

for the people of Jannah through which they will articulate their wish, and the angels, doing their duty, will fulfill it every time. (Rūḥ al-Maʿānī and Qurṭubī) From that angle, we can also call the statement: *subḥānaka ʾl-lāhumma, a duʿā*.

Describing the second state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: *سَلَامٌ* (and their greeting therein will be “*Salām*”). In customary usage, *تَحِيَّاتِهِ* (*taḥiyyah*) is the word used to greet someone coming in or met elsewhere, for example *ahlan wa saḥlan*, as the Arabs say, or good morning, good evening, nice to see you, hello, hi as used in English with varying degrees of formality or informality. This verse tells us that the people of Jannah will be greeted with the word: *salām* from Allah Taʿālā or from the angels. It would mean, ‘good news to you that you now stand protected against everything painful or unpleasant.’ This ‘*salām*’ greeting could also be from Allah Taʿālā Himself as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: *سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِنْ رَبِّ رَحِيمٍ* (“*Salām*” [peace], a word from a merciful Lord – 36:58). And it could also be from the angels as said elsewhere: *وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ* – 13:23,24.” By the way, there is no contradiction in the two sayings. There could be the time when *salām* greeting comes directly from Allah Taʿālā and there could be the time when it comes from the angels. Though, the *salām* greeting is actually a *duʿā* (prayer) in the mortal world but, once in Jannah where one would have everything one needs or wishes to have, therefore, this word will not retain its sense of prayer there, instead, will become a complement of glad tidings. (Rūḥ al-Maʿānī)

Describing the third state of the life of the people of Jannah, it was said: *أَجْرُهُمْ غُورُهُمْ أَنْ الْحُكْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (And the end of their call will be, ‘praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds’).

The essential aim of the statement is to indicate that the people of Jannah, once there, will start knowing Allah Taʿālā better. The spiritual master Shahābuddīn Suhrawardī, said, ‘after having reached Jannah, the people of Jannah as a whole will be blessed with a station of knowledge and wisdom which is occupied by ‘Ulamā in the mortal world. The ‘Ulamā would rise to the station the prophets have here. The prophets would rise to the station occupied by Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among them in this world.

And he, blessings and peace on him, will occupy the highest station of nearness to Allah in Jannah. It is possible that this may be the celebrated place called 'the praised station' (*al-maqām al-mahmūd*), a place referred to in the *du'ā* to be recited after *adhān* where Muslims pray that their prophet may be blessed with 'the praised station,' a prayer he had himself taught them to make.

In short, the initial *du'ā* of the people of Jannah will be: *سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ* (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) and the last *du'ā* will be: *أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds). Pointed to here are two kinds of attributes of Allah Ta'ālā. One: The attributes of being the most exalted which show that He is free from and beyond any shortcoming or evil. Two: The attributes of being the noblest which show honor, greatness, magnanimity and perfection. In the last verse of Sūrah ar-Raḥmān both kinds have been named by saying: *تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ* (Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Possessor-par-Excellence of Majesty and Honor – 55:78). If we were to ponder a little, we will see that absolute purity of Allah Ta'ālā forms part of His attribute of Majesty. And that He deserves being praised is one of His attributes of Honor. Since the attributes of Majesty and Honor follow in that order, therefore, the people of Jannah will first recount His Majesty by saying: *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah. Then, they will mention the words: *أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (*alḥamdu li 'l-lāhi rabbi 'l-'alamīn*: Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) being a tribute to His Honor, something they are engaged in all the time.

And according to the natural order of these three states, when the people of Jannah will say *subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*, in response to which, they will receive the greeting of *salām* from Allah Ta'ālā, as a result of which, they will say: *أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Injunctions and Rulings

Al-Qurṭubī has said in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*: According to this conduct of the people of Jannah, Sunnah in eating and drinking, and in everything else we do, is that one starts with *Bismillāh* and ends at *Alḥamdulillāh*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'It is liked by Allah Ta'ālā that His servant, when he eats or drinks something, starts with

Bismillah (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ) and, when he is finished with it, says *Al-hamdulillah'* (الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ).

It is recommended (*mustahabb*) that a person making *du'ā* also says: *وَإِخْرُجُونَا أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (and our prayer at the end is that praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds) at the end of it. Al-Qurtubī adds to that by saying: Along with it, it is better to also recite the following last verses of Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffat:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ . وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ . وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ .

Pure is your Lord, Lord of all might, above from what they ascribe to Him. And *salām* (peace and security) be on the Messengers. And praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds – 37:180-182.

Verses 11 – 17

وَلَوْ يَعْجَلُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتَعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَفُضِيَ
إِلَيْهِمْ أَجَلُهُمْ ۗ فَتَذَرُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ
يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْبِهِ أَوْ
قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا ۖ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّكَانَ ۖ لَمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَى
ضُرِّ مَسَّهُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ زِينٌ لِّلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾
وَلَقَدْ أَهَلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا ۖ وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا ۗ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ
﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَإِذْ أَنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِم آيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنَّكَ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ۗ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي
أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِن تِلْقَائِي نَفْسِي ۚ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ إِنِّي
أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ
اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمْرًا
مِّن قَبْلِهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ

كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمَجْرِمُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

And if Allah were to hasten in sending evil to the people, as they hasten in seeking good, their time would have been all over. So, We leave those, who do not believe in meeting Us, wandering blindly in their rebellion. [11]

And when hardship hits a person, he prays to Us lying or sitting or standing. Later, when We remove from him the hardship, he walks away as though he had never prayed to Us in any hardship that hit him. This is how their deeds appear beautified to the transgressors. [12]

And indeed We have destroyed generations before you when they transgressed, while their Messengers came to them with clear signs. And they were not the ones to believe. This is how We punish the guilty people. [13]

Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, so that we see how you would act. [14]

And when Our verses are recited to them in all their clarity, say those who do not believe in meeting Us, "Bring a Qur'an other than this, or make changes in it." Say, "It is not for me to make changes in it on my own. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a terrible day." [15]

Say, "Had Allah so willed, I would have not recited it to you, nor would He have let you know it. Then, I have lived among you for years before it. Have you, then, no sense?" [16]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? The fact is that the guilty do not succeed. [17]

Commentary

The first of the seven verses cited above relates to people who deny 'Ākhirah (Hereafter, life to come). For this reason, when they are warned against the punishment of 'Ākhirah, they mockingly say, 'if you are telling the truth, bring this punishment now' or say something like, 'why would this punishment not come soon enough?' This was like what Naḍr ibn Ḥārith had said, 'O Allah, if this thing is true, let stones rain down upon us from the heavens, or send some other severe

punishment.’

It has been answered in the same verse by saying that Allah Ta‘ālā is, after all, powerful over everything. He can send the promised punishment instantly, right now. But, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, He prefers not to do so. When people like these wish to have evil and hardship sent upon them, they do not realize what they were doing. Had Allah Ta‘ālā been granting their curses on themselves as soon as they wished – similar to how He would answer their positive prayers fairly often – all of them would have been destroyed to the last man.

From here we learn that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta‘ālā that He would answer prayers for one’s good fairly often and if, on one or the other occasion, a prayer is not answered due to some wise consideration, it would not be contrary to the general rule. But, the case of a person who, because of his ignorance, or anger, or grief, falls into the error of hurling on himself or his family a curse in the fair name of prayer is different. Similar to this is the unfortunate one who invites Divine punishment, due against those who reject the truth of a Hereafter, to fall on him, as if playing a game with God. Allah Ta‘ālā does not accept these prayers promptly, instead, gives them respite so that the denier gets the time to think and abstain from his denial. Or, if the curse has been invoked because of some sudden grief, anger or desperation, then one gets the lease of time to sort out his conduct, avoid what is bad about it and try to stay away from it thereafter.

Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Qatādah and al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Mujāhid report that, at this place, the invoking of curse refers to what an angry person sometimes does when he breaks into supplicating adversely to the effect that his children, wealth or property be destroyed. Even if the person were to blurt out words of curse on these, it will stand included therein. Allah Ta‘ālā, in His infinite mercy, does not hasten to answer such prayers. Imām al-Qurṭubī, on the authority of a Ḥadīth narrative, reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘I have prayed to Allah *jalla thanā’uh* imploring Him not to answer the curse invoked by a friend or relative upon another friend or relative.’ Shahr ibn Ḥawshab says, ‘I have read that angels appointed to take care of human needs have been instructed by Allah Ta‘ālā, in His mercy, that they should not write down what His servant says in grief or anger.’ (Qurṭubī)

Despite what has been said here, there are occasions when comes that moment of Divine approval in which what one is saying on the spot gets to be accepted instantly. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'never pray that evil may fall on your children or things you own – lest, that time be the time the prayer is to be accepted – and the curse so invoked may stand answered (and activated) all of a sudden (causing you remorse afterwards).' This Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim under the event of the battle of Buwāt.

The outcome of all these Ḥadīth reports is as follows. As obvious, the main address in the verse under reference concerns the deniers of 'Ākhirah who demanded an instant punishment. But, in view of its universality, it includes Muslims as well, who may also break into invoking a curse on themselves or on their belongings and children under some fit of grief or anger. Such is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā, because of His grace and compassion, that he deals with both of them in the same manner. He does not allow such invocations for curses to be actualized and implemented instantly so that the erring person gets the opportunity to think it out and rescind.

An eloquent approach has been made in the second verse (12) to convince those who denied that Allah was One (*Tauḥīd*) and that there was a life to come (*'Ākhirah*). It was said: When conditions are normal, people would find time to engage in debating the nature and existence of God and the Hereafter. They would feel free to ascribe all sorts of partners and associates to His pristine divinity and look forward to them in the hope that they would respond at their hour of need. But, as soon as some major distress overtakes them, even these very people, disappointed by the entire range of their false gods they pinned their hopes on, do nothing but call Allah for help, not simply once but repeatedly, lying, sitting, standing. They have no choice. They must invoke Him for help. However, along with this attitude, certainly terrible is their ingratitude. When Allah Ta'ālā removes their distress, they forget all about Him becoming so disconnected and indifferent to Him as if they had never called Him and never sought His help in their hour of need. This tells us that those who associate anyone or anything else with Allah Ta'ālā in His exclusive domain as the Dispenser of all that is needed by His creation do themselves get to experience the

demolition of this belief of theirs. But, because of their hostility and obstinacy, they keep glued to their false notion.

The subject of verse 12 has been emphasized from a different angle in verse 13. It has been said: Let no one miscalculate that punishment cannot come in this world just because Allah Ta'ālā gives respite to those who deny and disbelieve. The history of past peoples shows that different kinds of punishments have visited them because of their contumacy and disobedience right here in this world. It is a different matter that Allah Ta'ālā has promised that no mass punishment will come upon the Muslim *ummah* in consideration of the honor of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafaḥ صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets. But, it is in the face of this very merciful indulgence of Almighty Allah that people have become audacious enough to come forward and invite, even demand, Divine punishment. On the contrary, it is necessary to remember that indifference to Divine punishment is not proper under any condition even for them (Muslims). The reason is that the promise of not sending mass punishment upon the Muslim *ummah*, or the world as a whole, certainly stands there, but the coming of such punishment on particular individuals and nations is possible even now.

In verse 14, it was said: *ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ* (Then We made you vice-regents on the earth, in order to see how you would act), that is, 'after the destruction of past peoples, We made you successors to them giving you the vice-regency of the earth. But, let this not give you any false idea that this vice-regency of the earth has been given to you so that you could have a good time. In fact, this honor has been bestowed on you to test you and to see how you would act – would you learn your lesson from the history of past peoples or would you lose your head drunk with power and wealth?'

This tells us that worldly power is not something to be proud of or arrogant about. This is responsibility at its toughest, a charge very heavy and very fragile to handle.

In the last three verses (15-17), there is the refutation of a false notion entertained by the deniers of 'Ākhirah and also the rejection of an inappropriate request made by them. They were a people who did not know much about God or Revelation or Prophets sent by Him. They took them to be like common human beings having nothing special about them. Think of the Holy Qur'ān, which reached the world

through the Prophet of Islām. Even this, they thought, was spoken and written by him. It was under this frame of mind that they told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'as for this Qur'ān, it is against our beliefs and ideas.' These idols our forefathers have been worshipping since ever as providers of their needs are, according to the Qur'ān, totally false and ineffectual. There are things we have been using and transactions we have been making all along. The Qur'ān says that they are all unlawful. And then, the Qur'ān tells us that we have to live again after we are dead and that we have to account for everything we have done. All these things make no sense to us. We are not ready to accept them. Therefore, you do one of the two things we are asking you to do. Either you replace this one with another Qur'ān which does not have these things, or at the least, amend this very Qur'ān and expunge those (undesirable) things from there.'

Rejecting their false notion first, the Qur'ān instructs the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell those people that the Qur'ān was not his Word, nor could he change it on his own. He only followed what was revealed to him by Allah. If he were to make the least change in it on his own and by his choice, he would be committing a grave sin, and that he feared the punishment that falls upon those who disobey Allah, therefore, he could not do that.

Then he was asked to tell them that he did everything under Divine orders. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that this Word should not be recited to them, neither would he have recited that to them, nor would He have let them know about that. Now that it was the very will of Allah Ta'ālā that they should be made to listen to precisely that Word, who can dare make any addition or deletion therein?

After that, the fact that the Qur'ān was from Allah and that it was His Word was driven home with an open argument by saying: **فَقَدْ كُنْتُ** (فَبَيْنَكُمْ عُمْرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهِ) (Then I have lived among you for years before it). In effect, he was saying, 'just think for a moment. Is it not that, much before the revelation of the Qur'ān, I have spent a long period of forty years of my life among you? During this period, you have never heard me composing and reciting poetry or writing essays in prose. Had I been proficient in saying something like this Word of Allah, I would have naturally said at least some of it during this period of forty years. In addition to that, you have a direct experience of my character and con-

duct, particularly of my truth and honesty, during these long forty years of my life among you. You know that I have never lied then. How and why would I start lying now after all those forty years?' This clearly proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is true and trustworthy. Whatever there is in the Qur'an is the Word of Allah Ta'ālā and has come from Him.

Important Note

No doubt, this argument of the Qur'an provides a perfect proof of its veracity as the Word of Allah. But, it has also given us a standing rule of conduct in matters of common interest where we must be able to separate the genuine from the counterfeit and the true from the false. When an office or rank of responsibility has to be given to a person, it becomes necessary to assess the qualification and capability of the incumbent. To do that, the best rule is to go through the record of his past life. If the person concerned is found to be true and trustworthy, the same can be expected from him in the future as well. And if, there is no evidence to prove his honesty and truth in that person's past life, trusting him for the future just because of what he says or claims is not a wise thing to do. In our time, finding the right person for an office of responsibility has become a nightmare. All sorts of errors (of intent, background research and decision making) are being committed and errors are compounded by widespread disorders (in social and governmental institutions). The real reason why all this is happening is the abandonment of this natural principle in favor of what is customary, formal (or straight dishonest).

The last verse (17) emphasizes the subject conclusively by warning that attributing any statement to Allah Ta'ālā that was not His Word, or denying what actually was, were crimes deserving severe punishment.

Verses 18 - 20

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُلْ أَتَنْبِئُونَ اللَّهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ

سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾
 وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْ لَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةً مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ
 فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And they worship, besides Allah, what can neither harm them, nor benefit them, and they say, "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say, "Are you informing Allah of what He does not know to exist in the heavens or on the earth?" Pure is He, and far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [18]

And people were but one community; later, they differed. But for a word from your Lord that had already come, there would have come a decision between them on what they used to differ. [19]

And they say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "The Unseen is only for Allah. So, wait. I am waiting with you." [20]

Commentary

Disbelievers and Believers are two separate nationalities: Nationality based on race and country is absurd

The statement: كَانِ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً (And people were but one community) in verse 19 means that the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was essentially a single community of monotheists in the earlier stages of man's presence in the world. Shirk and Kufr were unknown as such. Then came up difference in the principle of pure monotheism that divided human beings in different nations and groups of people.

How long this period of a single community of believers last? Original sources of Islāmīc Tradition tell us that this situation prevailed up to the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (Noah). It was during his time that Shirk and Kufr showed up and he was the one who had to confront it first. (Tafsīr Mazharī)

Then, it is also obvious that there is a long period of time between Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, may peace be on them both. Human race had multiplied and population had spread out in the world. The presence of differences in color, ethnicity and social life styles was natural. That people had spread themselves out in different regions would have certainly generated differences on the basis of

country and homeland. Then, it is also possible that spoken languages may have become somewhat different. But, the Holy Qur'an did not allow these natural genealogical or tribal differences or those of color and country to become impediments to the grand design of one community. In fact, it did not declare the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to be different nations and communities because of these differences. Instead, it gave them the status of one community.

Of course, when Kufr and Shirk spread out and posed a threat to 'Imān or true belief, Kāfirs and Mushriks were declared to be a separate community of people as indicated in: فَاخْتَلَفُوا (later, they differed). Another verse of the Holy Qur'an: هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْكُمْ كَافِرًا وَمِنْكُمْ مُؤْمِنًا (It is He who created you; yet there is among you a disbeliever and there is among you a believer – At-taghābun, 64:2) makes it more explicit. It tells that the thing that separates the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام created by Allah into different peoples is the deviation from 'Imān and Islām. Bonds of lineage or country do not make people separate. Bracketing human beings into different groups on the basis of language, homeland, color or race is ignorance dished out in the garb of enlightenment. It is new. But everything new is not necessarily true and wise. In fact, it might as well be the exact opposite of what is wise. Today, there are many educated people who have also fallen into the trap of this narrow concept of nationalism based on the factors enumerated above. Unfortunately, this approach towards ordering the social life of human beings is fraught with seeds of countless unseen disasters. May Allah keep Muslims safe from its evil effects.

Verses 21 – 24

وَإِذَا أذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُمْ مَكْرٌ
 فِي الْإِتْنَانِ قُلِ اللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَكْفُرُونَ
 ﴿٢١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّى إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي
 الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَبَ بِهَمِّ بَرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَ نَهَارٍ رِيحٍ
 عَاصِفٍ وَجَاءَ هُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ
 بِهِمْ ۖ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنِ أُنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ

لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَلَمَّا أَجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُم بِبُغْوٍ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ بغيرِ الْحَقِّ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغَيْكُمُ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ
 مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنزَلْنَاهُ مِن
 السَّمَاءِ فَاحْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ
 حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ
 قَدِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا لَا أَنهَىٰ أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا
 كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ
 يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

He is the One who enables you to travel on land and at sea, until when you are in the boats and they sail with those on board under a good wind and they are pleased with it, there comes upon them a violent wind, and the wave comes upon them from many sides. And (when) they think that they are encircled, they pray to Allah, having faith in Him alone, (and say,) "If You deliver us from this, we shall be grateful indeed." [22]

But when He delivers them, they at once start rebelling on the earth wrongfully. O people, your rebellion is, in fact, against your own selves. (It is nothing but) an enjoyment of the worldly life. Therefore, to Us you are to return, then We shall tell you what you have been doing. [23]

The example of worldly life is just like the water We sent down from the heavens, then the vegetation of the earth, eaten by men and cattle, until when the earth took on its ornament and was fully adorned, and its people thought that they had control over it, Our command came to it at night or by day, and We turned it into a stubble, as if it had not been there a day earlier. This is how We elaborate the verses for a people who reflect. [24]

Commentary

The word: مكر (*makr*) used in verse 21: قُلِ اللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا (Say, "Allah is more swift in making plans") means secret plan or move that could be good or bad. Wherever this word has become a part of the local language, care should be taken that it is not rendered as 'deception'. For instance, in Urdu, the original language of this Commentary, it means just this. It is obvious that Allah Ta'ālā is free from it.¹

The warning given in verse 23: إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ (your rebellion is, in fact, against your own-selves) tells us that the curse of injustice is certain and, much before matters are settled in the Hereafter, one who is guilty of doing injustice must suffer from its evil consequences in this world as well.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'Allah Ta'ālā hastens to repay mercy shown to relatives and favor done to people (whereby its blessings start becoming visible in this world, much before the Hereafter). And He also hastens to repay injustices done and relationships severed (in that its consequences have to be faced within the life of this world).' (Reported by Tirmidhī and Ibn Majāh with a ḥasan chain of narrators) In another Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'there are three sins the curse whereof falls on the sinner himself: Injustice, breach of trust and deception.' (Reported by Abū ash-Shaykh and Ibn Mardūwayh in Tafsīr) (See Maẓharī)

Verses 25 - 32

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ بِمِثْلِهَا وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ مَّا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ كَأَنَّمَا أُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ قِطْعًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا

1. The English language has no such problems as the open sense of *makr* can be transmitted through 'plan' or 'move' (Translator)

خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا
 مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاءُكُمْ، فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَالَ شُرَكَاءُهُمْ
 مَا كُنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا
 وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغْفِيلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُغُوا كُلُّ
 نَفْسٍ مَّا أَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا
 كَانُوا يُفْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ
 أَمْ مَنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ
 وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ
 فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ الْحَقُّ، فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ
 الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالَةُ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And Allah invites (people) to the Abode of Peace and brings whom He wills to a straight path. [25]

For those who do good there is the best, and something more, and neither darkness nor disgrace shall cover their faces. Those are the people of Paradise. Therein they shall live forever. [26]

As for those who commit evils, the recompense of each evil shall be similar to that evil, and disgrace shall cover them. For them, there is none to save from Allah. Their faces seem to be covered with layers of a dark night. Those are the people of the Fire. Therein they shall live forever. [27]

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Wait in your place, you and your associate-gods." Then We shall cause a split between them, and their associate-gods will say, "It was not us that you worshipped. [28] So, Allah is enough as witness between us and between you. We were certainly unaware of your worship." [29]

Thereupon, everyone shall assess what one sent ahead, and they will be sent back to Allah, their true Lord, and lost to them shall be what they used to coin. [30]

Say, "Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Or, who controls the (powers of) hearing and seeing? And who brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living? And who manages everything?" They will say, "Allah." Then, (you) say, "Would you not, then, fear Allah?" [31]

So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error? Where, then, are you being diverted? [32]

Commentary

In the previous verse (24), the transitory nature of worldly life was likened to a field. Water came from the heavens and it became verdant with flowers and fruits and crops. Growers were happy to presume that this will take care of everything they needed. But, because of their acts of disobedience, some unforeseen Divine punishment descended during the time of the night or day. Everything stood wiped off – as if nothing had existed there. This was the state of worldly life. After that comes a description of the life-to-come as it would be (25).

It was said: وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُكُمْ إِلَىٰ دَارِ السَّلَامِ (And Allah invites [people] to the Abode of Peace). It means a Home where absolute and eternal peace reigns, a Home that has neither pain and sorrow, nor the danger of disease, nor the concern of adverse change or sudden extinction.

'*Dāru 's-Salām*' means the Jannah or Paradise. One reason why it has been called *Dāru 's-Salām* is that everyone will have ideal peace and security there. The second reason appears in some reports from Ḥadīth. They say that Jannah has been given the name of *Dāru 's-Salām* also because its dwellers shall always be receiving *Salām* greetings from Allah Ta'ālā, and from the angels as well. In fact, the word: *Salām* would itself be a sort of technical keyword used by the people of Jannah to express their wishes which the angels would fulfill. For details, please see the commentary on verse 10.

While explaining this verse, Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh has given some man-to-man advice to whomsoever it may reach:

'O son of Ādam! Allah Almighty invited you to the Home of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*). When and from which country would you take that right step in response to this Divine call? Understand, and mark it well. If you have started making efforts to say yes to this invitation (from your Lord) while you are

still here in this world, you will succeed. You will reach the Home of Peace. And if you wasted the years of your life here, then landed in your grave, and then thought of following this call, you will be stopped. You will not move from there, not even one step – because, the place where you are is no Home of Deeds (*Dāru 'l-'Amal*).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said, '*Dāru 's-Salām* is one of the seven names of Jannah.' (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

This tells us that it is not proper to name a house in this world as *Dāru 's-Salām*. Similarly, it is also not correct to give it names like Jannah or Firdaus (Paradise).

After that, it was said in the cited verse: وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (and He brings whom He wills to a straight path – 25). The sense is that the invitation to the Abode of Peace (*Dāru 's-Salām*) is universal, open to all human beings and, in terms of this sense, guidance too is open to all. But, there is a kind of guidance that is special. Here, a seeker is made to stand on the straight path and given the ability to move ahead on course. This is *Taufīq* at its best. Only fortunate people are blessed with it.

Compared in the first two verses (24, 25) were the two Abodes of the present world and the world-to-come. Mention was also made of the states in which their dwellers were. The next four verses (26-29) describe the reward and punishment of both. Taken up first were the people of Paradise. About them it was said that those who opted for good, the greatest good was that of 'Imān (belief and faith) supplemented by staunch adherence to *al-'amalu 'ṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds). They will have the best of returns for what they do, not simply what is coming to them as due, but much more than it.

The *tafsīr* of this verse was given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. He explained it by saying, 'at this place, *al-ḥusnā*: الحسنى: the best [of return] means Jannah (Paradise) and زيادة: ziyādah: something more) means the visit to the most exalted Allah with which the people of Jannah shall be honored. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه)

As for the reality of Paradise, this much every Muslim knows that it is a place of bliss beyond human imagination now. And as for the visit to Allah Ta'ālā, that is far superior to whatever blessings there

are.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said, ‘when the people of Jannah would have entered Jannah, Allah Ta‘ālā will address them: “Do you need anything? If so, tell Us. We shall fulfill it.” The people of Jannah will submit: “You made our faces radiant with delight. You let us be in Jannah. You delivered us from Jahannam. What else can we ask for?” That will be the time when the *ḥijāb* obstructing the view in between will be removed. The people of Jannah, one and all, will be blessed with seeing their true Lord. They will then discover that this was a blessing far more sublime than all other blessings of Jannah, something they had not even thought about, something the Lord of all the worlds bestowed upon them without their having to ask for it simply out of His infinite affection and mercy!’

Then, the text describes the state of the same people of Jannah by saying that their faces will remain free of any effects of distaste, pain or sorrow, nor will they have to be worried about any disgrace. These are conditions everyone faces in the mortal world one or the other time – and those who go to Jahannam will face it in the Hereafter.

In contrast, the state of the people of Jahannam has been described by saying that those who came with evil deeds in their record will have an equal return for each evil without any increase in it: They will have disgrace all over them. There will be no one to save them from the punishment of Allah. Dark will be their faces, so dark as if layers upon layers of a night have covered them up.

In the two verses (27,28) appearing next, there is a dialogue between the people of Jahannam and the idols or satans who had led them astray. The locale will be the plain of Resurrection. It was said: On that day, We shall gather everyone. Then, to the Mushriks We shall say that, ‘you and your gods whom you had associated with Us in Our divinity stay in your places where you are, so that you can find out the reality of your conviction.’ After that, the connection between these people and their so-called gods as it existed in the mortal world will be disconnected. The result will be that their idols will speak up: ‘you never worshipped us.’ Making Allah their witness, they will say, ‘as for us, we were certainly unaware of your worship’ – because we have no

senses, no movement and no intelligence to understand these matters.

Described in the sixth verse (30) is what would happen to both the peoples of Jannah and Jahannam by saying that, in this excruciating place called the plains of Resurrection, everyone would have assessed his or her respective deeds, individually and personally, whether they were beneficial or harmful. And they all would then be taken to their true Lord, the only One worthy of worship. At that time, all options of trust and support one usually looks up to will stand terminated. Even the idols the Mushriks used to take as their patrons and intercessors will evaporate in thin air en-block.

In the seventh and the eighth verses (31,32), the Holy Qur'ān has, in its typically wise and patronizing manner, beamed a few questions at the Mushriks to help them regain their sanity. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said that he should ask these people: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Who is the master-controller of your ears and eyes in that you hear and see as He wills and you do not if He wills otherwise? Who brings forth the living from the dead, such as vegetation and trees from the soil? Or, who brings forth humans and animals from the sperm, or a bird from an egg? And who brings forth the dead from the living, such as a lifeless sperm from humans and animals? And who is it that plans and manages the affairs of the whole universe?

After that, it was said when these questions will be addressed to them, all of them would say that all these things were created by One Allah! Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to ask them: Why then, would you not fear Allah? When you know that it is Allah alone who creates, sustains and manages everything, why do you have to take someone else other than Him as deserving of your devotion and obedience?

In the concluding verse (32), it was said: فَذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ الْحَقُّ، فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ الْحَقَّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ (So, that is Allah, your Lord in truth. And what is there, after truth, but error?), that is, 'this is the Sacred Being whose attributes of perfection have just been mentioned. Once you have found the Truth, there remains nothing else to find except error and straying. In other words, once it stands proved that Allah Ta'ālā is the only true and rightful object of worship, it is terribly senseless to abandon this truth and allow yourself to be diverted elsewhere.

An important note

In relation to issues of religious beliefs embedded in this verse, it must be borne in mind that the statement: مَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ (What is there, after truth, but error?) proves that there is no intermediary link between truth and error. What is not the truth will be included in error and straying. There can be no such thing that is neither truth nor error. And it is also not possible that two opposite things could be the truth. This is an established rule in the sight of the majority of scholars in the Muslim *Ummah*. However, difference exists among 'Ulamā' regarding minor and subsidiary juristic issues. In the view of some of them, both sides would be considered as on truth in Ijtihād-based issues and, according to the majority of them, there is consensus on the view that the taking of contra-position in Ijtihād-based problems cannot be termed as error and straying.

Verses 33 – 36

كَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَبْدُوا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَبْدُوا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ فَأَنْتُمْ تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ تَفَكُّرًا كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

This is how the Word of your Lord that they will not believe is established against those who sinned. [33]

Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who originates the creation, then brings it again? Where then, are you being turned away?" [34] Say, "Is there any one from your associate-gods who guides to the truth?" Say, "Allah guides to the truth. Is, then, He who guides to the truth more worthy of being obeyed, or he who has no guidance unless he is guided? So, what is the matter with you? How do you judge things? [35]

And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely, conjecture does not suffice against the truth in any way. Certainly, Allah is fully aware of what they do. [36]

Verses 37 - 40

وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَىٰ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَارْتَبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ
وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾
بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ كَذَلِكَ
كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ
﴿٣٩﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَرَبُّكَ
أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

And this Qur'an is not such as could be made by someone other than Allah, but it is a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of what is written. There is no doubt in it. It is from the Lord of the worlds. [37]

Or, do they say that he has made it up? Say, "Then, bring a Sūrah like it, and call whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are true." [38]

But they have belied something of which they had no comprehensive knowledge, while its implications have not yet come to them. Likewise belied those before them. So, look how was the fate of the unjust. [39] And among them there are those who believe in it, and among them there are others who do not believe in it. And your Lord has the best knowledge about the mischief-makers. [40]

Verses 41 - 44

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلكُمْ عَمَلِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ بَرِّئُونَ مِمَّا
أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ
إِلَيْكَ أَفَأَنْتَ تَسْمَعُ الصَّهْمَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ

مَنْ يَنْظُرِ إِلَيْكَ أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمَىٰ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَبْصُرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ
 يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And if they belie you, say, “For me, my deed, and for you, your deed. You are not accountable for what I do and I am not accountable for what you do.” [41]

And among them there are those who listen to you. Would you, then, make the deaf hear, even when they lack understanding? [42] And among them there are those who look at you. Would you, then, guide the blind even when they have no insight? [43]

Surely, Allah does not do wrong to people at all, but the people do wrong to their own selves. [44]

Verses 45 - 56

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُونَ
 بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾
 وَإِنَّمَا نُرِيَّتكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ تَوَفَّيْنَاكَ فَأَلَيْنَا
 مَرْجِعَهُمْ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ
 رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ
 لَا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾
 قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۗ
 لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۗ إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا
 يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن أَنُكُم عَذَابُهُ بَيَاتًا أَوْ نَهَارًا
 مَاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ أَتُمْ إِذَا مَاتُمْ بِهِ ۗ
 الْآنَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
 ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ ۗ هَلْ تُجْرَوْنَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾
 وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَكَ أَحَقُّ هُوَ قُلْ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ

بِمُعْجِزَيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۗ وَأَسْرُوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۖ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ
 بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾
 هُوَ يَحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

And the Day when He will gather them, (they will feel) like they had not stayed for any longer than a fraction of a day as they will recognize each other. Losers, indeed, are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, and they are not on the right path. [45]

So, no matter whether We show you some of what We warn them of, or We take you back to Us (before it), in any case, they have to return to Us. Then, Allah is witness to what they do. [46]

And for every people there is a messenger. So, when their messenger comes, the matter will be decided between them with justice, and they shall not be wronged. [47]

And they say, "When will this promise be (fulfilled) if you are true?" [48] Say, "I have no power to bring a harm or a benefit to myself, except what Allah wills. For every people there is an appointed time. When their time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they be earlier. [49]

Say, "Just tell me, if His punishment befalls you at night or by day, what is there in it that the sinners wish to come soon? [50]

Is it then when it befalls you that you will believe in it? Now (you believe)? And you have been asking for it to come sooner!" [51]

Then it will be said to the unjust, "Taste the punishment lasting for ever. You shall not be punished except for what you have been earning." [52]

And they want you to tell them whether it is true. Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it is true. And you cannot frustrate (His plan)." [53]

And if anyone who did wrong possesses all that there is on earth, he would ransom himself with it. And they will conceal their remorse when they will see the punishment. And the matter will be decided between them with justice and they will not be wronged. [54]

Look! To Allah belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth. Look! Allah's promise is certainly true, but most of them do not know. [55]

He gives life and brings death, and to Him you shall be returned. [56]

Commentary

In verse 45, it was said: *يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ* (they will recognize each other), that is, when the dead will be raised from their graves, they will recognize each other as if not much time had passed when they met last.

Imām al-Baghawī said: This recognition will be possible during the early stage. Later, when the horrendous happenings of the Qiyāmah, the Day of Doom, will unfold, this ability to recognize each other will stand disabled. According to some other narrations, the ability to recognize each other will, though, still remain, but such will be the awe of the situation that they will be unable to say anything. (Maḥzarī)

It was said in verse 51: *أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ إِذَا مَأْوَعِ الْمُنْتُمْ بِهِ النَّارُ* It means: 'Would you believe when Divine punishment actually descends down upon you – whether at the time of death, or even before it? But, at that time, the response to your believing will be: *النَّارُ* ('*āl'an*: now?) meaning: Is it now that you have come to believe while the time of believing has already passed? This is similar to what the Pharaoh said while drowning: *أَمَنْتُ أَنتَ* 'أَمَنْتُ بِكَ لَآ إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتَ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ' ("I believe that there is no god except the One in whom the Children of Isra'īl believe – 10:90). In answer, it was said: *أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ* ('*āl'an*: now?) and this believing by him was not accepted. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the repentance of His servant until he is seized by the agony of death.' It means that believing and repenting at the time of the agony of death is not credible in the sight of Allah. Similarly, in the mortal world, Taubah (repentance) could be accepted if done before the actual falling of the Divine punishment. Once the punishment strikes, Taubah is not accepted. The event related to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام going to appear towards the end of the Sūrah in which their

Taubah was accepted falls under this very rule. They had seen the punishment coming from a distance. Moved earnestly, weeping and wailing, they made their Taubah in all sincerity. Therefore, the punishment was withdrawn. Had it struck them, their Taubah would have remained unaccepted.

Verses 57 - 61

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَ تَكْمٌ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي
الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ
وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلْ
أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِّن رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا
وَحَلَالًا قُلْ أَللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَمَا ظَنُّ
الَّذِينَ يُفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَمَا
تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُوا مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ
عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ وَمَا يَعْرَبُ
عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا
أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦١﴾

O men, there has come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what is in your hearts, and guidance and mercy for the believers. [57]

Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" - with these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate. [58]

Say, "Tell me, whatever provision Allah has sent down for you, you have made out from it lawful and unlawful." Say, "Has Allah permitted you or are you fabricating a lie on Allah?" [59]

And what is the assumption of those who fabricate a lie on Allah (about) the Day of Doom? Surely, Allah is all gracious to people, but most of them are not grateful.

And in whatever condition you are, and whatever portion of the Qur'ān you recite therein, and whatever work you (all) do, We are present before you when you are involved in it. And hidden from your Lord is nothing even to the measure of a particle on the earth or in the heavens. And there is nothing smaller or greater that is not there in the clear Book. [61]

Commentary

Previous verses described how astray the disbelievers and polytheists had gone and what punishments had become due against them in the Hereafter.

Shown to them in the first two verses was the way out of their living in error and also the source through which they would find deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. And that source is Qur'ān, the Book of Allah, and His Messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

Both are great blessings for humanity, far superior to the entire blessings of the heavens and the earth. Following the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم go on to make human beings human in the real sense – and when this human person becomes the perfect man in the real sense, the whole world corrects and reorders itself like a paradise on earth.

The first (57) of the five verses cited above mentions four attributes of the Holy Qur'ān:

1. **ADVICE** as in مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَم (an advice from your Lord).

The real meaning of the word: مَوْعِظَةٌ (*maw'izah*) and: وَعِظْ (*wa'iz*) is to delineate such things as would make one's heart soft and receptive. As a result, it would incline towards Allah Ta'ālā. The barrier of heedlessness acquired from excessive indulgence in worldly life will stand removed. Ultimately, this advice would result in the flowering of a personal concern for what would happen in Ākhirah, the life ahead. The Holy Qur'ān, from the beginning to the end, is an eloquent preacher of this very good counsel. See anywhere, you will find promise with warning, reward with punishment, and prosperity and success in Dunyā and Ākhirah with a corresponding fate due to error and straying. Appearing recurrently in varying shades and blending, it generates a powerful appeal which has the ability to make a heart stone-hard turn soft and pliable like water all ready to absorb the message. Of course,

on top of everything, there is the miraculous diction of the Holy Qur'an that, by itself, has a class of its own in the matter of reversal of hearts.

The complement of: مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (from your Lord) with موعظه (advice) has elevated the status of Qur'anic advice to a much higher level. It is telling us that this advice is not coming from a helpless human being that does not hold the keys to anyone's profit and loss or reward and punishment, nor has any credibility of his own. Instead, the advice is from the merciful Lord whose Word admits of no error, and whose promise and warning too are free of any apprehension of some weakness or excuse.

2. CURE as in: شِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ (a cure for what is in your hearts).

The word: شفاء (shifā') means the removal of disease and: صدور (ṣudūr) is the plural form of: صدر (ṣadr) which means the chest, and it signifies the heart.

The sense is that the Holy Qur'an is a successful remedy of the diseases of the heart. It corrects and cures it as a prescription of legendary elixir would. The famous Hasan al-Basrī said, 'from this attribute of the Qur'an, we learn that it is a cure for the diseases of the heart specifically, and not that of physical diseases. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

But, other scholars have said that the Holy Qur'an is a cure for every disease, whether spiritual or physical. However, spiritual diseases are far more harmful for men and women than physical diseases. Then, the treatment of such diseases too is not in everyone's control. Therefore, at this place, only spiritual diseases that relate to the heart have been mentioned. From this it does not necessarily follow that it is not a cure for physical diseases.

Hadīth reports and countless experiments of the religious scholars of the Muslim community are witnesses to the fact that the way the Holy Qur'an is a great elixir for diseases of the heart, very similarly, it is the best of treatments for physical diseases also.

As narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه, someone came to Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and complained that he felt he had a chest problem. He said, 'recite the Qur'an, for Allah Ta'ālā says: شِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ that is, 'the Qur'an is a cure for all such diseases as are found insides chests.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

Similarly, according to the narration of Sayyidnā Wāthilah ibn Asqa رضى الله عنه, someone came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said that he had a throat problem. He told him the same thing – ‘recite the Qur’ān’.

Scholars of the Muslim community have compiled the properties and efficacies of the Qur’ānic verses in regular books by extracting these partly from narratives of Ḥadīth and the sayings of the Ṣahābah, and partly from their own experiments and experience. Imām al-Ghazālī’s work on ‘Qur’ānic Properties’ is well known in this area. Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānavī’s “A’māl-i-Qur’āniī, an abridgement of this work, has been popular among readers of Urdu for over fifty years. Then, there are so many observations and experiments in this field which prove that different verses of the Holy Qur’ān have been a total cure for physical diseases as well. Denying all of them is not possible. However, this much can be conceded that the real purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur’ān is to remove the diseases of the heart and soul while, as a corollary, it is also the most effective treatment of even physical diseases.

This also tells us that those who recite the Holy Qur’ān only to treat physical diseases or to seek nothing but the fulfillment of worldly needs are low in sense and high in waywardness. Such people never bother to correct spiritual diseases, nor do they pay any heed to the need of doing things in accordance with the instructions given by the Qur’ān. For such people, Iqbāl said:

ترا حاصل زیس اش جزین نیست که ازهم خواندش آسان بمیری

Your gain from *Yā Sīn* is but that:

By reciting it, death becomes easy.

Though, he is suggesting, had you pondered over its meaning and message, realities and insights, you would have gained much more of its benefits and blessings.

Some research-oriented commentators who have gone deeper into the meanings of the Qur’ān have said that the first attribute of the Qur’ān, that is, مرعظه (*maw’izah*: advice, good counsel) relates to man’s obvious, outward or physically-accomplished deeds known as the Sharī’ah. The Holy Qur’ān is the best source of the correction and betterment of such deeds. Then, the second attribute: شفاً؛ لَمَّا فِي الصُّدُورِ (a cure for

what is in your hearts) relates to man's hidden, inward or heart-oriented deeds known as *Tariqah* and *Taşawwuf*.

3. GUIDANCE as in: وهدى (and guidance).

The word: هدى (*hudā*) means guidance or the showing of or leading onto the way. The Holy Qur'an invites human beings to the way of truth and faith. It invites them to ponder over the great signs Allah Ta'ālā has placed in the near and far ranges of the world, even inside their own person, [staggering would certainly be the interior distances of the universe within us] and recognize the creator and master of everything.

4. MERCY as in: ورحمة (and mercy for the believers).

In the second verse (58), it was said: قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا ، هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (Say, "With the grace of Allah and with His mercy" – in these they should rejoice. It is far better than what they accumulate). The sense of the verse is that people should take only the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā as the real thing to be delighted about and be pleased with it. As for the short-lived worldly wealth, possession, comfort and recognition, these are things not worth being happy about in the real sense. Because, to start with, no matter how much one has, it turns out to be not as much as one would have wished. It becomes a cycle that never ends. Then, there is that ever-lurking danger that it may start declining any time. Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (It is far better than what they accumulate). Thus, the core of the meaning is that the grace and mercy of Allah is far better than the layers upon layers of wealth and property and worldly recognition and power one accumulates as the sum-total of one's entire life.

Two things have been identified as a source of delight in this verse, one being grace, and the other, mercy. What do these two mean here? Regarding this, there is a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه where it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'فضل : *faḍl* (grace) of Allah denotes the Qur'an and: رحمة : *rahmah* (mercy) means that you were blessed with the *taufīq* (ability) of reciting the Qur'an and acting in accordance with it.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Ibn Mardūwayh)

The same thing has also been reported from Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib and Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنهم while there are

many commentators who say that *faḍl* (grace) means the Qur'ān while *rahmah* (mercy) signifies Islām. However, the sense remains the same as given in the Ḥadīth appearing earlier, that is, *rahmah* (mercy) means that Allah Ta'ālā taught us the Qur'ān, gave us the *taufīq* to follow it practically, and that is what Islām is in reality.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه narrates that *faḍl* means the Qur'ān, and *rahmah* refers to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This interpretation finds support in the verse of the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (And We have not sent you [O Muḥammad] except as mercy for the worlds – 21:107). However, the outcome of this too is no different from the earlier *tafsīr* – because, acting in accordance with the Qur'ān, or Islām ultimately reverts to following the lead given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed.

In this verse, the word: فَلْيَفْرَحُوا (they should rejoice) has appeared in the third person in accordance with its well-known rendition (*qirā'ah*), although its real addressees were those present there or were living at that time. The exigency of the situation required that the form used should have been that in the second person – as it does actually appear in some renditions. But, the wisdom behind the use of the third person, as in the well-known rendition, is that the universal mercy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or Islām, was not restricted only to those present there, or living at that time. Instead, it included even the generations that will be born right through the last day of Qiyāmah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Special Note

At this point it is worth our attention that there is another verse of the Qur'ān which, in terms of its outward literal sense, seems to indicate that this world is just no place for any highly stimulated expression of joy and merriment. It was said: لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ (Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant – Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:76). The word: لا تفرح (*lā tafrah*) translated here as 'do not exult' means rejoicing in triumph or intoxication. But, in the verse under study (58), the command to rejoice appears in the imperative mood. One answer for this seemingly apparent contradiction is that the place where rejoicing has been prohibited is a place where rejoicing relates to the fleeting enjoyments of the mortal world. And the place where rejoicing is commanded is a

place where rejoicing is related to the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. Then, there is yet another difference here. Wherever rejoicing is prohibited, it does not refer to rejoicing in the absolute sense. Instead, it means getting euphoric and intoxicated in exultation and rejoicing. And wherever permitted, it means rejoicing in an absolute sense.

In the third verse (59), warning has been given to people who introduce their personal opinion in the serious matter of Ḥalāl (lawful) and Ḥarām (unlawful). They would, at will, declare something to be Ḥalāl and dub something to be Ḥarām – without any authority of the Qur'an, and Sunnah. A severe warning of no less a punishment than that of the day of Qiyamah has been given to those who commit this crime (60). This tells us that the fact of something being Ḥalāl or Ḥarām does not depend on human opinion. Instead of that, it is the special right and prerogative of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger. Without their injunctions, it is not permissible to call something either Ḥalāl or Ḥarām.

In the fifth verse (61), mention has been made of the all-encompassing knowledge of the most exalted Allah and its unmatched multi-dimensional extensions. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being told that nothing he does by way of his work or recital of the Qur'an remains hidden from Allah. Similarly, whatever all human beings do remains before Him. And not even a single particle in the heavens and the earth is concealed from Him. Rather, everything is written in the clear Book, that is, the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*).

At this place, as it seems, the wisdom of describing the all-encompassing nature of Divine knowledge is aimed at consoling the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that his enemies cannot harm him in any way for he was under the protection of Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 62 – 64

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
 الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٤﴾

Listen, the friends of Allah shall have no fear nor shall they grieve [62] – those who have believed and have been fearful of Allah. [63] For them there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter – there is no change in the words of Allah – that is the great achievement. [64]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, particular merits, definition and identity of the *Auliya'* of Allah have been mentioned. Also given there is good news for them in the present world as well as in the Hereafter. The text says that they will have no apprehensions of facing some unpleasant or unforeseen happening, nor will they grieve over the non-fulfillment of some objective. These *Auliya'* of Allah (men of Allah) will be people who believed and remained pious, righteous and God-fearing. They are most welcome in this world and in the next world both.

We have to consider three things at this point:

1. What is the meaning of *Auliya'* of Allah having no fear and grief?
2. What is the definition of *Auliya'* of Allah? How does one identify them?
3. What does the good news given to them in *Dunya* and *Ākhirah* mean?

First of all, the *Auliya'* of Allah have no fear or grief. This could possibly mean when they are admitted to their allocated place in Paradise, after having gone through the accounting of deeds in the Hereafter, they will stand delivered from fear and grief forever. They will have no apprehension of any pain or anxiety nor will they have to grieve for having lost something dear to them. Instead, the blessings of Paradise will be everlasting. Given this sense, there is no difficulty in rationalizing the subject of the verse. But, it does, however, raise a question. If this be the case, it registers no peculiarity of the *Auliya'* of Allah. In fact, all people of Paradise who stand delivered from Hell will be enjoying that very state of being. Yes, it can, then, be said that those who ultimately reach Paradise will all be known as the *Auliya'* of Allah invariably. No matter how different their deeds had been in the mortal world but, once they have entered Paradise, all of them will be

counted among the Auliya' of Allah.

But, many commentators say that freedom from fear and grief with which the Auliya' of Allah are blessed is common to the present world and the Hereafter both. The thing unique about the Auliya' of Allah is that they remain protected from fear and grief even in the present world, and that they will have no fear and grief in the Hereafter is something everyone knows. So, included therein are all people of Paradise.

Apart from that, in terms of relevant prevailing conditions, we have yet another difficulty on our hands. Observations in the world of our experience bear out that – not to mention the Auliya' of Allah – even the Prophets of Allah, may peace be on them, are not secure from fear and grief in this mortal world. In fact, their fear of and humbleness before Allah is far more pronounced as compared to others. It was said in the Qur'an: *إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ* (Among Our servants only those who have knowledge (really) fear Allah – 35:28). At another place, the emotional state of the righteous and the men of Allah has been described in the following words: *وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُسْتَفْضُونَ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَا مُنُونِ* (And those who are fearful of the punishment of their Lord – indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not to be unfearful of – 70:27) that is, no one can sit home comfortably in the knowledge that it is due to come.

This is borne by facts as well as it appears in a Ḥadīth of Shama'il al-Tirmidhī: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would more than often look concerned and pensive'. And he himself said, 'I fear Allah more than all of you.'

There are countless events relating to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the rest of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'in and the wide spectrum of the men of Allah which tell us how intensely they grieved and how genuinely they feared what would happen to them in the Hereafter.

Therefore, 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has said in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī: That the Auliya' Allah are protected against fear and grief in the mortal world has to be seen in terms of what usually happens here. There are things worldly people generally fear or grieve about most of the time. They are chronically addicted to their mundane agenda of life. They have to

have convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition. The slightest shortfall in any of these makes them nervous as if they were going to die without that. The fear of a minor discomfort or anxiety drives them crazy and they will go about finding ways and means to get rid of such irritants. The station of the Auliya', friends or men of Allah is way higher. In their sight, convenience, comfort, wealth and recognition one surrounds himself with in this transitory world are not worth their while that they go about acquiring these. Nor do they care much about the anxieties of the mundane and see no need to beef up their defenses against these. Their life style admits of nothing but the recognition of His greatness and love for Him. So overshadowed they are with the fear of Allah and their humbleness before Him that they just have no use for worldly sorrow and comfort or profit and loss.

Now we can go to the matter of the definition of Auliya' Allah and the marks of their identification. The word: اولياء (Auliya') is the plural form of: ولي (waliyy, commonly rendered as the simpler: wali, which bypasses the need to render the doubling of the ya sound at the end shown by the addition of a 'y', or two, as purists would prefer to do). The word: ولي (waliyy) is used in the Arabic language in the dual sense of 'near' as well as 'friend' or someone held 'dear.' The common degree of nearness and love as related to Allah Ta'ala is such as would not leave any living entity, human or non-human, exempt from it. If this element of nearness were not there, nothing would have come into being in this universe. The real justification for the existence of this entire universe is that particular interrelationship which it has been allowed to have by Allah in His absolute majesty. Though, no one has understood the reality of this interrelationship, nor is it possible to do so, but that a non-definable interrelationship does exist is certain. However, this degree is not what is actually meant in the term: Auliya' Allah. In fact, there is yet another degree of friendship, love and nearness that is specific to particular servants of Allah Ta'ala. This is known as nearness in love. Those who are blessed with this nearness are called the Auliya' Allah. This has been succinctly articulated in a Qudsi Hadith where Allah Ta'ala says, 'My servant keeps earning My nearness through voluntary acts of worship (nafl 'ibadat) until I too turn to him in love and when I love him, I become his ear - whatever he hears, he hears through Me. I become his eye - whatever he sees, he sees through Me. I become his hands and feet - whatever he does,

he does through Me.' In short, it means that virtually nothing issues forth from such a person against the pleasure of his Lord.

The degrees of this unique *Wilāyah* (station of nearness or friendship) are endless. Its highest degree is for the blessed prophets because every prophet has to be, of necessity, a *Waliyy* of Allah. In this degree, the highest station belongs to the foremost among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then, the lowest degree of this *Wilāyah*, in the terminology of the noble Sufis, is known as the degree of *Fanā'* (self-elimination: I am nothing – He is everything). It makes the heart of man become so engrossed in the thought of Allah Ta'ālā that it would not allow any love rooted in this world to overcome it. When such a person loves, he loves for the sake of Allah. When he hates, he hates for the sake of Allah. His own person plays no part in this love and hate cycle, the inevitable outcome of which is that he keeps busy in his quest for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā both outwardly and inwardly. This style of living makes him avoid everything which is not liked in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. The sign of this state of existence is abundance of *Dhikr* and constancy in obedience – in other words, to remember Allah Ta'ālā abundantly and profusely, and to obey His injunctions always, and under all conditions and circumstances. When these two attributes are present in a person, he is called a *Waliyy* of Allah. Whoever does not have any one of the two is not included in that category. Then, whoever has both, there is no limit to his ranks, lower and higher. It is in terms of these degrees that the ranks of *Auliya'* Allah precede or succeed each other.

On the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in a Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people meant by '*Auliya'* Allah' in this verse? He said, 'those who love each other only for Allah – without having any worldly interest in between.' (Maḥzarī, quoted from Ibn Mardūwayh). It is obvious that this condition can apply only to those who have been mentioned above.

At this stage, we have another question before us: What is the method of acquiring this degree of *Wilāyah* (nearness to Allah)?

Respected commentator, Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Panīpatī has said in *Tafsīr Maḥzarī*: Individuals from the Muslim Ummah could acquire this degree of *Wilāyah* only through the company of the Holy Prophet صلى

الله عليه وسلم. It is from here that the profound relationship with Allah, which was part of the blessed persona of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, is partly passed on to the *Auliya'* of the Ummah, of course, depending on their ambition and capacity for whatever portion from it falls to their lot. Then, we know that this benefit of companionship was available to the *Ṣaḥābah* without anyone being in between. Therefore, the degree of their *Wilāyah* was higher than that of all *Auliya'* and *aqṭāb* (plural of *qutb*, literally axis, meaning a man of Allah who stays at one place, as in *Ṣūfī* orders). Later people derive this benefit through one or more intermediaries. The more the intermediaries, the more pronounced becomes the difference. Only those who are colored with the color of the word, deed and message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and follow his *Sunnah*, in all love and obedience, can become such an intermediary. Going to them, frequenting their company with the added practice of listening to their good counsel, remaining obedient and remembering Allah abundantly – this is the blueprint of attaining the degree of *Wilāyah*. It is made of three parts. One: Being in the company of a *Waliyy* of Allah. Two: Remaining obedient to his good counsel. Three: Remembering Allah abundantly (*Dhikrullāh*) – with the condition that this abundance (and nature) of *Dhikr* must be in accordance with the *masnūn* method. The reason is that *Dhikr*, when frequent and sincere, adds to the luster of the mirror of the heart and it becomes worthy of receiving reflections from the light of *Wilāyah*. It appears in *Hadīth* that everything has a method of furbishing it. *Dhikrullāh* furbishes the heart. The same thing has been reported by al-Baihaqī as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه. (Mazharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said that a person asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: 'what would you say about a person who loves someone spiritually noble but is unable to reach up to his level in terms of his own deeds?' He said: *الْمُرَّةَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ* that is, 'everyone shall be with one he loves'. This tells us that the love and company of the *Auliya'* Allah is a source of acquiring *Wilāyah* (nearness to Allah). Al-Baihaqī (in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*) has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to Sayyidnā Razīn رضى الله عنه: 'I tell you about a principle of Faith. With it you can attain success in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*: Take to the company of *ahl adh-Dhikr* (people who remember Allah) as indispensable, and when you are alone, move your tongue with the *Dhikr* of Allah, as much as you can. Whoever you love, do it for Allah. Whoever

you hate, do it for Allah. (Maẓharī)

But, in order to be beneficial, this 'company' has to be of those who are, in themselves, the Waliyy of Allah and staunch followers of Sunnah. Those who do not observe and follow the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (and do not demonstrate by their word and deed that they are operating under it) are themselves deprived of the essential degree of *Wilāyah*. It does not matter if many a contra-habitual wonders (*kashf* and *karāmāt*) issue forth from them. They will still be considered deprived. However, if someone is a Waliyy in terms of the stated attributes – even though, nothing of the sort has ever issued forth from him – he is a Waliyy of Allah. (Maẓharī)

Now we come to the last point. What are the signs of the Auliya' Allah? How can they be identified? A Qudsi Ḥadīth referred to in Tafsīr Maẓharī points out in this direction. Allah Ta'ālā said: 'From among My servants, My Auliya' are those who are remembered when I am remembered and when they are remembered I am remembered.' According to a narration from Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd reported in Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave the identity of Auliya' Allah by saying: الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ (those who, when one sees them, remind of Allah).

In short, there is someone by sitting in whose company one gets the *taufīq* of remembering Allah (*Dhikr*), and relief from worldly concerns, then, this is a sign of his being a *Waliyy* of Allah.

It has been said in Tafsīr Maẓharī: There is a prevailing assumption among masses that things like getting to know what is hidden (*kashf*), doing some extra-ordinary things (*karāmah*) or claiming to be aware of what is *al-Ghayb* (Unseen) are signs of someone being among the Auliya' of Allah. This is nothing but error and self-deception. There are thousands of Auliya' who are not credited with anything like this, that could be termed as authentically proved while, in sharp contrast, reports of things otherwise hidden and unseen are accredited to those whose very basic *'Īmān* (belief) is not correct!

It was said in the last verse (64) that, for the friends of Allah, there is the good news in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. As for the good news of the Hereafter, it will come at the time of death when the

spirit of the deceased will be taken to Allah. At that time, he will hear the good news of Paradise being for him. Then, on the day of Qiyāmah, when he rises from his grave, he will receive the good news of being welcome to Paradise. This is similar to what al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه. He narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: ‘People who recite: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (lā ilāhā illallāh: There is no god but Allah) will not experience any fright at the time of death, nor inside the grave, nor at the time they rise from it. This is as if my eyes are seeing the scenario of that time when these people will, shaking the dust off, rise from their graves, saying: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحُزْنَ (Praised is Allah who has removed from us [all] grief – 35:34)’

As for the good news in this world, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘(they are) the true dreams one sees himself or are seen by someone else with him in it and, in which, there is good news for them. (Reported by al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه).

Another *bashārah* (good news) of this world unfolds in the form that Muslims at large love someone and take him to be good without any personal motive or interest. About it, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بَشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ that is, ‘being taken as good and praiseworthy is, for a true Muslim, good news in ready cash.’ (Muslim and al-Baghawī)

Verses 65 – 66

وَلَا يَحْزَنُكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
 ﴿٦٥﴾ ۞ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ط وَمَا
 يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ط إِنَّ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا
 الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ ۞

And what they say should not make you grieve. Surely, all power belongs to Allah. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [65]

Listen, to Allah belong all those in the heavens and all those on the earth. And what do follow those who invoke associate-gods other than Allah? They follow nothing but whims and do nothing but make conjectures. [66]

Verses 67 - 70

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ۗ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ بِهٰذَا ۗ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نَذِقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

He is the One who made for you the night, so that you may have rest in it, and (made) the day to see. Indeed, there are signs therein for a people who listen. [67]

They say, "Allah has got a son." Pure is He. He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. You have no proof for it. Do you allege about Allah what you do not know? [68]

Say: Those who fabricate against Allah shall not prosper. [69] A little enjoyment in this world then, to Us is their return, then, We shall make them taste the severe punishment, because they used to disbelieve. [70]

Verses 71 - 73

وَأَنذَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يٰقَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّقَامِي وَتَذَكِيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ ﴿٧١﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۗ إِنَّ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهُ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلْفَهُ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And recite to them the story of Nūḥ, when he said to his people, "O my people, if it is hard on you that I stay (with you) and give (you) advice through the signs of Allah, then, in Allah I place my trust. So, decide your matter along with your partners, then, your design should not be a matter of regret to you, then carry it out against me and give me no respite. [71] So, if you turn away, then, I have asked for no reward from you. My reward is with none except Allah, and I have been commanded to be among those who submit." [72]

Then they belied him, and We saved him and those with him in the Ark and made them the successors and drowned those who belied Our signs. So look how was the fate of those who were warned. [73]

Verse 74

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءَهُمْ وَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Then, after him, We sent messengers to their peoples, and they came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how We seal the hearts of the transgressors. [74]

Verses 75 - 82

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ بِآيَاتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا إِنَّ هٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَكُمْ ۗ اَسِحْرٌ هٰذَا وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السّٰحِرُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالُوا اجْتَنَبْنَا لِيَتْلِفَتْنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اِٰبَاءَنَا وَتَكُوْنُ لَكُمْ اَلْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اَنْتَوْنِىْ بِكُلِّ سِحْرِ عَلَيِّمْ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السّٰحِرَةُ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ مُّوسَى الْقُوَا مَا اَنْتُمْ مُّلقُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَلَمَّا

الْقَوْمَا قَالَ مُوسَى مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ السِّحْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيَبْطِلُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَيَحِقُّ لِلَّهِ الْحَقُّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Then, after them, We sent Mūsā and Hārūn with Our signs to Pharaoh and his group, but they showed arrogance. And they surely were a guilty people. [75]

So, when Truth came to them from Us, they said, "It is certainly a clear magic." [76] Mūsā said, "Do you say (this) about the Truth when it came to you? Is this magic, while the magicians do not succeed?" [77]

They said, "Have you come to us that you may turn us from what we found our fathers on, and that you both have supremacy on earth? We are not going to believe in you." [78]

And the Pharaoh said, "Bring to me every knowledgeable magician." [79]

So, when the magicians came, Mūsā said to them, "Throw what you have to throw." [80]

So, when they threw, Mūsā said, "What you have come up with is magic. Allah will certainly nullify it. It is sure that Allah does not let sustain the work of the mischief-makers. [81] And Allah establishes the truth through His words, even though the guilty may dislike it. [82]

Verses 83 - 86

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَى إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهِ عَلَى خَوْفٍ مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَى يُقَوْمِ إِنِ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِنِ كُنْتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَحْنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِّنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Then, except an offspring of his people, no one believed in Mūsā for the fear of Pharaoh and his group, lest he

should prosecute them. And the Pharaoh was high-handed in the land and he was of those who crossed all limits. [83]

And Mūsā said, “ O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then, in Him put your trust if you are obedient.”

[84] So, they said, “In Allah we have put our trust: Our Lord, do not make us a victim of the unjust people, [85] and save us, through Your mercy, from the disbelieving people.” [86]

Verses 87 – 91

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوَّأَ لِقَوْمِكَ مِمَّصْرَ بَيْوتًا
وَأَجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٨٧﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَآءَهُ زِينَةً
وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا
اطْمِسْ عَلَيَّ أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَيَّ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّىٰ
يَرُوا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٨٨﴾ قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَتِ دَعْوَتُكُمَا
فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعِنَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَجُوزْنَا
بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدُوًّا ۗ
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ
بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ آتَيْنَا وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ
قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā and his brother: “Have houses for your people in Egypt and make your houses worship oriented, and establish *Ṣalāh*, and give good tidings to the believers.” [87]

And Mūsā said, “Our Lord, You have given Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in the worldly life, so that, our Lord, they mislead (people) from Your path. Our Lord, obliterate their riches and harden their hearts, so that they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment.” [88]

Allah said, "The prayer of you both has been granted, so stand firm and never follow the way of those who do not know." [89]

And We made the children of Isrā'īl cross the sea. So, Pharaoh and his troops chased them in transgression and hostility, until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit." [90] Is it Now (that you come to believe) while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers? [91]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing immediately above, there are some circumstantial details along with their corresponding injunctions as they relate to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليهما السلام and the children of Isrā'īl and the people of the Pharaoh. The first verse (87) carries an injunction pertaining to a particular event. Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl) who observed the religious law of Sayyidnā Mūsā used to perform their prayers only in their synagogues as customary. Then, the past communities were also bound by this injunction. Their prayers were not valid if performed in their homes. The Muslim Ummah was the special recipient of the convenience that they could, if needed, perform their prayers everywhere as they wished. In a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, out of his six singularities, given one as, 'the whole earth has been made a *masjid* for me.' It means that Ṣalāh performed anywhere remains valid. However, it is something else that the performing of obligatory prayers in congregation only in *masjids* has been declared as an emphasized Sunnah. Then, saying *nafl* prayers inside homes is better. This was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He would say only the Farḍ Ṣalāh in the Masjid then go home and say his *sunnahs* and *nafls* there. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they were bound to offer their prayers only in their synagogues in obedience to their religious laws. Realizing this, the Pharaoh who used to oppress them in all sorts of ways had all synagogues demolished so that they could be deprived of offering their prayers in accordance with their religious laws. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent to the two prophets of Banī Isrā'īl, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, may peace be on them both, the injunction mentioned in

verse 87. It was said there that new houses should be built in Egypt for Banī Isrā'īl and that their orientation should be towards the Qiblah so that prayers could be offered in those very residential houses.

This tells us that the religious law of past communities demanded that prayers should be offered in houses of worship specifically built for this purpose. But it was because of a particular incident that the Banī Isrā'īl were temporarily allowed to offer their prayers at home and, for this purpose, they were to have houses oriented towards the Qiblah. And it can also be said that even at this time of emergency they were allowed to offer their prayers in particular houses that were oriented towards the Qiblah. Praying in common homes and public places was still not permitted even at that time. It was unlike the Muslim community that has the convenience of offering their prayers anywhere, be it a city or wilderness. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

It will be good to answer another question at this point. In this verse, the Banī Isrā'īl have been commanded to orient themselves towards the Qiblah. Which Qiblah is this? The Ka'bah or the Baytu 'l-Maqdis? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says, 'it means the Ka'bah and the Ka'bah alone was the Qiblah of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his people.' (al-Qurtubī and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) In fact, some religious scholars say that the real Qiblah of all past prophets was no other but the Ka'bah.

As for the Ḥadīth where it is said that the Jews turn their faces towards the Sakhrāh (the Rock) of Baytu 'l-Maqdis during their prayers, it will be applied to the time when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام left Egypt and headed towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis. This is not contrary to his Qiblah being the Baytullāh during the period of his stay in Egypt.

It is also proved from this verse that the condition of facing towards the Qiblah was operative also during the period of past prophets. Similarly, it also stands proved from authentic reports that purity (*ṭahārah*) and body cover (*satr al-'aurah*) were conditions of Ṣalāh even in the religious laws of all past prophets.

Since the very purpose of making houses Qiblah oriented was to pray in there, therefore, by giving the command: 'Establish Ṣalāh' (أَيَسِّرُوا الصَّلَاةَ) after that, the instruction given was: If the Pharaoh stops you from making prayers in places reserved for worship, prayers do not

stand dropped. Make these in your homes.

At the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been asked to convey the good news to believers that their mission will be successful. They will overpower the enemy and they will go to Paradise in the Hereafter. (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

It will be noted that, at the beginning of the verse, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام may peace be upon them both, were addressed in the dual form because they both were charged with the responsibility of having houses made Qiblah oriented and allowing occupants to pray in there. After that, by using the plural form which included all Banī Isrā'īl, command was given to establish Ṣalāh – because, this law included all, the prophet and his community. At the end, the command to convey the good news was given particularly to Sayyidnā Mūsā – because, it was he, as the law-giving prophet, who had the right to give out the good news of Paradise.

Mentioned in the second verse (88), there is a curse which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invoked after having lost all hopes of reforming the people of the Pharaoh. At its beginning, he submitted before his Lord that He had given the Pharaoh and his group glamour and riches in their worldly life (mines of gold, silver and precious stones in Egypt and Ethiopia – al-Qurtubī). As a result, they misled people from His way. Because, common-people, when they looked at their bulging affluence, they started doubting – had they been in error, why would they have been so blessed? Again, because common-people were unable to see through the reality that material affluence without good deeds cannot be the sign of a person being right and true. It was only after having been disappointed with his efforts to correct the people of the Pharaoh, and having realized the danger it posed for other people who were being misled by the glamour and wealth of the Pharaoh's group that he invoked the curse: رَبَّنَا أَطْمِسْ عَلَيْنَا أَمْوَالَهُمْ (Our Lord, obliterate their riches).

According to the statement of Sayyidnā Qatādah رحمه الله, such was the effect of this invocation that all gold, precious coins, stones, land produce belonging to Pharaoh's people were transformed into bland rocks. In a bag found during the period of the pious Khalīfah Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رحمه الله there were things dating back to the time of the Pharaoh. Seen in it, there were eggs and almonds of solid rock.

Leading commentators say that Allah Ta'ālā had turned all fruits, vegetables and grains they had into rocks. This is among the nine *āyat* (signs or miracles) mentioned in the Qur'an as in: *وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ* (and We gave Mūsā [Moses] nine clear signs – 17:101).

The second curse invoked by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for them appears in the words: *وَاصْدُدْ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ* (and harden their hearts, so that [they are deprived of the very ability to receive any good and] they may not come to believe until they witness the painful punishment – 88).

The invocation of this curse obviously appears to be something far out as coming through the speech of an apostle or prophet, because the sole mission of a prophet's life is nothing but to invite people to believe and act right and make efforts towards that end.

But, in terms of the hard facts of the situation here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has already made whatever efforts he could. He was totally disappointed. Now he wanted that they better learn through the punishment for their deeds. In doing so, it was probable that these people, once they see the punishment coming, may make a confession and declare that they now believed, whereby the punishment could stand warded off. Therefore, what became the cause of this invocation from him was his hatred for *kufr* (disbelief, infidelity). This is similar to what happened to the Pharaoh. When he started to announce his belief at the time he was drowning, the angel, Jibra'īl shut his mouth lest Divine mercy turns to him and he stands delivered from the punishment.

In the third verse (89), it was said that the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been accepted. But, by taking Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as associated with the act of prayer, the actual address was made in the words: *قَدْ أُجِيبَتْ دَعْوَتُكُمَا* (The prayer of you both has been granted). There was a reason for it. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was making this prayer, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام kept saying *Āmīn* (Amen). This tells us that the saying of *Āmīn* (so be it) is also a part of the prayer itself. And since the *masnūn* method of *du'ā* or prayer given in the Holy Qur'an is that of making it in a lowered voice, the saying of *Āmīn* too in a lowered mode seems to be preferable.

As for the acceptance of prayer, the information was given to the

two prophets as it appears in this verse. But, even they were somewhat tested in that the effect of the prayer, according to al-Baghawī, unfolded after forty years. For this reason, soon after the mention of the acceptance of their prayer in this verse, they both were given the instruction: فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعِنَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (so stand firm, and never follow the way of those who do not know). It means that they should go on carrying the mission of calling people to the true faith and do not get embarrassed, disappointed or hasty like the ignorant when the effects of the acceptance of some prayer takes its due time.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (90) was the famous miracle of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - the crossing of the sea and the drowning of Pharaoh. There it was said:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَذْرَكَهُ الْعَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ
وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ .

Until when he was about to drown, he said, "I believe that there is no god but the One in Whom the children of Isrā'īl believe, and I am among those who submit".

The answer to this appearing in the fifth verse (91) came from Allah Almighty Himself. It says:

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ مِنْ الْمُنْكَرِينَ

Is it now [that you come to believe] while you were rebellious before and you were among the mischief-makers?

This proves that the profession of faith exactly at the time of death is not legally trustworthy. It is further clarified by the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā keeps accepting the Taubah (repentance) of a servant until comes the time of the *ghargharah* of death. (Tirmidhī)

The *ghargharah* of death means the time the soul or spirit is drawn out or extracted from the body and it is a time when angels appear face to face. At that time, life in this world, the home of deeds, is all over and the laws of the Hereafter come into force. Therefore, nothing done at that time is acceptable, neither belief, nor disbelief. Whoever believes at such a time will not be called a believer. He will not be treated as a believer while shrouding and burying him. This stands proved from the fate of Pharaoh. There is a consensus that he died a

disbeliever. This is also what the text of the Qur'an says. In case, someone is reported to have called the belief of the Pharaoh as valid, it will either be suitably interpreted, otherwise the statement would be considered false. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Similarly, if someone were to utter (God forbid) a word of disbelief (*kufr*) in a state when the soul is being drawn out of the body, he will not be called a *kāfir* (disbeliever). Instead, a Ṣalāh of Janāzah (Muslim funeral prayers) will be offered for him and he would be buried like Muslims, and the word of disbelief uttered by him would be interpreted (in his favor). This finds confirmation in what happened in the case of some Auliya' of Allah, specially when that which they uttered bothered people as if what they were uttering was nothing short of *kufr* (disbelief). However, when they became conscious and explained, it gave relief to everyone and they realized that it was nothing but a declaration of true belief.

In short, when the soul is being drawn out and the certain knock of death is on, that time is not counted in the life one lives in this world. Nothing done at that time is valid in terms of the Shari'ah. However, everything is, if done before that. But, those who see this transition from one world to the other have to be very cautious. It is possible to make a mistake in determining the correct situation. Is this the time of the drawing of the soul from the body (*naz'atu 'r-rūḥ*)? Or, is it the last rattle of death (*ghargharatu 'l-maut*)? Or, is it that which prevails earlier (usually referred to in English as being in the throes of death or the agony of death or, uncharitably enough, giving up the ghost)?

Verses 92 - 98

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلَقَكَ آيَةً وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنِ الْآيَاتِنَا لَغَفِلُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مُبَوَّأَ صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ إِنَّ رَيْبَكَ يَفْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْئَلِ الَّذِينَ يُقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ

فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُتَرِّينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا
بَايَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونُوا مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَوْ جَاءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ حَتَّى يَرَوْا
الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرِيبَةً أَمَنْتَ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيْمَانُهَا
إِلَّا قَوْمٌ يُونُسُ ط لَمَّا أَمِنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخُزْيِ فِي
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٩٨﴾

So, today, We shall save your body, so that you may become a sign for those after you. And many of the people are heedless of Our signs. [92]

And surely We gave the children of Isra'īl a proper place to live, and provided them with good things. So they did not disagree until knowledge came to them. Surely, Allah will decide between them on the Doomsday, about what they used to dispute. [93]

So, if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book (revealed) before you. Surely, truth has come to you from your Lord, so never be among those who are suspicious. [94]

And never be among those who have belied Our signs, lest you should be among the losers. [95]

Surely, those against whom the Word of your Lord stands settled will not believe, [96] even though every sign comes to them, unless they witness the painful punishment. [97]

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have believed and its belief would have been of benefit to it except the people of Yūnus (Jonah)! When they came to believe, We removed from them the punishment of humiliation in the worldly life and let them enjoy themselves for some time. [98]

Commentary

Addressing Pharaoh in the first verse (92), it was said that Allah will take his body out of the waters after he is drowned so that his

body becomes a sign of Divine power, and a lesson for people after him.

It happened when, after having crossed the sea, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام told Banī Isrā'īl about the drowning of the Pharaoh, they were so overawed and subdued by him that they refused to believe the news and said that the Pharaoh was not drowned. To guide them right and to teach others a lesson, Allah Ta'ala had the dead body of Pharaoh thrown ashore by a wave of the sea. Everyone saw it and believed that he had died and then, this corpse became a sort of moral deterrent for everyone. After that, it is not known as to what happened to this corpse ultimately. The place where the dead body of the Pharaoh was found is still known as the mount of Pharaoh.

Some time back, newspaper reports indicated that the dead body of Pharaoh was found intact and was seen by the public at large and that it was deposited safely in the Cairo Museum. But, it cannot be said with certainty that this is the same Pharaoh who confronted Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or is some other Pharaoh because names of Pharaohs differ. Every ruler of Egypt in that period of history had the title of Pharaoh.

But, no wonder, the Divine power had thrown a drowned dead body ashore. Very similarly, it may have kept it even preserved against spoilage so that it could become a lesson for future generations. And it may still be there! (However it remains essential to learn a lesson from it as compared to becoming excited about its discovery as an archeological triumph).

At the end of the verse, it was said that many people pay no heed to the verses and signs of Allah. They do not ponder over them and fail to learn their essential lesson in living a better life. Otherwise, signs abound. They are everywhere, in every particle of this universe. A look at them would help one recognize Allah and His perfect power.

The second verse (93) brings the future of a people bulldozed in disgrace by the Pharaoh into sharp focus making it stand out against the evil end of the tyrant. It was said that Allah gave the Banī Isrā'īl a good place to live. They had the whole country of Egypt for themselves.

Then, they were given the holy lands of Jordan and Palestine which Allah Ta'ālā had assigned to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and his progeny as their inheritance. A good place to live has been termed as: *مبوا صدق* (translated as: 'a proper place to live') in the Qur'an. The word: *صدق* (*ṣidq*) at this place means good and proper. The sense is that they were given a place to live that was suitable and proper for them in every way. Then it was said that Allah gave them their sustenance in the form of Ḥalāl and pure things so much so that they had the best of everything.

Towards the end of the verse, once again, their penchant for crookedness and evil doing has been mentioned. Among them too, there were many who, soon after having power, failed to appreciate the blessings of Allah and went about disobeying Him. They recited the Torah and they knew the signs and marks of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mentioned there. This awareness demanded that they should have been the first to believe in him as soon as he came. But, how strange that these very people believed in the coming of the last prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم before he actually came. They would tell people about the signs he would have and the time he would come. They would even use the *wasīlah* (medium) of the last prophet in their prayers. But, when the last prophet came with a whole array of evidences of his veracity, and the signs identified in the Torah, these people started disputing among themselves. Some of them believed while the rest refused to do so. In this verse, the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been expressed by saying: *جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ* (knowledge came to them). Here, *علم* (*'ilm*) could also denote certitude. In that case, it would mean that once the causes of observation and certitude converged together, these people started disputing.

Some commentators have said that *علم* (*'ilm*: knowledge) at this place denotes *معلوم* (*ma'lūm*: known), that is, when the blessed person who was already known through the prophecies of the Torah came before them face to face, they started disputing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā will give His verdict about what they used to dispute, on the day of Qiyamah. Truth will then become distinct from falsehood and the upholders of truth

will be sent to Paradise while the practitioners of falsehood, to Hell.

In the third verse (94), the address is obviously to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it goes without saying that there is no probability of his doubting the revelation. Therefore, the purpose is to beam the message to the Muslim community through this address where he is not the intended recipient. Then, it is also possible that this address may be to human beings at large asking them if they had any doubts about the Divine revelation sent to them through Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. If they had, let them ask those who recited the Torah and Injīl before them. They would tell them that all past prophets and their Books have been announcing the glad tidings of the Last among Prophets. This will remove their scruples and suspicions.

According to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, this verse tells us that anyone in doubt about some religious matter is duty-bound to have his doubts removed by asking genuine ‘Ulamā’ (religious scholars whose learning, honesty and adherence to Qur’ān, and Sunnah is well recognized, popularly referred to as ‘*Ulamā’ al-Ḥaqq*). To continue nursing such doubts is not a good thing to do.

In the fourth (95), fifth (96) and sixth (97) verses, the same subject finds support and emphasis while carrying a warning to those who are heedless.

In the seventh verse (98), the heedless deniers of truth have been admonished for their failure to make the optimum use of the time of life allowed to them. There was still time for them to leave denial and contumacy. Otherwise, an ominous time was due to come when they will make Taubah but their Taubah will not be accepted. They will say that they believed but their belief will not be welcome. And that time will be the time when the punishment of the Hereafter will appear right before their eyes at the time of death. It was in this connection that an event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام and his people was mentioned – that has good counsels and great lessons in it.

It has been asked in this verse that the people who denied truth could have believed at a time when their believing would have been of benefit to them. It means that there was no use for it at the hour of

death, or the punishment, or after being neck deep in it, or at the time Doomsday sets in for the doors of repentance will then be closed and no repentance or belief from anyone will be acceptable. Now that they still had the time, they could put their contumacy aside and become believers very much like the people of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام did. When they, much before the worse happened, saw the Divine punishment coming, they lost no time, repented and believed. For this reason, Allah Ta'ālā removed the painful punishment from them.

The gist of the *tafsīr* given above is that the door of Taubah does not close even when the worldly punishment comes face to face. However, Taubah is not accepted at the time the punishment of the Hereafter comes face to face. As for the coming of the punishment of the Hereafter face to face, it would either be on the day of Qiyāmah or at the time of death, whether it is natural death or death as a victim of some worldly punishment as was the case with the Pharaoh.

Therefore, the acceptance of the Taubah of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is not contrary to the Divine law. In fact, it falls under it because they, no doubt, made their Taubah when they saw the punishment coming, but they certainly did so before the punishment overtook them, and did it before death too. This is contrary to what the Pharaoh and others did. They did their Taubah only after the punishment had overtaken them, and did that at the time of the last rattle of death, saying that they believed. Therefore, their believing was not valid and trustworthy and the Taubah they made was not accepted.

A precedent of the event relating to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is the event relating to Banī Isrā'īl which finds mention in the Holy Qur'an itself. In this event, the mount of Ṭūr was left dangling over their heads so that they were scared enough to repent. They repented and their Taubah was accepted. This appears in Sūrah al-Baqarah where it was said:

رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

And raised high above you the (Mount of) Ṭūr: "Hold fast to what We have given to you" – 2:63

The reason was that they had, much before the punishment mate-

rialized and death overtook them, repented simply by noticing the imminent danger of punishment. Similarly, when the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام saw the punishment coming, they sincerely wept and wailed and repented details of which will appear a little later. So, the acceptance of this Taubah is not counter to the Divine law stated above. (Qurtubī)

At this stage, some contemporaries have made a grave error. They attribute shortcomings to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in the discharge of his duties as a prophet. They declare that the cause of the removal of punishment from the people was the failing of the prophet and that this very failing was the cause of Divine displeasure which is mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt. Their words are as given below:

قرآن کے اشارات اور صحیفہ یونس کی تفصیلات پر غور کرنے سے اتنی بات صاف معلوم ہو جاتی ہے کہ حضرت یونس علیہ السلام سے فریضہ رسالت ادا کرنے میں کچھ کوتاہیاں ہو گئی تھیں اور غالباً انہوں نے بے صبر ہو کر قبل از وقت اپنا مستقر چھوڑ دیا تھا، اس لئے جب آثار عذاب دیکھ کر آشوریوں نے توبہ و استغفار کی تو اللہ تعالیٰ نے انہیں معاف کر دیا، قرآن میں خدائی دستور کے جو اصول و کلیات بیان کئے گئے ہیں ان میں ایک مستقل دفعہ یہ بھی ہے کہ اللہ تعالیٰ کسی قوم کو اسوقت تک عذاب نہیں دیتا جب تک اس پر اپنی حجت پوری نہیں کر دیتا، پس جب نبی ادائے رسالت میں کوتاہی کر گیا اور اللہ کے مقرر کردہ وقت سے پہلے خود ہی اپنی جگہ سے ہٹ گیا تو اللہ تعالیٰ کے انصاف نے اس قوم کو عذاب دینا گوارا نہ کیا . (تفہیم القرآن مولانا مودودی، ص ۳۲۱، ج ۲، طبع ۱۹۶۴ء)

“By considering the hints of the Qur’an and the details of the book of Jonah, at least this much becomes clear that some shortcomings had issued forth from Hadrat Yūnus عليه السلام, peace be on him, in the performance of his duty as a prophet. And, most probably, becoming impatient, he had abandoned his permanent station before time. Therefore, having seen the

signs of punishment, the Assyrians repented and sought forgiveness, then Allah Ta'ālā forgave them. Out of the principles and universals of Divine Law described in the Qur'ān, there is this standing article as well – that Allah Ta'ālā does not punish a people until He establishes His argument against them conclusively. So, when the prophet went about falling short in doing his duty as a prophet and, on his own, vacated his station (of duty) before the time determined by Allah, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing those people.” (Tafhīmul-Qur'ān¹ by Maulānā Mawdūdī, p. 321, volume 2, published 1964)²

The first thing to look at here is that the prophets, peace be upon them all, are protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*). This is an uncontested belief on which there is a consensus of the Muslim Ummah. In its details, some partial differences do exist, for instance, is this protection (*'iṣmah*) from all kinds of minor sins (*ṣaghīrah*), or from the major ones (*kabīrah*) only, and whether or not this protection (*'iṣmah*) includes the period of time before being inducted as a prophet? But, no difference exists among any individuals or groups in the belief that the blessed prophets, all of them, can never fall short in carrying out their duty as

1. Ordinary changes have been made, without any prior public announcement of withdrawal from these remarks, in the later editions of Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, that is, the words: “فريضه رسالت کی ادائیگی میں کوتاہی” : ‘shortcomings in the performance of duty as a prophet,’ are not there in the new text. But, the following observations are still there: “جب نبی نے پوری نہیں ہوئی تھیں” : When the prophet did not continue the mission of giving good counsel to those people up to the last moment of the respite given to them and, before the time determined by Allah, he himself, in a self-serving way, migrated out and away, then, the justice of Allah Ta'ālā did not bear by punishing his people, because the legal conditions of a conclusive argument against them had yet to be fulfilled.” Thus, despite the change in the text of the Tafhīmul-Qur'ān, the comment of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān stands as is. – Idāratul-Ma'ārif, publishers, October/1991.
2. Apart from the religious aspects of the observations quoted above which have been dealt with in the Commentary of this Tafsīr, the language used to convey these has contributed significantly in making the observations acutely vulnerable. For example, the use of verbs towards the end: کر گیا (*kar gayā*), ہٹ گیا (*hat gayā*) and گوارا نہ کیا (*gawārā na kiyā*) are hot action words in the present context. When used for a prophet, they are terrible. When attributed to God, like the last one, they are presumptuous. The liberty taken through language is difficult to transplant in translation. By ignoring it, the translator turns traitor. So, the translator has made the extra effort to stay within functional limits and render the text as it is. Since, the Urdu original has been reproduced here, discerning readers who read it should have no problem in making their independent judgement about the rendering – Tr.

prophets. The reason is that there could be no greater sin for prophets than that they themselves fall short in taking care of the mission for which Allah Ta'ālā had chosen them. This is an open breach of trust in assigned duty, something beyond even ordinary nice people anywhere. If a prophet does not stand protected (*ma'sūm*) even from this shortcoming, then, there is no use for protection from other sins.

If there were something somewhere even in the Qur'an, and Ḥadīth, seemingly contrary to the established principles of Qur'an, and Sunnah, and the collective Muslim belief in prophets being protected from sins, it would have been necessary to interpret it in a way that would not have left it discordant and different from the absolutely proven principles of Qur'an, and Ḥadīth.

But, things are strange here. What the learned author has presented with reference to 'Qur'anic hints and details of the book of Jonah' may possibly be in the book of Jonah, and so be it, being something having no validity in the sight of the people of Islām. As for a 'Qur'anic hint, there is none, not just one. In fact, what has happened here is that this presumption has been forced out of a patched pattern of several premises. First of all, it was presumed that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام took place contrary to Divine law – which is totally contrary to the context of this very verse, and equally contrary to the explications of recognized authorities in the field of Tafsīr. Along with it, it was also assumed that Divine law was broken on this occasion because the prophet himself had failed to fulfill his duty as a prophet. Again, along with that, it was also assumed that some particular time had been fixed by Allah Ta'ālā when he was supposed to leave the place – and he, much before this supposedly fixed time, abandoned his duty of calling people to truth and ran for life!

If seen with the least deliberation and fairness, it will stand proved that no hint from the Qur'an, or Ḥadīth points out to these assumed premises.

To consider what precedes in the verse of the Qur'an itself, let us look at the words of the verse:

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ أَمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ

So, how is it that there never was a town which could have be-

lieved and its belief would have been of benefit to it, except the people of Yūnus عليه السلام (Jonah)!

The sense, as already clear, is that of regret over the state of inertia prevailing among common residents of habitations around the world. It is in that spirit that it was said: How would they not become such as would have believed at a time when believing is acceptable and beneficial? In other words, they could have believed before being hit by punishment or death, in which case, their believing would have been accepted. But, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام were an exception to this rule, for they, by seeing the signs of punishment, and much before being hit by the punishment, believed and their believing and repentance came to be accepted.

This evident sense of the verse is itself telling us that no Divine law has been broken here, in fact, exactly in accordance with Divine practice, their faith and repentance have been accepted.

Most commentators – Abū Ḥayyān, Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Zamakhsharī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh, 'Allāmah Ālūsī and others – have given this very sense of the verse according to which the acceptance of repentance from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام comes under the customary Divine law. The words of Al-Qurṭubī appear as given below:

وقال ابنُ جُبَيْرٍ غَشِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ كَمَا يَغْشَى الثُّوبَ الْقَبْرَ، فَلَمَّا صَحَّتْ تَوْبَتُهُمْ رَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ. وقال الطبري: خص قوم يونس عليه السلام من بين سائر الامم بان تيب عليهم بعد معاينة العذاب، وذكر ذلك عن جماعة من المفسرين. وقال الزجاج، انهم لم يقع بهم العذاب، وانما رأوا العلامة التي تدل على العذاب ولورأوا عين العذاب لما نفعهم ايمانهم . قلت قول الزجاج حسن، فان المعاينة التي لا تنفع التوبة معها هي التلبس بالعذاب كقصة فرعون ولهذا جاء بقصه قوم يونس على اثر قصة فرعون، ويعضد هذا قوله عليه السلام : "ان الله يقبل توبة العبد ما لم يفرغر والغرغرة، الحشرجة، وذلك هو حال التلبس بالموت، وقد روى معنى ما قلناه عن ابن مسعود رضی اللہ عنہ (الى) وهذا يدل على ان توبتهم قبل رؤية العذاب (الى) وعلى هذا فلا اشكال ولا تعارض ولا خصوص .

"Ibn Jubayr says that the punishment had covered them up like the sheet of cloth on the grave. Then, as their Taubah turned out to be sound (being before the punishment materialized), Allah Ta'ālā lifted the punishment from them. And At-

Ṭabarī says that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام have been given a special place among all other peoples in that their Taubah was accepted after they had seen the punishment. And that has been mentioned by a large number of commentators. However, Az-Zajjāj says that the punishment had not yet fallen on those people. They had only seen the signs that proved the coming of the punishment. And if they had seen the very punishment falling upon them, their believing would have then been no good for them (and their Taubah too would have not been accepted). Al-Qurtubī says that the statement of Az-Zajjāj is better because the seeing of a punishment after which Taubah is not accepted means that in which one is seized – as it happened in the case of Pharaoh. Therefore, in this very Sūrah, the event of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been taken up immediately after the event relating to the Pharaoh. (So that the difference becomes clear in that the belief of the Pharaoh came after having been seized by the punishment, contrary to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, who came to believe before the punishment actually seized them). This is confirmed by a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, 'Allah Ta'ālā accepts the Taubah of the servant until he is rattled by death.' And 'al-ghargharah' (as in the Ḥadīth) is the rattling sound that comes from the throat and that is what happens on being seized by death. And the same thing is evident from the *riwāyah* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه in which it has been said that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had repented before the actual falling of the punishment. And Al-Qurtubī says, as based on this explanation, there remains no difficulty, or contradiction, or particularization (of the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام).

As for At-Ṭabarī and other commentators who have deemed this event to be special to the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, none of them have said that the reason of this special treatment was the 'shortcomings' of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. Instead, the honest repentance of those people and their sincere belief in Divine knowledge are the kind of reasons that they have given to that end.

And now, when we know that the removal of the punishment from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was just not against the Divine law, in fact, was exactly in accordance with it, then, the very

foundation of what has been postulated here stands demolished.

Similarly, there is no Qur'anic hint to prove that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, once he had given the warning of punishment, broke away from his people without prior Divine permission. Instead, the context of verses and reports from Tafsīr tell us that things happened here as they had happened with all past communities, that is, when the decision was made to send Divine punishment on a people, Allah Ta'ālā would command his Messenger and his companions to leave that area. This has been clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in connection with the story of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. Very similarly, here too, when this command of Allah was delivered to those people through Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام – that the punishment will come after three days – then, the departure of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام from that area has, obviously enough, taken place under Divine orders.

Of course, there was a slip from Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in terms of the elegant prophetic station he was blessed with. Words of displeasure about it appear in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:87,88) and Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt (37:139-148) and, as a result of which, came the event of his staying in the belly of a fish. But, this slip has nothing to do with the assumed assertion that he fell short in fulfilling his duty as a prophet. In fact, what actually happened is what has been stated earlier with reference to authentic Tafsīrs. In brief, after Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had delivered the warning to his people that the punishment will come after three days as willed by Allah, he left his place and went out. Later, it was proved that the punishment did not materialize. Now, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was worried as to how he would go back to his people. If he did, they would charge him to be a liar. And the law of those people required that a proven liar must be killed. Now, this added the danger of the likely loss of life in returning to his people. Under such circumstances, he had no way out but to migrate from that very country. But, the customary practice of the blessed prophets is that they do not migrate simply on the authority of their personal opinion – unless the signal to migrate comes from Allah Ta'ālā. So, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was no more than that he boarded a boat with the intention of migration, before came the permission of Allah. This was, though no sin in itself, but different from the customary practice of prophets it was. If we were to ponder over the

words of the verse of the Qur'an, the slip of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام will not turn out to be a shortcoming in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet. In fact, it would prove not to be anything else but migration before permission with the aim of staying safe against the oppression of his people. The verse of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt is virtually explicit regarding this subject. It was said: *إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِ الْمَشْحُونِ* (when he ran away towards the laden boat – 37:140). Here, the act of boarding a boat with the intention of migration has been expressed through the word: *ابق* (*abaqā*) denoting displeasure. It means the running away or fleeing of a slave without the permission of his master. And in the verse of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', it has been said: *وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ* (and the man of the fish, when he left in anger assuming that We shall not keep him tight – 21:87). Here the tenor of speech is that of displeasure over the act of migration that was resorted to because of natural apprehension and the desire to stay protected from a hostile people. It is worth keeping in mind that all this happened after the perfect fulfillment of the duties of prophethood, only when a return to his people posed a certain danger to his life. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has taken up this subject in the following words:

ای غضبان علی قومہ لشدة شکیمتہم وقمادی اصرارہم مع طول دعوتہ
ایاہم، وكان ذہابہ هذا سہم ہجرة عنہم، لکنہ لم یؤمر بہ

(Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام) left his people in anger against their bitter hostility and adamant infidelity despite that he had spent a long time as a prophet inviting them to faith. This journey of his was a kind of migration but he had not yet received the permission for it.

Here, it has been made clear that some shortcoming in carrying out the prophetic mission was not the cause of Divine displeasure, instead, it was migration before permission that did become its cause – which, by itself, was no sin. But, because of being contrary to the customary practice of blessed prophets, it was received with displeasure. When some 'Ulamā sounded the learned contemporary about this error, he chose to report the sayings of many commentators relating to the Tafsīr of Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaffāt, in support of his stand.

Among these – with the exception of some Israelite reports of Wahb ibn Munabbih and others – not a single report proves his stand,