second argument in favour of their naked Ṭawāf advanced by these people was that Allah had ordered them to do so. This was a flagrant lie. They were attributing to Allah what He had never commanded. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the answer given was: *قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ* (Allah never bids anything shameful) - because commanding people to do something like that is against His wisdom

and counter to His state of being the Purest of the pure. Then, taken to task was their false and untrue attribution to Allah. They were warned with the words: **أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ** (Do you say about Allah what you do not know?). It means that they were attributing a falsity to Allah without having an evidence in support; and it is obvious that attributing something to someone without proper investigation and authority is an act of rank effrontery and patent injustice. Then if done in the case of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, reporting anything so will be a crime and injustice the magnitude of which cannot be imagined. At this point, let it be understood clearly that the respected Mujtahid Imāms, when they deduce, formulate and describe injunctions which appear in the verses of the Qur'an through *Ijtihād*, that effort does not fall under the purview of this verse. The reason is that their deduction is a process which operates under the justification of the very words and meanings of the Qur'an.

Said in the second verse was: **قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ** (Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice). Here, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell those ignorant people, who were falsely attributing the justification of their naked *Tawāf* towards Allah, that Allah always commands justice. The word used here is: **الْقِسْطِ** (*al-qist*) which essentially means justice, balance and moderation. At this place, 'al-qist' refers to a conduct which is free of excess or deficiency, that is, which neither falls short, nor exceeds the appointed limits - as is the case with all injunctions of the Shari'ah. Therefore, under this sense of 'al-qist' included there are all acts of worship and obedience as well as all general injunctions of the Shari'ah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having stated the command of justice and moderation, two injunctions of the Shari'ah relevant to their erroneous conduct have been particularly mentioned. These are: **أَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ** (and yourself be aright at each occasion of prostration) and: **وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ** (and pray to Him with pure faith in Him). The first command relates to what one does physically and outwardly. The other belongs to the heart, the spiritual dimension. In the first injunction, the word: **مَسْجِدٍ** (*masjid*), according to most commentators, appears in the sense of prostration (*sajdah*, *sujūd* or *Tbādah*) and it means that one should be aright at the time of every *Ṣalāh* or any other act of worship. It could also mean that one should make an effort and be particular to keep

one's orientation straight towards the Qiblah. And being aright or keeping the orientation straight could also mean that one should subordinate everything one says or does to what Allah has commanded, maintaining an orientation and stance that never varies, never dwindles and moves elsewhere. Given this meaning, this injunction will not remain particular for Ṣalāh only - instead, it would comprehend all acts of worship, dealings and transactions.

The second injunction means that one should worship Allah, purely and exclusively, without associating in that act anyone else in any capacity, even to the limit that such worship should also be free from, and untainted with, what is known as al-Shirk al-Khafiyy (concealed Shirk of associating others with the Divinity of Allah), that is, hypocrisy and *riyā'* (show off).

By mentioning both injunctions together, the indication being given could be that one must correct, align and synchronize both dimensions of one's person, the outward and the inward, the physical and the spiritual, with the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Not enough is obvious obedience (*Iṭā'ah*) without sincerity (*Ikhhlās*), nor can simple sincerity of the heart become sufficient without following the Shari'ah as visible outwardly too. Instead of that, it is binding on everyone that one should correct and align one's outward bearings in accordance with the Shari'ah and never forget to keep his or her inward state of being too reserved for Allah Ta'ālā alone. This helps us see the error (dichotomy) of those who take Shari'ah (the outward or physical adherence to faith) and Ṭariqah (the inward or spiritual adherence to faith) as two different ways to approach religion. Some of them would even presume that it was sufficient to correct one's inward dimension as shown by Ṭariqah - even if they go about doing what is contrary to the Shari'ah! This is a gaping error.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ (As He originated you, so you will return). It means that it was He who created you first and it will be He who will make you rise again on the day of *Qiyāmah*. For His perfect power, this was not difficult at all. Perhaps to indicate this element of convenience what was said here is: تَعُودُونَ (*ta'ūdūn*: you will return) and not: نُعِيدُكُمْ (We shall make you rise) since making to rise again requires not much action. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

There is an additional benefit of introducing this sentence here. It helps one in abiding by the injunctions of the Shari'ah - because it is the realization that there is a life-to-come, and a Last Day, the Day of *Qiyāmah*, and reward or punishment for deeds, good or bad, which makes what is difficult easy, and what is painful bearable. Experience bears out that man is a tough customer. Unless one is under such gripping apprehension, no word of advice can make him do what is right, nor can the restriction of any law stop him from going into crimes.

In the third verse (30), it was said that there are people Allah has guided right while there are others who have provided the proof of their erroneous conduct, because they have, bypassing Allah, made satans their comrades, and they presume that they are on the right path.

The sense is that the guidance of Allah *Subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā* was open to all, but they turned away from it and started following satans, then, on top of it, they were led to think that their sickness was health, and their error, guidance.

This verse tells us that not knowing the injunctions of the Shari'ah is no valid excuse. If someone takes to a way of error thinking it to be correct with full sincerity, he will not be considered excusable in the sight of Allah. - because Allah has given everyone reason and common-sense to use it and distinguish the true from the false. Then, man was not left to rely on his reason alone. He sent prophets and books. They made the right and wrong and the true and false all too clear.

Now someone may doubt that a person who is acting in good faith, though in error, should not have any blame coming to him. He should be excused because he is not aware of his error. The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed human beings with reason and sense with the added benefit of the teachings of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. At least, through these, he should be able to compare his method and way with that suggested by them. There has to be some doubt or pinch or question in his mind. Now, his fault is that he did not pay any attention to what they taught and kept sticking to the way of error he had taken to.

However, a person who has striven his best in the quest of truth,

yet failed to find the right path and true teaching, may be found excusable in the sight of Allah - as Imām al-Ghazali has said in his book, *Al-Tafriqah Bayn al-Islam wa Al-zandaqah*. *والله أعلم* .

In the fourth verse (31), it was said: 'O children of 'Ādam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant'. In the way the 'Arabs of Jāhiliyyah used to take the making of the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah naked as the correct method of worship and an act of reverence for the House of Allah, they also had a custom that they would skip eating and drinking during the days of Ḥajj. They would eat no more than what would keep them alive. They particularly abstained from butter oil, milk and other pure eatables. (Ibn Jarīr)

The present verse was revealed against this absurd practice. It enjoined that they should abstain from it because making Ṭawāf naked was an act of immodesty and bad manners. Similarly, doing the reverse of it, that is, abstaining from good food given by Allah Ta'ālā without any valid excuse had hardly anything to do with religion. In fact, forbidding on themselves what Allah had made lawful for them was effrontery and excess in an act of worship, something disliked by Allah. Therefore, eat and drink as you wish during the days of Ḥajj, but do not be extravagant. Totally abstaining from Ḥalāl foods is also included under extravagance. Then, becoming heedless to the real objectives of Ḥajj and the Dhikr of Allah and remaining busy with nothing but eating and drinking is also included under extravagance.

Though this verse has been revealed to eradicate a particular custom of nudity in the 'Arab Jāhiliyyah which they demonstrated at the time of Ṭawāf in the name of reverence for the Ka'bah, but the Imāms of Tafsīr and the Jurists of Muslim Ummah unanimously agree that the revelation of an injunction in relation to a particular event does not mean that that injunction is restricted to the same event. Instead, what is considered here is the generality of words. The injunction, then, applies on everything that falls under the generality of these words.

Covering the Body Properly is Obligatory : There is No Ṣalāh Without it

Therefore, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi'īn, and the Mujtahid