

أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ۖ تُضِلُّ بِهَا
 مَنِ تَشَاءُ ۖ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۖ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا
 وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَكُتِبَ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ
 وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هَذَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ ۗ
 وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاكُتْ بِهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ
 الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Surely, those who have taken the calf (as god) upon them shall befall the wrath of Allah, and humiliation in the worldly life. And that is, how we recompense the fabricators. [152] And those who have done evil deeds, then have repented thereafter, and have believed - surely after that your Lord is most Forgiving, very Merciful. [153] And when the fury of Mūsā quieted down, he picked up the Tablets, and in its contents there was guidance, and mercy for those who are fearful before their Lord. [154] And Mūsā selected seventy men from his people for Our appointment. Later when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among them have done? It is nothing but a trial from You, wherewith you let go astray whom You will, and give guidance to whom You will. You are our protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us and You are the best among those who forgive. [155] And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to You in repentance." He said, "As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses. [156]

The first verse (152) has warned those who took to the worship of the calf and persisted in it, of their sad fate in the Hereafter, and of disgraceful life in this world.

The worldly life is also affected by the sinful deeds

A part of punishment of some sins is also given in this life. This is

what happened to Sāmīrī. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام commanded him to live apart from the people not touching any one with his hand nor is he touched by any one of the people. Consequently for the rest of his life he lived a deserted life of seclusion, walking about with animals. No human did come near him.

Al-Qurtubī has reported on the authority of the Companion Qatādah that his punishment from Allah was that whenever he touched someone or was touched by anyone of the people both suffered from fever. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has observed that the symptoms of this disease are still inherited by his generations. This verse has ended with this sentence. *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ* "And this is how we recompense the fabricators." The Sheikh Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah has said that those who invent new things in the Shari'ah (take to Bid'ah) also commit the sin of fabrication and deserve such punishment. (Mazharī)

Imām Mālik has also inferred from this verse that those who invent new practices in the Shari'ah deserve the same punishment of Allah's wrath in the Hereafter and disgrace in this life. (Qurtubī)

The verse 153 speaks of the people who repented to Allah for their sin after the admonitions of their Prophet, and fulfilled the formidable condition of killing each other for their forgiveness. They killed each other as was stipulated in the command of Allah for their forgiveness by Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام called them to him and informed them that Allah had accepted their repentance. The people killed in this combat were awarded martyrdom while those who survived were forgiven by Allah. This implies that those who get themselves involved in sinful acts, if repent to Allah and correct their belief, Allah forgives them in His mercy with no regard to the gravity of the act. It is, therefore wise to turn to Allah in repentance instantly after every sinful act.'

The verse 154 describes that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام lifted up the tablets of the Torah which contained guidance and blessing for those who feared Allah. The Arabic word: *نُسْخَةٌ* 'Nuskha' rendered as contents signifies a writing copied from a book or other writings. There are certain reports that inform us that the tablets had broken at the time the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had put them away quickly. This time Allah gave him the Torah written on some other material.

Seventy people and their Death

The verse 155 describes an unusual event. After the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام brought the Torah for his people and bade them to follow it, they, being a crooked and pretentious people, said that they were not sure of it's being the word of Allah, and that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام might have written it himself. He prayed to Allah for making them certain about it. Allah said to Mūsā عليه السلام that he should choose seventy men out of his people and bring them to the mount of Sinai, He shall make them hear the word of Allah which was done as was promised. But they said that they were not certain of the voice heard by them as being the voice of God - 'We shall believe only when we see Allah vividly.' Since this demand was based on ignorance and obstinacy, they evoked the wrath of Allah. They were caught by the earthquake from beneath and by a thunder clap from above. Instantly they fell down on the ground as senseless as dead.

The word used in Sūrah Al-Baqarah while describing this event is (صَاعِقَةٌ) which signifies thunder, while in this verse the word (رَجْفَةٌ) has been used which denotes earthquake. The two words can be reconciled by assuming that they were punished by both the thunder and the earthquake. In short, they looked like dead, or perhaps they were really dead. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely aggrieved by this incident. Firstly, because they were all prominent personalities of the Israelites, secondly, he did not know how he would face his people on his return. They would blame him with the murder of all these people, and would even kill him. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام said to Allah, 'O, my Lord, I know that it is not your will to kill them, as they could be killed at earlier occasions more suited to their destruction. They could be drowned with Pharaoh, or killed at the time of calf-worship, but you did not do so. I am sure that You do not want them dead, but You aim at giving them warning in this way. Besides, You cannot kill all of us for the bad deeds done by some foolish people.' He also said, "O my Lord, I know this is just a trial from You. You let some people go astray with Your test and give guidance to some others who perceive the wisdom and lesson inherent in them. I am also among those who know that You are The Wise and All-Knowing. You are the Most Merciful of all and the Most-forgiving. O my Lord, forgive the insolence shown by these people." As a result of his prayer, all the

seventy men were raised to life.

The verse 156 contains the last portion of the prayer. It said: *وَكَتُبْ لَنَا* "And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to you in repentance." Allah Almighty answered in response to this request:

عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۖ فَسَاكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ
يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ .

"As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My Mercy extends to everything. So I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh and those who do believe in Our verses".

That is, though all the disobedient deserve the punishment of Allah but out of His mercy, which encircles everything, even the wrath of Allah, He afflicts with His punishment only a few whom He wills. His mercy is as great as includes everything, even those who rebel Allah and deny Him are shown some of His mercy, though it is limited to this world alone. When His mercy is so covering that it includes even the disobedient, He will surely write it for those who deserve it by fearing Allah, paying Zakāh and by believing in His verses. Then the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was given the good news of its acceptance.

The Commentators have varied opinion about the above interpretation of this prayer. This verse has no indication of the acceptance of his prayer in clear words as in other cases the approval of his prayers has been clearly mentioned. For example, the approval of his prayer has been mentioned in these words at another occasion (20:36): *فَقَدْ أُذِنَتْ* "O Mūsā you are given what you asked for." It is mentioned in another verse (10:89) *أُجِيبَتْ دَعْوَانُكُمْ* (O! Mūsā and Hārūn) your prayer has been accepted." At this occasion (7:156), no mention of such approval has been made. Some commentators have, therefore, suggested that this prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was not accepted in favour of the Israelites, rather, it was accepted in favour of the Muslim Ummah. The author of Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī has, however, said it to be a remote possibility.

The correct interpretation, therefore, is that the Prayer of the Prophet Mūsā was comprised of two requests. The first, was of mercy and forgiveness for those who were punished, and second for writing the good for him and his people both in this world and in the Hereafter. The acceptance of the first request is mentioned in this verse while the answer to the second request has been mentioned in the next verse (157). In response to his first request he was told that Allah does not punish every one who acts sinfully. He punishes only a few whom He will for their transgression. Therefore these people also shall not be punished. His Mercy is as great as covers every creation of Allah. Even those who are punished are not completely deprived of His mercy, since they could get harder punishment than they got. Allah has all the powers to do everything He wills.

The Satan claimed that according to this verse he was also the subject of His mercy because His mercy is said to be extending to everything and he was one of 'everything.'

My teacher, the Sheikh Anwar Kāshmirī has said that this verse has indicated that His mercy *can* encircle every thing. It did not say that His mercy *shall* encircle everything. In another verse of the Holy Qur'an it has been said in more clear words:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

"If they disbelieve in you say: 'Your Lord has all-encompassing mercy; but His punishment cannot be warded off from the evil-doers-6:147."

This has made it clear that vastness of His mercy does not preclude the sinners from being punished by Him.

In short, the first part of the invocation of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in favour of these people for mercy and forgiveness was instantly granted, but the second part asking for writing the perfect favour of Allah both in this world and in the Hereafter was stipulated with certain conditions. That is, as far as this world is concerned Allah can make His mercy common to all without regard to their belief or disbelief, but the Hereafter is a distinct world where His Mercy shall be limited only to those who fulfil certain conditions. Firstly, those who

fear Allah and take to piety that is, they fulfil all their religious obligations and avoid things forbidden by Allah, and pay Zakāh regularly out of their earnings, and thirdly, those who, firmly believe in His verses without offering any pretences or false interpretations to them. If these people too, fulfil the above conditions, the perfect favour shall be written for them both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The next verse, however, has indicated that people who shall perfectly fit the above description will be those coming after them in the last age, and follow the last Prophet, consequently deserving the perfect Mercy or favour of Allah. According to the report of Qatādah cited above, the Satan claimed that he also deserved the Mercy of Allah, for His Mercy extends to everything but the condition of 'Imān (belief) etc. specified in the verse excluded him. Similarly, the Jews and the Christians claimed that they too believed in Allah and paid Zakah, therefore, they shall also get the perfect Mercy of Allah in both the worlds. The next verse, however, included the condition of belief in the last Prophet ﷺ and in the verses of the Qur'an. This has excluded the Jews and the Christians who did not believe in the Holy Prophet

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Verse 157

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا
عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ
إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ
وَعَزَّزُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُقَلَّبُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injil (The gospels), and who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair, and makes pure things permissible for them and makes impure things prohib-

ited to them, and relieves them of their burden, and of the shackles that were upon them. So, those who believe in him and strengthen him, and help him and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful." [157]

The Distinct virtues of the Muslim Ummah

This verse speaks of the people who, in actual sense, deserve the perfect Mercy and complete favour of Allah asked by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام for his people. It said that the people fulfilling the conditions, referred to in the previous verse, in real sense are those who follow the unlettered Messenger of Allah. The verse, while speaking of these people, described certain distinctive qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then the verse enjoined not only belief in him but also following the commands and practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This makes us understand that in conjunction with belief in Allah, practicing the Sunnah (the practices) and the Shari'ah (The Law) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is imperative for eternal success in the Hereafter.

The phrase الرَّسُولَ الْأُمِّيَّ "The Messenger, the unlettered prophet", has mentioned three qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Arabic word: 'Ummī' rendered as unlettered signifies a person who does not know the art of reading and writing. The Holy Qur'an has referred to the Arabs as: 'Ummiyyīn' because the Arabs generally had very little to do with reading and writing. Being incapable of reading and writing is, obviously not a quality, rather it is an indication of imperfection. No matter how unusual it may seem, the same sign of imperfection has come to serve the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a sign of his perfection of the highest degree, taking in view the unparalleled erudition and exemplary wisdom and learning preached and demonstrated by him.

A demonstration of perfect wisdom, showing wise practices and behaviour by a man of letters is considered to be a fruit of his education, but when these and many other attributes of perfections of the highest humanly imaginable degree come out of a personality, who did not even know how to read and write, makes it as bright a miracle as daylight. It is more surprising when we see him living in Makkah (Mecca) for forty years without ever having any opportunity to learn. Exactly when he is forty years of age, suddenly he starts speaking things of such great wisdom and, in such a linguistic style and diction

that none in the world could produce a match of even the smallest part of this word - the Qur'an. ¹ This is, indeed, a self-evident witness affirming that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the true Messenger of Allah and Qur'an, the true word of Allah. The quality of being unlettered, therefore, may be a defect for others but for the Holy Prophet ﷺ it is a commendable attribute.²

The fourth quality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in this verse is that they shall find him written in the Torah and the Injil (Evangel). It may be noted that the verse did not say that they will find his attributes or indications written in the Books. It said that they will find him written in their revelations. It is an implicit indication that the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in the Torah or the Injil shall be so expressive and with as clear details as seeing them will be similar to seeing the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. The mention of the Torah and the Injil, without a reference to the Zabūr (The Book revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd [David]) is because the Christians and the Jews believed in them, otherwise Zabūr also contained the description of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ in the early Books

The Present versions of the Torah and the Injil, having undergone great changes and distortions have lost their essential quality of being original and trustworthy. Despite this fact, they still contain expressions bearing reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Besides, it is obvious that the Holy Qur'an had declared, in definite terms, that the Torah and Injil contained the descriptions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Jews and the Christians living in the period of the Holy Prophet would have used this Qur'anic claim against the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims, in case this claim could be proved as not corresponding to reality. We find that neither did the Jews nor the Christians ever try to refute this

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1. The author here, refers to a verse of the Holy Qur'an (2:23) throwing a challenge to the whole world to produce a sūrah (chapter) comparable to any of the Qur'anic Sūrahs. Inability in meeting this challenge by the Arabs who were as boastful of their oratory as to call the whole mankind excepting themselves, the Ajam signifying a dumb person is certainly a clear evidence of the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'an. (Translator)]
 2. The verse under discussion has mentioned this attribute along with as great attributes as Messenger and Prophet. This Qur'anic witness is enough to show that his being unlettered was equally a great attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Translator)]

claim, which is a witness of the truth that the Torah and the Injīl current in that period contained transparent references to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Otherwise, the Jews and the Christians would have used it as against this Qur'anic claim.

It may be noted that some of the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in these books have been reported in the Holy Qur'an with reference to the Torah and the Injīl, while some other attributes have been reported in the Holy Traditions (*Hadīth*) by those new Muslims who read them in these book themselves, and later they had converted to Islām after reading such descriptions.

Al-Baihaqī has reported the following event in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah. The Companion Anas رضى الله عنه has reported that a boy from the Jews was in the service of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Once he was sick, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went to his house where he saw the father of the lad reciting some parts of the Torah beside his bed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to the father, "I bid you to tell me by the pledge of Allah if you find descriptions in the Torah indicating my coming as a prophet and referring to my attributes?" He negated it. The son instantly said "O Prophet of Allah, my father is wrong. We find you and your attributes mentioned in the Torah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah." The Holy Prophet ﷺ bade his Companions that they should perform his funeral ceremonies, after his death, according to Islām because he was a Muslim, after this witness. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ owed some money to a Jew. He demanded the Prophet to pay him the money back and said to him in a harsh tone that he will not let him go until he gets his money back. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that the Jew had a right on him, and sat down by him saying that he will not go until he lets him go willingly. The Holy Prophet ﷺ remained there for the whole day and night. He offered the *Zuhr*, *'Aṣr*, *Maghrib* and *'Ishā'*, and *Fajr* of the next day (from mid day to the next morning). The Companions were greatly annoyed at this behaviour from the Jew. They were secretly admonishing the Jew so that he may let the Prophet go. The Holy Prophet ﷺ having some idea asked them of what they were doing. They said that it was unbearable for them to see the

Prophet in the custody of a Jew. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to them, "My Lord has prohibited me from doing wrong to any one under the covenant."

Next morning, the Jew who was highly impressed by this remarkable experience, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and declared:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

"I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah."

Subsequent to this declaration of his faith in Allah he said that by detaining the Prophet ﷺ he meant nothing but to test the truth of his attributes mentioned in the Torah. He said that he had read the following description concerning him in the Torah. He also declared to give away half of his wealth in the way of Allah. The description given by him is this:

"Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh. He shall be born in Makkah. The place of his migration shall be Madīnah. His country will be Syria. He shall neither be a man of harsh temperament, nor shall he speak roughly. He shall not make noise in bazars. He shall be away from the acts of immodesty."

He said that he found out the truth of this description in him. He was a wealthy person, and half of his wealth was a considerable amount for the Muslims. (The above incident has been reported by Maḏharī with reference to Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah by Baihaqī)

Imām al-Baghawī has reported on the authority of Ka'ab Aḥḅār that the Torah contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

"Muḥammad is the Messenger and chosen servant of Allah. He is neither a man of harsh temperament nor is he a man of disagreeable speech. He does not cry in bazars, nor does he return ill when ill is done to him. He forgives or ignores the wrong-doers."

"His birth place is Makkah and his migration shall be to Ṭaybah (Madīnah). His country is Syria and his people shall be *ḥammādīn*. That is they shall praise Allah when in comfort and when in trouble. They shall say Takbīr when ascending in

their travel. They shall watch the shadows in order to ascertain proper time of their prayers."

"He shall wear a sheet of cloth round his waist and keep his hands and feet clean with ablution (Wuḍū). His man calling for prayer shall raise his voice in the air. In battle fields they shall line up as closely as in prayers. At nights their recitations shall be heard like humming of the bees."

Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Sa'd have cited full chain of narrators saying that Sahl Maulā Khuthaimah has informed that he had read the following description concerning the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Injil (Evangel):

"He shall neither be short nor shall he be tall. Colour shall be fair, hair, in two locks. He shall bear a seal of prophethood on his body between shoulders. He shall not accept alms, shall ride on camel and by himself shall he milk the goat, and wear the patched clothes."

"He shall be in the line of Isma'īl. His name shall be Aḥmad:

Ibn Sa'd in his book 'Tabaqāt', Dārimī in his Musnad and Baihaqī in his book Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, who was a great scholar of the Jews. He said that Torah had contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

"O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness over all the nations of the world, as the bearer of good tidings to the righteous, as a warner to the wrong doers and as Protector of the Ummiyyīn' the unlettered Arabs. You are My Messenger and servant. I have named you, 'Mutawakkil' (One who trusts Allah). You are neither a man of harsh temperament, nor quarrelling, nor crying in the markets. You do not return evil in response to evil, rather forgive or ignore the wrong-doers. Allah shall not let him die until he sets the crooked right and make them believe in Allah exclusively, until he makes the blind eyes see, dumb ears hear and sealed hearts open."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī also contains a similar description on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ رضى الله عنه. Besides, al-Baihaqī has reported the following statement in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah, on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, the great scholar and expert in the

early books.

"Allah revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (David) in the Zabūr as follows: 'O, Dāwūd, there shall come a Prophet after you. His name shall be Aḥmad. I shall never be displeased with him, nor he shall ever be disobedient to me. I have forgiven all of his errors and omissions. I have enjoined upon his people, the optional as well as the obligatory prayers that I had enjoined upon the early Prophets. On the day of judgement they shall come before me having the light similar to the light of the early prophets. O Dāwūd, I have blessed Muḥammad and his people with excellence over the people of other prophets. I have favoured them with six special concessions which I did not concede to the early people. They shall not be punished for their inadvertent omissions. I shall forgive their unintentional sins if they seek My forgiveness. The money they shall spend willingly in My way, I shall give them manifold in return in this world also."

Those who shall say *إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ* "We belong to Allah, and to Him we are to return," when ever they are faced with some distress, I shall turn their distress into blessing and mercy and a means of his guidance to paradise. I shall accede to their invocations, sometimes, by giving them what they asked for, and sometimes, by storing their prayers to be granted on the Day of Judgement." (Rūḥ-al-Ma'ānī)

The above are only a few out of hundreds of such Traditions which have been collected by the religious scholars in separate volumes, among them is Sheikh Raḥmat Allah Kairānvī of India who has dealt with this subject thoroughly in his book 'Izhār al-Ḥaqq'. He has given specific examples of such descriptions found in the current versions of the Bible, despite the fact that they have been robbed of their originality through innumerable changes and distortions by the Judo-Christian theologians. The Urdu version of this remarkable work has been published in Pakistan. ¹

Some additional attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have also been

1. By the grace of Allah, I have the honour of rendering this work into English. Three volumes of the English version have been published in London. (Translator)

included in the descriptions found in the Torah and the Injīl, among them is his attribute of bidding good to people and preventing them from evil. *أَمْرًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهْيًا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ* . The Arabic term Ma'aruf literally signifies something recognized, acknowledged or known, while the term: *مُنْكَرٌ* 'munkar' signifies strange, or unrecognized. That is, Ma'aruf refers to the acts which are known and recognized in Islām while Munkar refers to the acts which are not recognized or known. This has indicated that the act which was recognized by, or known to, the people of the first century of Islām shall only be considered as good-deed otherwise it shall be termed as 'munkar' or rejected. This, in turn, makes us understand that any act, not approved by the Companions and their disciples (صحابه و تابعين) cannot be considered as good-deed with no regard to how positive or agreeable it looks. The authentic Traditions have, therefore, termed the acts not acknowledged or approved by the Companions and their disciples as innovated acts (مُحَدَّثَاتُ الْأُمُور) or 'bid'ah' (innovation). In the next phrase of the verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been described as having the attribute of inviting people to good and preventing them from evil. The verse (7:157) said: *يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ* "Who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair."

This attribute has been, a common attribute of all the Prophets, as it had to be, because the very purpose of their being ordained by Allah is to guide people to good and prevent them from evil. There must be some reason in describing this attribute as a distinct feature of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . A little reflection on his effective way of preaching, and speaking to people according to their state of mind is enough to show the distinction. The Arab bedouins who knew nothing except grazing the camels and goats were spoken to in such a simple and candid terms that made them understand effortlessly even complex and speculative ideas. He used to receive delegates from the world-powers of the time like Rome and Persia and from other tribes. They were greatly impressed by his ingenuous approach in making his point easily intelligible to them. His god-gifted capability of making impact on others by his speech was miraculously unusual and has been acknowledged even by his enemies. Another attribute described in the Torah was that through the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah shall make the blind eyes see and dumb ears hear, and the sealed hearts open. This may also have a reference to his effective method of preaching and

making things understood easily.

The verse under discussion has described second attribute that he shall permit his people to eat pure things and shall prohibited impure things. This implies that many things which, in fact were pure and good, and had been forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment shall be permitted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ for his people. For example, the fat of permissible animals were forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment against their sinful deeds.

For example, the fat of the properly slaughtered animal which was forbidden for them was made permissible by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the Muslims. The example of impure things includes blood, dead animals, liquor and all the prohibited animals. This also includes impermissible means of income like gambling, interest and bribes etc. (Al-Sirāj al-Munīr). Some scholars have included immorality and ill manners also in impure things.

Next the verse speaks of the third attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying "وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ" And relieves them of their burden and of the shackles that were upon them.

The Arabic word 'Iṣr' إصر signifies heavy burden enough to stop movement, and the word 'Aghlāl' is a plural of 'ghull' (غل) signifying handcuffs or shackle which binds the hands of a criminal with his neck. Both the words refer to punishment and were not, in themselves, a religious requirement. For example, the Israelites were essentially required to cut away the piece of cloth having impurity on it. They were not allowed simply to wash it away. Similarly the spoils of war acquired during *jihād* with infidels was not permissible for them. Reportedly, a heavenly fire used to come and burn it up. They were not allowed hunting on *Sabbath* (Saturday). The human organs involved in committing sin were required to be cut off. The murderer had to be essentially killed in retaliation with no regard to the nature of murder: deliberate or homicide by mistake. They had no legal concession of paying ransom.

The arduous injunctions described above have been regarded to in this verse by the words burden and shackles. It is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall abrogate such injunctions and replace them

with easily practicable commandments. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has referred to this aspect of Islamic Shari'ah in a Ḥadīth saying 'that he is leaving among them an easy and practicable law which is neither cumbersome nor susceptible to going astray'. In another tradition he said: *أَلَدِينُ يُسْرٌ* "Dīn (Islam) is easy".

Subsequent to the description of some attributes of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the verse has said:

فَاَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِىْ اُنزِلَ مَعَهُ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"So, those who believe in him, and hold him in reverence, and help him, and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful."

This verse has stipulated the achievement of success with four conditions namely, belief in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, having reverence for him, readily coming to his help and following the commandments of the Holy Qur'an.

The word used for reverence in this verse is *عَزَّوهُ* which is derived from 'Ta'zīr'. Lexically it means 'to stop someone, with love and affection, from doing something, and to guard him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has interpreted it as 'reverence. Al-mubarrad has commented that it denotes the highest degree of reverence. The implication of the verse is that the achievement of everlasting success is the destiny of those who, in addition to having love and respect for him, are always ready to help him against his enemies. In the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم helping him was directly related to his person; but after his departure helping his message or supporting the Islamic Shari'ah is analogous to helping the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Qur'an has been referred to with the word 'light'. Since light does not require an external proof for its existence, similarly the Qur'an, in itself, is a clear proof of its being divine and the word of Allah, since the highest degree of wisdom and eloquence that it contains is as evident as the sunlight which requires no proof for its existence. Specially so when it was spoken by an unlettered man. Similar to light which is not only bright in itself, but has the characteristics of making the darks bright as well, the Holy Qur'an has

enlightened the mankind which was lost in darkness.

The significance of the Sunnah:

The verse under discussion started with the words, "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet," and has ended on the phrase. "and follow the light sent down with him". The first phrase enjoins the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while the second phrase bids to the obedience to the Qur'anic injunctions. This has indicated that eternal salvation is dependent on the obedience of both, the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and that the obedience of the Holy Prophet can be achieved only by following the way of his life - the *Sunnah*.

Love and respect of the Prophet is essential

The phrase عَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ "And hold him in reverence and help him." has been placed between the above two sentences, implying that the obedience required for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not like the obedience one has to show to the high ranking official out of some necessity. This has to be the obedience in true sense of the word which is a product of love and respect. That is to say, one should bear as much love and reverence for him as to make this obedience dearest to him. People have varied relations with their Prophet. He is a Prophet, a master, a commander and an object of great love at the same time. Besides, the Prophet being superior to all his people in respect of knowledge, wisdom, and social and moral behaviour demands, deep respect or veneration on the part of his people.

Our Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has perfection in each of the above aspects making it essential for the Muslims to fulfil the demands of all his positions. He should be believed as a prophet, obeyed as a commander, venerated as a man of great knowledge and wisdom and deeply loved and cherished for being very kind to them.

The obedience of the Prophet has to be a religious requirement for the Muslims because the very purpose of his being sent down remains unfulfilled without it. In the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah Almighty has enjoined additional obligations upon the Muslims. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān we find the phrase: وَتَعَزَّوْهُ وَنُصِّرُوهُ "So that you assist him and honour him." (48:9) Yet in another verse people have been warned that they should not raise their voices above the

voice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . The verse said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

"O Believers! do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet." (49:2)

In another verse the Muslims have been advised in these words.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

"O believers, do not go ahead in the presence of Allah and His Messenger. (49:1)

The verse has warned the Muslims that they should not start their speech before the speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his presence. The Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه has taken it to imply that people should not start talking before the Prophet of Allah speaks, and should remain silent when he talks. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an has prohibited the Muslims from calling the Messenger of Allah in a manner they call each other. It said:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

"Do not make the calling of the Messenger, among yourself, like the calling of one another." (24:63)

The Holy Qur'an warned the Muslims that all their good deeds shall go waste if they show lack of respect to him.

The companions, who availed the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ most of their time, maintained the respect of the Holy Prophet according to Qur'anic instructions. It has been reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه , after the revelation of the above verse, used to speak with the Messenger of Allah as stealthily as saying some secret to him. Same was the case with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Farūq رضى الله عنه .

The companion 'Amr ibn 'Ās رضى الله عنه has said:

"None on earth is as dear to me as was the Messenger of Allah but at the same time I was unable to cast my looks at him. If I am ever asked to describe him, I find it difficult since I have never seen him enough as to give out his description."

Tirmidhi has reported Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه saying that whenever the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came in the assembly of the

companions, people kept their eyes down with respect. Only Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهما raised their eyes and used to smile at them.

'Urwah ibn Mas'ūd was once sent to Madīnah for spying on the Muslims. On his return to Makkah he reported, "I have seen the courts of great kings like the king of Rome and Persia and I have met King Negus but the respect and veneration I saw in the hearts of the Muslims for their prophet was unique, never seen anywhere in the world. I think you shall never succeed against them."

The Companion Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah رضى الله عنه has reported in a Tradition that the companions of the Prophet of Allah deemed it against his respect to call him from outside his house. They knocked at his door with their finger nails to avoid making a loud sound. Even after his departure the companions did not only avoid talking loudly in his mosque, they also avoided raising their voice while giving sermons in the mosque. A number of people could not help themselves from weeping when some one made a mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This exemplary love and respect of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let them share a considerable part of prophetic perfection and enjoy the highest religious status next to the prophets.

Verses 158 - 159

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ
 مَلِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ فَآمِنُوا
 بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتِهِ
 وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ
 بِالْحَقِّ وَيَبْغِدُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

Say, "O people, I am a messenger of Allah (sent) to you from the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and brings death. So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummi (unlettered) prophet, who believes in Allah and in His words and follow him so that you may get the right path." [158] And among the

community of Mūsā there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [159]

This verse speaks of one of the basic aspects of the prophethood which is among the fundamental tenets of Islam. That is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent as His Messenger to the entire mankind and to the jinn (genies) coming into being upto the day of judgment.

This verse has commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to make general declaration that he has been sent to all the people of the world, and that his prophethood was not limited to a particular people and place as was the case with the early prophets who came to a particular people and place and for a limited period of time.

He is the last of all Prophets

The fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent down at the end of all prophets is an obvious reason behind the Islamic belief of Finality of prophethood. His being the last of all prophets and coming down for the guidance of all people of all future times leaves no room for any other Prophet. The same fact provides with an explanation to a characteristic quality of the Muslim Ummah. According to a Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , there shall always be a group among the Muslims who will keep defying the anti-Islamic forces and putting resistance in the way of sacrilegious thought and practice. It will also correct false interpretations of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This group shall be favoured by Allah with His special help and thereby will , ultimately, win over the opposite forces. It is because these people are considered to be the real inheritors of the prophetic mission, faithfully discharging their duty after the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Imām al-Rāzī, under the comments of the Qur'anic commandment كُنْتُمْ مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (Be in the company of the truthful) has remarked that this phrase has provided an assurance that a group of the truthful shall always be available for people, otherwise the command of seeking their company made no sense. Imām Rāzī has inferred the principle of consensus (اجماع) from this phrase. That is, the presence of the truthful people was enough to preclude the agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* on error.

Ibn Kathīr has inferred from this verse that it has provided a proof

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the seal of the prophets because his message was for all the people of the world and for all the ages to come. According to some authentic Traditions, the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام will also follow the Law of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his descent from heavens in the last age. Apart from this verse there are many other verses which speak in unmistakable terms of the Finality of Prophethood. For example the Holy Qur'an said:

وَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ (الانعام - ١٩)

"And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach." (6:19)

This, evidently, enjoins the following of the Holy Qur'an upon all the people coming after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to acquire knowledge of the Qur'an.

Some distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Ibn Kathīr has cited the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad reporting by authentic narrators that at the occasion of the battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in the late night prayer (Tahajjud). The companions gathered around him in a circle to save him from any possible attack by the enemy. After completing the prayer the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "This night I have been awarded with five distinctions, not awarded to any prophet before. Firstly, my prophethood has been extended to all mankind while the message of the prophets prior to me was limited to their particular people only. Secondly, my presence creates a feeling of dread in the hearts of my enemy which overtakes him from a distance of one month's travel. Thirdly, the spoils taken from the enemy have been made permissible for my people, while it was prohibited for the early people. Fourthly, Allah has made the whole earth a place for our prayers like a mosque, and made it a purifier (in *tayammum*) for my people, while the prayers of the early people was limited to their churches or synagogues. They were not permitted to pray at home or out in the land. Besides, in the absence of water my people are allowed to make use of soil, in place of water for *tayammum* (a substitute of ablution). The early people were not given this concession." Then, he said, emphatically that the fifth

distinction was, above all, the most promising and helpful. He explained, "Every prophet was asked by Allah to make one particular supplication which was to be essentially acceded to, and every prophet made that invocation for their particular aim. Allah asked me too to make such invocation. I preferred to reserve my invocation until the Day of Judgement which will be of great use to you and to those who follow and bear witness that there is no god but Allah."

Another Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه has contained that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Any one hearing the news of my appearance, be he a Muslim, Christian or Jew must believe in me, otherwise he will be placed in Hell."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī has reported the following incident with regard to this verse: Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهما once had severe disagreement on a matter. Sayyidnā 'Umar left the place to express his dissent. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه followed him in order to bring him round. Sayyidnā 'Umar being angry with him entered his house and locked the door upon him. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, having no choice went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and related the whole story to him. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه had a feeling of regret for misbehaving Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, he too went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and informed him of the incident. The Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was annoyed at it. Seeing that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was going to be admonished for it, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My fault was greater". At this point the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Can you people not leave one of my companions alone and save him from the annoyance on your part? Do you people not know when I declared by the will of Allah يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا "O people, I am a messenger of Allah sent to you all," you all belied me? It was Abū Bakr alone who testified to my Prophethood."

In short, this verse is a clear evidence proving that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to the whole mankind. His message is for all generations and for all times to come and for all places. No one can

achieve salvation without believing in him, even if he is faithfully and devotedly practicing some other faith or book.

The next sentence of the verse reminds people that he has been sent from the One to Whom the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs and who gives life to every living creature and brings death to it. That is, He alone is the Lord of the Universe. The last sentence of the verse said:

فَأٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَمْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهِ وَاَتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَهْتَدُوْنَ

"So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *Um mi* (unlettered) prophet who believes in Allah and in his words, and follow him so that you may get the right path."

After establishing the fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sent for all the people of the world and for all times to come, and that there is no other choice for any one but to follow his law - the Islam, the verse enjoins the belief in Allah and in His Messenger, who is Um mi, the unlettered. He, himself believes in Allah and in His words. The people should, therefore, follow him to keep themselves on the right path.

The 'words' كلمات refer to the word of Allah revealed to his prophets like the Torah, Evangile (the book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus)) and the Qur'ān. It may be noted that the command of believing in him is followed by another command of following him. This has indicated that sheer belief or making the verbal utterances of belief, is not enough for guidance or salvation. Practicing Islamic Shari'ah is essentially required for one's salvation in the Hereafter.

The great saint and spiritual leader Sheikh Junaid of Baghdad has remarked that all the paths leading to Allah are closed except the path specifically defined by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

The Truthful among the Israelites

The verse 159 said: "وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰٓ اُمَّةٌ يَّهْتَدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُوْنَ" "Among the community of Mūsā there are people who guide to the truth, and do justice thereby." That is, there is a group among the Israelites who follows the

truth and decides their controversies according to the dictates of the Truth - Islam. Which are the people referred to in this verse as following the truth among the Israelites? This refers to the people who faithfully followed the commandments of the Torah and the Injīl at the time they were revealed, and those who readily accepted the faith of Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم according to the predictions contained in the Torah and the Injīl. The Holy Qur'an has referred to this group in a number of verses in commendable terms. There is a verse which said: **مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَانِئَةٌ بِتَوْحُوتِ اللَّهِ أَنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ** "Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast, they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours, and they prostrate." (2:113)

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Those to whom We gave the book before this, they do believe in this (Qur'an)". (28:52)

Under the comments on this verse we find a narrative in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr. A group of Israelites who greatly despised the corrupt practices of the Israelites had prayed Allah for having a separate land away from the other tribes so that they might practice according to the original faith preached by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah carried them to a land somewhere in the far East where they faithfully practised their faith.

Another favour of Allah bestowed upon them was that in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they were granted an opportunity to embrace Islam directly on the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the night of Ascension (سَبِّ مِعْرَاج) the Archangel Jibra'il (Gabriel) took the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to these people on the way to heavens. They accepted the faith and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم taught them some Sūrahs (chapters) of the Holy Qur'an.

The Prophet of Allah asked them if they had some means of weighing and measuring and what other means of subsistence did they have? They answered that their usual practice was that they cultivated the land and collected the whole produce together in a heap. The people came and took from it according to their need. They said, "We do not, therefore, need any weights and measures." The Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked them if any one of them ever told lies. They said that no one among them ever told lies because it was a usual practice that any person speaking a lie was burnt up by a heavenly fire. He asked them as to why all their houses were of the same type? They answered, that it was to avoid the possibility of showing off one's affluence as compared to others. He asked them why they had built up their graves in front of their houses? They said that this made them remember their death all the times.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from heavens to Makkah, this verse was revealed to him. Al-Qurṭubī, under the comments of this verse has narrated this event along with other suggestions and has remarked that this narrative was not authentic. Ibn Kathīr, however, has termed it as an unusual event but did not reject it.

In short, this verse makes us understand that there has always been a group among the Israelites who followed the Truth. Be they the people described above or the ones who embraced Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Verses 160 - 162

وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَبِطًا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمَهُ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ وَظَلَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْعَمَامَ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّٰ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ ۖ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ۖ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَكَانُوا كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتِكُمْ ۖ سَنُرِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate

communities. And we revealed to Mūsā when his people asked him for water, "Strike the rock with your staff." Then twelve springs gushed forth from it. Each tribe came to know their drinking place. And We shaded them with the shadow of the clouds. And we sent down to them the 'Mann' and the 'Salwā'¹ (saying), "Eat of the good things we have provided you." And they did us no harm, rather they have been harming their own selves.

[160]

And when it was said to them, "Live in this town and eat therefrom any where you like, and say, 'Ḥiṭṭah' (we seek forgiveness) and enter the gate prostrating, so that We forgive your errors. We shall give much more to those good-in-deeds." [161]

But those of them who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was said to them. So, We sent down upon them a scourge from the heavens, because they have been transgressing. [162]

The above verses have enumerated various favours that Allah bestowed upon the Israelites, and spoke of their deviation from the commands of Allah resulting in a heavenly punishment for their transgression. The translation of the verses given above is self explanatory and the relevant details have already been given in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (First volume of this book, translation and commentary under verses 57-59, pages 217-221).

Verses 163 - 166

وَسَأَلَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي
السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرْعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا

1. Manna which is "Man-hu" in Hebrew has been described in Exodus (14:14) in these words, "a small round thing, as small as a hoar frost on the ground". According to 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, it usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun. The amount necessary for each man was about an omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to 2 1/2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual Manna found to this day in the region of Sinai is gummy saccharine found on a species of Tamarisk. As to 'Salwā' it is a quail, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War 1914-1918 by many Indian officers who campaigned between Egypt and Palestine. (The Holy Qur'an by Yūsuf Alī vol. 1 page 31) -- Translator.

يَسْبِتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾
 وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا لَّيْلَ اللَّهِ مَهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ
 عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعذِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾
 فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا
 الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَذَابٍ بَّيِّنٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
 عَتَوْا عَن مَّا نُهَىٰ عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

And ask them about the town which was situated by the sea, when they used to transgress in the matter of Sabbath, when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath, and did not come when they did not have Sabbath. In this way, We put them to a test, because they used to act sinfully. [163]

And when a group of them said, "Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is going to destroy or punish with a severe punishment? They said, "To absolve ourselves before your Lord, and in order that they may fear Allah." [164]

So when they forgot the advice they were given, We saved those who used to forbid evil and seized those who transgressed, with a bitter punishment, because they had been disobeying. [165]

So, when they persisted in doing what they were forbidden from, We said to them, "become apes, humiliated." [166]

The detailed discussion of the events contained in the above verses have been produced in the first volume of this work in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (under verses 58-60, pages 211-223). Those interested may refer to those verses for details.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to warn the Israelites present in his time by reminding them the events related in these verses. The events referred to in these verses are clear and require no explanation.

Verses 167 - 169

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ
سَوَاءَ الْعَذَابِ ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
﴿١٦٧﴾ وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا مِنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ
دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَبَلَّوْنَاهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ
﴿١٦٨﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ
عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَى وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفِرُ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ
مِثْلَهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ ۗ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا
عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ۗ وَالذَّارِ الْأَخْرَهُ خَيْرٌ
لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

And When your Lord declared that He would surely keep sending, till the Day of Doom, those who inflict on them evil punishment. Certainly, your Lord is swift in punishing, and certainly He is the Most-forgiving, Very Merciful. [167]

And we divided them on the earth as separate communities. Some of them are righteous, while some others are otherwise. And we tested them with good (happenings) and with bad happenings, so that they might return. [168]

Then after them, came a generation who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying, "We shall be forgiven." And if there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again). Were they not made to enter the covenant contained in the Book that they should not say, about Allah, anything but the truth? And they learnt what it contained. And the abode is better for those who fear Allah. Have you then, no sense? [169]

The first two verses (167 and 168) have referred to the two punishments given to the Israelites. Firstly, Allah will keep sending up to the Day of Doom, some individuals or groups of people who will punish

and bring disgrace to them. In fact, this is what has been happening to them up to this day. They had been dominated and disdainfully treated by others as has been recorded by history. We may not be in doubt about their present government in a part of Palestine, as it is a common knowledge that the state of Israel is, in fact, a part of the world powers, created by them for their political objectives against the Muslim *Ummah*. They are still ruled over and dominated by the colonial powers. It is, in fact, a military base of America. The day these powers stop providing them with their aid they shall not be able to maintain their existence for long.

The second punishment has been mentioned in verse 168. That is, Jewish populace has been cut into fragments scattered in all the parts of the world they could not integrate themselves into a solid nation. The phrase *وَقَطَعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَّمًا* "And we divided them on the earth as separate communities". has referred to this fact. The Arabic word *قَطَعْنَا* signifies breaking into pieces. While the word *أُمَّم* is plural of *Ummah*, which means 'a group', 'a party'. The verse means that Allah has divided them into fragments making them scattered on the earth.

This indicates that being integrated in a whole, or having an entity as a nation is a blessing of Allah while getting disorganized into parts separated from each other is a punishment from Him. The Muslims have always enjoyed the blessing of having their own entity, and being recognized as an organized people in the world. Starting right from Madinah in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم up to this day they have their own independent rule in various parts of the earth. The presence of Islamic countries from the far East to the West is an obvious proof of this fact.

Their present state in Palestine should not cause any doubt as they have to come together in a place in the last age according to the prophecies made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He informed us in authentic Traditions that Prophet 'Isā عليه السلام shall come down to the earth from heavens before the end of the world, and all the Christians shall embrace Islam. He shall fight a war against the Jews and put them to death. The culprits of Allah are not summoned through police, or other agencies; they are driven to their place of death by the causes created by the will of Allah.

The Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus) عليه السلام is to descend from heavens in the land of Syria. He shall fight war with the Jews. The Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام has been saved the trouble of seeking the Jews in different parts of the world by causing them to gather in Palestine. As to their present political power and sovereignty in the State of Israel, it is a delusion which beguiles only those who are not conversant with the world politics. The so called 'State of Israel' is, in fact, a common camp ground of the big powers like America, Russia, and England. It depends upon the aid of its masters for its existence. It has to serve the aims and objectives of its Masters. They are still living in real servitude, and are deprived of their free rule in true sense of the word.

The Holy Qur'an has informed us of their disgrace and distress up to the end of time in these words:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لِيُبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ

"And when your Lord declared that he would surely keep sending till the Day of Doom, those who inflict upon them an evil punishment."

History has recorded that they have been continually persecuted by one people or another right from the time of the Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام to the present age. Their imprisonment by Nebuchadnassar and persecution at the hands of subsequent kings, then their defeat and ignominious fate at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Caliph 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه¹ are obvious example of this fact.

The second phrase of this verse is this:

مِنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ

"Some of them are righteous, and some of them are otherwise".

The righteous people among them are those who followed the commandments of the Torah faithfully and did not try to distort them as others did. The people termed as 'otherwise' include infidels and those who obstinately disobeyed their prophets and even killed them. The terms 'righteous' and 'otherwise' may also refer to the people who

1. The recent persecution of the Jews at the hands of Hitler in the second world war is a fresh example of this Qur'anic declaration. (Translator)

believed in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and followed the Qur'anic guidance after it's revelation. Opposed to them are those believing in the Torah as the word of Allah, disobeyed it or distorted its commandment and thus sold out their eternal salvation for petty gains of this world. The last phrase of this verse has said:

وَبَلَوْنَهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"And we tested them with good happenings and bad happenings so that they might return."

The "good happenings" refer to their state of prosperity, comfort and ease while 'bad happenings' has reference either to their various persecutions and calamities faced by them throughout their history, or it may have referred to some period of famine coming upon them as punishment. Both the methods of testing their obedience were used in their case. Prosperity and wealth were given to them to see if they show their gratefulness to their Lord. When they were a failure in this test, they were made to undergo many punishments already discussed in the foregoing verses.

Their perversion of thought and practice had gone to such extent that in the time of prosperity they said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ

"Allah is poor and we are rich." (3:181)

while in times of their destitution they said: يدالله مغلوله "Allah's hand is shackled." (5:64) Another implication of the verse is that prosperity or poverty, happiness or suffering are sent as a test to mankind in order to judge the faith and love of the created for the Creator. Both, prosperity and suffering should be of no real concern to the men of understanding, as they are temporary and have to end.

It is, therefore, not wise to show arrogance for one's prosperity or being dejected for one's impoverishment. A persian poet said:

نه شادی داد سامانے نه غم آورد نقصانے
به پیش همت ما هرچه آمد بود مهمانے

"Neither happiness awarded us with real benefit nor did sorrow make us weep. Both came as guests to our resolute spirit."

The verse 169 has said:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَى وَيَقُولُونَ
سَيَغْفِرَ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلَهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ

"Then, after them came a generation, who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying: 'We shall be forgiven.' And if there comes to them similar stuff, they would take to it (again).

The Arabic word خَلَفَ is a past tense of خَلَاةٌ signifying a deputy or a person trusted with one's work in one's absence.

The second word used here is خَلْفٌ with the merged sound of the second letter *Lām*, generally denoting a deputy who is marked with wickedness, as opposed to the good practices of his elders. The word وَرِثُوا is a derivative of وِرَاةٌ that is, inheritance. The next word is عَرَضٌ meaning something bought with money. Sometimes, it is used just for something possessed. The use of this word for money indicates that any thing owned in this world is temporary, because this word, as an antonym of 'Jauhar' (substance), is used for an object which requires something else to show its existence like colour which requires another thing to show itself. The word أَدْنَى has been derived from دُنُوٌ which denotes nearness or lack of distance. The word نَبِيٌّ is a feminine gender of this word. The word أَدْنَى may also be taken to be a derivative of نَابَةٌ which signifies disgrace. In this case the word shall refer to something disgraced.

The verse implies that there were two groups of people among the early Jews, the righteous and the wrong-doers. The people coming in later generations who inherited the Torah, however, acted opposite to their elders and made the Book an object of trading or a means of their earning. They used to manipulate and distort the text of the Torah for some money offered to them for this purpose. Moreover, "they said: وَيَقُولُونَ سَيَغْفِرُ لَنَا" "We shall be forgiven". In spite of committing as great a sin as distorting the text of the Book of Allah, they claimed their forgiveness by Allah. They are warned of this error in the very next sentence. saying: "وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلَهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ" "If there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again)." That is to say, they are in such a state of perversion that in case they are offered money for changing another

text, they shall readily accept it. The verse has implied that forgiveness of Allah is always there to those who are mindful of their error and turn to their Lord in repentance showing their remorse over what they have done, and making firm promise of not repeating the same mistake again. Being persistent in their sinful acts and claiming their forgiveness is sheer self deception. The next part of the verse puts a question to them, whether they were not made to enter a covenant with Allah that they shall never say anything but truth about Allah. Yes, they read this pledge in their Book. This is nothing but their impudence and obstinacy that stops them from realizing the truth of the Hereafter which is exclusively the fate of those who fear Allah.

Verses 170 - 171

وَالَّذِينَ يَمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
 الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوْا
 أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

And those who hold fast the book and establish the Ṣalāh (are righteous) - Surely, Allah does not waste the reward of the righteous. [170]

And when We raised the mountain over them as though it were a canopy, and they thought it was falling upon them. (We said,) "Hold firmly what We have given to you and remember what is therein, so that you may become God-fearing." [171]

The preceding verse (169) contained a mention of a covenant made with the religious leaders of the Israelites in particular, that they shall not make any changes in the Torah and shall not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth. It has already been mentioned that they violated this pledge and distorted the contents of the Torah for petty amounts of money. This verse is an extension of the same theme. It says that there are some among their religious leaders who are truthfully following the commands of the Torah and are firmly adhering to its guidance. They established the Ṣalāh as was required. The verse has provided with an assurance to such people that they shall not be

deprived of their reward. That is, those who have been true to their faith and fulfilled its demands are righteous people among them.

There are some points of discussion related to this verse. The term 'Book' most probably refers to the Torah. Another possibility is that it refers to all the heavenly books of Allah like Torah, Injīl and the Qur'ān. Another point to be noted is that merely keeping the book of Allah and showing respect to it without following its' commandments does not fulfil the very object of its revelation. It is why the verse has used the word بِمَسْكُونٍ "Hold fast", in place of بِأَحْذَرٍ or بِقُرْءَانٍ "those who take it or read it. Holding fast the Book requires to follow all its injunctions and commands.

The next thing we note in this verse is that out of a large number of doctrines of the Torah the verse has made mention of "establishing 'Ṣalāh' only. This is because the Ṣalāh is the most significant and purposeful act among the precepts enjoined by Allah. This is, in fact, the most basic and quintessential way of expressing one's faith in, and obedience to, Allah. Offering the Ṣalāh regularly makes one capable of being regular in other worships more willingly and with more ease. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has termed the Ṣalāh as being the pillar of Islām. The whole edifice of Islam rests on it. Whoever has erected it properly has built the whole structure of his faith on a stronghold. Any one not regular in Ṣalāh, is of no worth to Allah, even if he is seen reciting His name all the times and has unusual visions and does extraordinary acts.

The next verse (171) described another incident of the Israelites when they were forced to promise their obedience to the law of the Torah. It has also been mentioned in the Sūrah al-Baqarah. The Arabic word كَتَبْنَا signifies drawing or lifting up. In the Sūrah al-Baqarah the word رَفَعْنَا has been used which denotes the act of raising up. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has therefore, taken the word كَتَبْنَا to signify raising high. The Arabic word 'Zullah' ظل means a sunshade or a canopy.

The verse refers to the time when the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام came back from the mount of Sināī with the book of Torah. They found therein many injunctions which they thought were difficult for them, to follow. They started showing their unwillingness for obeying those

commandments. Allah commanded the Archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام to raise the mount of Sināī upon their town. The area of this town is reported to have been three square miles. When the mount of Sināī was hanged over their heads they fell down prostrating themselves out of fear and promised their obedience to the Law of Moses (the Torah). The future events, however, witnessed their deviation from the Law every now and again.

No compulsion in Faith

The above incident gives rise to a question. Why the Israelites were forced to make a promise of their obedience while the Holy Qur'an has declared لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ "There is no compulsion in Faith?" (2:256) The answer is quite simple. None of the disbelievers has ever been forced to accept faith, nor any one is allowed to use force for this purpose. However, those who have already entered the covenant of faith out of their free will and, later, deviate from the commandments of Allah just for avoiding their commitments, shall essentially be forced to abide by the rules and regulations of the Law. In case of deviation from their duty they must be held liable to punishments prescribed by the Law. This is what exactly happened in this incident. They had already believed in Allah and in His Prophet and had entered the covenant of Faith. What they did was to deny from obeying the Law of the Torah and rightly were forced to fulfil their commitment.

Verses 172 - 174

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ
 أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
 إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ
 قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾
 وَكَذَلِكَ نَفِصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, that is, from their backs, their progeny, and made them testify about themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Of course You are, we affirm" – lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this," [172] or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated

partners with Allah, and we were (only) a progeny after them. Then, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?" [173] And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return. [174]

The covenant of *Alust*: عهد الست

These two verses describe the event of the great heavenly covenant which the Creator, Allah, made with all His created being even before they took the form of their existence. This covenant is known as the covenant of *Alust* (الْكُتْ).

Allah is the creator of all the worlds, the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. His infinite wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge has designed and manufactured this universe with as much perfection as leaves no room for any doubt or question. He has created everything with a wise set of rules and regulations. Following these laws ensures people of eternal success and ever-lasting peace and comfort while deviation from these principles makes one liable to punishments prescribed by Allah.

We may also note that His all-encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom was enough to decide the fate of all the created beings without assigning His angels to watch over and keep the record of the deeds of His servants, and without weighing their deeds in the Balance on the day of Judgement. It is because He is All-Aware of the deeds, even of the hidden thoughts and intentions of His servants without the remotest possibility of making wrong judgement.

His Grace and perfect Justice, however, chose that none should be punished without providing him with documentary evidences of his sinful acts, in a way, that sinner himself finds no choice but to readily acknowledge his sinful deeds.

He appointed some of His angels to record each and every act done by an individual. The Holy Qur'an said:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"He utters not a word but there is by him a vigilant watcher." ¹ (50:18)

1. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه everything good or bad about a mortal is recorded by his guardian angels" (A study of al-Qur'an al-Karim vol. 4 p. 969, by La'l Muhammad Chawla) (Translator)

In another verse the Holy Qur'an said: **كُلِّ صَغِيرًا كَبِيرًا مُسَطَّرًا** "And everything small and great is written down." (54:53) Then, on the Day of Judgement the Balance shall be set to weigh the good and bad deeds of all people. Those whose good deeds weigh heavy shall be rewarded with salvation while those whose bad deeds weigh heavier shall be punished.

Moreover, when Allah, the Best of All Judges shall hold His court on the Day of Judgement, He shall call for witnesses on the deeds of every individual. Certain wrongful people shall falsify certain witnesses. Allah shall ask his physical organs to bear witness to his deeds. They shall be given power to speak and bear witness against them. The places where the deeds were done shall also come to witness against them until they shall find no way to belie the witnesses and finally will make confession of their evil deeds. The Holy Qur'an referred to it in these words:

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

"So, they will confess their sins, but far removed (from Allah's Mercy) are the companions of the blazing fire." (67:11)

We also note that Allah, who is the most kind and loving did not leave His servants at the mercy of law and regulations only. He, out of His kindness, provided His servants with complete guidance through His prophets and the Books, in order to save them from eternal punishment.

Like the kind parents who make it essential for their children to go to school every morning also make sure that their children get all their requirements ready before time to facilitate their following the law of school-going with all possible ease. Allah, who is free from all similarities is more loving and kind to His servants than are the parents to their children. He did not only formulate the laws but made them a source of real guidance. Along with the commandments He also taught how people can carry out His commandments with ease and readiness.

Apart from sending His messengers and divine books to His servants He appointed a large number of His angels to help and guide people to the right path. Besides, He created clear signs of His Power and wisdom all around so that people may use their own observation

and understanding to distinguish right from wrong, and to remember their Creator. He repeatedly invited people to make use of their observation and understanding when seeing His signs scattered all around them. He said, in the Holy Qur'an :

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

"And on the earth are signs for those who have firm faith, and also in your own selves. Do you not see then?" (15:20) ¹

Another arrangement made by Allah to make people act righteously was to make them enter into covenants with Him through His prophets. The Holy Qur'an has references to a number of such covenants made with various people in varied circumstances. The Prophets were made to promise that they shall essentially convey Allah's message to their people without any regard to difficulties and reproach from them. This pious group of prophets did convey Allah's message as faithfully as was possible and sacrificed all that they had in this way.

Similarly the people of every prophet were made to promise to obey their prophet, and in some special cases, to spend all their energy in carrying out particular commands. Some people fulfilled their promise while some others did not.

Among such covenants the most significant one is the covenant which all the prophets were made to enter regarding the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all the prophets shall follow the last of all prophets and assist him when they find some opportunity to do so. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned this covenant in the following verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُم مِّنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ، ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ-

"And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger

1. This verse has referred to two kinds of signs; external and internal. The external signs are profusely available all around us; the heavens the earth, the oceans, mountains, plants and trees, fruits of different colour and taste; they provide us with unmistakable guidance to our Lord. The internal signs include the process of our reproduction, our physique, our thoughts, intentions emotions and sentiments of happiness and sorrow. A little reflection on these signs positively leads us to the Creator and makes us to express our gratefulness to Him. (Translator)

verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." (3:81) ¹

The Significance of Bay'ah (بَيْعَةٌ: Swearing Allegiance)

The traditional way of taking pledge (*bay'ah*: discipleship) from the devoted followers, is infact, in pursuance of this practice of Allah. The Prophets, their companions and spiritual leaders have been taking the pledge of allegiance from their followers. The incident of 'Bay'ah al-Rizwān' has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It said:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَايَعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Allah was certainly well pleased with the believers when they swore fidelity to you (O Prophet) under the tree." (48:18)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took such pledge of allegiance from his companions on many occasions. 'Bay'ah al-'Aqabah' is a famous pre-migration covenant made with the Anṣārs of Madinah. The customary way of Ṣufis to take pledge from their followers, is a covenant taken for practising the commandments of Allah regularly and strengthening their belief in Allah by frequent remembrance of their Lord. The way of swearing fealty to some one has many advantages and draws 'Barakah' from Allah.

After swearing fealty to some Sheikh (Spiritual Master), a follower feels himself more willing and inclined to practise the religious obligations, and is more conscious in seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The above description of Bay'ah also clears away a misconception common among the men of little knowledge that by putting one's hand in the hands of some Sheikh or spiritual leader is enough for one's salvation in the Hereafter. This is absolutely an erroneous notion as swearing allegiance is a pledge taken for following practical guidance according to the instructions given by the Sheikh. Therefore, only placing one's hands into the hands of a Sheikh is simply of no use. Rather, it is a deviation from the pledge and may incur the wrath of Allah.

1. By implication this pledge taken by all the prophets makes it binding on the followers of all the prophets to believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to follow him and support him in achieving his objectives. It makes binding upon them to follow the law given by the last of all prophets. (Translator)

The verse (172) speaking of the covenant of Eternity عهدآلست in the preceding pages has used the word ذُرِّيَّةٌ for the children of Adam. According to Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī the word ذُرِّيَّةٌ has been derived from the Arabic root ذر, which signifies to create. The Holy Qur'ān has used this word to signify the same meanings in a number of verses. The word 'Dhurriyyah' (ذُرِّيَّةٌ) therefore signifies all those created. This implies that the covenant of Eternity included all the human beings as they are the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام .

We find some more information about this covenant in the literature of *Hadīth*. Imām Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Imām Aḥmad have reported on the authority of Muslim bin Yasār that some people asked the Caliph 'Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه of the connotation of this verse. He said that the same question was put to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the answer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he heard it was as follows:

"Allah Almighty first created Ādam عليه السلام, then He placed His hand upon his back, and drew forth all the righteous descendants of Adam who were to come into being and said, "I have created them for the Paradise, and they shall act righteously as to deserve Paradise. Then He placed His hand on the back of Adam and all the wicked descendants that were to come into being appeared. He said, "I have created them for the Hell, and they shall act wickedly as to lead them to Hell."

Someone from among the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "When Allah has already decided the fate of the mankind why the people are asked to do good deeds, while they are of no effect. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever is created for Paradise, he starts doing good deeds making him worthy of paradise and he dies in this state, while the one created for the Hell involves himself in wicked acts making him liable of the fires of Hell until he dies doing such deeds as leads him to the Hell."

That is to say, when one is not aware of the category he belongs to, he must invest all his effort and energy in doing such deeds as are the characteristic of the people of Paradise and should be hopeful of his being one among them.

The Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه has added that the people who appeared the first time were of fair colour while those appearing the second time were black.

The same description reported by Tirmidhi on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه has additionally reported that all the children of Adam who were to come in the world upto the end of time had a kind of brilliance on their foreheads.

Here we are faced with two descriptions apparently differing from one another. The descriptions given by the above traditions have described the children of Ādam coming out of the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام while the Qur'ānic verse under discussion has related them as coming forth from the backs of the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام . In fact, there is no conflict between the two descriptions as the direct descendants of Adam are described as coming forth from the back of Ādam عليه السلام while the people coming after them have been described as coming forth from the backs of his descendants.

The aim of this pledge taken from the whole mankind was to make them acknowledge that Allah Almighty is the Nourisher, The Sustainer or the Lord of all the created beings. This implies that the children of Ādam عليه السلام coming forth from the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام were not in the form of spirit alone but also had a certain kind of physique made of some fine elements. It is because the function of nourishing is directly related to body which is made to progress from one state to another. The spirits do not require this kind of nourishment as they remain in one state from the moment of their creation. This is also supported from the above traditions speaking of the fair and black colour or the brilliance on their forehead because both, the colour and brilliance, require some material form to show their existence. The spirits obviously have no colour.

One may wonder how all the human beings to be created up to the Last Day could have gathered in one place. This also has been explained by the Tradition narrated by the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه which said that they did not appear with their usual size rather they appeared in the size of a small ant. In this age of scientific knowledge it should be of no surprise how a man of human size can be

reduced to the size of an ant. The science has established the fact that a perfect system similar to our solar system is functioning in and around the nucleus of an atom. The books of hundreds of pages can be reduced to a dot of small size through a process of micro filming. It should not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that Allah, the All-Powerful, might have reduced them to the size of an ant at this occasion.

The above discussion with regard to the covenant of eternity gives rise to a couple of questions:

1. Which was the time and place of the covenant?

2. This pledge was taken prior to the creation of all human beings, excluding Ādam عليه السلام . How did the children of Ādam have knowledge and reason to acknowledge Allah almighty as being the Nourisher or their Lord which requires the experience of their being nourished which was not possible prior to coming as human being on the earth.

The first question has been answered by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported through authentic sources by Imām Aḥmad and Nasā'ī that the covenant was taken at the time when Ādam عليه السلام was sent down from heavens to the earth. The place was the valley of Nauman known as the plain of 'Arafāt (Near Makkah).

As to the second question with regard to inability of their acknowledging Allah as their Lord prior to their creation, the answer is quite simple. Allah Almighty who has all the powers to do anything He wills, and who was able to make all the human beings appear in a size of an ant could more easily imbue knowledge and reason enough to make them capable of recognizing their Lord, the Nourisher. Allah made them appear with body and soul in a small size with all the physical functions needed by a perfect human being. Reason and understanding being the most significant functions must have been included.

Another question which remains unsettled is as to what value can be attached to a covenant occurring prior to the actual creation of human beings, and which is not remembered by them after they take their actual existence on the earth? Before proceeding to answer this

question we may add that, in some cases, there have been individuals who remembered the occasion of this covenant. For example, the great spiritual leader Dhul Nūn al-Miṣrī has said, "I remember the occurrence of this covenant as clearly as I am hearing it this very moment." Some of the elders have reported to have remembered even the people who were present near them. True, that such cases are rare and do not make an answer to the above question.

The answer to this question, therefore, is that there are many things or acts which are effective in their very nature without any regard to their being remembered or understood by others. They imprint the effect on others quite naturally.

For example, the common practice, among Muslims, of saying *Adhān* in the right ears of a new born and reciting *iqāmah* in his left ear¹ is an obvious example of such acts. The baby neither understands the meaning of this call nor does he remember it after becoming an adult. The wisdom behind this religious practice is nothing but to revive the pledge he has taken with Allah, and sow the seed of Faith in his heart by repeating the message of the covenant in his ears. The influence of this act is so obvious that can be seen in every Muslim individual even if he is not practically a good Muslim. He takes pride in calling himself a Muslim and utterly dislikes being deprived of this categorical entity.

Similarly the commandment of reciting the Qur'ān even to those who do not know Arabic is perhaps for the same reason that their hearts are enlightened with the impact of the Qur'ānic words, and their Faith in Allah is renovated therewith.

The wisdom behind this covenant is similarly to sow the seed of Faith in the heart of every human being. This seed is taking it's nourishment in the soil of human heart , no matter weather people are conscious of it or not. The fruit of this seed manifests itself in the form of love and respect for god (Allah) which is a part of human nature. The expression of this love and respect, may take unjust forms like

1. *Adhān* is a call for *ṣalāh* the ritual prayer which in fact is a bold declaration that Allah is one, has no partners, and is the greatest of all etc. while *iqāmah* is the same declaration with added enunciation that the *ṣalāh* has been set ready to be joined by people. (Translator)

worshipping false gods - idols or created beings. The worships, just or unjust, is in itself, an expression of love and respect for the creator. The billions of people have this respect and love for Allah which is expressed by them through their worship according to their ideas of worship guided by their knowledge or ignorance. There is no need to speak of those few who, under the influence of mundane pursuits have deteriorated their natural understanding and forgot the pledge they made with Allah.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَدُّ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ: Every baby is born on *Fitrah* (nature, that is, Islam) then he is converted by his parents to their religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Tradition that Allah Almighty has said, 'I have created my servants as *Hanīf*, that is, having faith in Allah, the one, then they were led astray by Satanic influences.'

The next sentence of the verse has said:

أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غٰفِلِينَ

"Lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this."

That is to say, the pledge taken by Allah has lit the candle of Faith in their hearts. Now with little reflection they can easily recognize Him as their Lord. Therefore, their excuse of ignorance shall not be of any avail to them on the Day of Judgement.

Another possible excuse from them was to say:

أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

"Or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated partners with Allah and we were (only) a progeny after them. So, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?"

The verse precludes them from seeking refuge in saying that they were unaware of the Truth. Being a progeny of their forefathers they only followed their path. Therefore they should not be punished for the error of their forefathers. The verse has said that they shall not be punished for the acts of their forefather. It was their own fault and

their apathetic attitude that led them to this disaster. It is because the covenant had sown the seed of Truth in their heart and it was not difficult for them to decide that the stones, shaped by themselves into idols, or the fire, the trees and other created beings could, in no way, be considered as being their creator or possessing powers of helping them in their need.

The next verse 174 said:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصَلُ الْآيَاتِ وَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return."

That is, Allah has made His signs clear through His elaborate verses to facilitate people to turn back to their pledge and acknowledge Him as their Lord. Any one applying his reason can find the Truth and save himself from ever lasting punishment.

Verses 175 - 177

وَآتِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَكُونُوا لِرَفَعَتِهِ غَابًا وَكَلِمَةً أَحْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

And recite to them the story of the one whom We gave Our verses, then he wriggled out himself from them, so the Satan overtook him and he became one of the perverted. [175] And if We so willed, We would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his desire. So, his example is like the example of a dog, if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants. That is the example of those who belied our signs. So, relate the chronicles, so that they may ponder." [176] Evil is the example of those who have belied our signs and have been doing wrong to themselves. [177]

The above verses have described the story of a religious leader of the Israelites who had a great following for his piety and knowledge but suddenly went astray and became among the rejected. This event contains a number of lessons and points of exhortation, and has a link with the preceding verses. The foregoing verses spoke of the covenant made by Allah with the children of Adam in general, and with certain people in varied circumstances. The above verses also made a mention of those people who did not fulfil their pledge with Allah. For example, the Israelites who were waiting the arrival of a prophet and used to describe his attributes to others, but after the Holy Prophet ﷺ made his appearance, they rejected him just for wordly considerations.

The story of Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā

The present verses have related the story of a saintly person among the Israelites. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate this story to his people to show how a devoted scholar and great spiritual leader was deprived of all the knowledge, wisdom, popularity and fame only by following the mundane desires.

We do not find any personal identification or name of this person mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. There are, however, many Traditions reported by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an and the Companions and their disciples, giving a variety of information about him. The most authentic and trusted by the majority of scholars is the Tradition reported by Ibn Marduwaih on the authority of the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās which is as follows:

The name of this man was Bal'am bin Ba'ura. He belonged to Syria living in Cana'an near Jerusalem. According to a report he was an Israelite by birth. He had knowledge of certain books revealed by Allah. The Qur'anic phrase "الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ الْكِتَابَ" "The one whom We gave Our verses" refers to the same knowledge.

This event belongs to the period after the death of pharaoh and his people and the victory of the Israelites over Egypt. Allah commanded The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people to fight war against a people called Jabbarīn. The Jabbarīn who had seen the fate of Pharaoh and his people were greatly frightened when they saw the army of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام approaching them. They came to Bal'am and said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was a strong man and that he had

come with great army in order to expel them from their land. He should therefore pray Allah that He may turn them back without fighting war against them. Bal'am bin Ba'urā was known to be having the knowledge of "اِسْمِ اَعْظَم" (the most gracious name of Allah). He used to pray with the help of this name and his prayers were generally granted.

Bal'am said to them that Mūsā, being the prophet of Allah, had the support of Allah's angels and he could not pray against him. He said that he knew the rank that Mūsā عليه السلام held with Allah, and that by praying against him he will ruin himself both in this world and in the world to come. Being insisted by the people Bal'am promised that he will first seek the consent of Allah for such a prayer, and in case Allah permitted him to pray against Mūsā he shall do so accordingly.

He performed some act to seek Allah's consent and in a dream was prohibited by Allah from making such prayer. He came to the people and informed them of this prohibition. The Jabbārīn presented him a gift of considerable value which he accepted. Subsequent to this gift their insistence increased. Some reports said that his wife advised him to accept the gift, and pray for them. Being blinded by the love of wealth and wife, he started praying against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. An unusual thing happened at this occasion. By the will of Allah the words he wanted to utter against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in his invocation, were uttered against the people of Jabbārīn themselves. They cried out and admonished him that he was invoking against themselves. Bal'am said that he was unable to utter a word against Mūsā عليه السلام and that he had no control over his utterances.

Consequently the Jabbārīn met the fate of disaster from the heavenly punishment, and the punishment of Bal'am was that his tongue protruded from under his mouth so much so that it dangled on his chest. Bal'am having ruined his life both in this world and in the world to come and being deprived of all spiritual powers he had, made a suggestion to the people of Jabbārīn saying, "There is only one way you can overcome the Israelites. Decorate your beautiful girls and send them to the Israelites giving them instructions that they should not put on any resistance against whatever is done by the Israelites. Being away from their homes they are likely to involve themselves in

adultery. Being the most detestable act to Allah, adultery has to incur the wrath of Allah. An adulterous people can never win over their enemy." This satanic suggestion was accepted by the people and they acted accordingly. A prominent person of the Israelites fell prey to this trap. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made all his effort to stop him from this act but he involved himself in this wicked act.

Consequently plague overtook them as a punishment, with a death toll of seventy thousand people in one day. The person who had committed the sin was murdered along with the girl and was hung by the Israelites at a public place. Then they turned to Allah in repentance and asked His forgiveness, which relieved them of this disgraceful punishment.

The Holy Qur'an used the expression of 'wriggling out' for Bal'am's disregard to the knowledge and wisdom Allah had given to him through His verses. The Arabic expression "فَأَسْلَخَ مِنْهَا" "He wriggled out from the verses of Allah" signifies coming out of an animal from its skin like a snake which leaves its old skin behind having no concern with it. This indicates that Bal'am had totally disregarded the knowledge and wisdom he was granted by Allah. The text phrase: "فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ" "So, Satan overtook him" implies that as long as he possessed the knowledge of the verses of Allah, Satan was unable to possess him. As soon as Bal'am was deprived of this great gift of Allah, he overtook him and led him astray. Consequently he became one of the misguided people "فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ" "And he became one of the misled.

The next verse (176) has said:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ

"And if We so willed, we would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth, and followed his desire."

The word أَخْلَدَ (*Akhlada*) is a derivative of إِخْلَدَ which means to incline or to cling to something. The word أَرْض (*ard*) meaning the earth includes the globe itself and all the things present. Furniture, machines, clothes and food are in fact, the gift of this earth. By implication all the worldly possessions have been taken to include in a single word - the earth. The quintessence of this verse is that the knowledge of the verses of Allah are the real source of gaining prominence and advance-

ment. For those who show disregard to them and give preference to worldly desires and possessions, this very knowledge becomes a source of disgrace and disaster for them.

The verse under discussion has expressed this fact by way of a similitude. It said.

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثُ

"So his example is like the example of a dog; if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants."

The word لهث (*Lahath*) signifies to breath hard by ejecting one's tongue out.

The process of inhaling fresh air and exhaling unclean air is vital for every living being. Allah has made this process as automatic and easy as requires no effort on the part of living creatures - dog excepted. It is only dog that has to labour hard for the process of breathing, while other animals have to make such effort only when they are attacked or undergo some strenuous task. Bal'am b. Baura has been mentioned in this verse as being similar to dog. He had his tongue protruded and panted like a dog who pants when attacked and pants when let alone.

The next sentence of the verse said: "ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا" "That is the example of those who belied our signs." According to the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه "this has a reference to the Israelites of Makkah who were always longing for some one sent to them as their leader inviting them to Allah and teaching them the ways of following the right path. When this long-awaited prophet came to them with as transparent signs of Truth as left no room for the resistance in his way, they too, 'wriggled out' from the commandments of Torah exactly as Bal'am Bā'urā had done.

The last sentence of this series said: "فَأَنْصُرِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ" "So relate the chronicles (to them) so that they may ponder." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate the story of Bal'am Ba'ura to them in order that they may take lesson from it and use their understanding.

The last verse in this series 176 said, "So evil is example of those

who belied our signs and they have been doing harm to themselves."

The General Message of the Verses

The above verses contain a number of useful points for the benefit of those who are heedful and make use of their understanding. Firstly, no one should be boastful of his knowledge and be proud for his piety. Things can change without notice just as happened with Bal'am Ba'ura. One has to be grateful to his Lord for all the knowledge and wisdom he has, and should keep praying Allah for being firm in his faith.

Secondly, one should avoid situations which seem to threaten his faith and knowledge. Specially so, when money, wife and children are involved because the love of these things is the most powerful agent of misguidance.

Thirdly, one should avoid the company of the misguided people and be careful in accepting gift or invitation from them. Bal'am met the evil fate through accepting the gift of the Jabbarin.

Fourthly, the acts of immodesty like adultery and fornication are the source of ruin and disaster for all the people living in a society. Those who want to save themselves from distress must prevent their people from committing such crimes, otherwise it will invite Allah's wrath and punishment upon them.

Fifthly, deviation from the commandments of Allah is, in itself a punishment and it opens the door to satanic influences, which work upon them quite unknowingly and lead them astray. Therefore, any one with knowledge must be conscious of this valuable treasure and seek Allah's help in protecting it from evil influences. He must carefully keep correcting himself against error.

Verses 178 - 179

مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ
 ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ
 لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا
 يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ

﴿١٧٩﴾ الْغٰفِلُونَ

The one whom Allah gives guidance is the one on the right path; as for those whom Allah lets go astray, those are the losers. [178] And surely We have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not, and have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled. They are the heedless. [179]

The main theme of the verse 178 is that guidance and misguidance both are from Allah. He is the creator of good and evil, guidance and misguidance. The guided are those whom Allah has given guidance and losers are those whom Allah lets go astray. This theme has been mentioned repeatedly by the Qur'an in many other verses to make the mankind know that Allah has created good and evil and has provided with clear instructions to distinguish one from the other, and with a kind of free will to choose one of the two paths. Those who willfully choose the right path and do good deeds get their reward from Allah while those who willfully take to the other path and do evil deeds are punished and sent to Hell.

Here we note that the above verse has mentioned the people of guidance in singular person while the people who are wrong and misguided have been mentioned in plural. This indicates that the path of guidance is the one true faith which was followed by all the prophets right from Ādam عليه السلام to the last of all Prophets ﷺ. The basic message of all the prophets has been one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals preached by all the prophets were all same in every age. Therefore, people of any age and denomination who believed in their prophets and followed the teachings preached by them are considered by Allah belonging to one and the same category - that is, the guided. On the contrary, the ways of misguidance have been thousands in number, hence mentioned in plural in this verse.

Another point to be noted in this verse is that the people following the path of misguidance have been mentioned along with their punishment of Hell, while no mention has been made of any reward of the people following the right path. The verse mentioned them saying that

they are 'the guided'. This implies that guidance, in itself, is the greatest blessing of all, which encompasses all the rewards and bounties existing in this world or in the Hereafter. The reward of guidance requires no specific mention of other rewards which are embodied therein.

For example, some great king assures some individual that he is a close friend of the king and he shall be heard and trusted by him. Certainly he enjoys the highest position among the royal officials. He does not require the achievement of a formal rank or position. Similarly, when Allah has given the title of being 'the guided' to any one, he has got all the rewards of the world. The elders, have therefore said that the remembrance and worship of Allah are themselves the reward of the worship, because they are the great favour of Allah.

Any one engaged in the worship of Allah is receiving the greatest reward of Allah at the same time. Other blessings which wait for him in this world and in Paradise are second to it, as they are the fruit of this guidance.

This also explains the meaning of another Qur'ānic verse in which the believers are promised to receive from their Lord their reward. It said جَزَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاً "A recompense from your Lord, a gift." Here the reward of the believers has been expressed by two different words جَزَاءٌ a recompense and 'Atā which is gift. The word جَزَاءٌ signifies something offered in return of some service while the word: عَطَاً 'Atā is a gift offered without any service or performance. This leads us to the fact that things which we take to be rewards of our performance or attainments are, in fact, the gift from our Lord. For the performance which has drawn this reward was in itself a gift from Allah Almighty who let us perform that particular service.

The next verse is an extension of the same theme. It said:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَعْنَا لِيُجَاهِدَ مِنَّا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

"And surely, we have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They possess heart wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not and they have ears wherewith they hear not."

That is, many Jinns and human beings have been created for Hell, because in spite of having all the means of guidance, the heart, the eyes and the ears, they do not use them to seek guidance. They could find the right path, had they used these faculties in proper way. They do not use their hearts to understand, their eyes to see things to be seen and their ears to hear things to be heard.

As a substance of the verse we are given to understand that ultimate end or destiny is a divine secret, not known to any one, but there are definite signs which help us to make a surmise. The people of Hell can be identified by their characteristic sign of not making proper use of their faculties of seeing, hearing and understanding. Allah has blessed us with these faculties for acquiring knowledge and recognition of our Lord. The people of Hell invest these abilities in worthless objectives and are evidently heedless of the real aim of man's life, that is, to earn with his capabilities eternal comfort and peace in the Hereafter through seeking guidance.

A Question and it's answer

A question may be asked about the above Qur'ānic verses. Here the Holy Qur'ān, has negated their qualities of hearing, seeing and understanding. On the other hand, we see that in real life they are not blind, deaf and insane. Like other human beings they do see, hear and understand things around them. How can this negation be reconciled with the actual fact?

The answer requires to refresh our usual knowledge with regard to things and living beings around us. Every thing created has an amount of sensibility equal to the need of its purpose of existence. The things we call inanimate are not totally devoid of sensibility or life. The stones and the earth which are not assigned with the duty of growth or movement have so little an amount of sensitivity that can hardly be detected.¹

1. Human reason essentially requires the presence of some kind of perception or life in things called inanimate. It is because there must be some way of communication between the Creator and the created. The one who cannot communicate with created beings for the absence of sensibility on their part, is not worthy of being called god. Allah does communicate with all His created beings, animate or inanimate, which proves some kind of sensibility in all inanimate things. (Translator)

The vegetable Kingdom comes next in this series. The purpose of their existence requires growth and nourishment. The amount of perception or life given to them is greater in degree and is equal to their requirements. Next we come to animal kingdom where we find more elaborate and complex form of life. In addition to growth and nourishment, the animals have to move on the earth from one place to another. They have to seek their food to maintain their existence. They require to protect themselves from dangers and above all, they are required to reproduce their children. The amount of life given to them is greater and more obvious than the others so far discussed. They are, however, equipped with as much powers only as were needed to assist them in feeding and protecting themselves from dangers and enemies.

The last, but not the least, is human being who, in addition to, and more prominent of all the functions discussed above, has the duty of recognizing his Creator and the Lord of the universe, and seek His pleasure by following His commandments and avoid doing things disliked by Him. He is required to contemplate and give due thought to the creations and use his faculty of reason to distinguish right from wrong, abstain from evil and do good to please his Lord. Another distinction of a human being from other creatures is that he has been provided with vast opportunity to make progress in making his life more purposeful and more elevated in position. When he comes to make progress, he can attain more elevated rank than the angels. He is accountable for his acts and is promised of eternal peace and comfort for his good acts and everlasting punishment and distress for his evil deeds. He has been, therefore, trusted with the highest and the most perfect degree of life, in order that he is engaged in doing things that are proper for the aim of his life. He is not expected to waste his special faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing in the achievement of material things only like animals.

Keeping the above points in view, the human faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing should essentially be distinct from those of the animals. If he did not make special use of these faculties like distinguishing right from wrong, doing good and keeping away from evil, he would be rightly considered among those who have eyes but do not see, have ears but do not listen, have mind and heart but do not

understand. The Holy Qur'an has therefore termed them as صَمٌّ بَكْمٌ عُمْيٌ "deaf, dumb and blind".

The verse therefore has not negated their physical ability of seeing, hearing and understanding. Rather, the Holy Qur'an has affirmed their knowledge about worldly things in the following words,

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُونَ

"They know the outward aspect of this worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless." (30:7)

In another verse the Holy Qur'an, speaking the destruction of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, said: وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ "While they could see clearly." (29:38)

The people of 'Ād and Thamūd being allured by satanic influences involved themselves in evil deeds which led them to their destruction. That is to say they kept the use of their capabilities limited to abject worldly gains like serving their physical needs and remained heedless to their spiritual demands. No matter what great advances they make in science and technology, they may conquer space, explore moon and other planets, make the world full of their sophisticated satellites, and tame the natural forces to serve their varied needs, but all such efforts are no more than a means of serving their physical and material life. It does not go beyond, to seek spiritual peace and comfort. This achievement science and technology of man is certainly confined to serving his physical life only, which does not make him distinct from the animal in technicality. It is why the Holy Qur'an calls them deaf, dumb and blind because they heard, saw and understood things that belonged to this world only. They did not make proper use of these functions which could lead them to eternal success and peace. The last phrase of this verse said that they are like cattle investing all their effort in serving their bodily desires. Next the verse added بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ "Rather they are much more misled." that is, they are far more unwise than are the cattle, because the animals are not bound to follow the laws of the Shari'ah. They have no reward or punishment for their acts. They are required only to serve their physical needs which they are efficiently doing, contrary to human beings who are accountable for everything they do in this world, and they are going to be punished

or rewarded according to their performance. If they confine their effort only to seek material gains of this world and do not make proper use of their faculties, they are certainly more imprudent and unwise as compared to animals.

Verse 180

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ
فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

And for Allah there are the most beautiful names. So, call Him by them, and leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they have been doing. [180]

This verse has a relationship with the preceding verses in the sense that the people of Hell discussed above did not use their abilities in seeking the everlasting comforts of the Hereafter, and made themselves liable to eternal punishment. The present verse has provided with remedy of their disease. That is, seeking help from Allah by calling Him with His good names and often remembering Him through them.

The good names of Allah

The good names are the ones that denote the attributes having the highest degree of perfection. It goes without saying that the perfection of the highest degree is not possessed by any one but Allah. In case of a 'perfect' human being there is always a possibility of someone being higher than him in some qualities. This is what the Qur'anic phrase has said: "رَفَعْنَا كُلَّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلَيْهِمْ" "And above every man of knowledge there is someone more knowledgeable." (12:76)

The style of the verse has suggested that these 'beautiful names' are peculiarly meant for Allah. "فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا" "So, call Him by them", because there is none other than Allah who owns these attributes, therefore the only one worthy of being called in need is none but He. Calling is a rendering of the word *دعاء* which has two characteristics: Praising, purifying and remembering Allah, and calling Him for help in times of need or difficulty. It implies, that Allah alone is worthy of praise and glorification and He alone has to be called for help and relief. The verse has also suggested that the best method of calling Him is to call

Him by His Beautiful Names.

Preconditions of *Du'a* (calling Allah)

The verse has provided us with two valuable informations. firstly, there is none other than Allah worthy of praise and worthy of being called for help. Secondly, Allah has provided us with specific words for calling him, proper to His glorious being, as we are not capable of choosing appropriate words for this purpose. That is, we are required to call Him by His attributes of perfections.

Bukhari and Muslim have reported on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"There are ninety nine names of Allah. Whoever learns them by heart shall enter paradise."

Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have enumerated these names in detail. Invocations made by reciting these names are generally granted. Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'an ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ "Call me and I will answer you" (40:60). The most definite and certain method of seeking help in one's need and getting relief from one's distress is calling Allah and praying Him for His help. This is the only way that is certain to meet success. The immediate benefit of praying to Allah is that it is, in itself, a worship. The reward of this worship is included in the sheet of one's deeds.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in a Tradition: الدُّعَاءُ مَعُ الْعِبَادَةِ "Invoking Allah is the quintessence of worship." The invocation is granted by Allah in many ways. Sometimes, the very thing for which the invocation has been made is granted by Allah, while some other times, when one asks for something untimely or unsuitable for him in the knowledge of Allah is exchanged with something more proper or beneficial for him.

Remembering Allah by glorifying and praising Him is the food for one's Faith in Allah (*Īmān*) which helps in magnifying the love, respect and awareness of Allah making the hardship of this world worthless in one's eyes.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī have reported through authentic sources that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that any one

who finds himself in some difficulty or is distressed with some grief should recite the following words:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ الْحَلِيمُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
اللَّهُ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

"There is no god but Allah, the Greatest, the Most forbearing,
There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the great Throne. There
is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens, and the earth
and the Lord of the Glorious Throne."

Hākim in his Mustadrak has reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his daughter Sayyidah Faṭimah al-Zahra رضى الله عنها :

"What is there to prevent you from hearing my advice of reciting the following invocation at morning and evening every day?"

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَسْتَغِيْثُ أَصْلِحْ لِيْ شَأْنِيْ كُلَّهُ وَلَا تَكِلْنِيْ إِلَى نَفْسِيْ
طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ

"O The Alive, The All-Sustaining, I call for help by Your Mercy. Set right every situation that I am in, and do not leave me at the mercy of my innerself for even a wink of an eye."

The above invocation is also an effective remedy of hardships and distress. In short, we have been given two instructions in this verse namely making invocation to Allah alone for seeking help or for pleasing the Creator, secondly, calling Allah by His attributes of perfection without changing them.

The next sentence said:

وَدُّرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِيْ أَسْمَائِهِ سَبَّحُونَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"And leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names.
They shall be recompensed for what they had been doing."

The Arabic word الحاد *Ilhād'* signifies to decline from the centre. In Qur'anic terminology the word '*Ilhād'*' is used for deviating from the correct interpretation of the Qur'anic words or distorting the meanings of the Qur'anic message.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to keep away from

the people who distort or decline from the prescribed names of Allah.

The Deviation from the good names

There are many forms of deviating from the prescribed names of Allah. Firstly, calling Allah by such names as are not specified in the Holy Qur'an or in the Sunnah. The 'Ulamā' (Scholars) of the *ummah* are unanimous on the point that it is not permissible to call Allah by any names or attributes of one's own choice or to praise Him by the names which have not been specified by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example, Allah may be called by the word: نور *Nūr* (light) but not by the word 'white'. Similarly Allah may be called '*Karīm*' (generous) but not by the word '*Sakhī'*: سخي having the same meaning. He can be called *Shāfi* شافي (The one who provides cure from disease) but not '*Tabīb*' (The doctor). Though the matching words carry the same meanings they are not allowed simply because they have not been reported by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

The second way of deviating from these names of Allah is to abandon certain name or names only because one thinks them to be inappropriate in certain situations. It, obviously, amounts to lack of respect to the glorious names of Allah.

Calling the people with the names of Allah

The third way of deviation from these names is to use any of the good names of Allah for other people. This however, has some exceptions as explained in the following lines:

There are certain names in the list of the glorious names of Allah which have been used by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* for human beings. Such names can be used for beings other than Allah. For example, Raḥīm, Rashīd, 'Alī, Karīm and 'Azīz etc., while there are other names which denote to exclusive attributes of Allah. Their use for any one other than Allah is an act of deviation from these names. For example, Raḥmān, Razzāq, Subḥān, Khāliq, Quddūs and Ghaffār etc. Using such names for any one other than Allah is prohibited in the Islamic Shari'ah.

Now, if some one calls any one other than Allah by these names because of his false belief, that he has the attributes denoted by these names it would be an act of infidelity. However, if some one used any

of these names for any one other than Allah just heedlessly and for the lack of knowledge, it would not be an act of infidelity, but having similarities with it would be called a major sin.

It is a pity that Muslims in general are having a number of wrong practices with regard to naming their children and calling them by improper names.

There is a group of people who have abandoned the practice of naming their children with Islamic names. Their modern names having, non Islamic character, mark it difficult to identify them as Muslims by their names. Specially so, when their general appearance and manners are already devoid of Islamic character. The Islamic female names like Khadījah, 'Ā'ishah, and Fāṭimah have been replaced with Najma, Pervīn, Nasīm, Shamīm and Shahnāz etc.

More doleful practice among Muslims is to heedlessly curtail the Islamic names like 'Abd al-Khāliq, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Razzāq or 'Abd al-Quddūs etc. to Khāliq, Raḥmān, Razzāq and Quddūs when calling people of these names. The attributes Khāliq (the creator) Raḥmān (the Merciful) Razzāq (The sustainer) and Quddūs (The Pure) are all exclusive attributes of Allah and using these attributes for any one other than Allah is a major sin (گناه کبیره). The number of times one calls any one by these attributes only commits a major sin every time and becomes liable of great punishment.

This sinful practice has become quite common among Muslims for no gain. They have been committing this sinful act simply for being thoughtless to the gravity of this error. The present verse has warned against it by saying سَيَجْزُونَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ "They shall soon be recompensed for what they have been doing".

Many evils are committed for certain worldly gains or benefits. Any one committing such evil deed may pretend to offer an excuse that being constrained by some necessity he had committed the sin, while a great number of evil deeds are simply of no avail, and produce no worldly benefit at all. It is a sad situation that people are seen committing such evil deeds just for being careless of the commandments of Allah and being indifferent to what is prohibited or permitted by Allah. May Allah save us from such ignorance.