

But, not doing it occasionally also stands proved from authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) *aḥādīth*. Therefore, the majority of Muslim scholars have not classed this injunction as obligatory (*wājib*). Instead, they have declared it to be Sunnah, a position on which Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported a consensus (*ijmā'*) of the scholars of the Muslim community. As for Ḥadīth narratives carrying the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whether those of reciting: *أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ* (*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*) under most conditions or those of not reciting under some, all these have been mentioned exhaustively by Ibn Kathīr at the beginning of his Tafsīr.

2. Should *ta'awwudh* (تَعَوُّذٌ) that is, '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*', be recited only at the beginning of the first *raka'ah* while in Ṣalāh, or should it be done at the beginning of every *raka'ah*? Views of leading Muslim jurists differ in this matter. According to the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى, it should be recited only in the first *raka'ah* while Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى declares its recitation at the beginning of every *raka'ah* as commendable (*mustaḥabb*). Arguments given by both have been presented in Tafsīr Maḥzarī with full elaboration. (p. 49, v. 5)

3. While reciting the Qur'ān - whether in Ṣalāh or out of it - the saying of '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' is a Sunnah. The rule applies to both situations equally. But, after it has been said once, one may go on reciting as much as one wishes to, for the same single *ta'awwudh* (said at the beginning) is sufficient. Yes, if one abandons the recitation in the middle, gets busy with some mundane chore and then resumes it all over again, one should re-initiate the recitation by saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' and '*bismillah*' once again at that time.

4. Saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' before reading any word or book other than the Qur'ān is not a Sunnah. There, one should recite only *bismillāh*. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī)

However, the Ḥadīth teaches the saying of *ta'awwudh* during other things done and situations faced. For example, when someone gets very angry - so says the Ḥadīth - the heat of the anger goes away by saying: *أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ* (*a'ūdhu bil-lāhi minash-shaiṭānir rajīm*: I seek protection with Allah from Shaiṭān, the accursed). (Ibn Kathīr)

It also appears in Ḥadīth that, before going to the toilet, saying:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْخُبْثِ وَالْخَبَائِثِ

(*Allāhumma innī a'ūdhu bika minal-khubuthi wal-khabā'ith*)

O Allah, I seek protection with you from the foul and the impure

is commendable (*mustaḥabb*). (Shāmī)

The way of Faith and Trust in Allah is the way of freedom from the power and control of the Shaiṭān

Verses 99 and 100 make it clear that Allah Ta'ālā has not given the Shaiṭān the kind of power which would disarm any human being and compel him to become helpless and take to evil. So, should one opt for not using his capability of choice and control because of sheer carelessness or some selfish motive, then, this would be his own fault. Therefore, it was said that people who have faith in Allah and who, rather than trust their will power in their states and actions, place their ultimate trust in Allah Ta'ālā for He is the One who gives us the ability to do everything good and also the One who shields us from everything evil. The Shaiṭān cannot possess and dictate such people. Of course, those who elect to befriend none but the Shaitān because of their selfish motives, particularly like things about him and go about associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā, then, the Shaiṭān is all over them, in possession, in control, and would not let them go towards anything good while, in every evil, they are right in front.

The same subject has been taken up in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Hijr where Allah Ta'ālā has Himself refuted the claim of the Shaiṭān by saying: *إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ* (Surely, My servants [are such that] you have no power over them - except [over] the one who follows you from among the astray - 15:42).

Verses 101- 105

وَإِذَا بَدَأْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزَّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ
 بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ
 لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَكَفَدَ نَعْلَمُ
 أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ، بَشَرٌ لِسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِي

وَهَذَا لِسَانَ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And when We replace a verse with another verse - and Allah knows best what He reveals - they say, "You are but a forger." Instead, most of them do not know. [101]

Say, "This has been brought down by Rūḥ al-Qudus (the Holy Spirit - Jibrā'il) from your Lord rightly (as due), so that it makes the believers firm and becomes guidance and good news for the Muslims. [102]

And We know well that they say, "It is a man who teaches him." The language of the one they refer to is non-Arabic while this is clear Arabic language. [103]

Surely, those who do not believe in Allah's verses, Allah does not lead them to the right path and for them there is a painful punishment. [104]

Those who forge lies are but the ones who do not believe in Allah's verses, and it is they who are the liars. [105]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verse (98), there was an instruction to say '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' (I seek protection with Allah) while reciting the Qur'an which indicates that the Shaiṭān puts scruples in the heart when one recites the Qur'an. In the verses cited above, there is a refutation of such Satanic instigations.

Verses 106 - 109

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اسْتَحْبَبُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمِعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Whoever rejects his faith in Allah after having believed in Him - not the one who is put to duress while his heart is at peace with Faith, but the one who has opened the bosom for disbelief - the wrath of Allah is upon such people and for them there is a heavy punishment. [106]

That is because they have preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter, and that Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [107]

Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on their hearts, their ears and their eyes; and they are the neglectful. [108] Invariably, they are the losers in the Hereafter. [109]

Commentary

From the first verse (106) comes the religious ruling about a person who has been compelled to utter a word of infidelity (*kufr*) under the threat that he would be killed if he did not do that. If he feels that, in all likelihood, the people threatening him have full capability of doing just that, then, this is a state of duress. If he were to utter some word of disbelief verbally - but, with a heart firm on Faith, a heart that shuns saying what is false and evil - then, there is no sin on him, nor will his wife become unlawful for him. (Qurṭubī, Mazhari).

This verse was revealed about the noble Ṣaḥābah who were arrested by the Mushriks. Their disbelieving captors had told them that they must return to infidelity failing which they would be killed.

Those so arrested were Sayyidnā ‘Ammār ؓ and his parents, Sayyidnā Yāsir and Sayyidah Sumayyah ؓ, and Sayyidnā Ṣuḥaib, Bilāl and Khabbāb ؓ. Out of these, Sayyidnā Yāsir ؓ and his wife, Sayyidah Sumayyah ؓ رضی اللہ عنہا totally refused to utter any word of disbelief. Sayyidnā Yāsir ؓ was killed while Sayyidah Sumayyah ؓ رضی اللہ عنہا was tied in between two camels who were made to run which tore her apart in two separate body parts. This was how she met her *shahādah* (martyrdom in the way of Allah). And these are the same two blessed souls who were the first to meet their *shahādah* for the sake of Islām. Similarly, Sayyidnā Khabbāb ؓ totally refused to utter any word of disbelief and it was in perfect peace that he accepted the fate of being killed by the dis-

believers. Out of the remaining, Sayyidnā ‘Ammār ؓ went by making a mere verbal declaration of his disbelief in the face of such a danger to his life, but his heart was perfectly satisfied and firmly set upon his Faith. Once he was released by the enemy, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated this event with great pain. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "when you were making this statement, what was going on in your heart?" He submitted, "As for my heart, it was at peace and firmly set on my Faith." The Holy Prophet ﷺ put him at rest by telling him that he was not to face any punishment for that. It was in confirmation of this verdict by him that the present verse was revealed. (Qurtubī, Mazharī)

The Definition of *ikrāh* or Compulsion

Literally, *Ikrāh* means using threat or violence to force a person to act against his or her will. Then, it has two degrees. In the first degree of *Ikrāh*, one is not willing by heart to do something, but is also not that denuded of choice and volition to say no. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as *akrah ghayr mulji'* (akrah ghayr mulji': state of compulsion not forced actually). Under such duress, saying any word of disbelief (*kufr*) or doing something unlawful (*ḥarām*) does not become permissible. However, there are some supplementary injunctions which do release some adverse effects even against this situation. Relevant details appear in Books of Fiqh. In the second degree of *Ikrāh*, one is just sucked out of all choice so much so that should he fail to carry out the order of the perpetrators of this coercion (*Ikrāh*), he would be killed or some of his organ is amputated. This, in the terminology of Muslim jurists, is called *Ikrāh Mulji'* which means a compulsion which makes one totally choiceless and helpless. When under the state of such duress, the mere verbalization of the word of disbelief - subject to the condition that one's heart is firm and at peace with Faith - is permissible. Similarly, short of killing another human being, should one be coerced to do some other unlawful deed, it will bring no sin to commit that unlawful act.

But, the concessions given in both kinds of *Ikrāh* are subject to a condition that the coercer threatening to do what he says he will do should actually be capable of doing just that, and the coerced should have the overwhelming likelihood that should he fail to oblige him, he would go ahead and definitely do what he is threatening to do.

Related Ruling

There are two kinds of transactions. (1) Those in which the transaction can be effected only by mutual consent and heart felt willingness of the parties, like sale, gift, etc. There is the definitive authority of the Holy Qur'an to this effect. The Holy Qur'an says, لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالِكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ "Do not eat up the wealth of others, unless there is a trade with mutual consent" (4:29) And then it appears in Ḥadīth:

لَا يَجِلُّ مَالُ امْرِءٍ مُّسْلِمٍ إِلَّا بِطَيْبٍ نَّفْسٍ مِنْهُ

The wealth and property of a Muslim does not become lawful unless it be with a whole-hearted pleasure from the person.

If such transactions were to be arranged and executed under duress (with Ikrāh), they have no validity in the sight of the Sharī'ah of Islam. In normal practice, once the person concerned comes out of the state of Ikrāh (compulsion, duress), he will have the option to reassess the sale or gift done under duress and exercise his free will to retain or cancel it.

Then there are some transactions which depend on verbal commitment only. Here, the intention and the volition in the heart or pleasure and will are not the binding conditions of the transaction - such as, marriage, divorce, revocation of divorce, freedom of a slave etc. For such matters, it is said in Ḥadīth:

ثَلَاثٌ جَدُّهُنَّ جَدٌّ وَهَزَلُهُنَّ جَدُّ النِّكَاحِ وَالطَّلَاقِ وَالرَّجْعَةُ (رواه ابو داود والترمذى وحسنه)

"There are three things in which not only the serious words, but also the nonserious words are counted as serious".

It means if two individuals go through the process of Offer and Acceptance in Marriage in accordance with attending conditions, or some husband divorces his wife by pronouncing it verbally, or verbally revokes the divorce given by him earlier - whether that be in jest with no intention in the heart for marriage or divorce or revocation - still, by a mere saying of the respective words, the marriage will stand solemnized, the divorce will become effective, and the revocation will turn out right. (Maḥzarī)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Sha'bī, Zuhri, Nakha'ī and Qatādah, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, this very injunction applies to 'divorce under duress' (طلاق مكره : *Talāq Mukrah*). It means that such a person being under duress was though not ready to divorce will-

ingly and by heart yet, rendered helpless, he uttered the words of divorce. Now, the actualization of divorce is connected with nothing but the pronouncing of the words of divorce. The intention and will of the heart is not a condition here - as proved from the Ḥadīth cited above. Therefore, this divorce will become effective.

But, according to Imām Shāfi'ī, and Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهم, the 'divorce under duress' (under the state of Ikrāh) will not take effect because it appears in Ḥadīth:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَاءَ وَالسَّيِّئَاتُ وَمَا اسْتُكْرِهُوا عَلَيْهِ (رواه الطبراني عن ثوبان رضي الله عنه)

Removed away from my Ummah are mistake, forgetting and what they are compelled to under coercion. (Reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Thawbān رضي الله عنه)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this Ḥadīth is related to injunctions of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, something said or done contrary to the Sharī'ah by mistake and forgetfulness or under duress will bring no sin. As for the rest of the injunctions pertaining to the mortal world as well as the incidences of doing things like that therein are to occur as felt and sensed. It goes without saying that the vestiges and rulings generated by this occurrence shall continue to bring their relevant effects. For example, someone killed someone else by mistake, then, there is no doubt that he will neither incur the sin of killing him nor face the punishment of the Hereafter, but the way the tangible effect of killing has occurred in the form of the victim's loss of life, very similarly, its subsequent Islamic legal effect will also follow: his wife will, after the period of Iddah, be able to enter a second marriage contract and the wealth and property left by him will be distributed in the form of inheritance to his legal heirs. Similary, when words to the effect of divorce, marriage or revocation were said verbally, then, their consequential Islamic legal effect will also follow. (Maḥzarī, Qurṭubī) والله سبحانه اعلم.

Verses 110 - 113

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ مَا جَاءَ مَنْ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ إِلَّا جَزَاءُ الْيَوْمِ الَّذِي هَاجَرُوا مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ أَمْ لَهُمْ آلَاءٌ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ الَّتِي ظَنُّوا لَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ أُمَّتِكَ أَلْفَاظًا بِمَا عَمِلَتْ وَأَنَّهَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ ﴿١١١﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَعَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٢﴾

نَفْسِهَا وَتُوفَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَضَرَبَ
 اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ
 فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعَمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا
 يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ
 الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Then, your Lord - for those who left their homes after being persecuted, then fought in the way of Allah and stood patient - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

The day everyone will come defending himself, and everyone will be given in full what he did. And they will not be wronged. [111]

And Allah has given an example that there was a town, secure and satisfied, with its sustenance coming in plenty from every place. Then, it turned ungrateful to the bounties of Allah; so, Allah made it taste hunger and terror (cast over it) like a garment in return of what its people used to do. [112] And surely there came to them a messenger from among themselves, but they belied him, so the punishment seized them, while they were transgressing. [113]

Sequence of Verses

Warnings of punishment against disbelief (*kufr*) - whether original or apostacy (*irtidād*) - appeared in previous verses. After that, in the first (106) of the initial three verses cited above, it has been pointed clearly that 'Īmān or the declaration of faith is a wealth that could work wonders for a *kāfir* (disbeliever) or *murtadd* (apostate) who - if he were to come up with an honest and true 'Īmān - all his past sins would stand forgiven.

In the second verse (107), the last day of Qiyāmah was mentioned for the reason that all this phenomena of reward and punishment has to occur after that. In the third verse (108), it was said that the real punishment of disbelief and sin will, though come after the Qiyāmah, yet there are some sins the punishment of which is faced in a certain degree with-

in the present world.

Commentary

According to leading Tafsīr authorities, the similitude mentioned in verse 112 is general and universal. It does not relate to a particular habitation. However, there are others who connect it to what had happened in Makkah al-Mukarramah where people suffered from an acute famine for seven years so much so that they were compelled to eat animal carcass, dead dogs and filth. They were virtually gripped with the awe of Muslims. Then, the chiefs of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the plea that those who had committed disbelief and disobedience against his call were all grown-up men. Women and children were innocent. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ arranged to have food supplies for them sent from Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. (Maḏharī)

And Abū Sufyān, while still in his state of *kufṛ*, requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ: You teach kindness to relatives and mercy and forgiveness. Here are your people standing on the brink of destruction. Please pray to Allah for the removal of this famine from us. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for them and the famine was gone. (Qurṭubī)

As for the use of the word: لِبَاسٍ (*libās*: garment) to carry the sense of giving a taste of hunger and fear towards the later part of verse 112, it will be noted that a garment is not a thing to be tasted. But, the word 'garment' standing for '*libās*' has been used here with the force of a simile denoting something being wide-spread and all-enveloping. The suggestion being conveyed here is that fear and hunger were cast over them in a manner of a garment or dress which becomes an integral part of the body. This was how hunger and fear were released and set all over them. (Maḏharī)

Verses 114 - 119

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ
 إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ
 وَمَا أَهْلَ لِعَيْبٍ لِّلَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
 رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَلٌ

وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لَتَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۗ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
 الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
 وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَمًا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ
 وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا
 السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ
 بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾

So, eat the permissible and pure from what Allah has provided you with, and be grateful for the bounty of Allah, if you worship Him alone. [114]

He has but prohibited for you the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine and what has been invoked upon with a name other than that of Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring, nor crossing the limit (of necessity) - then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [115]

And do not say about what your tongues describe falsely, "This is lawful and that is unlawful" so that you may forge the lie upon Allah. Surely, those who forge a lie upon Allah do not prosper. [116] (Let there be) a little enjoyment, and (then) for them there is a painful punishment. [117]

And for those who are Jews, We had prohibited that which We have already told you. And We did not wrong them but they used to wrong themselves. [118]

Then your Lord - for those who did evil through ignorance, then repented after that and corrected themselves - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [119]

Sequence and Explanation in Gist

Mentioned in the previous verses was that disbelievers will be punished for their ungratefulness to Allah whose blessings they had been enjoying. In the cited verses, Muslims have been instructed to stay away from ungratefulness, rather be grateful for Ḥalāl things Allah has given to them. After that, they were told how the disbelievers and polytheists

had become ungrateful by declaring what Allah had made Ḥalāl for them as Ḥarām and what Allah had called Ḥarām as Ḥalāl. Muslims were warned that they should never do that. Making things Ḥalāl and Ḥarām is the exclusive right of their Creator. Doing this on your own amounts to interference in Divine prerogatives, in fact, amounts to attributing lies to Allah Ta'ālā. Towards the end, it was also said that even those who have committed such evil deeds through ignorance should not lose hope in the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. Should they repent and believe honestly and truly, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive all sins committed by them.

Commentary

Nature of Prohibitions: The Correct View

The restrictive particle: *innamā* (إِنَّمَا) appearing in verse 115 seems to give the impression that things Ḥarām are no more than the four mentioned in the verse. This impression emerges more clearly in another verse: *قُلْ لَّا أَجِدُ فِيمَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مَعْزَمًا* (Say, I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited... - Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:145). It seems to be suggestive of nothing being Ḥarām other than the things mentioned in the verse while the fact is that according to clarifications of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and by the Consensus of the Muslim Ummah, there are many more things rated as Ḥarām. The answer to this difficulty comes through deliberation into the context of these very verses which tells us that the purpose at this place is not to describe Ḥalāl and Ḥarām as they are commonly understood. Instead, the purpose is to point out to what the *mushrikīn* of the period of Jāhiliyah had done. They had made many things Ḥarām on their own although Allah Ta'ālā had never ordered them about their unlawfulness. It amounts to saying: Out of the things you have (arbitrarily) made out as Ḥarām, only that which is really Ḥarām is being mentioned here. A comprehensive explanation of this verse along with a detailed description of these four prohibitions has appeared in the Commentary of Sūrah al-Baqarah, *Mā'ariful-Qur'ān*, Volume I, pages 424-438, under Verses 173-174. Those interested may see it there.

Repentance from Sin brings Forgiveness: Is it Open or Restricted?

In the last verse (119): *ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ* (Then your Lord - for

those who did evil through ignorance ...), it will be noticed that the sense of ignorance has been conveyed by the use of the word: *جهالة* (*jahālah*), not: *جهل* (*jahl*). As for the word: *جهل* (*jahl*), it is employed as an antonym of: *علم* (*ilm*: knowledge) and releases the sense of a lack of knowledge or understanding while the word: *جهالة* (*jahālah*) denotes acting ignorantly - even if done knowingly. This tells us that the forgiveness of sins through Taubah (repentance) is not restricted to a situation where a sin is committed with lack of understanding or volition. (Rather, a true *taubah* or repentance may forgive all sins, even though committed deliberately).

Verses 120 - 124

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾
 شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعَمِهِ ۖ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ فِي
 الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا
 إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا
 جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ
 الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

Surely, Ibrāhīm was an Ummah (a whole community in himself), devoted to Allah, a man of pure faith; and he was not among the Mushriks (those who associate partners with Allah) [120] while he was grateful to His bounties. He chose him and led him to the straight path. [121]

And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter, he is among the righteous. [122]

Then, We revealed to you, "Follow the way of Ibrāhīm, the upright, and he was not among the Mushriks". [123]

The Sabbath was appointed only for those who differed in it. And your Lord will certainly judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they used to dispute. [124]

Sequence of Verses

Refuted in the previous verses was the root of Shirk and Kufr which

is rejection of the reality of Allah's Oneness and the rejection of the mandate given by Him to His prophet. Also refuted there were some offshoots of Kufr and Shirk in the form of legalizing the illegal and illegalizing the legal, a virtual reversal of Divinely ordained arrangements. Since the Mushriks of Makkah who were the first direct addressees of the Holy Qur'an and who, despite their infidelity and idol-worship, claimed that they were adherents of the great community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and that what they did was all in accordance with his teachings, it was also taken up as due. The rejection of their position came on the basis of what they already believed in.

So, in the first (120) of the five verses cited above, it was said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the foremost universal leader of nations with the high station of a prophet and messenger of Allah. This proves that he was a great prophet and messenger. Then, by saying: وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (and he was not among the Mushriks...120) along with it, his being a torch bearer of the most perfect belief in the Oneness of Allah was confirmed.

And in the second verse (121), by saying that he was grateful to Allah and was on the straight path, a warning signal was given to his adversaries who claimed to be his followers - how could they, being as ungrateful as they were, had the cheek to call themselves his adherents and followers?

After that it was said in the third verse (122) that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was successful in Duniyā and 'Ākhirah and then it was said in the fourth verse (123) that the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā عليه السلام was true and that he was truly committed to the ideal of the authentic community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After having stated these two premises, the instruction given was: your claim cannot be correct without faith in and obedience to the Holy Prophet عليه السلام.

In the fifth verse (124): إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ (The Sabbath was appointed only for those...) the hint given is that good things you, on your own, have made unlawful for yourself were really not unlawful in the community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

Commentary

The word: امه (*ummah*) has a few other meanings, but the well-known

sense is that of community, nation, or group of people. At this place, this is what it means - as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه. The sense is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm is, in his person, a community, a nation, almost a compendium of their perfections and merits. There is another meaning of the word: *امة* (*ummah*), that of the leader of a community, someone imbibing in his person many perfections. Some commentators have taken exactly this meaning of the word at this place. And the word: *قانت* (*qānit*) in verse 120 means obedient to the command (of his Creator). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has distinct status in these two qualities. As for being a leader, people from all famous Faiths of the world believe in him and consider it an honour to be the followers of his community. Of course, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims rever him. Even the Mushriks of Arabia, despite their idol-worship, felt proud to believe in him and in (supposedly) following his way (the way of someone who was the foremost idol-breaker in human annals)! As for the signal distinction of his being 'qānit' (obedient), it becomes crystal clear from the trials this 'friend' (*khalīl*) of Allah has gone through. Imagine the fire of Namrūd (Nimrod), the Command to go elsewhere leaving behind his family in a wilderness, and then, his being ready to sacrifice his very dear son. All these are singularities because of which Allah Ta‘ālā has honoured him with such epithets.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ being on the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: Understanding the Chemistry of Adherence

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام appeared, Allah Ta‘ālā blessed him with a Shari‘ah and its Injunctions. When the Last of the Prophets ﷺ appeared, his Shari‘ah too - with the exception of some particular Injunctions - was laid out in accordance with it. Though, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is preferred as more distinguished (*afdāl*) of all blessed prophets and messengers, but at this place, there are two wise considerations in asking the preferred (*afdāl*) to follow the one not so preferred (*mafḍūl*) in the present context. (1) Since that Shari‘ah has come into the world earlier and is already known and recognized and as the last Shari‘ah was also to be in accord with that, therefore, this similarity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was expressed through the word: *إتباع* (*ittibā‘*: following). (2) As said by ‘Allāmah al-Zamakhsharī (author of Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf), this command to follow too is a special tribute

out of the many honours and tributes attributed to the 'friend' of Allah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. That it is so special has been hinted through the use of the word: ثم (*thumma*: Then - 123). The sense being conveyed is: Certainly great are all those merits and perfections of the person of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as they are, but the most superior of all these is the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has asked his preferred-most and the dearest *rasūl* to follow his way.

Verses 125 - 128

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوِقْتُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَأَصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ ع

Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners. Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path. [125]

And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient. [126]

And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah. And do not grieve over them, and do not be in distress for what they devise. [127] Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds. [128]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verses, by attesting to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah, the purpose was to induce his people to follow what he commanded them with and thus do

their bounden duty towards their Divinely ordained *rasul*. In the verses cited above, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself is being taught how to fulfill the rights of his mission as a messenger of Allah and how to observe the related etiquette as due - the generality of which includes and covers all true believers.

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh: Principles and Curriculum

Embedded in this verse (125) there lies a whole curriculum of Da'wah and Tablīgh, its principles and rules of etiquette, within the frame of a few words. As in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when Haram ibn Ḥayyān's رحمه الله تعالى time of death came near, his relatives asked him for some *waṣīyyah* (order, parting advice, will). In reply, he said, "*Waṣīyyah?* That people make for *māl* (wealth, property, inheritance), which I do not have. But, I would still make a *waṣīyyah*, that of the *āyāt* of Allah, particularly that of the last verses of Sūrah an-Naḥl - and I order you to stand firm on them." The verses mentioned here are the same as appear above.

Literally, دَعْوَةٌ : *da'wah*, means to call. The first duty of the blessed prophets is to call people towards Allah. After that, what they teach as prophets and messengers are explanations of this Da'wah. The Qur'an mentioning a special attribute of the Holy Prophet has called him: الدَّاعِي (one who invites people towards Allah):

وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا

And one who invites towards Allah with His permission whilst being a lamp, lighted. (al-Aḥzāb, 33:460)

يَقَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ

O our people, respond to the Caller of Allah (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). (al-Aḥqāf, 46:31)

Calling people towards Allah (دَعْوَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ : *da'wah ilal-lah*) has been made obligatory on the Muslim Ummah following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It was said in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān:

وَلِتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good... (3:104)

And in another verse, it was said:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ

And who is better in utterance than the one who called (people) towards Allah. (Hā Mīm as-Sajdah/Fuṣṣilat, 41:33)

While expressing the general sense, this word may take several forms, such as: *دَعْوَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ* (*da'wah ilal-lah*: Calling towards Allah), *دَعْوَةٌ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ* (*da'wah ilā al-khair*: Calling toward the good) and *دَعْوَةٌ إِلَى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* (*da'wah ilā sabīlillāh*: Calling towards the way of Allah). However, the outcome is the same because calling towards Allah is actually calling towards His *dīn* and the Straight Path.

The next phrase: *إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ* (*ilā sabīli rabbik*: to the way of your Lord) carries two nuances of expression. Here, by mentioning the special attribute of the Most Exalted Allah - 'Rabb' - and then by annexing it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a hint has been given that the work of Da'wah is connected with the attribute of nurture, raising, training and education. Here, it is being suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the way Allah Ta'ālā has nurtured him, he too should invite people using the mores of nurture and education. It should be a Da'wah in which due consideration is given to the nature and attending circumstances of the addressee and the ultimate approach has to be such as would not weigh heavy on the recipient, rather, should be as effective as is possible. The word: *دعوة* (*da'wah*) itself imparts this sense in that the mission of a prophet is not simply limited to conveying the injunctions of Allah and making people hear them. Instead, his mission is to invite people to implement these in their lives. And it is obvious that no one inviting someone to Allah would present his submission in a manner which causes distraction and aversion or in which the addressee has been maligned or mocked at.

The expression: *بِالْحِكْمَةِ* (*bil-ḥikmah*: with wisdom) which follows immediately has been used in the Holy Qur'an for several meanings. At this place, some Tafsīr authorities have taken: *الْحِكْمَةُ* (*al-ḥikmah*) to mean the Holy Qur'an, some others explain it as the Qur'an and Sunnah, still others call it the binding argument while Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has given the following Tafsīr of '*al-ḥikmah*' with reference to al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

إنها الكلام الصواب الواقع من النفس اجمل موقع

It is sound speech which goes into one's heart. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

This Tafsīr assimilates all above views. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has also carried almost the same sense in the following words:

"Al-Ḥikmah means the insight through which one finds out the dictates of circumstances and talks as appropriate relatively, chooses such time and occasion as would not put a burden on the addressee, employs lenience where lenience is called for and firmness where firmness is in order. And where he thinks the addressee would be embarrassed by saying something frankly, there he should use hints to communicate, or employ a change of subject and approach in a way that neither embarrasses the addressee nor feeds him with the thought of sticking by his prejudice."

The next word: الْمَوْعِظَةُ (*al-maw'izah*) or: وَعِظٌ (*wa'iz*) literally means to say something in the spirit of wishing well in a manner that would make the heart of the addressee softened and arable, all tuned to accept it. Once this is done, it will be useful to talk about the reward and benefit of such acceptance, as well as, about the punishment and ill-effects of not accepting it. (Al-Qāmūs and al-Mufradāt of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī)

Later, by saying: الْحَسَنَةُ (*al-ḥasanah*: good), the sense conveyed is that the subject and treatment of this counsel should be such as would satisfy the heart of the addressee, removing doubts and apprehensions whereby the addressee comes to realize that you have no personal motive behind your approach and that you are addressing him only in the interest of the addressee and for his or her good.

We may stay with the word: الْمَوْعِظَةُ (*al-maw'izah*: counsel) for a while and say that it had already made it clear that this wishing well has to be in an effective manner. But, experience bears out that sometimes while wishing well for someone, the approach could become hurtful or insulting for the addressee. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). In order that people would leave this kind of approach, the word: الْحَسَنَةُ (*al-ḥasanah*: good) was added.

The word: جَادِلْ (*jādil*: argue) in the subsequent sentence: وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي (And argue with them in the best of manners) has been derived from: مُجَادَلَةٌ (*muḥādala*). At this place, it means argumentation and debate and: بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners) means that should there be, in the process of Da'wah, the need to engage in debate or exchange of arguments, then, that discussion should also be in the best of manners. It appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that good manners

require a gentle and soft approach in mutual submissions, arguments have to be such as would be easily understood by the addressee, arguments have to be supported by known premises so that they help remove the doubts of the addressee and shields him against falling into dogmatism. And there are other verses of the Qur'an which bear witness to the fact that this approach of showing good manners in debate (*al-ihsān fi al-mujādalah*) is not restricted to Muslims alone. About the people of the Book (Jews and Christians), the Qur'an particularly says:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a manner which is the best. (al-'Ankabūt, 29:46)

And in another verse, by giving the instruction of: قُولَا لَهُ، قُولَا لَيْتَا (speak to him in gentle words (Ṭa-Hā, 20:44) to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, it was also stressed that this was how they have to deal even with as rebellious an infidel as the Pharaoh.

Da'wah: Principles and Etiquette

To sum up, three things have been mentioned in verse 125 as necessary for Da'wah:

1. Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom)
2. Al-Maw'izah al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel)
3. Al-Mujādalah - '*billati hiya aḥsan*' (Debate in the Best of Manners)

Some commentators have said that these things are there because of three kinds of addressees. Inviting with wisdom is for people of knowledge and understanding. Inviting with good counsel is for common people. Argument and debate are for those who nurse doubts in their hearts, or simply refuse to accept anything said to them because of hostility and obstinacy.

My mentor and master, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'an that it is far out to deduce from the context of the verse that the addressees of these three things are groups of three different kinds, separate from each other.

In the light of the above what seems to be obvious here is that these rules of etiquette in Da'wah are to be used for everyone. The first thing

to do in Da'wah is to wisely assess conditions surrounding the addressee and pick out the most appropriate thing to say in those terms. Then, what has to be said will certainly be said as a well-wisher, however, this empathy has to be strengthened by such evidences and proof as would satisfy the addressee. And the subject matter and the manner of presentation has to be kept soft and affectionate so that the addressee becomes certain about whatever is being said and starts feeling that this person is saying it in his interest and for his benefit, and that the speaker's purpose is not to embarrass him or belittle his status.

However, the author of Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī has made a subtle point at this place. According to him, the arrangement of the verse shows that there are really no more than two things in Da'wah: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'izah (Good Counsel). The third thing: Al-Mujādalah (Argument, Debate) is just not included under the Principles of Da'wah. But, it can be conceded that it does come out handy once in a while in the path of Da'wah.

The author of Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī proves his point by saying: If these three things were to be the Principles of Da'wah, the exigency of the situation required that all three should have been enumerated with the help of conjunctions as: *بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة والجدال الاحسن* But, the Holy Qu'ran has elected to say al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and al-Maw'izah (Good Counsel) with conjunctive words in one single arrangement while, for al-Mujādalah, it has chosen to have a separate sentence: *جَادِلْهُمْ بِأَتْيٰى هِيَ اَحْسَنُ* (And argue with them in the best of manners). This tells us that argument in matters of knowledge is not a basic element or condition of the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*). Instead, it is an instruction concerning matters that come up in the path of Da'wah - an example of which appears in the next verse where patience has been enjoined because it is inevitable to observe patience over pains inflicted by people while in the path of Da'wah.

In short, there are two principles of Da'wah - (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'izah (Good Counsel). No Da'wah - whether to the learned and the classes or to the masses of people - should remain without these two factors. However, one has to face the kind of people who are neck-deep into doubts and superstitions and more than ready to start a debate with the Dā'ī (the man of Da'wah), it is to meet such situa-

tions that a go ahead signal to engage in the exercise of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate) has been given. But, by imposing the restriction of: بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ (in the best of manners) along with it, it was made very clear that the Mujādalah devoid of this condition has no place and status in the Shari'ah.

The Prophetic Etiquette of Da'wah

Inviting people towards Allah is, in fact, the mission and station of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them all. The rightly-guided 'Ulamā' of the Muslim community carry out this mission in their capacity of being their deputies. So, it is incumbent on them that they should learn its etiquette and methodology from them alone. A *da'wah* that does not follow those methods faithfully does not remain what *da'wah* really is. Instead, it turns into '*adāwah* (enmity) and becomes the cause of subsequent confrontations and wars.

An instruction of the Holy Qur'an given to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام in Sūrah Tā-Hā illustrates the principle observed by prophets in their Call: فَقُولَا لَهُ، قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى (Speak to him in gentle words, may be he takes to the advice or fears - 20:44). This is a principle no Caller to Truth (*dā'i ila al-Ḥaqq*) should ever lose sight of. Let him always bear in mind that the Pharaoh was an infidel (*kāfir*) known for his rebellion, one whose death was to come, as in ultimate Divine knowledge, while he was still a *kāfir*. Now, when Allah Ta'ālā sends his man of the Call even to a disbelieving tyrant like the Pharaoh, He sends him with the instruction of talking to him gently. Today, the people we invite to Allah, to His Faith, they are not more astray than the Pharaoh. Then, none of us can claim to match Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام as great guides and callers to the way of Allah. So, the right that Allah did not give to the two of his prophets - that they hurl hard talk on the addressee, throw taunts at him and insult him - where in the world did we get that right from?

The Holy Qur'an is full of the Da'wah and Tablīgh of the noble prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام and the contestations of disbelievers. Nowhere in there we find that any messenger of Allah has ever responded with a single unpleasant word against those who threw taunts at them despite their being on the side of the Truth. Let us have a look at some relevant examples.

The words spoken by two prophets, Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Hūd عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام in response to the confrontation and sharp accusations of their people are worth noticing. These can be seen in the seventh section of Sūrah al-A'rāf from verses 59 to 67.

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام is the great prophet known for his high determination and long blessed years in this world. For nine hundred and fifty years he devoted his life to Da'wah, Tablīgh, Reform and Enlightenment among his people. But, with the exception of a few, no one from among his people listened to him. Leave the rest, even his son and wife remained on the side of disbelievers. Had a modern day Reformer been in his place, imagine how he would have talked to such a people! Just imagine and then see what those people said in response to his Call in their interest and for their benefit. They said:

إِنَّا لَنَرُكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

"Indeed we see you in an obvious error" - al-A'rāf, 7:60.

On the other side, there is a prophet of Allah. He skips the option of chastizing his evil and contumacious people and this is what he elects to say:

يَقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" [telling you what is good for you] - al-A'rāf, 7:61.

The other messenger of Allah who came after him was Sayyidnā Hūd عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. His people, despite having seen the messenger's miracles, chose to remain hostile. They said, "you have yet to come up with a proof for your claim and we are not the kind of people who would abandon their objects of worship (idols) just because you say so. The fact is that you have been irreverent in respect of our idols and that is why you have gone crazy."

Having heard all this, Sayyidnā Hūd عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام responded by saying:

إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَأَشْهَدُوكُمْ أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

"I make Allah my witness, and you witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him" - Hūd, 11:54.

And as in Sūrah al-A'rāf, to him his people said:

إِنَّا لَنَرُّكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِينَ

"Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars" - 7:66.

In response to these heart-rending words used against him by his people, the messenger of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd, blessings and peace on him, does not even think of some sharp repartee, some derogatory counter comment, or say anything which would bring into focus their waywardness and their ugly penchant for attributing lies to Allah. He does nothing of that sort. Yet, he gives the answer and what an answer! He simply said:

يَقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ

"O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" - al-A'raf, 7:67.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام invited his people to Allah in accordance with customary practice of prophets. They were addicted to the evil practice of weighing less and measuring short. When Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام asked them to refrain from it, his people made fun of him and asked him in biting contempt:

يُشْعِبُ أَصْلُوْتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَنْ نَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ

They said, "O Shu'aib, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or give up our free will in (spending) our wealth? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance" - Hūd, 11:87.

Here, they have said three things. They open with a taunt: This prayer that you make teaches you to do all those foolish things. Then they talk about their *māl* - wealth, property, commercial interests: This is ours. We buy. We sell. What do you have to do with our financial matters? And for that matter, how does your God come into this? All this belongs to us and we have the right of spending it as we wish. The last sentence they say is loaded with black humour and angry sarcasm - you are certainly wise, guided-right!

It seems as if the contemporary votaries of secular economy did not rise only in our time. They do have their forbears in the past whose theo-

retical assumptions were the same as is being dished out today by some Muslims carrying nothing but Muslim names. So, they would say that they were Muslims, they believed in Islam but when it comes to an economic order, they adopt socialism (or capitalism) for, as they would like to believe, this area is out of bounds for Islam.

Returning to what his people said to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, let us now see how the messenger of Allah responds to the sarcastic remarks made by his unjust people:

قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ط وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ
أُحَافِلَكُمُ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَكُم عَنْهُ ط إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ط
عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

He said, "O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, (should I still leave you unguided?) And I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you. I want nothing but to set things right as far as I can. And what I am enabled to do is only with the help of Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness" - Hūd, 11:88

Despite that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, when sent to the Pharaoh, had fully complied with the Divine instruction of talking to him gently, the response of the Pharaoh to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came in the following words:

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتَكِ الْبِئْسَ الْفِعْلُ وَأَنْتَ
مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

He said, "(You!) Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you stayed among us for years of your life? And you did your deed which you did, and you were of the unfaithful " - ash-Shu'arā', 26:18,19.

Here, the Pharaoh has reminded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of two favours done to him - that he raised him as a child and that he stayed with him for a number of years while older. Then he showed his displeasure over the incident in which a Copt got killed at the hands of Sayyidnā Mūsā, though he had no intention of killing him. In his anger, he also said that he had become an infidel.

At this place, the expression: أَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (*anta min al-kāfirīn*) could

be taken in the literal sense, that is, one who is ungrateful, which would mean: 'we did favours to you and you killed one of our men, a demonstration of ungratefulness to favours done.' Then, it could also be given a technical meaning because the Pharaoh claimed to be god. So, whoever denied his godhead turned out to be a *kāfir* (infidel).

Now, at this juncture, let us hear the answer given by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which is a masterpiece of prophetic manners and morals of Da'wah. Here, first of all, he goes ahead and makes a clean breast of what had happened to him. He had tried to disengage a Copt who was fighting an Israelite man. The punch he had employed to do that caused his death. So, this killing was not intentional. But, it was also not prompted by some religious exigency. In fact, even under the Law of Moses, that man was not deserving of being killed. Therefore, he began by confessing first and said:

فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ

"I did it then, while I was of the astray (ignorant)" - ash-Shu'arā', 26:20.

The sense is that the act had escaped him before he was blessed with the mission of a prophet and at a time when he was not aware of any Divine command about it. After that, he said:

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

"So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord bestowed wisdom on me and made me of His messengers" - 26:21.

After that, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام took up the reality of favours the Pharaoh was harping on. He told him that he was not right in doing that because this whole matter of bringing him up was the result of his own cruelty and oppression in that it was he who had a standing order in force, the order to kill Israelite children. His mother was, therefore, compelled to put him into the river until came the time when he reached his home. He said:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

"And this is the favour you put on me - that you have enslaved the Children of Isra'īl! - 26:22.

After that, when the Pharaoh asked: وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ("And what is the Lord of the worlds?" - 26:23), he replied by saying: رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ("The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever there is in between them" - 26:24). Thereupon, it was by way of mockery that the Pharaoh turned towards the audience and asked: ... ("Do you not hear?" - 26:25) [meaning: You hear him, don't you? Hasn't he gone out of his mind?] Thereupon, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام added:

رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ

"Your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers" - 26:26

Irritated, the Pharaoh said:

إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ

"Indeed, your messenger (who claims to have been) sent to you is a mad man" - 26:27.

Even such a derogatory title given to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not lure him into a blow for blow response for he could have easily told the Pharaoh as to who was insane and who was sane. He just took no notice of it, in fact, went on to describe another attribute of Allah, the Lord of the worlds:

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

"Lord of the East and the West and of whatever there is in between them, if you were to comprehend" - 26:28.

This is a lengthy dialogue taking place in the court of the Pharaoh between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. It covers three sections of Sūrah ash-Shu'arā' (26). Look at this dialogue of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام from the beginning to the end. No emotions are betrayed here. No reply has been given to his bad words, nor is his hard talk matched by counter hard talk. Instead of all that, there is a continuous flow of statements to the effect of Allah Ta'ālā's attributes of perfection along with the ongoing efforts of Taḥlīgh.

This is a brief sample of the confrontations in which the blessed prophets have stood up against their hostile and obstinate people. We can also say that it is a practical demonstration of 'arguing with the best of manners.'

Besides argumentations, debates and intellectual confrontations when inevitable, models have been set by the blessed prophets in Da'wah and Tablīgh on a standing basis. They have established wise principles in human communications as appropriate to different addressees and different occasions with the added considerations as dictated by wisdom or beneficial expediency. In short, the way and method put in practice by the blessed prophets in order to invite people to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*) and make it popular, effective and abiding as well is, in reality, the essence and spirit of Da'wah. As for its details, these are spread all over in the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Let us have a look at some of these as representative samples.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was very particular about making sure that no burden is placed on the addressee whether in Da'wah and Tablīgh or in good counsel and beneficial advice. As for the noble Ṣaḥābah, they held the Holy Prophet ﷺ very dear to their heart. About them, it could not be imagined that they would, God forbid, ever get bored with what he had to say. Yet, even for them, his customary practice was that he would not hold his teaching, counseling and advising sessions every day, rather limited it to some days of the week so that their occupation or business is not adversely affected or that it becomes some sort of burden on them.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, "The Holy Prophet ﷺ had his 'wa'z' sessions only on some days of the week lest we get bored - and he instructed others to do the same."

Sayyidnā Anas ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنْفِرُوا

Make (things) easy and do not make (things) difficult and give (people) the good news (of mercy from Allah) and do not disappoint or alienate (them) - Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-ʿIlm.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ says, 'you should become *Rabbānī*, the people of your *Rabb*, people with wisdom, learning and law.' After reporting this saying in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the word: رَبَّانِي (Rabbānī) has been explained as: A person who, keeping in sight the principles of Da'wah, Tablīgh, education and training, starts with simple things first. When people get used to it, then he tells them about other

imperatives which would have been difficult at the elementary stage. This person is a Divinely guided scholar (عالم ربّاني). These days religious sermons and propagation efforts produce very little effect. The main reason is that workers in this field generally do not give due consideration to the principles and etiquette necessary in this area. Lengthy lectures, uncalled for sermonizings and insisting on people to do something without first finding out the conditions faced by the addressee have become their habit.

When engaged in the mission of Invitation and Reformation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made an extra effort to ensure that the addressee is not insulted or disgraced in any way. Therefore, when he would see someone involved with something bad or wrong, he would not address him directly. Instead, he used to beam his remarks at a public gathering, for example, he would say:

مَا بَالُ أَقْوَامٍ يَفْعَلُونَ كَذًا

What has happened to people that they do so?

This used to be part of a public address. Naturally, the person who was supposed to hear it did hear it, was ashamed in his heart and went about getting rid of that drawback.

It was the universal habit of noble prophets that they shielded the addressee from being embarrassed. Therefore, on occasions, they would attribute what was done by the addressee to their own selves and thus tried to set things right with their people. It appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: مَا بَالِي لِمَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي (What is the matter with me that I would not worship Him who created me? - 36:22). As for this emissary of the messenger, he was already devoted to his *'ibādah* (worship) all the time as was his usual way. The purpose here was to make the addressee who was not so engaged hear the worth and value of turning to Allah in *'ibādah*. But, as we see, he has attributed the shortcoming to his own person.

And Da'wah means to call or bid someone to come close to the caller - definitely not to enumerate the person's shortcomings. Then, this act of calling can become effective only when there is some common ground between the caller and the called. For this reason, the Da'wah of the noble prophets ﷺ as in the Holy Qur'ān mostly begins with the words:

يَا قَوْمِ (yā qawmī : O my people) through which stress is placed first on the common factor of brotherly relations and then things aiming at their betterment are said. It amounts to saying - 'we are people of the same brotherhood, so let there be no hatred in between us' - and this is how they start the mission of reforming their society.

In the letter of Da'wah sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Hiraql, the Byzantine emperor, he began by calling the emperor: 'The Great Man of Byzantium.' This tribute of honour given to him was permissible because it contained a confession of the emperor's being great - though, for the people of Byzantine, not for him. After that, the manner in which the invitation to believe was given is being quoted below:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ

"O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah" (as in Sūrah Āl-Imrān, 3:64)

Here, a common factor of unity was mentioned first. It was said that the belief in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) was the common bond between the two of them. After that came the reminder about the error of Christians.

If we were to look into the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ carefully, we will find similar rules of conduct in every field of Da'wah and public education. Unfortunately, in our time, we suffer from lack of concern for carrying the call to faith, working for the correction and betterment of people, bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. Even those who are engaged in these pursuits have, (with valid exceptions) taken mere discussions, debates, accusations, name calling, berating and disgracing the adversary to be Da'wah and Tablīgh. The truth of the matter is that all this, being contrary to the Sunnah, never turns out to be effective and beneficial - while these gentlemen continue to congratulate themselves for having done a great service to Islam. In reality, they are becoming the cause of making people scared of it.

The Harmful Worldly and Other-Worldly Effects of Current Contestations

We know from the Tafsīr of the present verse (125) that the main objective of the Shari'ah of Islām is the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*)

which has two principles: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'izah Al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel). And if the unwelcome need of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate, confrontation) stands imposed on some stray occasion, then, that too has been allowed with the restriction of being 'in the best of manners.' But, in reality, it is not a regular department of Da'wah. Instead, it is a via media to handle its negative aspect. The Holy Qur'ān has resolved it by placing the restriction of: *بِأَيْتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ* (in the best of manners). By doing so, it has told us that it should be in the best spirit of politeness, and with the attitude of a sympathizer and well-wisher. Argument should be formulated clearly as appropriate to the state of the addressee. Any approach which belittles or insults the addressee should be totally avoided. Similarly, for it to be the best, it is also necessary to be on guard lest it becomes harmful to the speaker himself. In other words, it should not affect his morals adversely for there is the danger of his falling into envy, malice, arrogance, love for name, fame and power. These are major inward sins. In short, the kind of discussions, debates, polemics and confrontations we see today are such that it would take a very rare person, some man of Allah, to remain safe against their harmful effects, otherwise, it is extremely difficult to find refuge from it under normal circumstances.

Imām al-Ghazālī has said: The way liquor is 'the mother of evils' (*umm-ul-khabā'ith*) in that it is a grave sin by itself and also becomes the conduit of other grave sins. Similarly, when overpowering the addressee and demonstrating one's intellectual superiority over people becomes the objective, that too becomes 'the mother of evils' for one's inward state. As a result, many spiritual crimes crop up, for example: envy, malice, arrogance, backbiting, spying on the faults of others, being pleased with their discomfort and being unhappy with their gain, haughty rejection of Truth, the attitude of not considering the position of others with justice and moderation, instead, worrying about a rebuttal, no matter how askance their interpretations from the Qur'ān and Sunnah are.

These are dangers. Even serious religious scholars are affected by them. But, the problem is compounded when the thing starts affecting their followers when the intellectual exercise could turn into a physical one in progressive proportions. *Innā lillāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn*. Imām Shāfi'ī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, said:

"Knowledge is a brotherhood of the learned. How do those who have turned knowledge into enmity could invite others to follow their religion? When their sole objective is to dominate over others, how could they be expected to practice mutual attachment, love and consideration? And for one what evil could be greater than that which drowns him in the morals of the hypocrites and deprives him of the morals of those who truly believe and fear Allah?"

Imām al-Ghazālī said that a person who devotes himself to the *'ilm* of *dīn* and the *da'wah* of *ḥaqq* revolves between two destinies. Either he, following correct principles and avoiding fatal dangers, achieves the eternal good; or, otherwise, if he falls down from this station, he slides into eternal misfortune. That he would remain hanging in between these two states is too far out to entertain - because, knowledge which is not beneficial is nothing but punishment. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَالِمٌ لَمْ يَنْفَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِعِلْمِهِ

On the day of Judgement, the person most severely punished, of all human beings, shall be an *'ālim* from whose knowledge Allah has not given him any benefit.

And in another Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, he said:

لَا تَتَعَلَّمُوا الْعِلْمَ لِيُبَاهُوا بِهِ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَلِتُمَارُوا بِهِ السُّفَهَاءَ وَلِتَصْرِفُوا بِهِ وُجُوهُ النَّاسِ إِلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ

"Do not learn the *'ilm* (of *dīn*) to compete with the learned in pride and prestige nor to challenge the incompetent with it nor to make the faces of people turn towards you therewith. So whoever will do that, will be in the fire." (Ibn Mājah, from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Jābir with sound chains of authority as in Takhrij al-'Irāqī 'alā al-Iḥyā')

Therefore, the standing creed (*maslak*) of authorities among Muslim jurists and the people on Truth (*ḥaqq*) in this matter was that they never considered disputation and confrontation in intellectual issues as permissible. In the mission of inviting people to the Truth, it is enough to alert anyone considered to be in error, politely and sympathetically as a well-wisher, presenting one's submission with necessary arguments. Then, should he accept, it is better. If otherwise, let him observe silence, totally avoiding altercation and adverse criticism. Let us turn to Imām Malīk رحمه الله عليه in this matter:

كَانَ مَالِكٌ يَقُولُ، الْمِرَاءُ وَالْجِدَالُ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَذْهَبُ بِنُورِ الْعِلْمِ عَنِ قَلْبِ الْعَبْدِ - وَقِيلَ لَهُ: رَجُلٌ لَهُ، عِلْمٌ بِالسُّنَّةِ، فَهَلْ يُجَادِلُ عَنْهَا؟ قَالَ: لَا، وَلَكِنْ يُخْبِرُ بِالسُّنَّةِ، فَإِنْ قَبِلَ مِنْهُ وَإِلَّا سَكَتَ - (اوجز المسالك شرح موطا ص ١٥١٥)

Imām Mālik said: "Altercation and confrontation in *al-'ilm* (the knowledge of *dīn*) drives away the light of knowledge from the heart of a servant." Someone submitted: "There is a person who has the knowledge of Sunnah. Can he enter into debate for the protection of Sunnah?" He said, "No. But, he should inform the addressee about the Sunnah (as it is). Then, should he accept it, good - otherwise, let him observe silence." (Awjaz al-Masālik Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭā, v. 1, page 15)

Ineffectiveness of Contemporary Da'wah Work

There are two reasons why the work of Da'wah (invitation) and Iṣlāḥ (reform) is not fully effective. (1) Firstly, because of the increase of corruption in our time and the abundance of Ḥarām things, hearts of people have become generally hard, and heedless of the Hereafter - and the very ability to accept truth has become weak and low. And there are some who find themselves suffering from the curse the foreboding of which was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had said that, by the later times, the hearts of many people will turn upside down, all reversed. The ability to know good from bad, and the distinction of permissible and impermissible will vanish from their heart.

(2) Then, negligence towards the duties of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair and inviting people to the true faith has become common. Not to say much about people at large, there is not much realization of its need even among the learned and the righteous. It is assumed that correcting one's own deed is just about enough whether their children, spouse, brother, friend remain smeared with all sorts of sins. The concern for their reform and betterment is as if no responsibility of theirs - although, the definite textual statements of the Holy Qur'ān (*nuṣūṣ*) are openly declaring that the betterment of one's children, family and relatives is his responsibility: قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا (Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire... - at-Taḥrīm, 66/6). As for some people who do pay attention to this duty, they do not know the teachings of the Qur'ān and the principles and manners of prophetic Da'wah. They take it easy, go by their impulse and say anything to anybody anytime without ever thinking about it. By doing so, they

surmise, they have done their duty - although, this method of action, being contrary to the blessed practice of prophets, further alienates people from the Faith and from following its dictates.

Of particular mention is the habit of finding faults with others, mocking at them or making fun of them all in the name of open criticism. Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى said:

"When alerting someone to some mistake (the rule is:) If you talked to him privately, explained it politely, then, this is 'advice'; and if you disgraced him publicly, this is 'vice.'"

The publicizing of mutual defects has become so popular these days that negative advertising is being done as if it was some service rendered to the Faith. May Allah Ta'ālā bless all of us the ability to serve our Faith with the best of insight into its Da'wah and its modalities.

At this point ends our submission relating to Da'wah and its principles and etiquette.

After that, we can move on to explain the last part of verse 125: **إِنَّ رَبَّكَ** (Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path). This statement has been made to comfort those who carry the Call of their Faith because one is naturally shocked when the addressee does not accept the truth presented despite that all rules of Da'wah have been observed. And there are occasions when this could produce another effect. When one sees no benefit coming out of Da'wah, he can become disappointed, even leave the work itself. Therefore, in this sentence, it was said: 'Your duty is only to invite people to the Truth in accordance with its correct principles. Beyond that, its acceptance or rejection is something you have nothing to do with, nor is that one of your responsibilities. That falls in the domain of Allah alone. He knows who will remain astray and who will stand guided. You should not worry about it. Go on doing your duty. Do not lose hope. Do not despair.' This tells us that this sentence too is really a complement of the etiquette of Da'wah.

Causing Pain to a Man of Da'wah: Revenge is Permissible, but Patience is Better.

The next three verses (126,127,128) carry another important instruc-

tion for those who present the message of Truth before people. It tells them about what they have to do in unusual conditions. There are occasions when they have to face people who are hard-hearted and very ignorant. No matter how softly and politely one explains things to them and no matter how much goodwill one has for them in his heart, they would, even then, go in a fit of anger, use bad language and cause pain. There are times when they would go beyond that and hurt the preacher physically or would not even mind killing. So, a remedial measure was in order.

For this purpose, by saying: **وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ** (And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient - 126), these noble workers in the way of Allah were given the legal right that it was permissible for them to retaliate against injustice done to them. But, this was to be subject to the condition that retaliation should not exceed the measure of injustice done. In other words, assess the injustice inflicted on you, retaliate only to that measure and ensure that no excess occurs.

And at the end of the verse, given there is the advice: Though, you do have the right to retaliate, but be patient and do not retaliate. It is better.

The Background in which this Verse was Revealed and How it was Implemented by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah

According to the majority of commentators, this verse is Madani. It was revealed in relation to the *shahādah* of seventy *ṣaḥābah* and about the event in which Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه was killed and his body was subjected to post-killing mutilations (*muthlah*). The narration in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is in accordance with it. Dārquṭnī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه as follows:

"In the battle of Uḥud when the Mushriks marched back, the dead bodies of seventy leading *ṣaḥābah* were found. Also included there was Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه, the revered uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Since the Mushriks were particularly angry with him, therefore, once he was killed by them, they took out their anger on his dead body. His nose, ears and other

parts of the body were cut and the abdomen was slit open. The very sight of it shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he said that, to avenge Hamzah, he would have seventy men from the Mushriks subjected to a '*muthlah*' similar to what they have done to Hamzah. It was in the background of this event that these three verses were revealed (126,127,128)". (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

It appears in some narrations that these cruel people had meted out the same treatment of '*muthlah*' (mutilation) in the case of other *ṣaḥābah* as well. (As reported by al-Tirmidhī, Aḥmad, and Ibn Khuzaimah and Ibn Ḥibbān in their *Ṣaḥīḥs* from Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b ؓ)

In this matter, being extremely grieved, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had declared his determination to subject seventy Mushriks in retaliation for his *ṣaḥābah* irrespective of their exact number, and this was not in accord with the principle of justice and equity Allah Ta'ālā intended to stand established in this world through him. Therefore, two things were done. (1) He was alerted and told that the right of retaliation was there but it had to match the measure of injustice done. Retaliating against seventy for a few, irrespective of their number, is not right. (2) Then, he was to be the model of morals at their best. Therefore, given to him was the good counsel: Though, you are allowed to retaliate evenly but, should you set aside this option and be patient and generous to the unjust, that would be much better.

Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Now, patient we shall be. We shall not take any revenge from anyone" - and he paid out a *kaffārah* (expiation) for his oath. (Maḥzarī from al-Baghawī) When, on the eve of the Conquest of Makkah, having all those Mushriks of Makkah under his control, it was certainly the time to do what he had declared on the battlefield of Uḥud that he would do. But, it was precisely at the time of the revelation of the cited verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had forsaken his earlier intention and had, instead, decided to observe patience. Therefore, at the time of the Conquest of Makkah, the course of patience was taken in accordance with the imperative of these verses. Perhaps, it is on this basis that it has been mentioned in some narration that these verses were revealed at the time of the Conquest of Makkah. And it is also not too far out to believe that the revelation of these verses was repeated, that is, initially they were revealed at the battle of 'Uḥud and

then, when came the Conquest of Makkah, they were revealed again. (as narrated by al-Mazḥarī from Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār)

RULING:

This verse has told us about the Law of Even Retaliation when avenging. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that in the event a person kills someone, the killed will be avenged by killing the killer. One who inflicts injury will have an even injury inflicted on him. Against one who cuts off someone's hand and feet, and then kills him, the guardian of the killed will be given the right that he too should first cut off the killer's hands and feet and then kill him.

Yes, if someone kills someone else by hitting him with a rock, or kills him by injuring him with arrows, then, it is not possible to determine the correct measure of the way of killing, that is, how many strikes did it take to make this killing take place, and how much pain has been inflicted on the person killed. In this matter, there is no measure of determining real equalization. Therefore, he will have to be killed invariably with a sword. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

RULING:

Though the verse has been revealed in relation to physical pain and loss, but its words are general which includes the inflicting of financial loss. Therefore, Muslim jurists have said that a person who usurps *māl* (money, property etc.) belonging to another person, then, this other person has the right to forcibly take away from him his *māl* in accordance with his right, or take it by stealth on condition that the *māl* taken is from the genus of his right, for example, if cash has been taken, then, he can take, in lieu of it, the same amount of cash from him, by usurpation or theft. If things usurped are like grains, corn or cloth, then, similar grains, corn or cloth can be taken back. But, one cannot take another kind in lieu of the kind taken from him, for example, one cannot forcibly take cloth or some other article of use in lieu of cash. However, some *fiqhahā* (Muslim jurists) have permitted it unconditionally - whether it be from the entitled kind or from some other. Some details of these rules have been covered by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr while more comprehensive details appear in books of Fiqh.

Mentioned in verse 126: وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ (And if you were to harm...) was the

general law in which avenging harm done with even harm was declared to be permissible for all Muslims, but taking the option of patience was recommended as definitely much better. And in the next verse (127), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed in a special manner and prompted to be patient because, in view of his great dignity and high station, the later response was certainly more appropriate and becoming for him as compared with others. Therefore, it was said: *وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ* (And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah). It means: 'As for you, you just do not even contemplate a revenge. Take to Ṣabr (patience) as your only option.' And then, he was also told that his Ṣabr will come with the help of Allah alone, that is, observing Ṣabr will be made easy for him.

After that, once again in the last verse (128), a universal formula of having the help of Allah Ta'ālā by one's side was announced. It is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds.

The essence of this formula is that the help of Allah Ta'ālā is with people who have two virtues: Taqwā and Iḥsān. The essence of Taqwā is acting righteously or being good in deed while the sense of Iḥsān at this place is to be good to those created by Allah Ta'ālā, that is, those who are duty-bound to do righteous deeds and are particular in dealing with others nicely - Allah Ta'ālā is with them. And it is obvious, if someone is-blessed with the 'company' (help) of Allah Ta'ālā, who can touch him!

Alḥamdulillāh

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Al-Naḥl was completed today,
Shabān 25, 1389 Hijrah

وَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ أَوْلَىٰ وَأَخْرَأَ وَظَاهِرٌ وَبَاطِنًا

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

(Al-'Isrā')

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl is Makkī. It has 111 verses and 12 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verse 1

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْٓ اَسْرٰی بِعَبْدِهٖ لَیْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ
الْاَقْصَا الَّذِیْ بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهٗ لِنُرِیْهِ، مِنْ اٰیٰتِنَا اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْبَصِیْرُ ﴿۱﴾

Pure is He Who made his servant travel at night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā the environs of which We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All Hearing, All Seeing. [1]

Commentary

Described in this verse is the event of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the heavens, or al-'Isrā', the midnight journey of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a signal honor and distinctive miracle of our Messenger of Allah ﷺ). The word: *أَسْرَى* (*asrā*) is a derivation from: *إِسْرَى* (*isrā'*) which literally means to make someone travel at night. After that, the introduction of the word: *لَيْلًا* (*lailan*) also makes this sense very clear. Then, by placing this word as a common noun, the indication released was that during this event the time spent was that of a part of the night - not even that of the whole night. The journey from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā mentioned in this verse is called al-'Isrā' and the name of the journey from here to the seven heavens is al-Mi'rāj. *Isrā'* stands proved under

the definitive textual authority of this verse and the Mi'rāj finds mention in the verses of Sūrah an-Najm and is proved by Aḥādīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. The word: *بَعْدِيهِ* (*bi'abdihi*: His servant) used here for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is special. It shows that, in this magnificent setting of honor and welcome, when Allah Ta'ālā, on His own, elects to call someone 'His servant', a unique bond of love lies embedded therein and that this is the highest honor any man could ever have.

This is similar to what has been said in another verse: *عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا* (and the servants of Ar-Raḥmān [the Most Merciful] are those who walk on the Earth gently - *al-Furqān*, 25:63) where the objective is to increase the prestige of those who are acceptable with Him. From here, we also learn that the highest achievement man is capable of is to become a perfect servant of Allah - for, on this eve of special honor, the quality of ideal servitude, out of his many attributes of perfection, was chosen. Then, the presence of this expression yields yet another beneficial outcome in that no one gets the wrong impression of divinity from this wonderful journey by night which, from its beginning to the end, is full of extra-habitual miracles. This is something like what happened with the Christians who fell into deception over the event of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام being raised unto the heavens. For this reason, by saying *عَبْدٌ* (*'abd*: servant), it was declared that, despite all those attributes, achievements and miracles, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still a servant of Allah, not god.

The Qur'ān, Sunnah and 'Ijmā' prove that the Mi'rāj was physical.

It is proved from the text of the Holy Qur'ān, and from Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession mentioned later that the entire journey of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj was not simply spiritual, instead, it was physical - like the journey of anyone else. The very first word of the Holy Qur'ān in this Sūrah: *سُبْحَانَ* (*Subḥān*: Pure is He!) carries a hint in this direction because this word is used to register wonder or introduce a great marvel. Had the Mi'rāj been merely spiritual, just a matter of dream, what was there so unusual about it? As for a dream, every Muslim, even every human being, can see it and report that he or she went to the heavens, did this and did that.

The second indication embedded in the word: *عَبْدٌ* (*'abd*: servant) also

points out in the same direction because 'abd is no spirit all by itself, instead, it is the name of the combination of body and spirit.

In addition to that, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the event of Mi'rāj to Sayyidah Umm Hānī رضي الله عنها, she advised him not to mention it before anyone otherwise people would falsify it even more. Had this been the matter of a dream, what was there in it that needed to be falsified?

After that, when he did tell people about it, the disbelievers of Makkah called it a lie and made fun of him, so much so that some neo-Muslims became apostates (*murtadd*) after hearing the news. If this would have been the matter of a dream, the likelihood of such reactions was least warranted. And that he had experienced some spiritual Mi'rāj in the form of a dream, before this or after that, does not become contrary to it. According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word: الرُّءْيَا (ar-ru'yā) in the verse of the Qur'an: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ (And We showed you the scene - 17:60) means: رُءْيٍ (rūyah: seeing). But, it has been expressed through the word: رُؤْيَا (ru'yā, which is frequently used in the sense of seeing a dream). The reason for this expression could be that this thing has been called *ru'yā* in the sense of a simile. This is like someone seeing a dream. And if, *ru'yā* is taken to mean dream itself, then, it is also not too far out to say that the event of Mi'rāj, in addition to its being physical, also transpired, before or after it, in the form of a spiritual Mi'rāj as a dream as well. Therefore, the saying, that it was a dream, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه and Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها is also correct in its place - but, it does not necessarily imply that physical Mi'rāj did not take place.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the Aḥādīth relating to the event of al-Isrā' are recurrent and uninterrupted. Naqqāsh has reported related narratives from twenty Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ has given additional details in Al-Shifā' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has, in his Tafsīr, reported all these narratives and after applying the standard rules of scrutiny has mentioned the names of twenty-five Ṣaḥābah from whom these reports come. Their names are:

- (1) Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,
- (2) Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā,

- (3) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd,
- (4) Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī,
- (5) Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah,
- (6) Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah,
- (7) Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī,
- (8) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās,
- (9) Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws,
- (10) Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b,
- (11) Sayyidnā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Qurāz,
- (12) Sayyidnā Abū Ḥayyah (ابوحيه),
- (13) Sayyidnā Abū Lailā,
- (14) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar,
- (15) Sayyidnā Jabīr ibn 'Abdullāh,
- (16) Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān,
- (17) Sayyidnā Buraidah,
- (18) Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī,
- (19) Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah,
- (20) Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub,
- (21) Sayyidnā Abū al-Ḥamrā',
- (22) Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī,
- (23) Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī',
- (24) Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah,
- (25) Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, After that, Ibn Kathīr said:

فَحَدِيثُ الْإِسْرَاءِ أَجْمَعِ عَلَيْهِ الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ الزُّنَادِقَةُ وَالْمَلْحَدُونَ (ابن كثير)

As for the Ḥadīth of al-Isrā', there is a consensus of all Muslim on it. Only heretics and atheists have denied it. (Ibn Kathīr)

A brief account of Mi'rāj - as reported by Ibn Kathīr

After having explained the present verse in his Tafsīr along with a detailed background of relevant Aḥādīth, Imām Ibn Kathīr has said: The truth of the matter is that the journey of Isrā' came to pass when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was awake, not dreaming. From Makkah al-Mukarramah to Baitulmaqdis, the journey was covered on *burāq* (a special heavenly horse to ride). When he reached the gate of Baitulmaqdis, he tied the *burāq* close to the gate, entered the Masjid of Baitulmaqdis and offered two *rak'āt* of Taḥiyyatul-masjid (prayer in honor of the Mosque) facing its orientation. After that, a staircase was

brought which had steps to go up from below. Through this staircase, he went to the first heaven. After that, he went to the rest of the heavens. [Only Allah knows the reality of this staircase - what it was and how did it work and things like that. In our day too, many kinds of stairs are in use. There are stairs that escalate automatically and there are elevators that take one up. Therefore, falling into any doubt or suspicion about this miraculous staircase is not right.] On every heaven, the resident angels greeted him and on every heaven, he met blessed prophets who were stationed on a particular heaven, such as, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on the sixth heaven, and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام on the seventh heaven. After that, he went beyond the stations of all these blessed prophets and reached a plain where he could hear the sound of the pen writing destinies. And he saw the Sidratul-muntaha, the Far Tree in Jannah, on which moths in gold and variegated colors were falling from above by the command of Allah and which was surrounded by angels of Allah. And it was at this place that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn in his real form with six hundred wings. And right there, he saw a flag in green that had the horizon all covered up. And he also saw al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (the well-attended House believed to be located in Jannah exactly above the Baytullah in Makkah) sitting by which was the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with his back reclining against its wall. Seventy thousand angels enter this Bayt al-Ma'mūr every day who shall be waiting for their turn to re-enter there right through the day of Qiyāmah. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the Jannah and the Jahannam with his own blessed eyes. At that time, first came the command that his people were being obligated with fifty prayers, then, these were reduced to five. This shows the importance and merit of Ṣalāh as being the foremost out of all acts of 'Ibādah.

After that, he alighted back into Baytul-maqdis and, with him, so did the blessed prophets he had met on different heavens (as if) they had come to see him off as far as Baytul-maqdis. At that time, as it was time for Ṣalāh, he offered the prayer with all prophets. It is also probable that this Ṣalāh was the Ṣalāh of Fajr the same day. Ibn Kathīr says that this event concerning the prayer with prophets led by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come to pass, as held by some, before he went to the heavens. But, as obvious, this event took place after the return because it has been re-

ported in the incident relating to his meeting with blessed prophets at different heavens that it was Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl who introduced him to all prophets. Had this event relating to his leading the prayer passed earlier, no introduction was needed there - and, for that matter, it is obvious enough that the real purpose of this journey was to visit with the heavenly hosts. Doing that first appears to be more likely. Once he was done with the real mission, all prophets came to say good bye to him up to Baytul-maqdis and by making him the Imām of the prayer through a signal from Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl, his precedence over others was demonstrated practically.

After that, he departed from Baytul-maqdis riding *burāq* and reached Makkah al-Mu'azzamah while it was still dark. *والله سبحانه تعالى اعلم*
(And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

The testimony of a non-Muslim about the event of Mi'rāj

It appears in Tafsīr ibn Kathīr that Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, in his book, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, has reported a narrative from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓi on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Wāqidi* giving details of the event as follows:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah ؓ with a blessed letter from him to the Roman Emperor, Caesar. After that, he has given a detailed account of how Sayyidnā Diḥyah reached the Emperor, delivered the letter, and how intelligent he was in his mission (an event present in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī as well as in all trustworthy books of Ḥadīth). Towards the end of it, it has been reported that Hiraql, the Roman Emperor, once he had read the blessed letter, ordered that all Arab traders who were visiting the country at that time should be assembled together. He wanted to investigate into the background of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The royal order was carried out. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and those with him visiting Syria at that time with their famous trade caravan were presented before the Emperor. Details of the questions asked by the Emperor are present in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as elsewhere. Abū Sufyān was really

*. The Scholars of Ḥadīth say that Al-Wāqidi is weak in Ḥadīth narrations but a cautious Muḥaddith like Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported his narration for the reason that this matter is not connected with 'Aqā'id or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and in such historical matters his narration is trustworthy - **Muḥammad Shafi'**

eager to use this occasion to say things about the Holy Prophet ﷺ which show his insignificance. But, says Abū Sufyān : Nothing stopped me from doing that except that I may slip and say something which turns out to be a lie and I stand disgraced in the eyes of the Emperor and my own comrades keep taunting me for being a liar. Certainly, then it occurred to me that I should relate the event of Mi'rāj before him. The Emperor would himself conclude from it that it was a lie. So, I said: I shall describe before you what he claims to have happened to him regarding which you will yourself realize that it was a lie. Hiraql asked: What event is that? Abū Sufyān said: This claimant of prophet-hood says that, one night, he left Makkah al-Mukarramah, reached this Masjid Baytul-maqdis of yours and, then, within that night, before dawn, he returned to us in Makkah al-Mukarramah!

At that time, the leading scholar of Elia' (Baytul-maqdis) was standing close to Hiraql, the Roman Emperor. He disclosed that he knew that night. The Emperor turned to him and inquired as to how did he come to know about it. He submitted that, as a matter of habit, he would not sleep at night until he had closed all gates of Baytul-maqdis. That night he habitually closed all gates but one which would not close despite his effort. He summoned his staff. They all tried but they too failed to close it. The panels of the gate remained simply unmoved from their place. It seemed as if they were trying to move some mountain. Rendered helpless, he called technicians and carpenters. They looked at the gate and decided that the weight of the building has come to rest on the panels of the gate. There was no way it could be closed before morning. When morning comes, they said, they will see how this could be fixed. Non-plussed, he returned leaving both panels of the gate ajar. As soon as it was morning, he came back to the gate where he noticed that someone had made a hole in the rock close to the gate of the Masjid which gave the impression that some animal was tied down there. At that time he had told his colleagues: Perhaps, Allah Ta'ālā has caused this gate not to close today because some prophet was to come here. And then, he also stated that this blessed prophet has also offered his prayer in this Masjid of ours. Thereafter, he has described further details. (Ibn Kathīr, p. 24, v. 3)

The date of the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that the narratives of Ḥadīth

regarding the date of Mi'rāj are quite different. According to Musa ibn 'Uqbah, this event came to pass six month before the Hijrah to Madīnah. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها had passed away before the injunction making Ṣalāh a Farḍ (obligation) was revealed. Imām Zuhri says that the event of the sad demise of Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها took place seven years after the call to the mission of prophet-hood.

According to some Ḥadīth narratives, the event of Mi'rāj happened five years after the call to prophet-hood. Ibn Ishāq says that the event of Mi'rāj took place at a time when Islam had spread throughout the tribes of Arabia generally. The outcome of all these narratives is that the event of Mi'rāj dates back to several years before the Hijrah to Madīnah.

Al-Ḥarbi says that the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj has happened during the night of the 27th of Rabi' ath-Thānī, one year before Hijrah and Ibn al-Qāsim adh-Dhahabi says that it took place eighteen months after the call to prophet-hood. Esteemed Muḥaddithīn (Ḥadīth scholars) who have mentioned these different narratives have not followed it up with any decisive statement. And as commonly known, the 27th night of the month of Rajab is the Night of Mi'rāj. واللّه سبحانه و تعالى اعلم (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Which Masjid of this world comes first?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' Then he inquired, 'Which one after that?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.' Then he tried to find out the intervening time difference between the two whereupon he said, 'Forty years.' After that, he added, '(as for the order of these *masājid*, this is it) but, Allah Ta'ālā has made the entire Earth a *masjid* for us. Wherever comes the time of Ṣalāh, offer it right there.' (Reported by Muslim)

Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says that Allah Ta'ālā has made the site of Baytullah two thousand years before He made the entire Earth and that its foundations reach as far down as the seventh (strata of) Earth and that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān رضي الله عنه. (Reported by an-Nasā'ī with sound chains of authority from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar) (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 137, v. 4)

And al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is the name of the Mosque that stands around the Baytullah ash-Sharīf while, on occasions, the entire Ḥarām is also identified as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. In terms of this second sense, the dichotomy of those two reports - some hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ left for the nocturnal journey, al-'Isrā', from the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها while others say that he departed from the section of Baytullah known as Ḥaṭīm - stands removed. If we were to take al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in its general sense, it is not far out to believe that he may have been there in the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها first, then he walked over to the Ḥaṭīm of Ka'bah and then began the journey of al-'Isrā' from there. Allah knows best.

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and blessings of the Syrian environs

The word: حَوْلَ (ḥawl: environs) in the verse: بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ (the environs of which We have blessed) means the entire land of Syria. It appears in a Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā has made the land from the 'Arsh (Divine Throne) to the river, Euphrates and, out of this, He has bestowed particular holiness on the land of Palestine. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blessings it has are both religious and worldly. As for religious blessings, it has been the Qiblah of all past prophets, and their home, and the last resting place. And that its land is green, lush and verdant with streams, rivers and fruit farms etc. shows its worldly blessings.

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah Ta'ālā says: O land of Syria, thou art My region chosen from many and I shall make My chosen servants reach thee. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Imposter will traverse the whole Earth but he will not be granted access to four Mosques: (1) Masjid of Madīnah, (2) Masjid of Makkah al-Mukarramah, (3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and (4) Masjid Ṭūr.

Verses 2 - 3

وَاتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا تَنَحَّدُوا
 مِنْ دُونِي وَكَيْلًا ﴿٢١﴾ ذُرِّيَّةً مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا
 شَكُورًا ﴿٢٢﴾

And We gave Mūsā the Book and made it guidance for the children of Isrā'īl (with the command) "Do not take anyone other than Me as guardian, [2] O descendants of those whom We put on board with Nūḥ. Surely, He was a very grateful servant." [3]

Verses 4 - 8

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ
وَتَتَعَلَّنَ عَلُودًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا
أُولَىٰ بِأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ ۗ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ
رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ
نَفِيرًا ﴿٦﴾ إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا ۗ فَإِذَا
جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيُسْوَوُا أَوْجُوهَكُمْ ۖ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا
دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا ﴿٧﴾ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ
يُرْحَمَكُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا ۗ وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا ﴿٨﴾

And, in the Book, We declared to the children of Isrā'īl: "You will surely spread disorder on the earth twice, and you will surely show arrogance, a great arrogance. [4]

So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to us having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses. And it was a promise bound to be fulfilled. [5] Then We gave you your turn to overpower them, and increased your strength with wealth and sons, and made you greater in number. [6] If you do good, you will do it for yourselves, and if you do evil, it will be for you, too. Later, when came the time appointed for the second, (We sent others) so that they spoil your faces, and so that they enter into the Mosque as the former ones had entered it the first time and destroy what they overpower, totally. [7]

May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again. And We have made Jahannam a prison for the disbelievers. [8]

Sequence of Verses

Verses 2 and 3 featuring the statement: *جَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ* (We made it guidance for the children of Banī Isrā'īl) exhorted the Banī Isrā'īl to follow and obey the Divine Law. The verses that follow warn and admonish them on their disobedience. These verses mention two events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl so that they serve as a lesson. Tired to sin and disobedience, first they increased the tempo of their hostility. Allah Ta'ālā set their enemies upon them. They shook them up. The Jews got the message, cut down on their mischief and gave the impression of having been corrected. But, soon after, the same lust for mischief and misdeeds overtook them. So then, Allah Ta'ālā had them punished at the hands of their enemies. The Qur'an mentions two events while history carries six like these:

1. The first event came to pass some time after the demise of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, the founder of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, when the ruler of Baytul-maqdis became irreligious and corrupt. The ruler of Egypt attacked him and took away the gold and silver of Baytul-maqdis. But, he did not demolish the city and the Masjid.

2. The second event relates to the period nearly four hundred years after that. Some Jews settled in Baytul-maqdis started idol-worship while the rest began disputing among themselves. This ill omen prompted another ruler of Egypt to attack them which somewhat affected the city and the Masjid both. After that, their condition took a turn for the better.

3. The third event came to pass after some years when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon ransacked Baytul-maqdis. He conquered the city, looted property and took back a lot of people as prisoners of war. When he left, he had a member of the family of the former king appointed a ruler of the city as his deputy.

4. When this new king, who worshipped idols and was corrupt, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he returned, killed people, destroyed property en masse and burned the city razing it to rubbles. This happened nearly four hundred and fifteen years after the construction of the Masjid. After that, the Jews went out as exiles to Babylon where they lived in disgrace for seventy years. After that, the King of Iran attacked

the King of Babylon and conquered it. Then the King of Iran showed mercy to the Jewish expatriates and ordered that they should be sent back to Syria along with things looted from them. Now the Jews had repented having forsaken their habitual sins and misdeeds. When they re-settled there, they restored the original structure of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā with the support of the King of Irān.

5. Then came the fifth event. When the Jews had peace and prosperity once again, the first thing they forgot was their past. They returned to the kind of evil deeds they were used to. Then, it so happened that, one hundred and seventy years before the birth of Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ, the king who had founded Antakiah (Antioch) attacked, killed forty thousand Jews and took with him another forty thousand as prisoners and slaves, even desecrated the Masjid though its structure remained safe. But, later, the successors of that king rendered the city and the Masjid totally denuded. Soon after this, Baytul-maqdis came under the authority of Roman kings. They put the Masjid back into shape and it was after eight years that Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ was born.

6. Forty years after the physical ascension of Sayyidnā 'Isā ﷺ, the Jews chose to rebel against their Roman rulers. The Romans destroyed the city and the Masjid once again relegating it to what it was. The king at that time was called Titus who was neither Jewish nor Christian because long after him Constantine I was a Christian. From that time to the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ, this Masjid lay desolate until he had it reconstructed. These six events have been reported in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān with reference to Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī.

Now, it is difficult to precisely determine as to which two out of those mentioned above are the two events mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān. But, as obvious, the events that are major and serious among these, in which the Jews were far too wicked and more seriously punished too, should be taken as the likely ones. The fourth and the sixth event seem to be fit for such application. At this point, a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ؓ, with its chains of authority ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It also helps in determining that these two events mean the fourth and the sixth event. The translation of this lengthy Ḥadīth is given below:

Sayyidnā Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم if Baytul-maqdis was a great Masjid in the sight of Allah. He said that it was the most distinct house of Worship in the world, the greatest of all houses, which Allah Ta'ālā made for Sulaymān, the son of Dāwūd, peace be on both, with gold, silver and precious stones like ruby and emerald. The manner in which this happened was, when Sulaymān عليه السلام started its construction, Allah Ta'ālā made the Jinn subservient to him. The Jinn collected this gold, silver and precious stones and used them in the making of the Masjid. Sayyidnā Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه says that he, then, asked as to where and how did all that gold, silver and precious stones go out of Baytul-maqdis? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When the Banī Isrā'īl disobeyed Allah Ta'ālā, got involved in sins and misdeeds and killed their noble prophets, Allah Ta'ālā set King Nebuchadnezzar on them. He was a fire-worshipper who ruled Baytul-maqdis for seven hundred years. And when the Qur'an says: *فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعَدُ أُولُهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ* (So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to Us having strong aggressive power - 17:5), it means this event. The army of Nebuchadnezzar entered the Masjid of al-Quds, killed men, took women and children prisoners and carried away with him all gold, silver and everything of value belonging to Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles. He kept the treasure in his country, Babylon and kept the children of Isrā'īl as his serfs and slaves for a hundred years making them do hard labor in utter disgrace.

Then Allah Ta'ālā made a king from among the kings of Persia to stand up against him. He conquered Babylon, freed the remnants of Banī Isrā'īl from the bondage of Nebuchadnezzar and made arrangements to have all valuables he had brought from Baytul-maqdis returned back to it. Then he sternly told the Banī Isrā'īl that should they, in future, return to disobedience and sin, he too will return the punishment of killing and prison back on them. This is what the verse of the Qur'an: *عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدْتُمْ عُدْنَا* (May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again - 17:8) means.

· Later, when the Banī Isrā'īl had come back to Baytul-maqdis (with lost wealth and property in their possession), they went back to the life

of sins and misdeeds. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā set the Roman Emperor, Caesar upon them. This is what the verse: *فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعَدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءَ وُجُوهُكُمْ* (Later, when came the time appointed for the second, [We sent others] so that they spoil your faces - 17:7) means. The Roman Emperor launched a two-pronged attack, from the land and the sea. He killed many and many were those he took prisoners. Then he had all this wealth of Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles and took it home. There he had it deposited in the Temple of Gold. This wealth is still there, and there it will remain until comes the Mahdī who would bring these back to Baytul-maqdis on one hundred and seventy thousand boats and it will be at this place that Allah Ta'ālā will assemble everyone, former and later. (Lengthy Ḥadīth as reported by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr)

It appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān, that the two events mentioned in the Qur'ān refer to the disobedience of two Divine Codes of Law, first the disobedience to the Code brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and, then, after the advent of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the disobedience to the Code brought by him. Thus, all events described above can be considered as relevant to the first disobedience. Now that we have gone through the details of the events, we can turn to the explanation of the verses cited above.

Commentary

The outcome of the events mentioned above is that Allah Ta'ālā had decreed that the Banī Isrā'īl will be successful, having the best of both worlds, the material and the spiritual, as long as they continue to obey Allah. But, whenever they deviate from the dictates of Faith, they shall be put to disgrace, and that they would be subjected to punishment at the hands of enemies and disbelievers. Then, not only that the enemies will run over them destroying their lives and properties, but it would also happen that their Qiblah, their sacred Baytul-maqdis, will also not remain safe against the onslaught of that enemy. Their disbelieving enemies will barge into the Mosque of Baytul-maqdis and defile and damage it. This too will be a part of the punishment of Banī Isrā'īl themselves. The Holy Qur'ān has told us about two events relating to them. The first one dates back to the time of Mosaic religious law while the second pertains to the Christian. During both these periods, the Banī Isrā'īl rebelled against the divine law of the time. In the first case, a disbelieving Magian monarch was made to sit over them, and

Baytul-maqdis, who brought great destruction upon them. In the second case, a Roman emperor was set against them who killed and pillaged and made Baytul-maqdis all demolished and rendered desolate. And along with this description, it has also been mentioned that the Banī Isrā'īl - when, on both occasions, they repented from their misdeeds resolving not to go near them again - Allah Ta'ālā reinstated their country, wealth and children.

After having mentioned these two events, Allah Ta'ālā declared His Law in such matters by saying: **وَأَنْ عُدْتُمْ عَدَاَنَا** (If you do this again, We shall do that again - 8). This law which means - 'if you return to disobedience and contumacy, We shall, once again, make a similar penalty and punishment zoom back upon you' - has been declared as valid right through the last day of Qiyamah. That its addressees were the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were present during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ serves as a reminder to them. It is being pointed out to them that they should not forget that they were seized by divine punishment twice when they had first opposed the code of Sayyidnā Mūsā, and then the code of Sayyidnā 'Isā. Now this was the period of the Code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was a period that will continue up to the Last Day. Let them, therefore, realize that the fate of those who chose to be hostile to it will turn out to be no different. Consequently, this was actually happened. These people became hostile to Islam and the religious code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they did that, they were expelled and disgraced at the hands of Muslims, and finally Baytul-maqdis, their Qiblah, too came under Muslim control. However, the only difference was that their past conquering kings had treated them disgracefully and had desecrated their Qiblah too. Now when Muslims took over Baytul-maqdis, they reconstructed the great Mosque of al-Quds ash-Sharīf which was lying demolished and desolate for centuries and thereby reinstated the honor and reverence of the Qiblah of prophets.

The events of Banī Isrā'īl are a lesson for Muslims and what has happened to Baytul-maqdis in our time is a part of the same chain

Obviously, the purpose of narrating these events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl in the Qur'an and making Muslims listen to them is to let Mus-

lims understand that they are no exceptions to this divine law. Be it this mortal world or the eternal universe of their Faith, their honor and ascendancy, possessions and wealth are inseparably tied with obedience to Allah. Whenever they veer away from their obedience to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their enemies and disbelieving tyrants of all sorts shall be empowered to prevail over them. When this happens, the desecration of their places of worship will also not remain too far.

The calamity of the Jewish usurpation of Baytul-maqdis in our time and the added sacrilege of setting fire to it has thrown the world of Islam into acute anxiety. In reality, it is confirming the Qur'ān. Muslims forgot Allah and His Rasūl, ignored the life waiting for them in the Hereafter and opted to scrounge for their share in the glamour and grandeur of the mortal world. When they became aliens to the dictates of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, the same divine law stood activated before them. A few hundred thousand Jews overcame them. They also inflicted the loss of life and property on them. Worse still is the fate of one of the three greatest mosques of the world according to the religious law of Islam, a mosque that has the distinction of being the Qiblah of all prophets. It was snatched from them and those who took it over had a track record of being the most disgraced people in this world, that is, the Jews. In addition to that, it is common observation that these people stand nowhere close to Muslims in terms of their numbers, nor do they have some significant superiority over the current collective Muslim holdings of war materials. This also tells us that this event does not really give Jews any niche of honor in the annals of world nations. However, it does provide punishment for Muslims in return for their disobedience. It clearly shows that everything that came to pass came as the punishment of our own misdeeds. And it also shows that there is no remedy for it except that we should feel ashamed of our misdeeds, make a genuine *taubah* (repentance), start obeying the commandments of Allah, become true Muslims and shun the great sins of imitating and trusting others. If we were to do just that, *insha'Allah*, true to the Divine promise, Baytul-maqdis and Palestine shall return to us. But, it is regrettable that the present-day Arab rulers and common Muslims living in Arab lands have yet to be alerted to that reality. They are still relying on foreign assistance while making plans of taking Baytul-maqdis back, something that does

not appear to be probable, at least outwardly. Where else shall we lodge our complaint but Allah!

The only weapon system and military hardware with which Baytul-maqdis and Palestine can return to Muslim hands are still there waiting to be picked up - Return to Allah, genuinely and passionately. Have certitude of Akhirah. Obey the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Stay away from imitating and trusting others in our social and political goals. Finally, let us place our trust in Allah and wage a purely Islamic Jihād as enjoined by the Shari'ah. May Allah Ta'ālā give our Arab rulers and other Muslims the ability to answer the challenge effectively.

A strange coincidence

Allah Ta'ālā has made two places on this Earth to serve as the Qiblah or orientation for those who worship Him, the Baytul-maqdis and the Baytullah. But, the divine law relating to each of them is different. That Baytullah shall be protected and that disbelievers shall never take it over is a security concern that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself. The Event of the Elephant mentioned in Sūrah al-Fīl (105) of the Holy Qur'ān came as its result. When the Christian king of Yaman (Abraham al-Ashram) invaded Baytullah, Allah Ta'ālā destroyed him and his army along with the contingent of elephants he had brought, through birds, much before he could reach Baytullah.

But, this law does not apply in the case of Baytul-maqdis. Instead, as the verses cited above tell us, when Muslims go astray and start indulging in disobedience and sin, this Qiblah will be snatched away from them and it will pass into the control of disbelievers.

Disbelievers too are the servants of Allah, but not among the accepted ones

About the first event (5), the Holy Qur'ān said: When the people of Faith start letting them be seduced to discord, sin, disobedience and disorder, Allah Ta'ālā shall set upon them such servants of His as would break into their homes killing and plundering. At this place, the Qur'ān has used the expression: *عِبَادًا لَنَا* (*ibādal-lanā*: Some servants belonging to Us) and not: *عِبَادَنَا* (*ibādanā*: Our servants) - even though it was brief. There is wisdom behind it. Is it not that the attribution of a servant to Allah is, for him, the greatest conceivable honor? This is similar to what

we have explained at the beginning of this very Sūrah under our comments on the first verse: *أَسْرَى بَعْدَيْهِ* (*asrā' bi'abdihi*: made His servant travel at night). There it was said that certainly great was the honor and nearness the Holy Prophet ﷺ was blessed with during the night of the Mi'rāj. But, when the Qur'an describes this event, it does not mention either his blessed name or some attribute. It simply said: *عَبْدِهِ* ('*abdihi*: His servant). This tells us that the ultimate perfection a human person can have, and the highest station he can occupy, is that Allah Ta'ālā chooses to cherish a servant by calling him 'His' servant. In the verse under reference, the people who meted out the punishment to the Banī Isrā'īl were *kāfirs*, or disbelievers after all. Therefore, instead of calling them: *عِبَادَنَا* (Our servants), Allah Ta'ālā has broken the element of attribution and connection and said: *عِبَادَنَا* (some servants belonging to Us). Thus, a hint has been given here that all human beings are nothing but servants of Allah as created, but because of the absence of 'Imān or faith, they are not the kind of accepted servants who could be attributed directly to Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 9 - 11

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيَشِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ
الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٩﴾ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانَ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ ط
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا ﴿١١﴾

Surely, this Qur'an guides to the way which is most upright and gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that there is a great reward for them, [9] and that for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared a painful punishment. [10]

Man invites evil as he would invite good, and man is prone to haste. [11]

Sequence

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the majesty of the prophet-hood of the Messenger of Allah was described through the miracle of al-Mi'rāj. The present verses cite the miracle of Qur'an as its confirmation.

Commentary

The most upright way

The way to which the Qur'ān guides has been called '*aqwam*,' the most upright. '*Aqwam*' can be explained by saying that it is a way that is closer to the destination, is easy and free of dangers at the same time. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that the rules set for human life by the Holy Qur'ān are a combination of all three features mentioned above. However, it is a different matter that man may start taking this way to be difficult or dangerous on occasions because of his own lack of comprehension. But, the Lord of all the worlds has the most comprehensive knowledge of every single particle in the entire universe. Before Him, the past and the future are the same. It is He who can have the knowledge of the reality as to the function and form most beneficial for human beings. And since man is unaware of things as they are in a comprehensive setting, he cannot identify even his own good or bad fully and decisively.

Perhaps, it is based on this congruity that it was said in verse 11 that man would, on occasions, pray for something in a haste, something that spells out destruction for him. If Allah Ta'ālā were to answer such a prayer, he would be ruined. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not answer such prayers instantly until man himself comes to realize that his prayer was made in error and that it was fatal for him. Then, in the last sentence of this very verse, a natural weakness of man has been mentioned in the form of a standing rule - that man is, by nature, haste-prone. He keeps his sight trained on passing profit and loss and falls short on foresight and hindsight. He loves to go for the immediate gain and comfort, even if it happens to be only a little. He would not bat an eye to prefer it to the greater and more lasting gain and comfort. In short, this verse points out to a natural weakness of human beings in general.

And some authorities in Tafsīr have taken this verse to be related to a particular event. The event they refer to concerns Naḍr ibn Ḥārith who had made a prayer in the heat of his hostility to Islam saying:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ
الْيَمِّ

O Allah, if this [Islam] is the truth from You, then, rain down on us rocks from the skies or send upon us some other painful

punishment.

In that case, '*al-insān*' of the text would be referring to those mentioned above, or those like them.

Verses 12 - 15

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً
لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ
شَىْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَكُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلَمْنَهُ طِغْرَهُ فِى عُنُقِهِ ۗ
وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا ﴿١٣﴾ أَقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ ۗ كَفَى
بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ﴿١٤﴾ مَن اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ
وَمَن ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۗ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ وَمَا كُنَّا
مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

And We have made the night and the day two signs having made the sign of night dark and the sign of day bright, so that you may seek grace from your Lord, and that you may know the number of the years and computation. And everything We have expounded in detail. [12]

And every human's (deeds determining his) fate We have tied up to his neck, and We shall bring forth for him, on the day of Resurrection, a book he will receive wide open. [13] "Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account." [14]

Whoever takes to right path does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And it is not Our way to punish (anyone) unless We send a Messenger. [15]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, first it was declared that the alternation of night and day was a sign of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then it was said that there was great wisdom in the making of the night dark and the day, bright. As for the wise consideration behind the making of